

**SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS AND THE SUBJECT LEADER'S
INFLUENCE SPACE: AN EXPLORATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL SUBJECT LEADERS ON THE
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF THE MEMBERS OF THEIR
DEPARTMENTS**

by

ADRIAN PAUL JARVIS

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ABSTRACT

This project explores how far subject leaders in British secondary schools are able to promote “leadership for learning” by influencing the professional practice of department members. This area has excited much discussion in the literature in recent years, but little work seems to have looked into departmental inter-relationships and their implications for leadership and followership. Using a case study methodology, I investigated over 160 subject leaders and department members from a wide range of schools. Firstly, I distributed questionnaires which probed participants’ approaches while identifying themes for a second stage based around semi-structured interviews. I found that subject leaders are limited in their impact because the organisational structure of schools and the individual nature of teaching restrict the power resources available to them. Although much advocated, collegiality was less evident than informality. This project recommends that the subject leader role be re-calibrated to give its holders access to a broader range of power resources in order to create the conditions in which true collegiality can flourish; such an environment would allow subject leaders to impact positively on the practice of department members to engender effective “leadership for learning”. In arriving at this conclusion, I exploited the gaps in extant literature around the point of intersection between what subject leaders do and how department members respond to it.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1

Introduction

Impetus For The Research	1
Research Questions	12
Possible Impact of the Research	16
Outline of the Argument	20

Chapter 2

Literature Review:

Leadership in Secondary School Subject Departments

Introduction	22
Leadership Defined	26
Leadership in Action	36
Leadership in Secondary School Subject Departments	44

Chapter 3

Literature Review:

Power, Authority and Influence in Secondary School Subject Departments

Introduction	56
Power, Authority and Influence	57
Influence in Action: Motivation, Morale and Job Satisfaction	67
Departmental Structures	79

Chapter 4

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction	94
Philosophical Approach	97
Strategy and Samples	101
Methodology	111
Methods	116
Research Management	136

Chapter 5

Findings 1: The Questionnaires

Introduction	145
The First Research Question	147
The Second Research Question	163
The Third Research Question	179

Towards the Interview Stage	197
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Chapter 6

Findings 2: The Semi-Structured Interviews

Introduction	200
Concepts of Management and Leadership in the Context of Departmental Practice	202
How Authority and Influence Operate in Secondary School Subject Departments and their Implications for Power Relationships	214
The Limitations of Subject Leader Influence	224
Implications for Teamwork	242
Departmental Influence Relationships and Morale, Motivation and Job Satisfaction	252

Chapter 7

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction	262
Discussion	263
Conclusions	282
Recommendations	294

Appendices

Appendix 1: A letter requesting access in order to conduct the questionnaires and an email requesting access to carry out interview-based research	302
Appendix 2: Description of the research sites visited during the interview stage	304

Appendix 3: Copies of the questionnaires	307
Appendix 4: Schedules used during the semi-structured interviews	320
Appendix 5: A sample interview transcript	322
Appendix 6: Off-print from “Management in Education”, 22 (1), 24 – 30	349
Appendix 7: Off-print from “Papers from the Student Conference, Education Research: Strengths and Weaknesses, Held on Saturday 5 th July 2008”	357
List of References	368

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	Relationships between modes of power, Maslow's motivational factors and Etzioni's compliance relationships	70
Figure 2:	An initial query about the extent of subject leader influence	92
Figure 3:	Graphical representation of the data from Subject Leader Questionnaire question 7	150
Figure 4:	Graphical representation of the data from Department Member Questionnaire question 6	154
Figure 5:	Comparison of "1" weightings for subject leader question 7 and department member question 6	156
Figure 6:	The subject leader's "influence space"	284
Figure 7:	The subject leader's "influence space" with implications for "leadership for learning"	291

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	Etzioni's typology of compliance relationships	61
Table 2:	Findings of Subject Leader Questionnaire question 7	149
Table 3:	Findings of Department Member Questionnaire question 6	153
Table 4:	Responses to Subject Leader question 15 and Department Member question 14	161
Table 5:	Hours spent in subject-leadership specific tasks by subject leaders	164
Table 6:	Proportion of time spent by subject leaders in direct interaction with the members of their departments	165
Table 7:	Subject leaders' claimed weekly hours of contact time with the members of their departments	166
Table 8:	Department members' claimed weekly hours of contact time with their subject leaders	167
Table 9:	Department members' estimates of the proportion of contact time with their subject leader devoted to him or her guiding professional practice	168
Table 10:	Number of hours per week department members claim are spent by subject leaders in guiding their professional practice	169
Table 11:	Number of lesson observations per year according to subject leaders	170
Table 12:	Number of lesson observations per year according to department members	171
Table 13:	Subject leaders' claimed influence over the classroom practice of the members of their departments	173
Table 14:	Subject leaders' levels of influence on classroom practice according to department members	174
Table 15:	Subject leader descriptions of teamwork within their departments	180
Table 16:	Department member descriptions of teamwork within their Departments	181

Table 17:	Subject leaders' estimations of the extent to which they delegate	188
Table 18:	Department members' estimations of the extent to which subject leaders delegate	189

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Impetus For The Research

Educational effectiveness and improvement is the subject of much contention in political, academic and media circles. At the sharp end of the debate are the working teachers who have to deal with frequent initiatives aimed at building the former by means of the latter. The logic behind many of these conforms to the type of student-centred model proposed by, for example, Creemers (1994), which sees improvement as being effected through the manipulation of a combination of resources, teaching styles and the time given over to instruction. The attention has tended - as Creemers and Kyriakides (2008), for example, have described - to be on what happens in the classroom; research has confirmed the intuitive conclusion that the organ of school improvement is how teaching and learning work together. Such approaches generally acknowledge that the quality of teacher input is an important factor - Maslowski et al (2008), for example, cite research which indicates that teacher behaviours can make a big difference to classroom effectiveness. To a large extent, these behaviours will be determined by individual teachers' characters, personal philosophies, subject knowledge and life experiences: such matters are major components of "professional identity", about which much will be said later in this thesis. The wider policy and professional context, though, has also been seen as important, albeit with less agreement as to how. A question, then, is begged: what influences teachers' pedagogical practices and who is accountable for their ultimate success or otherwise?

Attempts at an answer have led to a growing movement in favour of what has been termed “leadership for learning” (as described by, for example, Rhodes and Brundrett, 2010, and Moller, 2009), which is the idea that leadership in educational organisations should have as its ultimate goal the building of learning capacity among students, since, as Moller (2009) reminds us, “the core work in a school is about student learning” (page 254). The notion of leadership for learning lies at the heart of work by Leithwood et al (2006) who, in a report for the National College for School Leadership, claim that, “school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning” (page 3). These authors concede that they are making a “controversial” claim, but the fact that they include it in a document that is intended to influence the policy agenda implies that they make it with some confidence. They are, it must be said, primarily concerned with whole school leadership, but the evidence they give for their arguments brings in the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders. Unfortunately, as Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) have found, “there is a paucity of evidence that shows how this leadership of learning is accomplished” (page 6).

Most writers in the area – Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) among them - agree that subject leaders are important members of any school organisation, being key players in the delivery of its central mission. A Welsh Office Green Paper (1999), to give one instance, states that subject leaders are central to driving forward improvements to teaching and learning. Another typical perspective is that subject leaders, “continue to make a vital contribution to school improvement” (Naylor et al, 2006, page 11). These views are, however, at variance with other research for the National College for School Leadership carried out by Bennett et al (2003b) which finds that, “very little empirical work” has examined, “the influence of middle leadership on teaching and learning” (page 1). This

position is further underlined by Harris (2004), whose work suggests that the great wealth of research literature into subject leadership has failed to discover any connection between it and improvements in student outcomes. My own published work (Jarvis 2008a: the paper is included as Appendix 6) has followed a similarly sceptical line.

Much of the problem springs from a lack of agreement as to what actually constitutes subject leadership. On the face of it, a simple definition is that given by Wise and Bush (1999), that subject leaders are, “specialists who are responsible for an aspect of the academic curriculum” (page 184). In most secondary schools of the type investigated by this research, subject leadership is a formal role with an appropriate job title and a job description which, while being specific to a particular institution, will always broadly agree with Wise and Bush (1999). However, as Poultney (2007) writes: “While the links between school improvement and the increasing role of the Subject Leader has [sic] been evidenced, the nature of subject leadership is under debate” (page 8). Those actually performing the role seem little more enlightened. Turner (2003) found that it is, “debatable as to whether S[ubject] L[eader]s perceive themselves more as managers ... rather than leaders engaging in strategic planning for the future” (page 210).

Subject leadership is thus worthy of study precisely because it is at present not fully understood. An attempt to break the impasse has been made by the Teacher Training Agency (now the Training and Development Agency for Schools) in its National Standards for Subject Leaders (1998) which sets priorities for those in the role. These can be summarised as: the strategic direction and development of the subject, the leadership of teaching and learning, the leading and managing of staff and the efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources. Somewhat more detail is given later in the standards

document when it is stated that, “a subject leader plays a key role in supporting, guiding and motivating teachers of the subject, and other adults” (page 4), and this is placed in a broader context by, “a subject leader identifies needs in their own subject and recognises that these must be considered in relation to the overall needs of the school” (page 4). So subject leadership, by this reasoning, takes place within the context of a whole school (and wider) policy and through the medium of the people to whom it is directed. In other words, it is a relationship of power and influence.

The central problem, therefore, which this research aims to investigate, is the nature of this relationship. The next section of this chapter will give more specific research questions, but, broadly, the query that inspired the project was: what influence does a subject leader have on the professional practice of those in his or her department? As we shall see, the word “influence” is important because it means that the question probes how the fundamental inter-relationships of power in a department condition the type of leadership that is in evidence and, from there, how that leadership may affect the teaching practice of department members. This positions the research in the area of leadership for learning, investigating a key aspect of what Ball and Forzani (2007) call “the instructional dynamic” – in this case, the factors that determine the pedagogical approaches taken by teachers. In the light of the literature on effectiveness considered above, this will then allow some judgements to be made regarding the capacity of subject leaders to be the drivers of improvement envisaged by Naylor et al (2006). Here, then, is the “gap” in the literature which is addressed by this research: little work seems to have looked at subject leadership from both sides of the equation, the voices of department members, in particular, being largely silent in much extant research.

To a significant degree, this research was stimulated by personal experience. As a subject leader of long standing, I have been only too aware of how much of the responsibility for the overall performance of a subject department is deemed to rest with whoever happens to be in notional charge of it. A question that has often been uppermost in my mind has been, “how is this mission to be accomplished?” How - to put it another way - am I to influence the manner in which the members of my department do their jobs, from planning, through to evaluating and, in particular, how they actually deliver the content of the lessons which, as Creemers and Kyriakides (2008) believe, are the crucible for effectiveness and improvement?

In order to fully grasp the nature of the problem it is necessary to give some consideration to the nature of a teacher’s classroom behaviour and this means analysing the characteristics of teaching as a practice. Ryken (2004) identifies the essence of teaching as highly personal. She suggests that it is a teacher’s “sense of self” (Ryken, 2004) which informs his or her work, teaching being the sharing of that self with students. Since this process usually occurs in a classroom, it is hidden from fellow professionals, and is, thus, remote from casual scrutiny and beyond any immediate management or leadership influence. As we will see later in this section and during the main body of this thesis, influence, to be successful, must operate on the “self” which Ryken (2004) explored. However, findings from the fieldwork undertaken for this study will demonstrate that this is no easy task, since the individual nature of teaching was frequently mentioned by participants as a barrier to influence and, in consequence, leadership. This can be accounted for, in part, because teachers are themselves, as Rhodes and Brundrett (2010) and Rhodes and Bisschoff (2010) point out, the leaders in the classroom, meaning that any attempt to exert leadership influence over them is necessarily indirect

- an argument advanced by, among others, Mulford and Silins (2003). That this is an important matter for leadership for learning is argued by Leithwood et al (2002) who make a connection between a teacher's self and school improvement when they speak of a teacher's internalised goals being "energised" to contribute towards the implementation of wider policy when that policy can be seen to tend towards the individual teacher's own "desired future state" (page 99). To take this discussion a stage further, therefore, it might be posited that part of a leader's role is to effect such an "energisation". Leadership for learning implications of this discussion are further underlined by findings from, for example, Goodlad (1984) that the major goal claimed by most teachers is to help students and pupils realise their full potential as learners.

The means by which leadership influence can be brought to bear on teachers have tended to take their cue from such ideas as those of Hallinger and Heck (1999), who talk about leaders coaching or mentoring their followers in order to facilitate improvement, or Vitanen and Parainen (2003) who put the same idea in terms of the influence on an individual's practice of an expert "senior". Alternatively, Southworth (2004) suggests that outcome data can trigger an intervention at classroom level by a leader if such is deemed necessary. The first of these possibilities is in the area of motivation and the latter accountability and, while this might suggest that the two approaches are divergent in nature, what they have in common is that they are both reactive in the sense that they are initiated by specific actions - usually negative - of followers. There has also been, it must be said, too much emphasis placed on seeing accountability measures as the means by which to highlight weaknesses in the practice of educators (as has been noted by Freire, 1998) rather than as a medium through which influence relationships can be pursued.

What seems to have excited less interest is how the relationship between subject leaders and their followers operates on an ongoing basis, how subject leaders see themselves in relation to their followers and how followers see themselves in relation to subject leaders; as Bennett et al (2003b) comment, “limited attention to team leadership is apparent” (page 4) in research into subject leadership. Given the apparent contradiction between teaching being an individual activity and the Teacher Training Agency’s (1998) expectation that subject leaders have the major role in directing it, there is much to be said for exploring how teamwork operates in subject departments. Teamwork might even be described as the major vehicle for leadership since, if a leader has an impact on a follower, some form of teamwork must have taken place – the leader must have used the resources of power, authority and influence which we will explore later to engage the follower with an agenda or vision. Certainly, if Leithwood et al’s (2002) “energisation” is to happen, the actors involved in the process must relate to each other in a manner that we, and they, would recognise as a group structure or a team dynamic. As we will see, however, the organisational nature of departments is both an opportunity for subject leaders and, in many cases, an impediment to their successfully performing their given role.

Complicating the matter further is the undoubted fact that the subject leader role has undergone considerable change and development in recent years. As Turner (2003) makes clear, subject leaders are no longer expected to be little more than administrators. Rather, there is an expectation from both policy makers and senior managers that those promoted to the post will, “be able to offer the kind of dynamic and pro-active leadership required in the 21st Century” (page 209). As will be demonstrated, this research presents some perspectives on that viewpoint. It needs to be remembered, moreover, that subject

leaders are not the only “middle leaders” within a school. Those holding various pastoral posts occupy similar strata in the hierarchy and they, too, have some impact on teaching and learning (a point made by Hobbs, 2006).

This project looks at the essence of subject leadership in secondary schools and, by so doing, aims to advance general understandings of its place in strategies aimed at improving educational outcomes. A later chapter will give a detailed discussion of literature on the nature of subject leadership, but this research aims to go further in isolating and exploring the power relations that lie behind the success or otherwise of the many and varied tasks that are contained in the job description. As will be seen, leadership is founded on influence. In order, therefore, to fully understand leadership (and, hence, to improve its effectiveness), it is necessary to understand how influence works within social groupings and work teams. Inter-relationships conditioned by personality and attitudes will be seen to lie at the heart of the issue. Independent research into school leadership by Pricewaterhouse Coopers LLP (2007) has found that, “the behaviours of school leaders have a greater impact on pupil performance than school structures or leadership models” (page 1). The point is given further emphasis by Bennett et al (2003b) who argue that leadership styles, “tend to become blended in leaders’ approaches” (page 8). These quotations bring in ideas of discourse and social reality, reminding us that the ways in which people think and feel are the key determinants of influence and power relationships. Leadership types such as the charismatic, the transactional and the transformational spring from such social interactions.

For this reason, the research approach followed aimed to probe the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of both subject leaders and members of subject departments in order to explore exactly how departmental intra-relationships work. The research participants were subject leaders and the department members who are their followers. These terms will be used throughout this report: the former are those curriculum leaders as discussed above, while the latter are the subject teachers who are members of subject departments - and so specialists - whose first line of academic management is a subject leader. There are, of course, many very small departments in schools, consisting of a "subject leader" and no-one else. For this research, such people were discounted; it is specifically the influence relationships between subject leaders and followers that interested me and so the first qualification for inclusion was that a given academic department had to comprise a subject leader and at least one department member. It is also to be noted that a "department member" will often report to middle leaders other than subject leaders (heads of year or heads of house being examples) and may, indeed, be members of more than one department. Again, I did not view these as impediments to the research since my interest was in the relationship between subject leader and department member within a given subject area.

As we will see, I deemed an interpretivist strategy to be most appropriate, pursued through a case study methodology which made use of mixed methods. The first stage of this was to ascertain whether the gap for this research described above was sufficiently broad to encourage a full scale project. This was accomplished through a pilot study in three schools. As a consequence of this both the research questions and the tools to be used to answer them were refined ahead of performing fieldwork in a larger number of sites. We will also see that the pilot led to a major change in research strategy away from

the ethnographic approach that had, at first, seemed most apt. When the research proper got underway, a questionnaire was administered in twelve contrasting secondary schools to subject leaders and members of their departments to look at the relationship between the two constituencies in detail; the answers received were used to generate a number of themes relevant to the research questions. These were explored in much more depth by taking subject departments in eleven secondary schools as case studies and, through carrying out semi-structured interviews of representatives of the two groups.

That the methods chosen for both the pilot and main studies involved participants revealing something of their “inner worlds” and closely-held values threw up a number of ethical issues, not least those of confidentiality and anonymity (much, as we will see, has been written on these topics by authorities such as BERA, 2004, and Walford, 2005). These matters will be dealt with in more detail in the chapter on Research Design, but, for now, it is worth bringing out a broader context of relevance in this connection which is introduced by Bourdieu (2000) who says that, in modern society, the conceptual and abstract are at least as important as the actual, meaning that what constitutes the “space” occupied by an individual includes, “what [he or she] call[s] social space, the locus of the co-existence of social positions, mutually exclusive points, which, for the occupants, are the basis of points of view” (page 130). The power relations that lie behind leadership are played out in this space and involve a give-and-take in which actors are forced to show an, “openness to possibilities and opportunities that are presented to [them], as well as resistance” (Dall’Alba, 2009, page 41). This leads to an open-ended process of mutual influence in which an individual is in a continuous state of “becoming” (Dall’Alba, 2009). The chosen research design for this project needed to be an effective way of learning about this “space” (Bourdieu, 2000). It also had to be a way to consider

context, which is equally crucial to power relations, since, as Merleau-Ponty (1962) argues, the physical world cannot be disregarded, that, indeed, “the body is the vehicle of being in the world” (page 82). He goes on, “every figure stands out against the double horizon of external and bodily space” (page 115).

Not only will this be seen as important for my research methodology in that the precise relationship between the subjective and objective must be fully understood for qualitative enquiry to have validity, but it alludes to interpersonal power relationships. The point is lent extra relevance for this research by Foucault (1975) who makes a link between the body and power when he writes: “power relations have an immediate hold upon [the body]; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks” (page 25).

These varied concepts will form the basis of a discussion of power, authority and influence to be carried out in later chapters. It will be seen that influence will operate morally/intellectually as alluded to by Dall’Alba (2009) and Bordieu (2000) but it will also have a large presence in the corporeal realm evoked by Foucault (1975); the extent to which an individual is influencing others on these two planes will largely determine his or her level of power. While the arguments of Foucault (1975) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) involve abstractions seemingly at odds with a practically-based project such as this, their ideas – as we will see – have a bearing on the concepts of leadership and management which penetrate to the centre of subject leadership. It will become clear that Foucault’s (1975) ideas, in particular, are germane to school subject leaders in that the influence which such people hold is very specifically defined, being based mainly in the intellectual/moral world of discourse, trust and consensus and having little bearing on external factors such as the wider environmental and political context.

Research Questions

This project conforms to approaches advocated by Bassey (1990) who sets parameters for what educational research should aim to achieve. He states that such research should be performed for some clearly defined purpose, that it should be systematic, that it should be informed by theory, that it should be conducted self-critically, be open to scrutiny and, finally, that it should be written up in a form that communicates its findings comprehensibly to its intended audience. Clearly, the first stage of this is to plan the research and, on this topic, Johnson (1994) establishes the fundamental principle that it is important to ensure that the research design and resources available are matched to the, “particular characteristics of the topic under consideration” (page 171). The first step, she claims, is to decide upon the focus of the study.

Although the initial research problem has been outlined in the previous section, it can only be given proper definition by a series of research questions which guide the study, outline its scope and indicate the areas of knowledge that it is intended to address and expand upon. Devising these is not a straightforward task; Dillon (1983) asks whether questions in educational research projects habitually use a form that is specific to education or follow a more general style, the ideal being the former. He counsels that, in order to achieve it, the researcher must consider not only the content of a question (what it is intended to discover) but its linguistic structure and its cognitive and logical type (what knowledge it entails or assumes). Maxwell (1998) adds that research questions should not merely stand at the start of a study, but should permeate it, in that they should provide the basis for the “operationalisation” (Cohen et al, 2005) of the research;

that is, they should be a conduit through which a set of research aims can be met in the form of specific answers discovered using particular methods of data gathering. In Maxwell's (1998) terms, the questions must be worded such that answers to them bring together the purposes of the research (what it is intended to discover), the methods used, the validity of the data gathered and the conceptual context. This last consists of what is discussed in the literature review. Hammersley et al (2001) remark, however, that research – particularly qualitative research – is often exploratory in nature and so research questions are open to change as the initial problem becomes more clearly delineated. Maxwell (1998) covers this possibility by suggesting that the best research questions are those which explore processes - rather than those which set out to discover variances - and thus are adaptable to the changing emphases of the study as it progresses.

Bearing all of this in mind, I decided to keep to relatively few questions that crystallised the purposes of the research but were sufficiently “broad brush” as to not close off any potentially fruitful areas of study (as advised by Hammersley et al, 2001). On top of this, the questions were carefully worded so that they would have the flexibility to be open to alteration and development over the course of the project. Indeed, as research caused certain areas to acquire enhanced salience, slight modifications in the original wording of the research questions became necessary. For example, at the start of the research process, the first question asked exclusively about leadership, the need to consider power, authority and influence only becoming clearer as I delved more deeply into the literature on the topic. The second question was also narrower, looking only at subject leader influence on department member classroom practice and not mentioning leadership for learning, which, again, became more important to the study as a result of

the literature review. Moreover, there was originally a fifth research question, “How do leadership influences other than the Head of Department’s affect the practice of teachers in the classroom?” This was rejected as, once more, looking at classroom teaching to the exclusion of other aspects of practice and, furthermore, for being too broad in bringing in wider influences on a teacher’s professional life; as we shall see, these are undoubtedly important, but they form part of the context to subject leader influence and were best covered in that way rather than being seen as, in themselves, subjects for this research. The overarching research questions for this project at the point of analysis and writing are:

1. What constitutes “leadership” insofar as it is evident within secondary school subject departments and on what resources of power, authority and influence is it based?
2. To what extent is the professional practice of department members influenced by subject leadership and what, by extension, are the implications for leadership for learning?
3. What are the implications of the answers to questions 1 and 2 for purposeful teamwork in subject departments?
4. What common features can be identified from a comparison of different departments in a range of schools?

The first question attempts to bring the literature into focus by linking the theoretical background to my main area of interest, secondary school subject departments. The question also echoes many of those that were posed to research participants and so a full answer to it could only be arrived at once fieldwork had been completed. Likewise, research questions 2 and 3 are “road signs” for fieldwork which were answerable largely through my findings (although, as will be seen, previous studies were also very much taken into account). Question 2 touches on the attitudes mentioned in the previous section of this chapter and, thus, anticipates the methods needed to answer it, while question 3 begins to tie data together by interrogating how subject leaders and their “followers” operate in interpersonal environments. Question 4 broadens the study out to place it in a cycle of hypothesis and theory-building (of the type advocated by Walford, 2001) in which the findings are used to augment existing notions of leadership and management in school subject departments. Equally, in bringing in multiple research sites, it speaks to the need for properly triangulated and reliable data.

The questions suggest a close relationship between extant theory and this project’s fieldwork. Certainly, the first stage of the investigation was an exploration of the literature on educational leadership in general and subject leadership in particular. A detailed evaluation of this will be found in the next two chapters. That such a procedure is advisable is stressed by Hart (1998) who states that a literature review is vital if a researcher is to give himself or herself a theoretical grounding in the topic which he or she is studying. That said, Hirst’s (1983) qualifications regarding the limitations of theory are well-made: he argues that education is a field driven by practical knowledge gained intuitively in action and not generated in any a-priori manner. By Hirst’s (1993) reasoning, therefore, a literature review has only limited value. However, that is to downplay the

symbiotic relationship between theory and practical research that informs the educational debate of which this study seeks to be a part – and which is assumed in the research questions. Most researchers would tend to agree with Verma and Mallick (1999) in seeing theory as a “guide” to practical research - or they would take on board Maxwell’s (1998) description of theory as a “model” or “map” of the way the world, or the world insofar as it is relevant to the research questions, currently stands.

The most important part of any project of this nature is the fieldwork and the conclusions which can be drawn from it. This project’s research methodology was sketched in broad detail earlier in this chapter, but it is worth stressing the extent to which it was determined by the research questions in that the research proceeded via a process labelled “following the thread” by Moran-Ellis et al (2006). This approach is described in action by these authors when they state: “The identification of a ‘promising’ emergent finding may be sparked by the relationship between it and the over-arching research question” (page 3). As a summary of the interdependence between the research questions and the different methods adopted to answer them, this is usefully concise.

Possible Impact of the Research

All of the above having been said, a pertinent question is posed by Hammersley (1993) when he asks what is the relevance of educational research. Ball (2008) positions research in general as a predicate of an open, civilised society when he states that, “research is one of the arts of democracy” (page 4). Such an idealistic stance is problematic when applied to educational research. As Hammersley (1993) points out, few

teachers read it and the circumstances in which they work are so variable that any one piece of research literature can scarcely hope to cover every situation (this objection will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 4). Woodhead (1998) concurs, finding fault with educational research when he writes that much of it is, “at best no more than an irrelevance and distraction” (page 1). The OFSTED report to which his remarks are an introduction contains a number of specific complaints against educational research and educational researchers. Perhaps most germane to this project are those which touch on problems of methodological appropriateness and those of sampling bias caused by a lack of proper triangulation. Chapter 4 will address these points. Another point from the OFSTED report is that teachers-as-researchers (of which I am one) have not proven to be particularly effective in solving educational problems through their work.

In order to provide a riposte to this – and gauge the potential impact of this current project – it is necessary to ask the simple question, what is educational research for? One view is taken by Blunkett (2000) who makes a clear link between educational research and government policy. To him, the former should exclusively inform and guide the latter. In this, he is echoing Hargreaves (1996) who berates educational research for what he perceives to be its lack of cumulative knowledge, theory building and its failure, as he sees it, to create a corpus of evidence which can act as a guide not only to policy but to professional practice. It has been pointed out by Munn (2008), though, that research and policy/practice should not be seen as too closely linked and that government policy can be influenced by research in relatively subtle and not immediately obvious ways. She argues that educational research is a broad spectrum and that to confine it to a single aim is to rob it of much of its richness; an interesting distinction is made on this issue by Whitty (2006) who suggests that research “of” education is not the

same as research “for” education. Again, though, Hargreaves (1996) would demur, seeing the tenuous link between research and policy/practice as a de-motivator to researchers to even try to make any practical impact.

Some criteria for evaluating the extent to which educational research projects influence policy and practice have been devised by Furlong and Oancea (2005). The first is what they call the technological dimension to educational research: the ways in which it provides practitioners with a fact-orientated guide to practice. The second is more values-based, being how far research changes practitioners as people, raising their levels of reflexivity and morality. This they call research’s, “capacity building and value for people” (page 10). Neither of these are seen as rapid processes. Weiss (1997) stresses that research enters the consciousnesses of those at whom it is aimed by indirect routes, changing their view of the world over a long period of time in a process she labels “knowledge creep”. According to this, a piece of research should be appreciated not as an instruction manual for immediate action, but as part of an ever-growing agglomeration of theory and knowledge which can easily fit into both of Furlong and Oancea’s (2005) categories at different stages of its creation and dissemination.

It ought, at this juncture, to be said that the work of Furlong and Oancea (2005), while influential, should not be taken as representing an uncontested consensus. Hammersley and Scarth (1993) argue that educational research should not even aim to take a “directive role” since educational practice:

“...does not consist of the implementation of policies, but rather of the employment of skills on the basis of judgements about situations that may be

informed by research but will be shaped much more by sedimented experience of the practitioner and his or her local knowledge” (page 497).

This position is elaborated upon by Hammersley (2008) in an article intended specifically to critique the work of Furlong and Oancea (2005). The author replaces the binary distinction between technical research and values-based research by positing three research modes of his own: that carried out by practitioners in the everyday course of their work, that which is related to an activity but is not carried out during the course of that activity and academic research, which aims to contribute towards a body of knowledge with only an indirect relationship to practice. This, though, is not to make overly simple the connections between research and practice; Hammersley (2008) suggests that even practical research should not be judged on whether it can be demonstrated to have an immediate impact on practice, but on whether it is relevant and valid to the extent that it could, potentially, have such an effect.

Although this research is, in most respects, academic in nature (as per the ideas of Hammersley, 2008), it does concentrate on practical matters and the final section of this thesis is a series of recommendations for future action. In this respect, it is both “of” and “for” education (Whitty, 2006). The intended audience for this research, therefore, is, ultimately, practising teachers. I would also hope that, as with much educational research – and to agree with Blunkett (2000) – that it would have some, albeit diffuse, impact on the policy agenda for education and the organisation of education. That said, I am aware that the dissemination of my findings, even through published articles, is unlikely to take them far beyond a relatively specialised readership of fellow researchers. This is not to deny the value of the work. The ideas of Weiss (1997) alluded to above describe a very

real situation in which research can play a vital role in the world of education. The current research, however modest its own reach, is a contribution to the mass of material which adds up to the great debate about educational practice that takes place in research literature, the media and those bodies which set the previously-mentioned policy agenda within which educationalists work. This certainly influences training courses and other professional activities and it is largely through these means that this research may “speak to” the working classroom-based teacher. Furthermore, this research has already had a measure of influence on educational practice; by taking part in it, a number of professionals have subjected their working lives to the type of reflection which Jarvis (1994), among others, suggests is vital to improvement.

Outline of the Argument

This chapter has explored the reasons for this research and sketched the broader context and possible audience for it. The argument will now move on to address the research questions more specifically through the combination of an investigation of extant literature and a consideration of the original research carried out according to the methodology described above. The next chapter will go into the literature on leadership and how it relates to subject departments. The chapter’s first section provides a definition of leadership insofar as it is relevant to schools. The second section will look at what the literature has to say about how leadership works in practice before the final section narrows down the argument to consider leadership in school subject departments and the problems associated with it. Chapter 3 goes deeper, looking at the literature on power, authority and influence and how these forces operate through interpersonal

relationships. The final section of the chapter looks behind the notion of subject leaders as heads of teams by discussing what the literature has to say about the dynamics of such teams – the practical effect of leadership influence. Chapter 4 describes the project's research design; it gives the reasons for the choice of an interpretative strategy and justifies the mixed methods approach to case studies, evaluating both its strengths and weaknesses. How the data were analysed is discussed and full coverage is given to ethical concerns. Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings of the fieldwork. The former shows the outcomes of the questionnaires, linking them to the main research questions and using the data generated to devise the themes which were investigated by the semi-structured interviews, the findings from which form the substance of chapter 6. The final chapter, 7, draws together the theory as discussed in the literature review and the data from the fieldwork to reach a number of conclusions and, from these, make recommendations for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW:

LEADERSHIP IN SECONDARY SCHOOL SUBJECT DEPARTMENTS

Introduction

Before embarking on a literature review, it is important to bear in mind Hart's (1998) criticism that literature reviews are, all too often, little more than "thinly disguised" bibliographies. Moreover, as Moloney (2009) says of her own research, "I quickly learnt to discern more useful from less useful articles" (page 185), warning of the danger of a "snowball effect" in approaching literature. Gunter et al (2006) also caution against the researcher feeling compelled to read "everything" ever written on a particular topic. Instead, they advise, reading should be strategic, structured around the research questions and designed to provide a theoretical platform for fieldwork. This Literature Review chapter has been prompted by the first half research question 1 ("What constitutes "leadership" insofar as it is evident within secondary school subject departments and on what resources of power, authority and influence is it based?"). A subsequent literature review chapter will outline the theoretical background to the second part of this question as well as research questions 2 and 3.

That having been stated, we saw in the previous chapter that the literature and the research questions for this project enjoyed a symbiotic relationship, each influencing the other until the precise focus of the research was fixed. This is because – again as we

have previously seen – the topics to be explored in Chapter 3 became increasingly important as reading and pilot fieldwork progressed. For this reason, the literature to be discussed in the next two chapters is presented thematically, rather than as a series of direct “answers” to the research questions. As the previous chapter suggested, we begin with a direct focus on leadership in general and subject leadership in particular, mentioning specific elements of both – such as influence and authority - and other related concepts – such as collegiality and distributed leadership - which are discussed in more depth and detail in the ensuing chapter. In this way, the structure of what follows alludes to and mirrors the process of exploration that drove the literature searches. Chapter three will conclude with the proposal of a conceptual model which will draw together the themes from both chapters and provide a spur to the fieldwork which sought to provide answers to the research questions.

Baker and Carty (1994) give some practical hints on literature searching; they suggest breaking down the topic into its constituent parts and following up references in which these parts appear. To some extent, I adopted this method in that I sought the words “leadership”, “schools” and “middle management” in the contents pages and indexes of the books and journals to be discussed later. Brindley’s (1992) approach of taking a wide-ranging view and sampling in an, at first, largely random manner, was also used – this effectively meant trawling through issues of journals dating back at least ten years and reading every paper that seemed to hold the promise of relevance. By doing this I was able to acquire a broad, but in-depth, grasp of a sizeable field. As the process developed, it became obvious that certain authors were more useful than others (as the repeated references to such authorities as Harris, Evans, Bennett, Burns and Buser in

what follows will indicate) and this, in turn, became a determinant of the searches undertaken.

It also became clear that a rich literature can accumulate around an idea, or even an individual word, that is susceptible of use in a range of contexts. One such instance for this project is “effectiveness” which appears in its title. Although brief mention was made of literature on the “effective schools movement” in the previous chapter, it is not otherwise discussed in detail. Here, “effectiveness” is used in a less precise way to refer to the efficacy or otherwise of the “instructional dynamic” (Ball and Forzani, 2007) which lies at the heart of leadership for learning; in this respect, the project follows the argument begun in the previous chapter in which “effectiveness” was subsumed into the broader concept of leadership for learning which, as we have seen, entails such effectiveness-building notions as professionalism and accountability. Literature on these areas receives ample coverage in what follows.

Since the territory of educational leadership and management is so large, the sources of information for any literature review are many and varied. Baker and Carty (1994) suggest that academic libraries, public libraries, bibliographies and lists of references in articles and books are fruitful sources of information. All of these were freely accessed, the library at my home school of education being a particularly significant location for wider reading. Books and journal articles found therein provide much of the substance of the reference list to be found at the end of this thesis. However, other areas also proved to be worthwhile places to look: the Internet was a rich source of material, especially in the respect that it allowed me wide access to journal articles through the British Education Index which I accessed via my university’s eLibrary; a typical search would

begin with my using Google or Google Scholar to investigate a theme (for example, “distributed leadership in education”), or the works of a particular author, before using the university eLibrary to obtain any academic articles and papers that were returned as results. The internet also provided access to reports and papers from such official and quasi-official websites as the National College for School Leadership and that run by the Teacher Training Agency. I found much of interest in blogs, usually those posted by professors of education from universities around the world, which included many lively debates. Journalistic articles occasionally proved to contain some valuable insights and a number are mentioned in the next two chapters: often these were taken from internet news and comment sites.

Just as valuable, though, was the educational research community; unpublished theses, conference papers, book chapters and articles in draft form were offered for consultation by my fellow researchers, giving me access to a good deal of up-to-the-minute primary research. Furthermore, I placed a high value on conversations and discussions, either at supervision level or researcher conferences, which allowed concepts to be aired and suggestions for reading to be made (and thus tending to confirm Maxwell’s [1998] objection that literature is not the only theoretical resource available to the researcher).

In considering the literature so discovered and in attempting to meet the previously stated aim of this chapter, we will now create an essential framework for the ensuing argument by looking at what the literature has to say on the nature of leadership, providing a definition of the concept that is useful for this project. From there, the chapter will look at how leadership is manifested in action, before going on to explore how it operates in subject departments. Throughout, the key emphasis will be on the relational

aspects of leadership and, indeed, followership. It will become apparent, though, that subject leadership is difficult to identify with any exactitude. Certainly, as, again, we saw in the previous chapter, and as will be explored in the final section of this chapter, policy makers' expectations that subject leaders will have a major influence on educational outcomes are open to question, a key point for a project which, ultimately, deals with subject leaders' contributions to leadership for learning.

Leadership Defined

The brief overview of relevant literature in the introductory chapter stressed that subject leadership as a phenomenon defies easy categorization or conceptualisation. That subject leaders are located somewhere around the middle of a school's hierarchy is undeniable and, as we shall see, the source of a number of issues regarding their potential effectiveness as leaders for learning. Perhaps the crux of the matter and, indeed, this research, however, is - as we saw in the previous chapter - that subject leadership is an indirect process mediated by department members and manifested in their actions, meaning that subject leaders operate via the medium of followers over whom they have influence and with whom they enjoy some form of relationship. To put it simply, they are, as their job title suggests, leaders. Such a blunt statement may appear obvious, but it begs many questions which can only be answered if leadership itself is interrogated and defined.

This is not, as Leithwood et al (1999) have argued, a straightforward task that can be accomplished by reference to extant literature; neither, indeed, is this the aspiration of

the current project, which aims to seek answers in both the literature and fieldwork. That said, as Rost (1991) has pointed out, “many scholars have wondered why we have not been able to get a conceptual handle on the word *leadership*” (page 4). This builds on work carried out by Burns (1984) who opined that the media and, by extension, the public at large, spend, “twice as much time commenting on trivial personality and tactical matters [to do with leaders] as on substance [regarding leadership]” (page 155). Beare et al (1992) argue that there is no one definition of leadership and that different contexts and perspectives will alter the ways in which leadership is viewed by researchers and practitioners, while others, such as Duke (1986), seem to have given up on any real attempt at a definition: he describes leadership as a “gestalt phenomenon” which cannot clearly be identified by listing the elements of which it is comprised. Indeed, as Rost (1991) says, the prevailing ethos is all too often, “anything that anyone proclaims to be leadership is leadership” (page 16).

Of “Leadership”, “The Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary” (Burchfield, 1976) says merely, “The position of a group of people leading or influencing others within a given context; the group itself; the action or influence necessary for the direction or organisation of effort in a group undertaking”. Perhaps taking their cue from this, many authors have likewise attempted to encapsulate notions of leadership in a single gobblet, most of which have been unsatisfactory for what they have not said as much as for what they have said; for example, Stogdill (1950) tries to sum up leadership in the phrase, “the process of influencing the activities of an organised group toward goal-setting and goal accomplishment” (page 4), while for Dubin (1968) it is, “the exercise of authority and the making of decisions” (page 8). Moloney (1979) proffers a view of the phenomenon as, “an interpersonal process of influencing the activities of an individual or group towards

goal attainment in a given situation” (page 11). Even as careful and thorough an author as Rost (1991) can only come up with, “leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes” (page 102).

In defining “leadership”, it is common to distinguish it from “management” which is described by Bennett (1996) as an activity bound by organisations and focused on the distribution and utilisation of resources in, “the most effective and efficient ways possible” (page 62). A similar attitude is taken by Glatter (1999) who argues that management is a “technical-rational” activity – that is, centred on administrative and material activities – and not (unlike leadership) a matter of interpersonal relationships. A survey of literature by Grace (1995) finds that many writers have seen management as “scientific” in orientation or, to borrow Greenfield’s (1993) phrase, the study of management and administration has too often become a “neutered science” (page 141).

As this all suggests, it has been fashionable to denigrate management, seeing it as a prosaic necessary adjunct to leadership, but, as Rost (1991) has stated, we should, “rethink the nature of management and its necessity to the operation of our complex societies and ... organisations” (page 143). Many writers have indeed upgraded the status of management considerably – Bullock et al (1995) are not untypical in giving it as an absolutely vital ingredient in the successful running of schools and the development of the curriculum – although few would go as far as Gronn (2003) in seeing it as indistinct from leadership. He does, though, ask a penetrating question when he writes, “by what rationale does a focus on resource procurement count only as management rather than leadership?” (page 273). Given all this, any modern piece of research into the middle

stratum of a school cannot afford to be dismissive of management as an aspect of the job: in this project's fieldwork, a great deal of emphasis was placed on management, in Bennett's (1996) sense of the word, by participants (Jarvis, 2008a).

Much literature has taken as its subject matter the actual work of management. Dean (1993), for example, says that it is, "the task of management to organise so that there is optimum learning for students, by deploying people, time and space to best advantage" (page 91). More specifically, Glover (1997), in discussing the procurement of resources, describes management as a process of "rational planning" which springs from the, "establishment of systems which ensure decision making based upon the perceived priorities of the organisation" (page 138). This is important for two reasons: firstly, it underlines the fact that management needs to occur within the confines of some form of organisational structure – this is not necessarily true of leadership – and, secondly, it links management to the aims of an organisation and, thus, makes it sound not dissimilar to leadership according to some of the definitions given earlier. It is also an attitude shared by Sutton (1994) who not only reinforces the point that resource allocation should be based on an organisation's objectives, but, like Bennett (1996), focuses on two important words for management: "efficiency" and "effectiveness". The first of these means ensuring that inputs are justified by the level of outputs (although how this is to be achieved in an educational environment is a moot point), while the second is a more complex term which carries with it notions of social value in answering the question, how well does a certain activity meet its objectives? What does come through from this discussion is the notion of measurability – again, this has often been seen as a key component of management rather than leadership.

If we are to reject Gronn's (2003) general arguments, we must look for a detailed definition of leadership. The first point to make, agreeing with Leithwood et al (1999), is that, largely, the gobbets quoted above are not wrong – leadership is indeed some form of “influence relationship” (Rost, 1991; Yukl, 1994). Ogawa and Bossert (1995) argue that, “leadership is an organisational quality” (page 224) by which they mean that “leadership” is not the exclusive preserve of those with named and formalised positions within an organisation – although Ogawa and Bossert (1995) do not deny that such people are necessary – but that leadership is the “medium” which, “shapes the systems that produce patterns of interaction and the meanings that other participants attach to organisational events” (page 225). In other words, leadership may be demonstrated by all sorts of people within a group and those who are leaders on some occasions may be followers at other times. A similar point is made by West-Burnham (2004) who sees education, “moving from the view of leaders as the product of individual characteristics to seeing leadership as collective, shared potential in the organisation” (page 2). Both of these articles pre-suppose some form of organisational structure and thus invite discussion of so-called “collegial” models (such as those described by Wallace, 1988, and Bush, 1995), although more will be said of these in the next chapter. What all of these authors do usefully contribute to the definition of leadership is, firstly, an emphasis on leadership as a process of shaping meanings and, secondly, that it is most markedly manifested, “in times of crisis” (West-Burnham, 2004, page 1).

The fact that leadership involves the shaping of meanings leads to its primary effects being indirect. Hallinger and Heck (1997) suggest that the contribution of leadership to the realisation of an organisation's aims, “is always mediated by other people, events and organisational factors, such as teacher commitment, instructional practices or school

culture” (page 167). This notion is reinforced by Simkins (2005) who stresses the policy context for leadership before dividing it into approaches to the two opposed questions of “what makes sense?” and “what works?” He introduces a crucial term when he says that the question of how to lead a school might be given the “what works” answer of, “establish a powerful and engaging vision”, which would immediately be followed by the “what makes sense” follow-up question, “a vision of and for what?” “Vision”, then, would seem to be a component of leadership; a leader needs it, although, as Simkins (2005) has it, not everyone is very clear as to what “vision” is. Of course, if leadership is to be effective – if, that is, meanings are to be shaped - the question needs to be answered: how is vision put across and to whom?

The issue of communication is clearly important to any discussion of how leadership operates. This brings in the role of followers; leadership, wherever it comes from, must work on someone, and whoever this might be is as important to the leadership relationship as whoever is demonstrating the leadership. As Southworth (2002) has written, “we cannot know what effective leadership means unless and until we include the stakeholders’ perspectives and their constructions of leadership” (page 74). Leadership must also, in some way, affect an individual’s intention to perform action (Ajzen, 1991). This is planned behaviour theory, according to which actions are a function of an actor’s intention and control, the latter being defined as the underlying attitudes and beliefs which condition intentions (Armitage and Conner, 2001). It might be said that a leader’s task is to galvanise an individual’s intentions into effective action by influence upon the various controls. In order to accomplish this, Svedberg (2004) talks about the role of language, or “discourse”, the main purpose of which, in his terms, is to “achieve things” (page 426). This, he argues, is accomplished through discourse not merely being

a reflection of cognitive processes, but, “a continuous co-construction of social realities” (page 425), or, to borrow a phrase from Edwards and Potter (1992), it becomes, “reality constituting practice”, the means by which social action is carried out. In this respect, discourse is the way in which identity is created through symbol, narrative, approaches to problems – portraying the present and the past as undesirable states is a common way of encouraging others to accept changes and innovations - and the visioning of possible futures, or, in Svedberg’s (2004) words, it is how, “power is exercised from within by regulating and controlling our thoughts, emotions and perceptions of ourselves” (page 426). Rhodes (2006) puts this in terms of the construction of “professional identity” - that is, the, “ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences by the individual, so that they may understand who they are and what they want to become” (page 159). This, he finds, is strongly influenced by the, “interaction between both person and context as individuals adopt and adapt professional characteristics depending on the necessities of their immediate context” (2010, page 3), quality of leadership being an important constituent of this context. A caution is sounded by Lumby and English (2009) when they remind us that the self is a complex and multi-dimensional entity that is comprised of both the rational and the emotional and these, in combination, condition how leaders lead and followers follow. Crawford (2007) has reached the same conclusion; this author describes leadership as, “a dynamic and social influencing process” (page 87) and decries the fact that, “leadership, whether from the top, the middle or bottom up, has been dominated, usually unproblematically, by rationality” (page 88). Taking all of this into account, we can say that a significant aspect of leadership is the way in which it allows individuals to operate through the building, and continuous re-building, of a sense of self through discourse framing, and re-framing, meanings.

This does, naturally, beg the next question, to wit: how is this done? Agreeing with Rhodes (2006), context is central, an idea that is underlined by Hamilton and Bean (2005): these authors are flexible, however, in their definition of what constitutes “context”, stating that it is not merely the physical environment, but the “social system” within which individuals act. This, they say, can be direct, as in personal interactions with other people, or indirect, coming through laws, regulations, culture, politics or even nationality. In terms of planned behaviour theory, these factors can be described as “subjective norms” (Ajzen, 1991), which are important because, as Armitage and Conner (2001) argue, “it seems unlikely that the majority of people’s behaviour is unaffected by social pressure” (page 488). Such context, or subjective norms, might also, of course, include gender and the politics which surround it; Johnston (1986) is only one author who has found that gender differences among leaders and followers can have an effect on group dynamics. On a more philosophical level, Strain (1996) describes society as a collection of meanings created by individuals through discourse and “signification”. To him, any separation of individual and context is wrong because the individual is the context – it is the interaction of the individual with other individuals, and with the socio-historical norms within which they operate, that creates the “symbolic systems” which are the medium of social action. This idea is not wholly distinct from that of “organisational culture” for which, as James and Connolly (2009) remind us, “the notions of meaning, interpretation and symbolic significance are important” (page 391). What this may mean for leadership is spelled out by Southworth (2002) when he reminds us that the, “importance of leadership being a social construction is that it suggests that it will vary from setting to setting” (page 74). He actually comes close to denying the value of this whole discussion when he states that, “instead of striving for generalisations that homogenise leadership, we might be better advised to work towards more heterogeneity” (page 75).

This notwithstanding, much research has specifically dealt with the means by which teachers' professional identities are constructed and, in so doing, permit some insights into the operation of leadership. Beijaard et al (2004) cite one strand which advocates the view that professional identity is related to teachers' concepts or images of self (a position taken by, for example, Knowles, 1992) and contrast it with other researchers who argue that professional identity is a question of role and reflection upon role (as proposed by Goodson and Cole, 1994). Another way of looking at this is to define it as a dichotomy between agency - the personal dimension to teaching - and structure - the social context (Coldron and Smith, 1999). As Antonek et al (1997) have contended, both aspects are important to the creation of professional identity, reflection on the former in the light of the latter being how teachers develop a sense of themselves as professionals. This is a point reinforced by Beijaard et al (2000) who state that, "teachers' working knowledge is as much dependent on the environment in which they work as on the individuals" (page 753). These authors give much detail about the "biography of the teacher" (for example, his or her educational or family background and how it may impact upon self-perception), but, strangely, fail to include the influence of leadership as a component of professional context.

More useful is the work of Kelchtermans (1993) who propounds the theory of "biographical perspective" as a lens through which to examine teachers' senses of themselves. He believes that a teacher's professional experiences are organised into an "autobiographical story" which, "implies that the biographical approach not so much focuses on facts, but rather on the meaning they have for [the individual teacher]" (page 444). The implication is that a teacher's professional identity is in a constant state of motion, being constructed against a background which is subject to internalisation and

interpretation by the self. The leadership relationship is the influencing of this process through the setting of goals and the shaping of the meanings that emerge; a leader's role, it might be said, is to help a follower create for himself or herself a positive professional identity.

Our overall definition of leadership, therefore, is that it is a social interaction in which an agent, called a leader, uses discourse to mediate between an individual's external context and his or her internal values, beliefs and goals in a way that causes these elements to be more closely aligned with those of the leader. In professional contexts, such as school subject departments, leadership is an important – although not exclusive – factor in the development of an individual's professional identity. The media (as we shall see in the next chapter) through which the leader operates are power, authority and influence. Leadership, in this basic form, does not, of necessity, entail action; just because there is goal congruence between leaders and followers does not automatically mean that steps are taken to attain those goals (a point made by Spillane, 2006). As we saw in the earlier discussion of management - and as the next section will further develop - leadership requires some form of expression if it is to be effective in practice.

This section has added extra detail to the general definitions of leadership given earlier in order to lay a foundation for the field research carried out for this project as a whole. In spite of the objections of some authors, it is most straightforward to retain the conventional distinction between management and the less easily definable entity of leadership. How the latter operates in practice will be dealt with in the next section.

Leadership in Action

If leadership is a social interaction centred on the influencing of an individual's sense of self and professional identity through manipulation of the social world which provides the medium for the creation of meanings, then it is necessary, in an educational context, to explore the practical ways in which it is manifested and how it is of benefit to the educational process. A caveat needs to be applied first of all: Eden (2001) reminds the researcher that teaching is an occupation in which leadership often has very little place. She describes the notion of "pedagogical autonomy", or "the logic of confidence" – the fact that, as regards teachers' primary role as classroom practitioners, leader influence is subject to circumscription. As Eden (2001) points out, the implications of the logic of confidence are most marked for the composition and culture of teams – this will be dealt with in the next chapter. In the meantime, there is value in looking at how leadership can and might be manifested in action.

Hales (1993) outlines the tripartite foundation of relationships between leaders and followers as he sees them – power, authority and influence. These three elements will be dealt with in more detail in the next chapter and, as will be seen, it is the interplay between them that determines the type of relationship enjoyed by leaders and their followers. If authority, for example, is deemed to be illegitimate by followers, the best that can be hoped for from them is a certain amount of "instrumental compliance" (Hales, 1993), a pragmatic acceptance of what has to be done, rather than the sharing of a vision. Lacey (1977) and Day (1999) define the same concept as "strategic compliance" which is defined by the latter as a situation in which an, "individual complies with [an]

authority figure's definition of [a] situation and the constraints of the situation, but retains private reservations about them" (page 60). Even this model may not describe environments in which authority is completely rejected by followers – to the extent that there may be resistance to, or subversion of, a leader, perhaps based on a perception among followers that the leadership being supplied is deficient. Again, we must remember Crawford's (2007) notion that group relationships have an emotional dimension which will influence an individual's willingness, or otherwise, to accept the authority of a "leader". All of these issues will be explored in greater length in the next chapter in a discussion of compliance relationships.

The ability to avoid the danger of instrumental compliance, or worse, has often been seen to reside with certain individuals who possess "charisma" as explored by Crawford (2002). Her work is useful in that she views charisma as, "enabling the leader to influence followers by arousing strong emotions and identification with the leader" (page 278). She suggests that charisma as a quality is engendered in the minds of followers and she stresses its transferability – when one leader disappears, a void is created which is quickly filled, in one way or another, by a new leader (this would tend to agree with the work of Ogawa and Bossert, 1995). It has to be remembered that Crawford's (2002) research is primarily concerned with schools in "special measures", which, as well as perhaps not speaking directly to organisations that are not facing up to crises, does, once again, locate leadership in the realm of response to unusual or problem circumstances. That said, it does allow her to introduce a major concept into the debate when she states that charismatic leaders have "transformational effects" (page 278).

The link between charisma and transformation has been made before; House (1977), for example, stresses above all the role of values and moral principles when he states that followers respond to a charismatic leader's integrity in this regard. He also makes the useful contribution that charismatic leaders have high expectations of their followers. "Transformational leadership" as such, however, is a concept that was developed (although not invented) by Burns (1978). He argues that leadership could be sub-divided into two types: first, and most common, is what Burns (1978) terms "transactional leadership". This is, essentially, the exchanges that occur between leaders and followers; for example, a leader may promise a follower a reward if specific tasks are completed on time and to an acceptable standard, and, in so doing, he or she demonstrates transactional leadership. Again, this type of leadership appears to be closer in tone and style to management than leadership as it has been defined.

Transformational leadership is a more mercurial idea. Northouse (2001) gives a concise definition of it when he says that it, "refers to the process whereby an individual engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (page 132). The chief difference between this and transactional leadership – and one which bears on the discussion of leadership and management above – is that, while the outcomes of transactional leadership can be predicted, transformational leadership encourages and inspires the follower to reach a level of performance that is wholly unexpected, or, as Northouse (2001) puts it, "they become motivated to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group or organisation" (page 139). In order to effect this, transformational leaders are, according to Northouse (2001), required to become role models for their followers. They should have a clear and fully articulated set of values and a strong sense of their own identity

that they can express eloquently in a discourse environment in which they are tolerant of opposing views. Most significantly, they should possess vision and an ability to use it as a focal point for group dynamics and organisational change. By these achievements and approaches, a transformational leader influences the social world of organisations – he or she is, literally, a “social architect” (Northouse, 2001, page 142).

There are, however, arguments against this analysis. Allix (2000) dismisses the ideas of Burns (1978) on the grounds that the epistemological foundations of his work are suspect, failing to support the claims his theory makes. Burns (1978) adjusts Maslow’s (1970) needs hierarchy (to be dealt with in the next chapter), stating that a leader should not fixate on “self” actualisation, but should reach out to followers and promote their actualisation through “gratification” of their higher order needs and wants. Allix (2000) suggests that the distinction which Burns (1978) makes between “needs” and “wants” – the former meaning socialised and collective requirements which are taken from the environment, while the latter refers to the source of values and ethical codes - is inconsistently applied, with serious consequences for the validity of his hypotheses; the main argument which Allix (2000) puts forward is that Burns’ (1978) claim that, “needs are wants influenced by the environment” (page 68) attributes subjectivity to both terms rendering the case built around them unclear at best. The upshot is that Burns’ (1978) conception of “values” - which he puts at the heart of his leadership theory - is not well established, moving, as it does, from a notion of them as held by the individual, through a process of ever-greater abstraction until they acquire an almost mythical state of objectivity. While many of Allix’s (2000) objections are persuasive and relevant to this research, his picking up on some semantic confusion in Burns’ (1978) work has signally failed to consign it to obsolescence – it continues to be influential. Where Allix’s (2000)

contribution is most valuable is when he reminds his readers of Burns' (1978) suggestion that transforming leaders are essentially charismatic and embrace conflict - filtered through a large degree of ideology - as the means by which change can be effected, a stance which (as Allix, 2000, argues), with the wrong slant, is the recipe for tyranny or, in the context of schools, poorly run systems, departments and the like.

In an educational context, transformational leadership is complex - the word chosen by Southworth (2002) is "polyphonic" - involving many different tasks which must be accomplished often simultaneously and rapidly with the net result that the culture of the organisation is changed. Meyerson and Martin (1987), having stated that an organisation does not have a culture, but is a culture in the sense that a culture is the shared meanings of the organisation's social world, go on to outline three different approaches to cultural change which a visionary leader may take. The first, integration, is centred on deliberately seeking out the shared and known manifestations of a culture (a shared language, say, or an agreed-upon set of shared behaviours) and making an effort to build a consensus towards the re-orientation of one or more of them. This, then, views cultures in a fairly superficial and easily-manipulable light. The second approach is differentiation - this focuses on the diffuse and diverse, seeing culture as a random collection of differences. To change it would thus call for a seizing on the accidental, the opportunistic and, probably, the local, working on small units within an organisation, rather than the whole entity, and dealing with them in a wider environmental context. Finally, there is ambiguity. This recalls many of the notions dealt with under the previous heading in that it involves an acceptance that any organisation is unique and not easy to define. A leader hoping to change a culture according to this approach would tend to narrow his scope

down to that of the individual and would help him or her adjust to alterations and fluctuations in the environment.

Busher and Barker (2003) make the point that, in education, culture change must ultimately impact upon the quality of the students' learning experience and this is accomplished through changing how teachers and students work. This will mean leaders - adopting, in all likelihood, Meyerson and Martin's (1987) "ambiguity" approach - pulling "social levers" (page 52) in order to get their way (this, as will be seen, is one way of talking about the exercising of authority) and overcoming the resistance to change of others in the school community, resistance which, as Van der Westhuizen (1996) comments, is a normal part of organisational life engendered by the determination of individuals to retain and promote their own values and beliefs. According to Busher (2001), various micro-political strategies will be adopted by the leader to tackle this problem. These may include emphasising staff development or holding subordinates accountable for their work (micro-politics will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter). Again, however, Allix (2000) objects, suggesting that "transformational" is an overly-grandiose term for leadership which, "in its essence, collapses into a transaction process of emotionally charged ideological exchange" (page 18).

It is worth, at this point, considering the ways in which leaders and followers relate to one another. To some extent, this has been dealt with in the previous section under a discussion of "discourse" and it will be returned to in the next chapter in a consideration of the literature on motivation, teams and organisational structures. For now, a good starting point is the work of Lambert (2003) who, in attempting to re-define leadership, examines the personal dimension in leader/follower relationships. Much of what she says

agrees with the concepts discussed in the previous section, her broad definition of leadership as, “the reciprocal processes that enable participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead towards a shared purpose of schooling” (page 423), being a capsule version of that being explored here. She further brings to the debate a conviction that leadership in education should be a matter of just that – education; in other words, leaders should both learn and pass on what they know to their followers, that those entering an organisation should be subject to “enculturation” to inculcate into them the meanings already shared by the current occupants. A virtuous circle of co-dependency and mutual coaching would result from the adoption of this model, which is clearly somewhat more holistic than that of the charismatic leader exercising authority (even if charisma is susceptible of being exhibited by all sorts of people within any given group). Lambert (2003) is attempting to move away from a fixed notion of schools as organisations and trying to re-characterise them as communities. Again, the next chapter is the place to deal with this notion but it must be doubted whether Lambert’s (2003) ideas accord very closely with reality; a simple common-sense objection might well be that who, in the busy world of schools, has time to learn how to be a leader?

While arguments regarding the relationships between leaders and followers are easy to state in theory, fieldwork does not always provide convincing support for them. A case in point would be the work of Beatty and Brew (2004) who talk about the roles played by trust and emotion in educational leadership. They begin by stating that, “school leaders’ handling of the emotion factor in their own reflective practice and in their relationships with parents, students and faculty, shape and reflect the climate and culture of their schools” (page 331). This is linked, once more, to the Maslovian (1970) need among

followers for respect, care and attention and, indeed, the research carried out by Beatty and Brew (2004) identified a difficulty among participants in exposing themselves emotionally in a professional and, importantly, hierarchical, environment. The result was that a fundamental element of trust in leader/follower relations was not easy to attain. Unfortunately, the methodology of these authors' work leaves flaws in their findings, since their sample consisted of their own students (the researchers worked in university education faculties) creating the suspicion that the data may have been contaminated by a desire on the part of those investigated to "please teacher" with the responses they gave. It must be said that the authors themselves acknowledge this danger.

Through a naturalistic, ethnographic research design focused on the gathering of qualitative data analysed in a "grounded theory" style, Russell (2003) has sought to prove her contention that, "leadership is a social process with a strong relational element" (page 146). Her findings indicate that, whereas in any organisational setting a "them" and "us" element in the leader/follower relationship is inevitable, leadership can only be successfully applied with the consent of the followers. However, the leader requires followers to play their part in the meeting of whole organisation needs – an aim which is not always compatible with gaining followership support, leading to a problem which Russell (2003) refers to as "relational dilemma". The conclusion is that, in order to overcome this difficulty, a leader needs to adopt various strategies, including seeking followers' consent, the use of manipulation (dividing work and meetings among people for particular effects, say, or withholding/drip-feeding information) and tactics designed to reduce conflict (mediation, for example, or taking on counselling/caring roles). Russell (2003) makes the very good point that leadership executed in this way – which is how her research found it – is not "transformational" in the senses in which authors on that

subject mean it. Indeed, her word for the leadership she observed is “pragmatic”. She discovered that, “leaders were prepared to sacrifice followers’ well-being in order to meet [organisational] needs” (page 152), although she also admits that too little work on the nature of followership has been carried out for such a statement to be considered definitive.

Russell’s (2003) work is particularly relevant to this project in a number of ways: firstly, the role of followers is a major focus of this research, which strives, perhaps, to fill in some of the gaps which she has identified in extant literature, and, secondly, much of the fieldwork carried out would tend to support her findings. Leadership is certainly a “relational phenomenon” which can only be successfully performed when leaders and followers are in agreement regarding methods and outcomes, but to view it as rooted purely in the moral realm of emotional interaction and personal development is to ignore how it often occurs in practice. Of course, this point is still made in the abstract realm of leadership theory. The argument will now turn to a consideration of leadership’s manifestation in the area of concern for this particular project - school subject departments.

Leadership in Secondary School Subject Departments

In seeking to apply to school subject departments the ideas dealt with in the previous sections, the major need is to define what, in principle, a school subject leader is expected to do. A simple answer is provided by Bennett et al (2003b) who state that, “ensuring good teaching and learning [is] universally recognised as at the heart of the

middle leader's role" (page 15). Turner and Bolam (1998) have developed a typology for subject leadership in the form of a flowchart that enumerates the different aspects of a subject leader's role – the policy context, the tasks to be performed, the methods used, etc – with all arrows finally converging on educational outcomes. The implication is clear: that a subject leader's efforts should ultimately be focused narrowly on leadership for learning. Indeed, Sammons et al (1997) have demonstrated that a school's academic performance relative to other schools can largely be attributed to the quality of its subject departments. Not all have reached the same conclusions; Glover et al (1998) have countered the above by stating that the nature of subject leadership is not well understood or clearly delineated from that of other varieties of leadership, it being uncertain whether subject leaders or senior leaders are to be thanked for such enhanced performance indicators as are evident in high-performing schools and, indeed, departments. What is undeniable is that, in some sense, subject leaders are responsible for, "the operational work of others, namely classroom teachers" (Busher and Harris, 1999, page 306). That said, as Busher and Harris (1999) remark, any given teacher will be a follower to a number of different leaders (for example, subject leader, pastoral head, extra-curricular co-ordinator) and perhaps even a leader in some areas and a follower in others. This, "complex matrix of leadership and accountability" (page 307) blurs relationships and makes any judgement as to the precise impact of any one of these leaders difficult to gauge. Perhaps motivated by this very haziness, efforts have been made recently to explore the nature of the subject leader role and, specifically, its overall contribution to school effectiveness (Naylor et al, 2006). That such initiatives are timely is demonstrated by the increasing degree to which subject leaders are held responsible for the academic performance of the departments they run; Howling (2006) mentions that, in the school which provided the case study for her research, subject leaders were

expected to supply to senior management an annual analysis of examination scores at all levels – a situation which is far from untypical.

The chief obstacle to a straightforward description of the subject leader role comes - having developed a view of leadership that stresses its relational qualities (see the previous sections) - in attempting to isolate the precise relationship the subject leader enjoys with those around him or her, including his or her followers. Most problematic is the word “middle”, since subject leaders constitute a stratum of middle management and leadership in any school organisation. There can be benefits to this; as Harris et al (1995) have found, successful departments are those which are “nested” within successful school organisations. It does mean, however, that a subject leader is divided in his or her loyalties and main focus. Busher and Harris (1999) remark that subject leaders perform, “a bridging and brokering function” in that they, “translate the perspectives and policies of senior staff into the practice of individual classrooms” (page 307). Busher (2005) has argued, similarly, that subject leaders

“mediate the values and demands from [wider] contexts to their colleagues, students and their students’ parents and carers, as well as taking account of their colleagues’, students’ and students’ parents’ values and beliefs” (page 139).

Even this role is not, in practice, as simple as it sounds: research by Poultney (2007) has found that teachers are surprisingly reluctant to see their subject leaders involved too intimately in the greater school environment (the major concern being that it would increase the subject leader’s workload and decrease the effectiveness with which they pursued their primary responsibilities) and that, while senior staff are keen to give subject

leaders a broad remit, actually finding something for them to do beyond simple department-based tasks is difficult. Moreover, subject leaders themselves often feel a considerable degree of role conflict and confusion in their professional identities, lacking a clear sense of whether they are the representatives of their followers or the agents of their seniors; research by Wise (2001), for example, found that 58.8% of subject leaders surveyed identified loyalty to their departments as more important than promoting whole school aims, while Glover et al (1999), by contrast, discovered that both subject leaders and senior managers expected subject leaders to be involved in the development of whole school teaching and learning. Bush (1997), alluding to this conflict, states that, “the demands from both senior managers and teacher colleagues put [subject leaders] under great pressure” (page 4).

Nevertheless, there can be no real doubt that the role of the subject leader ipso facto involves working both “upwards” and (not to use the term pejoratively) “downwards”. Briggs (2005) and Busher and Harris (1999) have attempted to identify what, given this, a subject leader’s (or, for that matter, any middle manager/leader in an educational setting) role should encompass. That much that has already been labelled “management” comes under this heading is readily demonstrable. Indeed, a definition of “middle manager” by Fleming (2000) comes close to being a definition merely of “manager”: “middle managers in schools ... play vital roles in planning for moving the school towards its goals, ensuring the smooth day-to-day operation of school business and monitoring the progress of others” (page 2). There is little here that takes its cue from concepts of “transformational leadership”.

To add to this, Howling's (2006) findings would tend to confirm that much of the activity associated with the subject leader role is broadly managerial; she gives a list of subject leader "priorities" (drawn from survey data) which include such items as "co-ordinating and overseeing teaching and marking", "supervising/monitoring colleagues' work" and "devising and monitoring pupil records" (page 58). Again, the focus on administration and measurement would seem to leave scant room for the application of vision - although it does not explicitly exclude it. The only entry which would seem to open up the possibility of genuine leadership in any of the senses explored above is, "leading teaching and learning in the subject area" (page 58).

Irrespective of this, Howling's (2006) work, being empirical and rooted in a mixed methodology research design, is an overview of relevance to this project. More theoretical perspectives, such as that of Briggs (2005), add colour to the picture, although her research, being located in further education colleges, can only be applied to secondary schools in principle. Even so, she does identify a number of roles which are performed by middle leaders; these include, "corporate agent", comprising the middle leader's contribution to the whole work of the organisation, "implementer", which involves the putting of the organisation's policies into practice through the management of departmental activities, "staff manager", which mainly means finding ways to improve the effectiveness of under-performing staff, and "liaison" or dealing with others, either laterally or vertically within the organisation, or with external agencies. Perhaps most interesting, however, is Briggs' (2005) use of the term "leader"; she suggests that this is manifested at middle level through middle leaders encouraging and developing their teams, offering purpose and direction to their departments and taking a creative attitude towards departmental development. She stops short of ascribing transformational

qualities to any of this, preferring to side with Alexiadou (2001) and, indeed, Russell (2003), in talking about the “pragmatic” qualities of middle leadership.

Other authors, such as Busher and Harris (1999), are more strident in supporting the notion of transformational leadership at middle management level. They suggest that many of the functions outlined above call for an enabling leadership style which requires the subject leaders to use “power with” or “power through” their followers (terms which are taken originally from Blase and Anderson, 1995). This – effectively the exercise of authority as touched upon earlier and to be explored in depth later – is potentially transformational in that it represents a style of leadership that is people-orientated and which creates an environment in which those people are able to, “transform their feelings, attitudes and beliefs” (page 307). That no empirical evidence is offered to back up these concepts would suggest that the more grounded findings of Howling (2006) accord more closely with what was revealed by the fieldwork carried out for this project.

The discussion thus far has painted a picture of the subject leader role as complex and difficult to make generalisations about. This point is reinforced by Busher and Harris (1999) when they bring out the fact that no two departments are precisely alike, meaning that every subject leader’s job is “contextually different” (page 308) from every other subject leader’s job. On one level, of course, this is justification for gathering a sizeable body of evidence before making any wider pronouncements about the role. However, it also alludes to another aspect of the role which is potentially damaging to any research aimed at uncovering its qualities and impact: the constraints within which it operates. Perhaps the most significant is that of time. Much research has demonstrated that subject leaders find it difficult to perform many functions related to leadership, “within

the constraints set by an overcrowded teaching timetable” (Turner, 1996, page 207). Glover and Miller (1999) add detail to this comment when they break down the “average” day for a subject leader, discovering that many of the tasks of leadership (and even management) have to be accommodated within “informal” time slots, such as break, lunch and before the start of the school day, non-contact lessons (of which there are, usually, few) often being needed for preparation and marking.

Time constraints do not merely impede a subject leader’s performance of straightforward managerial tasks. A growing expectation is that subject leaders will monitor the work of the members of their departments quite closely (as explored by, for example, Wise and Bush, 1999) and it has already been established that holding followers to account is a key feature of transformational leadership. Munby (2008) is only one author who places the accountability trend into a policy and “consumer rights” context. The need for accountability measures to meet the demands of “stakeholders” has also been mentioned by Brundrett and Rhodes (2010); they go on, though, to state that the ultimate goal of any monitoring of practice is improvement in educational outcomes. Given the demands of “leadership for learning”, there is clearly a part to be played here by those who run academic departments. While the preferred way of accomplishing this, according to Brundrett and Rhodes (2010), is for the leader to have an influence on the culture, climate and ethos of a school or department, there is less agreement about how this is actually to be done. The favoured approach of many (Brundrett and Rhodes, 2010) is to distribute leadership in such a way as to, effectively, make every practitioner responsible for the quality of his or her own work – this brings in notions of collegiality which will be dealt with in greater detail in the next chapter. As Taylor Webb (2005) reminds us, however, by far the most common method of ensuring quality and thus answering the

requirements of accountability is “surveillance” of practice. On one level, enforcing accountability becomes, according to this argument, a means of exerting power, and more will be said on this in the next chapter, but, more practically, the above cautions regarding the amount of time available to subject leaders prompt the question of when can time be found to visit colleagues in their classrooms. Moreover, there are perceived problems with professional ethics in asking to do so; as Glover et al (1998) have found, not only can monitoring of performance be regarded by subject staff as a challenge to their professional status, but subject leaders themselves are often reluctant to associate themselves with a practice that could be seen as too autocratic and hierarchical in intention and execution.

If subject leaders are to show genuine leadership, then, it will, as numerous authors agree, be manifested in their input into the core business of any school. Bush (2003a) puts this succinctly when he writes: “Middle level leaders should be able to focus on teaching and learning and not on routine administration or other school-wide tasks” (page 7). That the quality of academic leadership has an impact on student learning has been established by a good deal of research. Martin et al (2003), for example, state that, “the quality of leadership is a distinguishing factor that separates more effective departments from less effective ones” (page 248). They go on to suggest that the major features of successful departments and, indeed, schools, are collaborative management, purposeful leadership and day-to-day practice informed by vision. Perhaps most tellingly, though, researchers agree that subject leaders have, “a powerful influence over classroom practices” (Harris et al, 2001, page 84). Unfortunately, how this is to be achieved is not fully defined. Neither do subject leaders receive much guidance in what they should be doing, since little or no training has traditionally been available to

practising or aspirant subject leaders (which goes against points made earlier about the need for leaders to engage in a mutually educational inter-relationship with their followers): Adey (2000) discovered that, of the sample which he surveyed, 57.4% of middle managers claimed to have received no formal guidance about the expectations of their position. The upshot is that, while subject leaders have a theoretical role to play in school effectiveness and improvement, its precise nature – accepting that much of this is context-dependent - is still to be identified.

What is clear is that, all too often, departments are, by various measures, less effective than they might be. Harris (1998) argues that departments which fail to meet some minimum standard of attainment are not only guilty of not fulfilling whatever success criteria are applied, but exhibit a specific range of “failure criteria” on top of them. Her case study revealed that, of the reasons for failure identified, quality of leadership came high up the list. In essence, two styles of leadership were seen as deficient; one, the *laissez faire* approach, was exhibited by those subject leaders who appeared to view their job in largely functional terms, seeing it as being about carrying out the department’s operations efficiently, rather than building a team and a shared sense of corporate identity. These subject leaders made little effort to plan for the future and, as a consequence, the departments lacked internal cohesion and a sense of purposefulness. The second style, authoritarian (which is not to be confused with “authority” as used above), came from subject leaders who talked about “ownership” of the department and who placed a high value on “leading from the front”; they made few efforts to delegate and performed work in a neurotic and over-controlling manner. As Harris (1998) argues, the evidence suggests that both styles produce departments that are less teams than random collections of individuals working on similar tasks in isolation from one another.

The important qualities missing from failing departments, according to Harris (1998), tended to be vision, communication and much formal monitoring of performance. Interestingly, all of these are attributes which have previously been ascribed to leadership in general and transformational leadership in particular. Harris (1998) does not, however, neglect the impact of assistant teachers – the followers in this relationship – on how well a department rates, and her findings in this area are of particular relevance to the current project. The question she asks is, to what extent can a department’s failure be blamed upon poor teaching by its assistant teachers? Her findings indicate that, in fact, most teachers investigated were considered by staff and pupils to be at least competent and, in some cases, outstanding. Rarely, it seems, was this true of the subject leader him- or herself – a worrying outcome in that much research has suggested that one of the chief means by which subject leaders exercise authority is through being viewed as the “leading professional” in a department; that is, there is an expectation that they will demonstrate the highest levels of teaching ability and subject knowledge (an idea discussed by Kirkham, 2005, for example). Of the proposed means for improving ineffective departments which are put forward by Harris (1998), the two of most relevance to this project are, firstly, changing leadership and, secondly, focusing on teaching and learning issues. The former does not necessarily refer to a change in the individual performing the role of subject leader, but to finding a way between the polarised possibilities of the *laissez faire* or authoritarian styles.

To summarise this section, it is perhaps best to allow a voice to subject leaders themselves (as reported by Busher, 2005); when asked for their views on what the role encompassed, a survey sample of subject leaders yielded the following list (Busher, 2005, page 142):

- Having a vision for the department.
- Having the will to use power: Managership.
- Working with staff to implement action.
- Co-ordinating and implementing action effectively.
- Mediating contexts; engaging in arenas.
- Being a teacher – a successful model for colleagues.

This is an idealistic list redolent of leadership and not simply management. Some routine administrative areas are included, but the items that mention vision and working with people touch on notions of transformational leadership. Moreover, where this list talks about mediating contexts, it reminds the researcher that leadership is, ultimately, a question of influencing, if not conditioning, the social worlds of others. It is the main aim of the current project to uncover where leadership in these terms is manifested in subject departments. As has been established, this is linked closely to effectiveness and, again, as the above discussion has shown, effectiveness is focused on what occurs in the classroom. Subject leadership must, therefore, have a direct impact on what happens in the classroom. That few papers on this theme have thus far been written (Bennett et al, 2003b, found that “little empirical work [] examined: the influence of middle leadership on teaching and learning”, page 1) leaves gaps in the literature which this project aims to make some contribution towards filling.

This chapter overall has accomplished a number of goals. Firstly, it looked at what the literature has to say about concepts of leadership, distinguishing it from management, before deciding on a definition which provides a springboard for further discussion and,

importantly, fieldwork. As we saw, leadership can be viewed as a social interaction based around the influencing of meanings in specific contexts. Secondly, this chapter went into what the literature tells us about the practical application of leadership. A number of key terms were introduced – power, authority and influence, of which more will be said in the next chapter, and the twin ideas of transformational and transactional leadership. These – and particularly transformational leadership which has a connection to a charismatic leadership style – were seen in relation to followers and the part they play in the engendering and legitimisation of leadership. Finally, this chapter narrowed the argument to secondary school subject departments, this project’s area of concern. We found that the literature paints an inconsistent picture of subject leadership, there being little agreement about what it is or the extent to which transformational leadership is exhibited by those who hold subject leader posts. It was also found that, although subject leaders are generally expected to make a large contribution to leadership for learning, how this is to be done is not fully understood – not least by subject leaders themselves.

Before moving on to a detailed presentation of the fieldwork carried out for this project, however, it is necessary to examine what the literature has to say about many of the concepts inherent to the above discussion. As has been alluded to, leadership is based on specific relationships of power and authority. These are prosecuted through influence tactics which touch on the motivation and morale of followers and take place within the context of work groups which have different structures and cultures. All of these issues will be explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW: POWER, AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL SUBJECT DEPARTMENTS

Introduction

The previous chapter aimed to provide a definition of leadership before applying it to the specialised circumstances of subject departments in secondary schools. The present chapter will look in greater depth at some of the notions which underpin those definitions. Specifically, power, authority and influence will be subject to further consideration, particularly in relation to the organisational structures within which subject leaders work. The specific connection between power and leadership is stated succinctly by Burns (1978) when he writes that, “leadership is a special form of power” (page 12); in other words, leadership is one method by which power is projected, although Burns (1978) would argue that it is not the only way. Conversely, leadership can only be fully understood in relation to the concepts of power which comprise it. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to deepen the definitions of leadership previously given and explore in more detail the context that has been highlighted as a key facet of leadership. It will, thus, once again, address the first of the research questions, but will also provide a theoretical context for research questions 2 and 3. Both literature review chapters will provide a foundation for the fieldwork from which an answer to the fourth research question will emerge. The first section will examine the notion of influence – which, as the project’s findings will indicate, is the main basis of leadership for learning - and the key concepts of power and authority with which it is associated.

Power, Authority and Influence

Like leadership, power is a concept which refuses to yield a straightforward definition, or, as one commentator has remarked: “power evades a simple consensual understanding and determination because its significance is dependent on far-reaching preconceptions” (Ricken, 2006, p. 542). Even Foucault (2001a) questions the extent to which theories of power can be developed when he writes, “for power relations we [have] no tools of study” (page 327). The difficulty can be underlined by pointing out that Foucault’s (1986) notion that power “circulates” among people may not accord with the experience of many of those working at lower levels of hierarchical organisations who feel disenfranchised and powerless. The workers in corporate entities of any kind might more readily recognise Weber’s (1947) formulation that power is the ability of an actor to, “carry out his own will despite resistance” (page 152). It has not, moreover, proven easy to address the issue of a definition through research because, “those who have power deny that they do; many people seek it but pretend not to, and those who have achieved it are secretive about their methods” (Furnham, 1997, page 366).

In seeking a definition, a good starting point is - the above notwithstanding - Foucault (2001b) for whom power is indistinguishable from knowledge. Taking the example of a “Greek tyrant” he states that such a person’s power came from, “possessing a certain knowledge that was superior in its efficacy to that of others” (page 29). Foucault (2001b) also argues that, “at the root of knowledge” lie, “hatred, struggle, power relations” (page 12). The key word here is “relations”, because, as numerous authors have stressed, power is, “not merely an entity to be passed around like a baton” (Burns, 1978, page 13),

but a relationship between actors in a situation. Indeed, it has been remarked (as by Ricken, 2006) that power is not to be found in wealth, property or other privileges; power is power over others. It has also been argued that there is a strong element of symbolization in power – that power resides in imaginative codes shared by those with power and those over whom power is wielded. For Bourdieu (2000), for example, “symbolic power” – as he terms it - operates with the consent of those over whom it is wielded, “because they help to construct it as such” (page 171). Rather than asking “what is power?”, then, Foucault (2001a) would prefer the question, “how is power?”, the focus being on the means by which it is projected and the effect it has on people both as individuals and as groups. A clear link can be made at this point with what has previously been said on leadership: if leadership does, in some way, involve one person having an effect on the social world of another, then power as viewed above must be the basis of it.

A simple definition of power is that given by Lukes (1974): that it is the means by which people promote their own preferred choices and values at the expense of those of others, or, as Foucault (2001a) describes it, it is, “the subjection of subjectivity” (page 332). Again, this invites as many questions as it answers; how is it done, for example, and what are the resources available to anyone who wishes to wield such power? Power is often seen as taking two forms: the power that comes from a person’s office or position within an organised structure and the power that comes from personal qualities, professional knowledge and interpersonal skills (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980). More detail is given in the classic typology formulated by French and Raven (1959) who identified a number of different types, and sources, of power:

- “Coercive power” which is the ability to bring about desired outcomes through the mobilisation of threat and force.
- “Reward power” or the ability to give people what they want in return for their willingness to act according to the will of the giver.
- “Legitimate power” which is essentially the power vested in a particular role, thus reflecting the “culture values” (Furnham 1997, page 366) of a specific context.
- “Referent power” or the power that springs from other people wishing to align themselves personally or professionally with the power-holder.
- “Expert power” which comes from having skills and/or knowledge which are valued and desired by others.
- “Position power” which comes from a manager or leader occupying a particular position within a complex of inter-relationships.

An alternative view propounded by Emerson (1962) makes power a matter of dependence: “*a*” has power over “*b*” because “*a*” has something “*b*” wants. Further detail is supplied by Furnham (1997) who suggests that the greater the dependence of “*b*”, the more power is in the hands of “*a*” and that this is directly determined by the availability of alternative sources of supply; that is, if “*a*” is the sole means by which “*b*” acquires whatever he or she wants, then “*a*” is in a very powerful position. If there are many other routes by which “*b*” may achieve what he or she wishes for, then “*a*”’s position is proportionately weaker. Power, then, is a function of importance (whatever “*a*” controls must be seen as significant by “*b*”), scarcity (it must not be readily available) and non-substitutability (it must be impossible for something else to do the same job as effectively). This is relevant to middle leaders in that a major problem of their position –

as will be seen - is that they are suppliers who are limited in what they are able to supply. However – and to agree with Foucault (2001b) – using the single word “power” to cover such a complex range of human relationships risks sacrificing subtlety to abstraction. To take French and Raven’s (1959) ideas: a person over whom coercive power (or, perhaps, legitimate power) is being wielded is hardly subject to the same force as someone submitting to referent power. In the first case, power is taken, in the second, given. Likewise, in Emerson’s (1962) model, a dependence on information is not qualitatively of the same order as a dependence on, say, food supplies. It is important to bear this in mind because the degree of symmetry in power relations varies, as Burns (1978) argues when he talks of, “some power holders [who] will have such pervasive control” over their followers (or, as he calls them, “respondents”) that the imbalance, “will be overwhelming” (page 15). This, though, is untypical of advanced, complex societies and organisations.

The typology of power forms given by Etzioni (1975) takes this into account in that he simplifies the list of power sources, but then, crucially, brings in the role and function of followers in determining the nature and orientation of power relationships. To Etzioni (1975) the different types of power can be reduced to “coercive”, “remunerative” and “normative”. While the first two of these are founded on the use of threat and the control of resources, the third is based in the more intellectual and emotional realm of symbolic rewards and manipulation of image and esteem (thus referent power as mentioned above would be normative in orientation). Within this, Etzioni (1975) goes on to categorise different forms of involvement from those over whom power is held: “alienative”, “calculative” and “moral”, these referring, respectively, to unwilling involvement, involvement for gain and voluntary involvement motivated by some sense of

the activity's inherent value. How the different forms of power interact with the different types of involvement determines the compliance relationship, as illustrated in Table 1:

Modes of involvement

	Alienative	Calculative	Moral
Coercive	<i>x</i>		
Remunerative		<i>y</i>	
Normative		<i>a</i>	<i>z</i>

Types of power

Table 1: Etzioni's typology of compliance relationships

Person *x*, is an unwilling participant in whatever activity is being described here, but is forced to take part, perhaps on the basis that some fundamental need that he or she has will not be met if he or she refuses. Person *z*, by contrast, is committed to the cause, and is actively donating his or her involvement because he or she has been persuaded that the activity has value in and of itself. In between the two comes person *y*, whose involvement is motivated by a combination of the desire for reward and an evaluation of the benefits to him or herself of his or her compliance. "Instrumental" and "strategic" compliance – as discussed in the previous chapter – would accord with this analysis in that they would spring from alienative or calculative modes of involvement. Within Etzioni's (1975) typology, other combinations of power and involvement are possible: person *a*, for instance, is submitting to power based on an abstract sense of the activity's value, but is motivated purely by the desire for reward.

As this should demonstrate, there is a profound difference between different compliance relationships. The first (x) is, in many respects, more “essential” than the other three in that, within it, power is based in the physical world and, as Foucault (1975) would have recognised, operates in some way on the body of the inferior party – coercion may take the form of physical punishment or the withholding of some needed commodity; in the everyday world this is likely to be the threat to dismiss someone from the job which is the means by which that person meets his or her fundamental physiological needs. The normative/moral compliance relationship, by contrast, operates on a more consensual level; it works because the inferior party is prepared to invest in it, the power holder having no method of ensuring compliance beyond whatever effect can be produced by his or her personal qualities (this lies behind notions of “charisma” as defined by, for example, Crawford, 2002). Transformational leadership, then, is only possible in an environment that is normative/moral.

An objection may be raised here to the effect that coercion need not be physical – a person may coerce someone else through blackmail, that is, the threat to reveal to some third party, a piece of information of detriment to the inferior party. In this instance, though, the physical coercion is merely removed by one stage, the information in question being of the type that would allow someone else to exercise the threat of a physical sanction. In any case, coercion resides in the ultimate threat of some harm coming to the physical entity of an individual; as Handy (1993) puts it, “in order to be effective as a basis for influence, physical power does not have to be used” (page 126).

Given, though, that most of the varieties of power touched upon so far are not coercive in nature, it might be asked, how does power operate when it is not directed against the

body of an individual, when, to use the terminology developed above, it is more “consensual”? In answering this, we need to bring in another key element of power relationships, influence. For this project, influence is of central importance, being the major concern in any discussion of leadership for learning. As with power, though, it is a word that cannot be summed up by recourse to a single catch-all definition. To some authors, influence is virtually synonymous with power - as when Manz and Gioia (1983) state that power is, “the ability or potential to influence others” (page 461). That this is not necessarily determined by position in a hierarchy or group is argued by Bennis et al (1958) who notice that different people with the same theoretical status within an organisation will vary in the degree of influence that they are able to exercise over others, including subordinates. The point is taken further by Anderson and Kilduff (2009) who argue that influence is not imposed on a group, but granted by it, and is thus not capable of being taken by force or coercion.

Generally, influence is defined as the mobilisation of power resources in order to modify the behaviour of others (Bacharach and Lawler, 1980; Handy, 1993), influence in this sense being the vehicle by which power is projected. The Emersonian (1962) model of dependency often lies at the heart of this. Bennis et al (1958) suggest that an actor’s influence is directly proportional to his or her ability to, “manipulate [] appropriate rewards” (page 144). Hales (1993) suggests that the use of power resources may be either “overt” where explicit reference is made to the power resources, perhaps in the form of a threat or a monetary reward, or “covert”, where the use of power resources remains as a potential only (as in the quotation from Handy, 1993, given above). In a school context, the accountability measures discussed by Taylor Webb (2005) run continuously, but are not always “active”, and so would qualify as reference to a covert

power resource. They also recall Foucault's (1975) description of a "panopticon": an organisation that is ordered in such a way as to enforce voluntary compliance from its members with the ever-present threat that someone is watching. Although Hales (1993) does not see power resources in purely economic terms and acknowledges the existence of normative relationships, he does describe the influence relationship as essentially one of exchange. From the point of view of the current research, a more useful view is that of Busher (2006) for whom influence is a factor of a person's, "personal and professional qualities and the nature of the interpersonal relationships they construct" (page 37). How these relationships are constructed has been identified by Yukl and Falbe (1990) who give eight major tactics in the building of social influence:

- Consultation: involving others in decision-making.
- Rational persuasion: an appeal to logic.
- Inspiration aspects: an appeal to values and ideals.
- Ingratiation: the attempt to arouse personal liking.
- Coalition: seeking the support of others.
- Pressure: the use of demands, threats and intimidation.
- Upward appeals: citing the supposed support of a more highly positioned actor.
- Exchange: the promise of some benefit or reward.

These fit well into the typology of power relations devised by French and Raven (1959). It will also be seen how they relate to the work of subject leaders in schools; of particular interest will be the first, consultation (which Yukl and Falbe [1990] believe to be the most

frequently used tactic) since it provides the grounding for collegial approaches to leadership – which will be dealt with in more detail later in this chapter.

For the moment, more needs to be said about power resources and this brings in the third term of relevance to this discussion: authority. A link between authority and legitimate power is made by many authors; Bennis et al (1958) call authority, “the potentiality to influence based on a position” (page 144), a view echoed by Heywood (2000) who writes that, “whereas power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others, authority is the right to do so” (page 15). Moore (2008) makes of authority a type of “downward control”, but, in doing so, misses a fundamental point about it, a point that is made by Hales (1993) when he suggests that authority can be defined as the possession of power resources and attempts at influence which are, “considered legitimate and, hence, acceptable by those subject to them” (page 27). The absence of such authority he calls “naked power”. Followers must accept a leader’s authority for it to be effective: it is not just “authority over” - it must also be “authority with”. The type of a person’s authority will determine the level of influence he or she has and this, in turn, will define the type of power being projected.

It is now possible to move towards a typology of power relations which includes all of the concepts discussed so far. At one extreme, it can be seen that authority based on force will lead to influence based on fear which is coercive power, or, to go to the other end of the spectrum, authority based on respect for personal achievement will lead to influence based on persuasion which is referent power. As with Etzioni’s (1975) compliance relationships, there are many interim positions: authority based on possession of esoteric

knowledge leads to influence based on the desire of others to benefit from that knowledge which is expert power.

On the whole, power that resides at the coercive end of the spectrum operates on what has been called the “essential” level, whereas most other forms are more “consensual” in that they call for participation and commitment from followers to be effective. The more complex an organisation becomes, the more consensual it is forced to be as power is dispersed through different varieties of authority and influence at the different levels of the hierarchy - such as the middle level which concerns this research. This also aligns very much with Etzioni’s (1975) notion that a single organisation will tend to exhibit a wide range of power relations and compliance relationships. It may be noted that it is no coincidence that those leaders who are characterised as “tyrants” often make strenuous efforts to remove such complexity in order to concentrate essential power in their own hands. Head teachers are more often than not the sole members of a school organisation who are able to project this essential power – as we shall see. Only they have the ability to deprive someone of access to physical resources (through control of the school’s finances) or to remove a person altogether by relieving them of their post. Given that subject leaders are – according to this discussion - in possession of consensual power which relies on various types of influence, it is now worth exploring the ways in which they can project such influence within their departments and, hence, exercise some form of leadership for learning.

Influence in Action: Motivation, Morale and Job Satisfaction

Motivation is crucial to the influence relationship. In one respect, influence is a force for motivation; in another, teachers will not submit to influence unless they have sufficient motivation to do so. Ajzen (1991), in defining planned behaviour theory, connects motivation with intention to action when he says that, “intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behaviour; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behaviour” (page 181). As another author has put it, “motivation ... has to do with teachers’ desire to participate in the pedagogical processes within the school environment” (Ofoegbu, 2004).

That leadership and motivation are linked in the working lives of educational professionals has been attested by numerous studies: Hammett and Burton (2005), for example, have carried out work on learning support assistants which suggests that, “the existence and quality of the line manager is both important and a possible area of motivation” (page 307). Evans (2001) posits that leadership is the major factor in shaping professional educational environments to match the aspirations and expectations of the teachers who work in them. However, motivation is not a fixed quantity; as Rhodes et al (2004) remark, “levels of job satisfaction, motivation and commitment to work are likely to vary both between individuals and within individuals over periods of time” (page 76). Moreover, the same authors have produced research which suggests that issues other than leadership are as important, if not more important, to the motivation of teachers. This section, then, will consider various concepts of

motivation before narrowing down the argument to teachers and, in particular, the motivational role of subject leaders.

As Evans (1998) points out, studies of motivation have tended to concentrate on what motivates rather than attempt a definition of the term, with the consequence that it remains contentious and somewhat vague. Evans (1998) herself proposes that a definition should include consideration of such features of motivation as the causal (events that cause a modification in behaviour), the attitudinal (the state of mind of someone who is motivated to perform a particular task) and the activity of motivating (the act of influencing an individual or group to perform a specific task or to modify their behaviour in some way). She arrives at: “motivation is a condition, or the creation of a condition, that encompasses all those factors that determine the degree of inclination towards engagement in an activity” (page 34). While this is compelling - not least in its recognition that to be motivated to perform an activity does not necessarily mean that the activity is, in fact, performed - its emphasis on motivation being linked to the accomplishment of a particular activity is somewhat limiting. It may be argued that “activity” need not refer to one event but may be conceptualised as, for example, “to be a teacher of a given subject”. This, though, is to forget that, as the authors cited at the start of this section have suggested, levels of motivation fluctuate. It must also be remembered that, as Ajzen (1991) has found, for an activity to be performed, an actor’s intention to engage in it must be linked to a belief in the possibility of it yielding the desired outcomes. The upshot, therefore, is that motivation remains difficult to grasp as an idea.

Nowhere does this become more obvious than when the classic theories of motivation are examined. Maslow's (1970) needs theory – which was alluded to in the previous chapter - is usually given as the starting point (as by Evans, 1998, Furnham, 1997, and Riches, 1994) but Riches (1994) and Mitchell and Nowdggill (1976) are only some of the authors who have questioned Maslow's (1970) "needs hierarchy", finding little empirical evidence for it. The notion that an individual will be motivated to aspire to more personality- and morally-based needs as those that can be regarded as "basic" are satisfied has begged many questions. What, for example, are the "cut-off" points between strata in the hierarchy? Does the satisfaction of one type of need automatically trigger the next set of needs? If so, how? Are the different needs necessarily satisfied in a strict order? How does the theory account for the undoubted fact that individuals will differ in the value that they place on the same need or its method of satisfaction? How is a "self-actualisation" need to be identified by research, much less measured? Maslow (1970) answers some of these points when he writes that, "all the lists of drives that have ever been published seem to imply mutual exclusiveness among the various drives. But ... there is usually such an overlapping that it is almost impossible to separate quite clearly and sharply any one drive from any other" (page 8) and, later, "this hierarchy ... is not nearly so rigid as we may have implied" (page 26).

Where Maslow's (1970) theory is useful to this project is in the respect that it can be used to bring motivation into the discussion in the previous section on power, authority and influence. What have been termed "essential" and "consensual" power can be seen to link to the strata in Maslow's (1970) hierarchy and, through them, to Etzioni's (1975) notions of compliance. The following diagram (Figure 1) offers a possible representation of these relationships:



CP = Consensual Power; *EP* = Essential Power; *NM* = Normative/Moral Compliance Relationships; *CR* = Calculative/Remunerative Compliance Relationships; *AC* = Alienative/Coercive Compliance Relationships.

Figure 1: Relationships between modes of power, Maslow's motivational factors and Etzioni's compliance relationships

In Figure 1, the left hand side of the diagram refers to those who hold power, while the right hand side shows the responses to power of those over whom power is wielded; the central area shows the different levels of Maslow's (1970) needs hierarchy and how they are touched upon by the types of power projected and different modes of involvement. As we can see, a wielder of essential power will affect another individual at all levels; he or she will be able to exercise his or her own will over another to the extent that the satisfaction of even that person's basic physiological needs will be in the gift of the power-holder. Similarly, such a person is in control of the means by which a subordinate individual can meet their higher, self-actualisation needs. Consensual power, by contrast, only works at these higher levels, meaning that a person will not be motivated to respond to it by the requirement to satisfy fundamental needs. The right hand side of the diagram indicates how compliance might work in this environment: in a normative/moral

relationship, all needs are met, up to, and including, so-called “self-actualisation” needs – this describes a highly-motivated individual. For such an individual, the type of power being projected by those in superior positions is largely irrelevant; he or she is able to meet the full range of his or her needs through interactions with power-holders of different types. At the other end of the spectrum, the alienative/coercive worker is motivated purely to meet his or her fundamental needs, the higher levels of the Maslovian progression not being reached. As can be seen, while a holder of essential power can still wield a large measure of influence over such an individual through his or her control of whatever is required to meet the fundamental needs, one who has power based purely on consensual factors will struggle to wield influence, there being little or no overlap between the power resources available to the power-holder or the mode of involvement offered by the individual. In sum, while essential power can operate in a normative/moral environment, consensual power is incompatible with alienative/coercive relationships and only touches lightly on those that can be described as calculative/remunerative.

This analysis, while intriguing, is not definitive; it might justifiably be objected that the categories given are somewhat “broad brush”, reality being rather more nuanced. Moreover, as we have seen, degrees of power held or involvement offered will vary from situation to situation, even for a single individual. Figure 1 also needs to be viewed in the light of other so-called “content theories” (Riches, 1994) of motivation. Herzberg et al’s (1959) “two-factor” theory, for example, is essentially a modification of the above. Their “hygiene factors” (which include supervision, interpersonal relations, physical working conditions, salary, organisational policies, administrative practices, benefits and job security) correlate quite closely to Maslow’s (1970) physiological and safety-security

needs and, thus, could slot easily into Figure 1. The other factors, “motivation factors” (such as achievement, recognition, doing work of a fulfilling nature, responsibility and advancement), overlap with Maslow’s (1970) “higher order needs”; Herzberg et al (1959) acknowledge as much when they opine, “there is still the possibility of a fluctuating ‘need hierarchy’ operating within the group of satisfiers or dissatisfiers” (page 112). Hygiene factors provide the context to work and, when they are favourable, job satisfaction can result, but, when they are unfavourable, there can be job dissatisfaction. Importantly, as Evans (1998) remarks, improvements in hygiene factors do not lead to job satisfaction, merely a reduction in job dissatisfaction. Only motivation factors can bring about job satisfaction. As might be expected, Herzberg et al’s (1959) ideas have excited as much contention as Maslow’s (1970); Riches (1994) points out that, again, research does not support the theory which, anyway, is susceptible of some profound criticisms – for example, it has been found that women place a higher value on interpersonal relationships at work than men, making moot that particular factor’s status relative to others (Riches, 1994).

At the heart of this discussion lie teacher job satisfaction and what brings it about. A link is made between motivation and job satisfaction by many authors, such as Czuba (1996) who writes, “there are many dynamics which coalesce into the person who loves his/her profession. The major dynamic: motivation” (page 1). As with other concepts explored, what constitutes job satisfaction varies depending on the author consulted. Schaffer (1953) foregrounds job fulfilment as its key constituent, while Lawler (1973) favours expectations, seeing job satisfaction as the degree of congruence between what a worker hopes to gain from a job and what he or she actually does gain. Others (such as Kalleberg, 1977) have seen the rewards of a job – such as salary - as its chief satisfying

ingredient, while Locke (1969) takes the view that job satisfaction is an emotional state stimulated by a job's ability to embody a worker's values. Evans (1998) has developed a typology of job satisfaction specific to education that divides it into "job comfort" and "job satisfaction". The former, "is about the extent to which the individual is satisfied with, but not by, the conditions and circumstances of his/her job" (page 11). The latter invites a more involved explanation, being, "a state of mind encompassing all the feelings determined by the extent of the sense of personal achievement which the individual attributes to his/her performance of those components of his/her job which s/he values" (page 11). That this bears a close similarity to Herzberg et al's (1959) two-factor theory is acknowledged by Evans (1998) herself.

As alluded to earlier, Rhodes et al (2004) have found that such elements as recognition of effort, working in teams to reach shared goals and feeling valued make major contributions to a teacher's degree of job satisfaction. For this project, it is interesting that, although leadership can be assumed within these (presumably, it is someone in a leadership position who would do the recognising and valuing), the quality and, indeed, type of leadership are not given as satisfiers – or, at least, they are not specified as such. Similarly, Mercer (1997), in work on job satisfaction among head teachers, identified "seeing oneself as a teacher", "seeing oneself as a manager" and "quality of education" as some aspects of job satisfaction, while "societal changes" and "macropolitics" (page 60) appeared on the list of dissatisfiers. Of great significance to this project is Evans' (2001) finding that a major source of a teacher's job satisfaction or, indeed, dissatisfaction is the institution within which he or she works and the extent to which he or she is able to assimilate its prevailing ethos ("person-organisation fit" as it is called by Vancouver and Schmitt, 1991). By contrast, Caladarci (1992) has found that a teachers'

feelings of “efficacy” – the difference they are making in the lives of their students - is a large source of the satisfaction that they feel about their jobs.

What is being touched on here is teacher professionalism and professionalism. Both terms have received much coverage from Evans (2008) who makes a clear, and increasingly familiar, distinction between the two. Professionalism is viewed as being all about context, the background to work, the policies and expectations and the nature of the world in which workers work, or, as Hoyle (1975) puts it, “those strategies and rhetorics employed by members of an occupation in seeking to improve status, salary and conditions” (page 315). Hilferty (2008) echoes this in describing professionalism as, “the character of professional work, including quality of work and the standards that guide action” (page 162). Evans (2008) develops these ideas into a “new professionalism” that de-emphasises status in favour of competent or excellent delivery of service, her description, significantly, being that it is, “a representation of a service level agreement, imposed from above” (page 23). The underlying feature of this, as Evans (2008) suggests, is commonality, that professionalism equals the norms against which work is judged. Professionalism is more personal. The definition given by Evans (2002) includes the notion that it is, “an ideologically, attitudinally, intellectually and epistemologically-based stance” (page 6) on the part of an individual towards his or her professional practice. That this stance will be largely determined by a teacher’s degree of job satisfaction should be obvious. Taking the debate further, Evans (2008) makes the important point that professionalism can be regarded as enacted professionalism – that the definition of professionalism given above is merely an abstract requirement unless it informs the practice of teachers and, in allowing it to do so, teachers demonstrate

professionalism. In this sense, as she states, “professionalism is an amalgam of multiple professionalities” (page 28).

What should come through here is that these distinctions are, again, centred on the dichotomy between what Foucault (1975) would have recognised as the fundamental, physical side of an individual (“the salary and conditions”) and the intellectual/moral realm (as seen in those features that comprise professionalism). This divergence, moreover, is carried through into professionalism itself in the distinction that is made (by Evans, 1998, for example) between “restricted” and “extended” professionalism. Teachers exhibiting features of the former focus on what might be called the contingent aspects of their jobs; they tend not to question the ethical bases of their work and place a large emphasis on the processes it involves. Their main, if not exclusive, concern will be their own work and they will only show an awareness of any political or macro-curricular background insofar as it may impact negatively on what they do. Extended professionals will interrogate their own practice on the level of values and will exhibit a keen appreciation of its philosophical, social and political context. They will also have a higher capacity for placing themselves imaginatively within an organisation and realising that their personal aims and objectives are subsumed within those of the greater body. It is not fanciful to see a progression from professionalism through restricted professionalism to extended professionalism as being akin to the movements up Maslow’s (1970) needs hierarchy.

All of that having been said, it is worth adding, at this stage in the discussion, that the economic metaphor of exchange, which underlies the “needs” or “content” theories of motivation examined above, is not sufficient in itself to describe the ways in which

teachers respond to their working environments. They are not always primarily concerned to meet their own needs, especially when they are operating at what in Maslow's (1970) hierarchy would be the higher levels of motivation. Altruism is a genuine motivating force for many teachers tied up with a sense of vocation informed by clearly articulated values (although it could be argued that the desire to be altruistic is a higher order need). Further, what Hargreaves (1992) describes as the "intensification thesis" applies to the working lives of many teachers. According to this, teachers are prone to substitute for professionalism, or professionality, a misplaced feeling that they must work ever harder if they are to be effective. Hargreaves' (1992) research uncovered the fact that, "teachers appeared to drive themselves with almost merciless commitment... They did not appear to need direction or pressure from above to motivate them in their quest" (reviewed online).

Apart from what this may mean for the motivating influence of leaders, it is difficult to see how it amounts to the satisfaction of a need. Possible theories of motivation that take this into account include "equity theories" (Adams 1965) which view motivation as being determined by the extent to which employees are able to maintain fair - or "equitable" - relationships with their colleagues. Again, this is binomial: individuals, according to the theory, will make comparisons between themselves and others in the light of two variables, "outcomes" (which are benefits and rewards) and "inputs" (the effort they put in and the ability they perceive themselves to possess). "Value theories", such as that of Locke (1976) to which reference has already been made, attempt to replace an emphasis on needs with one on how much people value or desire certain outcomes. So, for example, while Maslow (1970) would describe a pay rise as a method of satisfying a larger number of needs, Locke (1976) would see more money as something that a worker

might value, but not necessarily need. The main benefit of this approach is that it takes into account variations between workers – that one worker might regard money as his or her sole satisfier and strive to make as much of it as possible, whereas another might not care how much he or she earns provided that his or her basic needs are met. Moreover, it does not necessarily connect motivation to activity, but characterises it as a state of mind which is prone to fluctuation, even during the performance of a single activity. The disadvantages of the theory are that, again, it has not been proven by rigorous research and it would seem to be applicable only in environments in which all basic needs are satisfied.

What emerges from this discussion, then, is the notion that individuals operate in work environments on two levels – the physical/contextual and the intellectual/moral – and that job satisfaction and motivation are largely determined by the inter-relationship between the two. Where there is no distance at all between them, the result will be discipline in Foucault's (1975) sense of the word – “disciplinary coercion [that] establishes in the body the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination” (page 138); Bourdieu (2000) puts this in terms of the carrying out of orders, when he writes, “an order takes effect only through the person who executes it; which does not mean that it necessarily presupposes a conscious and deliberate choice on the part of the executant” (page 168). Given that most workers (with the possible exception of those in the armed forces) will not be so uncritical in their attitude towards direction from above, it is the job of those with followers to somehow fill the resulting gap.

Another way to characterise this “gap” is to see it as expressible in terms of teacher morale. Evans (1998) sees morale as a phenomenon which measures the distance

between an individual's self-conception and the ability of his or her "situation" to respond to it, the latter term referring largely to his or her professional environment; some of her research participants, "felt constrained by the professional climates that prevailed in their schools" which were, "at odds with their own educational ideologies and professional values" (page 25). Morale is, then, conditioned by precisely the dichotomy developed above.

A complicating factor, however, is the often-made claim that morale is an attribute of a group, rather than an individual (as in Smith's, 1976, concept of "feelings of togetherness"). Evans (1998) is unconvinced and posits that individual goals are key to the idea of morale and she further rejects the work of such authors as Cattell and Stice (1960) who argue that there are numerous "dimensions" to morale. To Evans (1992) morale is a "uni-dimensional" phenomenon. The motivating role of leaders is to engender and foster morale (Evans, 1999) – to fill the gap alluded to above. As regards the practical tasks associated with this aim, ensuring that the physical factors are adequate will allow workers to function without hindrance, but, if a worker's performance is to be optimised and his or her morale maximised, he or she must be functioning at a much higher intellectual/moral level. He or she must be motivated in this direction. A link back to the previous chapter can be made at this point: it might be said that management is all about creating a propitious physical environment, whereas leadership is located in the intellectual and moral realms. In this respect, it might be suggested that a leader is not merely someone who influences the social world of others, but someone who can also have an impact on their psychological worlds. Sytsma (2009) makes a connection between such psychological changes and notions of "transformation". The social world can be seen as the sum of the psychological worlds so influenced. The morale of a group

or team – as with professionalism and professionalism – is thus the aggregate of the morale of all the individuals of which it is comprised. The process of team-building must, therefore, begin with the individual. If this analysis is accepted and supported by field data, then those in superior positions in work groups – such as subject leaders - must demonstrate genuine leadership if they are to have any kind of impact on motivation. The next section will explore what the literature says about how leadership operates in groups to maximise its effectiveness and raise motivation, morale and job satisfaction.

Departmental Structures

Organisations are conduits for power - bearing in mind that power has been defined as an active inter-relational process. As Foucault (2001a) remarks, “if we speak of structures or mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others” (page 337). An organisation must be structured, then, in a manner that distributes power in some way that is conducive to the realisation of its purposes. For schools, this has traditionally meant hierarchically. Fidler (1997) argues that the “office holders” in a hierarchy all share in power to some extent, since they will almost all report to those above them and be reported to by those below them. That said, it is the case that hierarchies tend to distribute power in an asymmetrical way; as Busher, (2006) states, “power is more accessible to people in more senior posts in a school hierarchy” (page 7). Since the typical image of a hierarchy is a pyramid with few people at the top and many at the bottom, this will mean that the average “share” of power will increase dramatically at the higher levels of the structure. As has been previously said, in schools, the person at the very top – the head teacher – will enjoy a substantial portion, a point

made by O'Brien et al (2008) when they write that, "there is no doubt that locally in schools, the decisions of head teachers ... have a significant impact on the work experiences of teachers and pupils" (page 26). To this might be added the head teacher's powers of veto and sanction, which, as Busher (2006) puts it, can include, "physical threats, such as denial of access to material and symbolic resources, withdrawal of privileges offered by the system and exclusion from normal processes of communication and consultation" (page 50). Of course, it must be remembered that head teachers are themselves subject to the power and influence of those in larger organisations such as local education authorities, although an examination of that lies beyond the scope of this research.

Although authors such as Jaques (1990) have defended hierarchies as the best way to order an organisation to allow a proper degree of accountability to be put into place, the tendency in the literature has been to decry them and to de-emphasise the importance of organisational structures in the working lives of educational professionals, especially as far as leadership is concerned. That an overly-regulated working environment can be counter-productive has been pointed out by Tschannen-Moran (2009) who, describing what she terms the "control paradox", states that teachers will often resent the imposition of rules and, while ostensibly agreeing to them, will subject them to tacit resistance – at cost to the teachers' own pedagogical effectiveness (again, this is the notion of strategic or instrumental compliance). She argues for a de-centralised, distributed leadership environment based on senior leaders having a professional respect for, and trust in, their followers. In this sense, her work is of a piece with that of Ogawa and Bossert (1995) who have reframed leadership as a quality in and of itself which is not embodied in any specific individual or role; taken to a logical extreme, this is

as much as to say that the organisations within which individuals operate are largely imaginative constructs of dubious relevance and effectiveness. Even the word “organisation” has been challenged by Sergiovanni (1994) who relegates it to the status of metaphor before replacing it with “community” as a label for the corporate entity of a school. The current state of the literature is summed up by de Lima (2008) who remarks that most writings on the subject, “emphasise the collective responsibility and collegial activity of wider groups of teachers” (p. 160).

Before going further, it is worth noting that not all teachers are comfortable with the notion of schools as communities. Many, as Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett (2008) have found, feel secure within the structures of a hierarchical organisation in which their individual roles are clearly delineated. Ryan and Rottman (2009) suggest that any attempt to create a different organisational approach will inevitably fail as many of those who participate in hierarchies, especially at the higher levels, revert back to them as the most effective means of achieving goals, albeit goals that are often dictated by a market mechanism the authors criticise. In a similar vein, Wartzman (2008) cites cases which argue that too much dissemination of power can lead to confusion among organisational members as to who exactly is in control on any given occasion.

Nevertheless, a growing body of literature supports the view that a simple linear model of an organisation does scant justice to its multifarious aspects. This may be particularly true of schools which are highly complex and the loci for various forms of power and the compliance relationships springing from them. Wartzman (2008) is just one writer who contests the belief that there is a single workable way to run an organisation. Instead, he says, a blend of styles should be adopted under the umbrella of the overall structure, a

position which recalls Foucault's (1984) conception of the state as a "metapower" consisting of an intricate network of subordinate power centres. Proponents of "complexity theory", Morrison (2002), for example, view a system as a melange of interacting elements which, when taken together, function as a whole. Such a system is, by its nature, unpredictable and difficult to control. When applied to an organisation such as a school, the implication of this argument is that self-organisation will be the rule (a point made by Stacey, 1992) and that solutions to "imbalances" in the system will be generated from within and not imposed by managers, or, as Morrison (2002) puts it: "change and emergence can occur anywhere in the organisation, often in an unpredictable way" (page 57). In support of his point, Morrison (2002) argues that a hierarchy creates resentment among followers who, even so, feel absolved of individual responsibility for their actions (a point which recalls Tschannen-Moran's [2009] "control paradox"), that it can create mistrust between colleagues, that it places undue emphasis on a leader and, importantly, assumes his or her competence, but, when things go wrong, sees subordinates unfairly blamed. Most crucially, the problem with a hierarchy, in Morrison's (2002) opinion, is that it is unnatural, that, when left to their own devices, systems will adopt the complexity model that he favours. The ramifications of these points for subject departments are profound; a subject department is part of the formal hierarchy of a school, but this very fact makes it a contributor to the complexity of the school as an organisation.

Such reasoning as that of Morrison (2002) lies behind much literature on collegial structures and distributed leadership. These two terms do not necessarily refer to the same concept, despite Bush's (2003b) assertion that distributed leadership, "shares many features with collegiality" (page 64). To Brundrett (1998), collegiality is a loose term

which simply refers to, “teachers conferring and collaborating with other teachers” (page 305). In enumerating the features of collegiality, Bush (2003b) focuses on two elements: firstly, he contends that collegial structures rely on consensus, decisions being reached through collaboration and discussion rather than being imposed by a single leader, and, secondly, that they are value-driven and normative in orientation. In simple terms, this means that they will only work if everyone involved shares a common set of values, but, even given this, collegiality is an idealistic aspiration which is not necessarily carried over into practice by those who advocate it (Brown et al, 1999, for example, are only some of the authors who have found little evidence for its existence). It is in this latter respect that it differs from distributed leadership, which can be seen as enacted collegiality and so is a practice, one which, as Pounder (2006) observes, has become increasingly prevalent in recent years: according to him, teaching and leading are inextricably linked, current trends being towards a gradual de-coupling of both from the formal organisational structures of the schools in which they occur.

This position is echoed in much of the literature. Of distributed leadership, Harris and Spillane (2008) declare that the concept is increasingly popular with practitioners and researchers, although they acknowledge that, “interpretations of the term vary” (page 31). Again, some confusion appears to exist as far as the term’s “conceptual elasticity” (Hartley, 2007), is concerned, Bennett et al (2003a), for example, highlighting the lack of agreement both theoretically and as revealed by field studies. This has led - according to Spillane (2006) - to distributed leadership becoming, “all things to all people” (page 102). Moller (2009), in common with Bush (2003b), suggests that many writers fail to discriminate between collegiality and distributed leadership when he writes that, “some understand distributed leadership as something that is implemented, while others think

of it as something that happens spontaneously” (page 255). Distributed leadership is not, however, to be confused with delegation, as Court (2003) says, when she makes a distinction between leaders who simply give people jobs to do and those who absent themselves from a situation altogether so that others can take a lead. Muijs and Harris (2007) give a description of distributed leadership which would gain majority approval when they write that it is an, “increased teacher participation in decision-making, and opportunities for teachers to take initiative and lead school improvement” (page 113). Gronn (2000) adds that such participation may not be a constant; that is, that a teacher may lead at certain times and be led at others.

Irrespective of such debates, authors constantly link collegiality and distributed leadership to school improvement (Harris and Bennett, 2001, being examples), a phenomenon accounted for by Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett (2008) in their contention that they allow a pooling of ability to produce outcomes that are greater than those which individuals working alone could manage and that they give those teachers who do not aspire to formal positions of leadership an opportunity to unlock their energy and creativity. As will be seen, these arguments are not conclusive, other researchers having questioned the benefits of collegiality and distributed leadership to students’ learning.

On a different theme, that distributed leadership and collegiality are major motivating factors for teachers has been attested by much research (such as that by Sederberg and Clark, 1990). Slater (2008) contributes the opinion that it is the role of leaders to create the necessary conditions within which others can be empowered for the greater benefit of the whole group or organisation. Harris and Spillane (2008) meanwhile - agreeing with

Ogawa and Bossert (1995) - assert that leadership is a practice, not a role, and is, therefore, not restricted to those who hold formal positions within an organisation, a desirable state of affairs, the authors believe, given that the previously-discussed complexity of schools means that they are not open to being purposefully governed by a pre-appointed oligarchy. Gronn (2000) goes beyond even this when he implies that formal positions of leadership are largely irrelevant since organisational outcomes will have numerous causes, the trail back to a leadership decision by one person being vague at best.

In terms of the analysis developed so far in this chapter, collegial structures can be described as a means by which consensual power is generated and exerted. This is, indeed, almost a truism in that essential power does not require the agreement of others – it can be applied directly and decisively, or, in Yukl and Falbe's (1990) words, it will be held by those who, "usually have sufficient power and authority to influence subordinates without using coalitions" (page 135). In collegial relationships, participants attempt to influence each other in ways that fit Hoyle's (1982) definition of micro-politics as, "those strategies by which individuals in groups in organisational contexts seek to use their resources of power and influence to further their interests" (page 88). The connection between micropolitics and collegiality is well-made by West (1999) who states that, "more democratic tends to mean with rather more scope for micro-political influence over directions and decisions" (page 190). To give a framework for this comment, West (1999) describes two types of groups within a school organisation, the formal and informal. The former, which includes subject departments, consists of constitutionally established collections of co-workers which are tasked with accomplishing specific organisational goals. The latter are those gatherings of people, either from within or between formal

groups, which form as a result of social bonding or the sharing of common viewpoints or grievances. Informal groups serve a number of purposes, but germane to this argument is the claim that they are a means by which jobs that group members need to be done are actually done, the given examples being information-gathering or helping out when colleagues are sick or absent. Youngs (2009) – alluding to the work of Barnard (1938) – goes so far as to say that formally constituted organisations would not function at all were it not for the informal groupings which comprise them.

West (1999) himself, though, states that, “the division of groups into formal and informal arrangements is an oversimplification” (page 192). A group may have been created on formal principles, but its functioning may better be seen as informal: it may, as West (1999) puts it, “be serving the needs both of the organisation and the individual members” (page 192). This encapsulates the position of subject departments: they are formal groups which make up a layer in a school’s hierarchy, but their internal operation may often be carried out along lines that are more informal. That tensions within any organisation can arise between formal and informal groupings is, as West (1999) points out, well-attested by research.

Micro-political strategies conform closely to the list produced by Yukl and Falbe (1990) discussed earlier. Of equal interest to this study is the recent research by Anderson and Kilduff (2009) previously alluded to which indicates that influence tactics are not necessarily linked to competence. According to these authors, “dominant individuals achieve influence because they tend to appear competent to others, even when they actually lack competence” (page 491); that is to say, power in informal groups often resides with those best able to project confidence in their own abilities, regardless of

those abilities. These authors' research found that groups would accept answers to problems – even when they were demonstrably incorrect – simply because a member of the group had expressed them stridently and confidently. That said, the authors give two important caveats: they are open in stating that their work was not carried out within an organisational setting and that such a study would be necessary before their results could be extrapolated to that context. They also argue that non-competence-based leadership is a relatively ephemeral phenomenon; in the long run, informal groups will identify their competent members and begin to cede leadership to them. Such findings will be seen to have some bearing on the fieldwork for this project.

They also have the effect of again emphasising the normative aspects of collegiality and distributed leadership. Although it is dismissed by Hoyle (1999), Pfeffer's (1981) distinction between management and micro-politics is relevant here. Hoyle's (1999) objection is that empirical observation does not support the point, but this can be answered if management is accepted as essential and located in the physical realm. Micro-politics is thus placed in the consensual and psychological sphere, a claim that was borne out by the fieldwork carried out for this project. Micro-politics is the oil which lubricates collegial groupings since they are, by their nature, informal; within them, formal structures are over-ridden because, in theory, they grant equal voice to all of their members, together with equal access to power resources (Hargreaves, 1994). Some authors (such as Muijs and Harris, 2007) are adamant that collegial approaches are not incompatible with traditional organisations and can flourish without the need for wholesale re-structuring, allowing, "processes of flexibility and decentralisation [to] co-exist with more rigid constraints and structures of domination" (Courpasson, 2000, page 157). The head of Design "David Potts" is given by Ribbins (2007) as an instance of a

leader who made remarkable strides in his efforts to carry the traditionally-constituted structure of a department forward, his favoured method being to adopt a collegial/distributed leadership approach by involving all other members of the department in decision-making. The very existence of “David Potts”, though, gives credence to the counter-argument from Hartley (2007) that, even within so-called collegial groups, there is no real “democracy” since distributed leadership is, mostly, by appointment, not election. This can be extended (in the light of the research by Anderson and Kilduff, 2009) to include the informal taking of leadership roles – when a group member is showing “initiative”, it is not always with the assent of his or her colleagues or the formal office holders within the group. On a whole school level, Heng and Marsh (2009) argue that, “the extent to which power is ever truly distributed is debatable, however, especially in a culture of school accountability” (page 526).

These are not the only objections that could be raised. Kirkham (2005) - focusing on the fact that collegiality is, often, an aspiration rather than a reality - suggests that it adds up to little more than, “a substitute term for professional autonomy” (page 160). This idea is taken further by Brundrett (1998) who makes the pertinent observations that, firstly, collegial approaches could lead to the “Balkanisation” of teaching should teachers feel greater allegiance to their departments than the whole school organisation and, secondly, that collegial approaches inevitably lead to an unnecessarily drawn out decision-making process. A broader implication of this danger is spotted by Woods and Gronn (2009) when they state that, “decisions may be delayed substantially and the direction of the organization rendered unclear by prolonged debates” (page 437). On a more sinister note, Brundrett (1998) proposes that collegiality is often a mask for an insidious mode of control which is given a spurious legitimacy by the illusion of collaboration; this might

occur when, for example, an individual “goes along” with a plan because it has gained the assent of a majority and not because he or she agrees with it in principle. Honingh and Hooge (2009) rehearse much the same argument in their contention that groups of professionals working together are often arenas for internecine competition with ultimate control going to the victor. This is the darker side of micro-politics as noted by Hartley (2007) and it can lead to what Muijs and Harris (2007) identify as professional rivalries and resentments between those teachers who take on leadership roles and those who do not.

Whatever the truth of this, the extent to which collegial approaches can promote more effective teaching and learning has been questioned, as by Hartley (2007) who emphasises that there is little, “evidence of a direct causal relationship between distributed leadership and school achievement” (page 202), a conclusion that finds support from Miller and Rowan (2006) when they observe that there is, “almost no evidence” that distributed leadership models, “have positive effects on student achievements” (page 242). Bolden et al (2009) state that the central problem with distributed leadership is that, all too often, “it is still not clear what is actually distributed (in terms of power or accountability)” (page 258). Miller and Rowan’s (2006) work supports this conclusion in that they argue that the “core technology” of teaching and learning will vary between schools and, indeed, between academic departments within a single school. In consequence, what might be regarded as collegial within a subject that is organised according to a rigid set of routines may not closely resemble the “collegiality” of a less regimented subject area.

To summarise, then, it is worth returning to the earlier distinction between “essential” and “consensual” power. The former means having control over the formal structures of an organisation while the latter has its more natural medium in informal groupings and collegial approaches. For collegial approaches to survive and flourish, they need the support and sponsorship of those holding essential power, a conclusion reached by Muijs and Harris (2007) who write, “in all cases studied, teacher leadership appeared to have been prompted by a new head teacher who had taken the decision to distribute leadership” (page 129). Although Youngs (2009) would have it that leadership is an emergent quality that is latent in an organisation and thus does not need to be “granted” by anyone, he is essentially talking about leadership potential and admits himself that it will only become manifest in practice by, “official leaders ... stepping back and creating space [for it]” (page 387). The logical corollary of this is that those holding essential power must, as Woods (2004) has emphasised, make strenuous efforts to preserve a distributed leadership environment in organisations, but, conversely, they are able to quash the distributed leadership enterprise whenever it suits them to do so – although they would have less success at outlawing collegiality as an aspiration and the micro-political activity in informal groupings which is its seed bed. This tension lies behind many of the problems of being caught “in the middle” which were identified in the previous chapter as characterising the subject leader’s role.

Finally, when considering the applicability of collegial approaches to subject departments, a sound end point is to re-appraise Ribbins’ (2007) work on “David Potts”: for all that Potts is used as a paradigm of the virtues of distributed leadership, Ribbins (2007) goes on to state that he did not, in fact, adopt a fully collegial approach, but instead treated the members of his department “paternalistically”, always behaving as though he,

ultimately, knew best. Furthermore, when members of the department failed to reach minimum standards of performance, Potts was powerless, having no option but to, “[take] the problem further” (Ribbins, 2007, page 24) - to pass it on to someone with genuine essential power. The story of David Potts is not, therefore, an unalloyed endorsement of the benefits of distributed leadership to a subject department.

This chapter and its predecessor have, thus, sketched the theoretical background to the research undertaken for this project. The previous chapter looked at leadership, both in the abstract and in its practical application within secondary school subject departments. In this chapter, we have deepened the terms of the discussion, investigating what the literature tells us about what constitutes such leadership. The terms “power”, “authority” and “influence” have been defined and the link made back to leadership. Of the three, influence is perhaps the most significant, being the means by which the others are manifested and, thus, being central to any notion of leadership for learning. Taking a cue from a number of the authors cited, this chapter has developed a concept of power as being divided into the “essential” and the “consensual”, the difference between the two largely being the extent to which they operate on the physical or moral/intellectual planes. This dichotomy also informed the ensuing discussion of motivation – another aspect of leadership. As we saw, classic theories of motivation fit into the schema, as do the related ideas of professionalism and professionality – these being the means by which a teacher expresses his or her professional identity. Job satisfaction was seen as key, it being a leader’s motivational role to promote it by fostering the optimum balance between the factors of professionalism and professionality. How this might be done provided the substance of the final section which looked at organisational structures and the position within them of leaders and followers. The suggestion that a leader’s power

might operate primarily on the consensual level led to an exploration of what the literature tells us about collegial and distributed leadership structures, although it was noted that some authors remain unconvinced that such approaches lead to school effectiveness.

With this theoretical background in place, I developed a model for this research, bearing in mind that “influence” is the key term. As the question posed in the introductory chapter indicates, my aim was to ascertain the extent of subject leader influence, or, to put it another way, how far the practice of a subject leader overlaps with that of a department member; this relationship is represented in Figure 2:

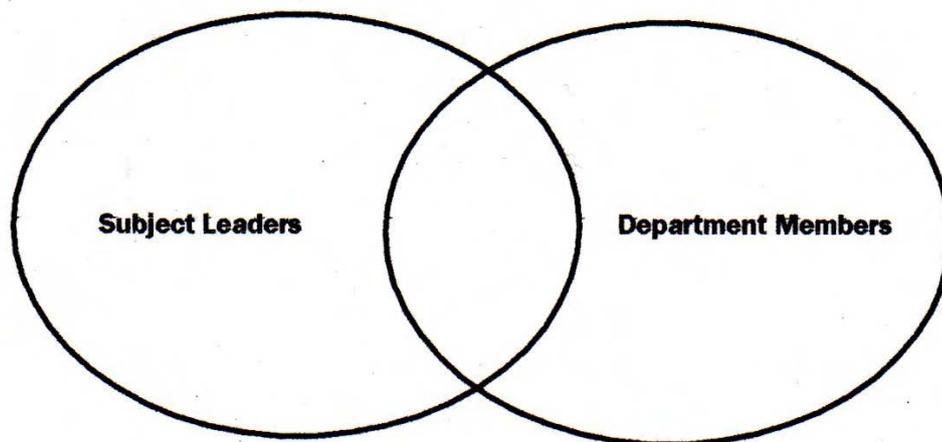


Figure 2: An initial query about the extent of subject leader influence

McMurdo (2010) has described such Venn diagrams as a powerful way to conceptualise management structures and improvement priorities. With this in mind, the diagram given in Figure 2 presents an empty space at the point of intersection – a space which this

research aimed to fill. How far subject leaders are able to influence department members' practice is vital to establishing the effectiveness of leadership for learning; how large the point of correspondence between the two circles in Figure 2 should be was somewhat indeterminate at the start of the research process. Drawing some conclusions from fieldwork about the level of subject leader influence allowed a view of the types of power relationships in departments to be formed. In order to do this, it was necessary to consider the varieties of authority open to subject leaders and this meant investigating the motivation and compliance relationships sketched by Figure 1 (this will be revisited in revised form in Chapter 7). It was also important to look at how the formal and informal organisational structures within which teachers work operate as vehicles for the projection of influence. Figure 2 will, therefore, re-appear, in Chapter 7, as Figure 7, augmented and enlarged in the light of what was revealed by the findings from fieldwork.

Before presenting these, it is necessary to consider, and justify, the approach taken in the research. In resolving the initial research problem and answering the research questions emanating from it, it was important to ensure that the chosen design was the best possible vehicle for gathering reliable and valid data. It is to these matters that we will now turn.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Maxwell (1998) identifies three purposes for educational research: personal purposes, practical purposes and research purposes. The first, to do with the researcher's own intellectual needs and interests, can affect design and focus, the second tries to accomplish a goal or bring about some change and the third is about improvements in understanding. In attempting to fulfil these purposes, this project can broadly be categorised as an effort to generate "knowledge for action" in the sense defined by Wallace and Poulson (2003). In other words, it aims to examine practice from a critical standpoint within current ideological norms and to propose ideas for improvement to both that practice and the policy that engenders it. The project is not, then, "emancipatory" in wishing to change the ideological bases of current practice, but, agreeing with Wilson and Wilson (1998), it is designed to be a piece of research which is centrally concerned with learning and, ultimately, how to improve it through leadership and management – hence the presence of leadership for learning in the research questions. The major focus is on the ways in which subject leaders and department members think and co-operate within the milieu of secondary school subject departments. The research is, thus, as Wilson and Wilson (1998) recommend it should be, concerned with "the qualities of the educators themselves" (page 360).

This chapter describes my research design, looking, firstly, at the philosophical stance that I adopted, sketching the epistemological background and arguing that, while strict distinctions between qualitative and quantitative approaches are not always necessary, the former was most useful for this research. Secondly, it outlines my research strategy, showing that I took a pragmatic view of the project, giving it a phenomenological slant expressed through a largely constructivist-interpretivist approach that focused on how actors operate in specific situations. Next, the chapter will discuss methodology, my framework being case studies carried out by utilising mixed methods, these being specifically questionnaires and semi-structured interviews; while the first of these also fits into a survey methodology, we shall see that they were used to inform the interviews in a way that made them fit for the purpose of contributing towards my overall design. I will then go on to consider the methods used, looking further at the rationale behind the questionnaires and reporting on how they were disseminated, describing research sites and analysing response rates. The section also gives an account of how the semi-structured interviews were designed before describing the schools and departments that provided interview participants. The chapter concludes with a section which focuses on research management, paying particular attention to such matters as data validity, the types of analysis undertaken and how ethical issues were dealt with throughout the project.

Both the questionnaire and interview stages of the research were rigorously piloted before a full scale study was undertaken. Gillham (2000a) and Munn and Drever (1995) are among the authors who argue for the virtues of such a process, while Youngman (1994) states unequivocally that piloting is “integral” to research. The chosen sites for the pilots were Three Spires School, Firthside School and The Royal Grammar School

which, as with all the sites investigated by this research, have been anonymised. A rationale for the use of pseudonyms is given later while a full description of the pilot research sites is included in Appendix 2. The reason for choosing these schools for the pilot was that the first two, being organisations in which I had worked prior to embarking on educational research, contained a good number of what Munn and Drever (1995) call, “individuals who [were] likely to be sympathetic to [my] work but willing to give forthright comments and sharp criticism” (page 33). With the third school, this service was less necessary since, by this stage of piloting, I was largely testing conclusions that had already been drawn.

The first stage of the pilot, then, was to follow an – ultimately rejected – ethnographic strategy and perform semi-structured interviews and observations at Three Spires and Firthside Schools. One department was targeted at Three Spires and two more at Firthside, producing observations of, and interviews with, two subject leaders and five department members. While this did not, in itself, lead to the immediate disregarding of observations, it did lead me to seriously question their value and opt to do a further pilot at The Royal Grammar at which I investigated two further departments, focussing on two more subject leaders and a further four department members. I ultimately rejected observations on the grounds that they did not provide sufficiently reliable data, although the interviews were retained; the data obtained from the interviews carried out at this stage were also analysed along with those gathered later as they included many insights of relevance in the answering of my research questions. In all of this, the value of piloting was made clear, leading me to decide on a questionnaire as an alternative research instrument. The reasons for this choice will be explored in the sections on Strategy and Samples and Methods.

To pilot the questionnaire, I returned to Three Spires and sent it out to all members of staff as an email attachment, asking for responses and feedback. My experience accorded with that of Bhaowises (2005) who argues that a pilot is essential in that it can help to guarantee an acceptable response rate by feeding into the creation of a sufficiently comprehensible and attractive questionnaire to appeal to putative respondents. Much the same can be said of such methods as observation and interview schedules: a properly-conducted pilot can allow them to be refined and re-worked until their value as vehicles for answering the research questions can be optimised. In response to what I had learned from this pilot, I decided to put visits to departments “on hold” pending the outcomes of the questionnaire stage; this, I hoped, would provide me with a more robust framework for further research as well as a series of themes which would inform the interviews I would subsequently carry out. I was also conscious of the need to triangulate my findings in order to give them sufficient authority – more will be said about triangulation in the section on Research Management.

For now, we will turn to a discussion of the philosophical background that determined my decisions about research strategy, methodology and, through these, the specific methods chosen to discover answers to the project’s research questions.

Philosophical Approach

Since this project investigates leadership, the research approach I took was ultimately based on the epistemological foundations of leadership itself. Allix and Gronn (2005) give a summary of the current position, arguing that much of what is termed “leadership” is

implicit, involving, “memory systems that do not draw on the content of the general knowledge of the individual” (Kandel and Hawkins, 1992, page 54). In other words, leadership is based on a type of knowledge that is linked to motor responses to specific sensory inputs, the result being “intuition” in its everyday sense: that feeling that something is right because it feels right. Allix and Gronn (2005) also state that the mind is inherently embodied, that it is not an entity separate from the senses that feed it. The body and the physical world in which it operates are thus an, “indispensable frame of reference for the mind” (page 188). The major consequence of this contention is that any a priori attempt to theory-build is, almost by definition, wrong-headed; leadership is an intensely practical activity and any incidents which provide insights into its nature cannot be viewed in isolation from the circumstances in which they occurred – hence my insistence that this project’s research questions could only be answered by carefully-planned fieldwork.

Furthermore, it can be seen that I, as a researcher, was forced, during the course of this study, to adopt a very clear ontological and epistemological stance, one that dealt with leadership on its own terms as an intuitive process. “Ontology” and “epistemology” are usefully defined by Usher (1996) when he says that the former is a particular version of the world and the latter is a particular way of knowing the world. Any research has an epistemological basis insofar as it makes knowledge claims about the world. However, the extent to which such claims can be accepted as “true” is the major factor in the attitude taken by any researcher towards his or her material.

At the heart of this debate lie notions of “objectivity”. Objectivity is considered by many to be important because the researcher should be capable of being placed as what Usher

(1996) calls “the ideal universal knower” (page 11): the researcher’s conclusions should be susceptible of being checked and his or her methodology repeated by other similar “ideal universal knowers”. This notion lies at the heart of the so-called “positivist/empirical paradigm” of educational research which finds its most common expression in those quantitative research techniques which measure occurrences of events to identify patterns and variances. Ions (1977) is among many writers who see quantitative methods as merely one tool in a much deeper exploration of human behaviour in all its complexity. Given such objections, a different paradigm needed to be found for this project – one which provided a more workable framework for the research questions from which it sprang.

Eisner (1992) proposes a version of objectivity which he terms “procedural objectivity”; this corresponds quite closely with what Bridges (1999) terms the “coherence theory of the truth”. Bridges (1999) defines this as a concept which presents, “truth and the tests for truth as applying rather to a set of beliefs and the relationship between them than to a single proposition in isolation” (page 603). Truth, by this reasoning, is not an absolute, but beliefs and statements can be considered true if they are internally consistent and coherent - that is, if they both avoid contradicting themselves and work together to form a provable and believable series of propositions. This approach was attractive for this research because it seems to be grounded in the practical common-sense world in which leadership occurs and, as we shall see in the section on Research Management, admits a type of validity consonant with the data which I gathered.

Taking the coherence theory of truth as the standard by which to measure research suggests that what Usher (1996) calls the “hermeneutic or interpretative epistemology”

is a potentially more fruitful paradigm within which the researcher into educational leadership should work. The key feature of this epistemology is that it focuses on social practices, treating all human activity as meaningful and to be interpreted on its own terms. The researcher's job is to uncover and understand the meanings that are constructed within activities by deciding upon interpretative schemes and frameworks, bearing in mind that both the subject of research (the researcher) and the object (other people) share the same characteristics of being interpreters of action. Research should be, then, a "fusion of horizons" between researcher and researched, if a horizon is taken to be an individual's perspective-bound standpoint or situatedness (to wit, where one is in time, place and with regard to culture, gender, ethnicity and other such means of categorizing an individual). The hermeneutic epistemology thus provided the major philosophical framework for this research.

Given that, it seemed sensible for me, as a researcher into educational leadership, to adopt a so-called qualitative approach to the gathering and analysis of data – and this notion did indeed drive the over-riding strategy that conditioned my research. One qualification needs to be mentioned at this stage, however: Scott (1996a) argues that quantitative and qualitative research do not represent separate paradigms and can be used alongside one another in the same investigation. As seen above, quantitative techniques have traditionally been viewed as centring on measurement, not meanings, and yet, as Scott (1996a) points out, a survey, for example, tends to be quantitative in nature, but can still explore meanings. Interviews, on the other hand, have usually been placed on the qualitative side of the divide, but the epistemological assumptions behind them are of the type with which quantitative researchers would be more familiar, such as the assumption of rationality (that is, that data gathered in a formal or, even, semi-formal,

environment relate to how the actor who provides them actually behaves or has behaved in the past). Such reasoning was certainly at the forefront of my mind during this research, my research instruments being used in a relatively free manner, taking quantitative and qualitative data from them according to what was needed at any given time. As we will see, this philosophical stance lay behind my decision to adopt the “mixed methods” approach which will be discussed later. Before then, this chapter will go on to outline, and justify, the research strategy adopted for this project.

Strategy and Samples

This project’s research questions invite a largely qualitative research design with an interpretative, rather than positivist, direction as discussed in the previous section. This was ultimately pursued, as was intimated in the introductory chapter, through the employment of mixed methods, specifically questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The reasons for these choices will be discussed in what follows. The sample consisted of subject leaders and department members; questionnaires (samples of which appear as Appendix 3) were distributed to members of the two target constituencies in twelve secondary schools covering a range of types and sectors. The results of these influenced the design of interview schedules (Appendix 4) which were used to investigate twenty two departments in eleven secondary schools, again of varying type and sector (Appendix 2 gives full details of these). Two points need to be stressed at this point: since it was specifically *subject* leadership that interested me, secondary schools were the natural home for (and, potentially, beneficiaries of) this research. Moreover, since the interview stage tended to concentrate on people who worked together in the same

departments, we can see a movement between the two stages from a soliciting of the views of individuals (via the questionnaires) to a greater appreciation of how individuals interact in context (as explored in the semi-structured interviews): the later findings chapters will demonstrate that, as a consequence, much of the material on departments as organisational units was generated during the interview stage.

Initially, my intention had been to follow an ethnographic strategy. As will be seen in the section on Research Methods, I followed Walford's (2001) advice in planning to visit departments in situ and combine interviews with observations. The ethnographic strategy was pursued during the pilot research at Three Spires, Firthside and the Royal Grammar Schools. Jeffrey and Troman (2004) are only two of the authors who have pointed to the difficulties inherent to ethnographic research and it quickly became clear that the approach was not yielding a sufficient amount of usable data.

A re-think, in view of the pilot, led me to re-define my stance, just as I narrowed the focus in the methods that I employed. I began to find myself allied closely with Miles and Huberman (1994) in taking a pragmatic view of the research process. As these authors state, this attitude has, "qualities of both interpretivism and post-positivism" (page 5). That my research had a constructivist-interpretivist slant follows naturally from the hermeneutic philosophical stance outlined above. Ponterotto (2005) succinctly summarises this strategy's characteristics, "constructivists hold that reality is constructed in the mind of the individual" (page 129) and, "the constructivist position espouses a hermeneutical approach, which maintains that meaning is hidden and must be brought to the surface through deep reflection" (page 129). As Ponterotto (2005) argues, the chief vehicle for this reflection is interaction between the researcher and the participant to co-

construct a version of reality – we will see that this makes apposite the choice of semi-structured interviews as the chief method of data-gathering for this research.

The questionnaires did not fit quite so easily into the constructivist-interpretivist strategy. While - as we shall see - the admixture of questionnaires and interviews is not uncommon in mixed methods research (Gillham, 2000a, for example, views this as a sensible research design), the use of scaled and numerical questions assumes a slightly different version of reality from that espoused by interpretivists, one with more obvious sympathies to that adopted by post-positivists. Although Trochim (2006) states that, “most post-positivists are constructivists who believe that we each construct our view of the world based on our perceptions of it” (accessed online), Hutton (2009) argues that, “post-positivism is similar to positivism in relation to the goal of predicting phenomena within the approach of realism, the correlation of assessing causative factors to that of consequences, and the implementation of an objective role of research” (accessed online). In other words, despite the fact that post-positivists reject many of the central tenets of positivism, seeing a need for interpretation based on data acquired using multiple means in a flexible research design (Trochim, 2006), they, nevertheless, hold that there is such a thing as objective reality and that it is the job of the researcher to discover the truth about it; as Ponterotto (2005) writes, “whereas positivists accept an objective, apprehendable reality, post-positivists acknowledge an objective reality that is only imperfectly apprehendable”, but that, “positivism and post-positivism serve as the primary foundation and anchor for quantitative research” (page 129). It can be said, then, that while the questionnaire stage of my research shared some of the characteristics of post-positivism, my use of interviews and the philosophical stance which engendered them, mean that the overall strategy for this project is constructivist-

interpretivist; again, though, it is worth stressing that the mixed methods design does tend to locate me as one of Miles and Huberman's (1994) "pragmatists".

The interpretivist strategy adopted for this project is broadly phenomenological in orientation. The characteristics of phenomenology as outlined by Cohen et al (2005) – the granting of primacy to the subjective consciousnesses of participants, understanding the consciousness to be an active meaning-bestowing force and the notion that there are certain structures to consciousness which can be explored through reflection – all dictated the approach and methodology of this study. Schutz's (1962) concept of reflexivity was central to the fieldwork: participants were encouraged to reflect on their assumptions and practice to uncover and understand meanings. On this point, it can be said that, while the questionnaires and the ensuing interview schedules imposed a structure on the research, much of the data gathered during the semi-structured interview stage were "unstructured" (Hammersley, 1998) fitting into no pre-ordained shape, but needing to be interpreted fully later. Pokinghorne's (1995) definition of "narrative" is relevant here: that narrative is a form uniquely suited to displaying human existence as situated action. In effect, this project was an attempt to create a narrative from the mass of data gathered. The process of analysis – to be discussed later – conformed to Pokinghorne's (1995) notion of "emplotment", the imposition of shape and meaning on data that are unstructured or only partly-structured.

Critical to any research centred on investigating the practice of individuals in specific settings is the question of access. As Hammersley et al (2001) make clear, qualitative research does not require a large number of cases to ensure validity. By contrast, Scott (1996b) has argued that, if educational research is to be valid and meaningful, the

researcher needs, “to assess the relationship between the data and what they refer to”, which means comprehensively deconstructing the means by which, “sampling and fieldwork decisions are made” (page 83). With these ideas in mind, the pilot studies, as we have seen, led to a design based on a first stage consisting of the distribution of survey-style questionnaires to respondents in as large a number of schools as possible. In arriving at this determination, it was important, as Munn and Drever (1995) point out, to put a great deal of effort into, “defining clearly the group or groups of people that the research is interested in” (page 13). Given the overall research problem and the research questions emanating from it, this was relatively easy to accomplish in broad principle: the population under consideration was that of secondary school subject leaders and members of their departments. This, however, begged a number of further questions. Perhaps of greatest significance was that of how representative of all academic departments in all schools did the sample need to be? Given the research questions, the major determinant of an individual’s suitability to participate was their membership of an academic department, either as leader or assistant teacher. Therefore, it was not considered necessary to restrict the survey to schools of specific types or from specific sectors. The sample of individual participants chosen, then, can be described as “random” in the sense outlined by Gillham (2000a) when he writes that, “in a random sample each individual in a given population has an equal chance of being selected” (page 18).

Problems of gaining access to proposed research sites are dealt with later and, indeed, some schools, when sounded out, refused to participate in the questionnaire stage. This obstacle notwithstanding, a wide range of schools did agree to involve themselves and questionnaires were made available to them in ways that permitted the surveying of a

random sample according to Gillham's (2000a) definition. Twelve schools took part, including co-educational comprehensives, single-sex and co-educational state grammar schools, single-sex and co-educational independent boarding schools and single-sex and co-educational independent day schools. The geographical spread was broad, encompassing schools from various parts of the country. The reasons for requesting these schools' participation were, partly, to ensure a wide range of responses and also because the unit of analysis at this stage was the academic department and not the school; the only criterion for suitability was whether a school was organised on the principle of academic departments. This was also the major factor in this project's concentration on secondary schools. The chosen sample also gave me the chance to gauge whether sector, type and location were significant variables in the way departments are run. In the event, they proved, as will be seen in the findings chapters, to have had little effect on the variety and quality of the data obtained, although another element of this stage of the research's breadth – the range of departments surveyed – did, as will become clear in the relevant findings chapter.

The main purpose of the questionnaires was to build on the literature and what had been learned in the pilot to pick out and develop themes to be further investigated in a later, interview-based, stage of the research which involved my paying visits to several schools and investigating various subject departments in each. The hope was that the demands of triangulation and validity (see the section on Research Management) would best be served by this choice with the questionnaires having replaced the rejected observations as a means of backing up and supporting the interviews while giving a different perspective on the research questions. Within most of the departments visited during the second stage, the subject leader was interviewed, along with between one and four

members of the department (see the section on Methods). Twenty two departments in eleven schools were investigated, a detailed description of all sites appearing as Appendix 2.

Although ethical dimensions will be dealt with in more detail later, it is worth, at this point, making a note about the issues of anonymity and confidentiality. Walford (2005) argues that the latter – the receiving of secret or personal information in an atmosphere of trust that it will not be abused or misused – is only possible in the presence of the former – the concealing of the identities of all who provide such information. Walford (2005) views as difficult the maintaining of anonymity as the need to ensure the availability of sufficient context about research sites and individual participants makes them relatively easy to identify. In the case of this project, all participants were guaranteed confidentiality and, in this report, all schools investigated have been given fictional names – those listed in Appendix 2. It can only be said that the nature of this project made it unlikely that participants would reveal information or express opinions that might be personally damaging to themselves and they were, thus, very happy to take part. For ease of reading, the schools researched were (using the pseudonyms by which they will be known in the text):

- Three Spires School
- The Royal Grammar School
- Firthside School
- Fenham Grammar School
- Mackintosh College

- City Grammar School
- Kowloon British School (KBS)
- Castleton School
- Anglia Community College
- Hilltop High School
- Queenswood College

More will be said about the process of selecting “cases” in the next section, on Methodology. In general, though, the schools listed above were what might broadly be called “successful” in that their academic outcomes were at, or above, national averages for pupils obtaining 5 A*s to Cs at GCSE and results at post-16 level were also strong, leading to healthy rates of entry to higher education. Most of the schools had recently received favourable reports from OFSTED or the ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) and none was, during the period of research, receiving any special support for problems either academic or pastoral (although Hilltop High had been in such a position within the previous five years). This was not a deliberate policy on my part – as will be seen, problems of access dictated it. In fact, I contacted two schools in “special measures”, one in Northern Scotland and one in East Anglia, but, despite lengthy periods of negotiation, both declined to participate in this project.

This highlights a danger, brought out by Walford (2001), that research sites are often chosen because they are convenient for the researcher (Cohen et al, 2005, describe this as “convenience sampling”). This certainly dictated the early stages of the project, but much effort was put into ensuring that an appropriately wide variety of research sites

were visited as the research developed. The degree of pre-planning in the samples chosen was necessarily limited, such an approach being the following of “a trail of discovery” (Denscombe, 1998, page 216) in which not every instance or participant in the research is predictable at the start. The samples chosen actually conformed closely to the notion of “random sampling” as described above and further defined by Drever (2003): the sample was random in the respect that particular individuals were not targeted, participant selection being structured solely around the need to interview subject leaders and a number of others. In some of the schools researched, I chose the participants, but, in others, the resident subject leader presented me with a “fait accompli” list of pre-chosen names.

Gaining access to research sites presented a number of challenges, at both stages of the main research. Walford (2001) describes the process of obtaining access to a research site as an “incremental continuum” (page 34) in which the researcher builds more and more trust as he or she becomes increasingly familiar to potential participants. Ball (1990) outlines a more specific timetable for negotiating access. He states that the first stage involves contacting the Principal or Head teacher who may grant “entry”, but not necessarily “access”. Appendix 1 contains samples of the types of communications that were made to head teachers in order to secure the first of these. The latter, which refers to the co-operation of the teachers and/or students who, it is hoped, will participate, is not guaranteed by the Head teacher’s permission. Indeed, a number of the subject leaders approached for this project – by telephone or email - were reluctant to involve themselves, despite “entry” having already been granted. One example of this was the “special measures” school in the East Anglian region which ended up playing no role in the research. In the event, several of the schools listed above were in the independent

sector, a choice dictated once again by the pragmatic strictures of what is possible and which schools are prepared to allow access.

As an examination of Appendix 2 reveals, departments from a wide range of subject areas were investigated. The next chapter will indicate that the same is true of the questionnaire stage. In part, this reflected the realities of access – that I did not always have complete control of the sample within a given research site. That said, subject area was not in itself a key determinant of suitability to be included in the sample; it must be remembered that the initial research problem was to do with the relationship between subject leaders and department members and so belonging to one or other of these categories was what qualified an individual to take part, not a different category based on subject area. Interestingly, though, data on subject area were gathered and, as we shall see, did present some interesting perspectives on the conclusions to be drawn, particularly from the questionnaires.

Other aspects of the data which were potentially significant were individuals' lengths of service and gender. Again, details of both were included in the accumulated data. Both can affect the way power works in departments, the former through the extent to which relationships "mature" and so alter the ways in which leaders and followers interact with each other, and the latter through the types of gender politics and dynamics which may have an impact on behaviour within mixed groups. Again, both of these factors will be occasionally alluded to throughout the presentation of findings and ensuing discussion, but it is largely beyond the scope of this research to concentrate upon them; indeed, in the final section of this report, recommendations for next steps will be made, one of which will be a call for more fieldwork to be done into how different types of social

relationships within departments have a bearing on power, authority and influence. Equally, there is much to be said for extending this research into the type of “special measures” schools mentioned above; in such organisations, subject leader discretion is often circumscribed by wider political necessity and this would do much to condition the context within which teachers operate.

In this section, we have looked at the strategy I adopted for the research and I have provided justifications for it, given the philosophical approach taken and the needs of data-gathering. In the next section, I will go on to give a rationale for the chosen case study methodology.

Methodology

Although the strategy adopted for this research was constructivist-interpretivist with a phenomenological angle, it was carried out via the methodological framework of the case study, using mixed methods to gather data. More will be said about this latter point in the section on Research Methods, but, for now, it is worth considering whether “mixed methods” constitutes a distinct methodology in its own right. Greene (2008) is one author who believes it does, suggesting that a mixed methods approach seeks, “not so much convergence and consensus as opportunities for respectful listening and understanding” (page 20). She argues that it fosters a close link between theory and practice – important for a project, such as this, that aspires to explore the professional worlds of its participants and to generate conclusions of relevance to a broad spread of similar practitioners. Furthermore, as we saw earlier in this chapter, to insist on a binary

distinction between quantitative and qualitative is to oversimplify not only the cognitive structures which human beings impose upon the world, but the world itself, which, as Ercikan and Roth (2006) demonstrate, can be described as a melange of the two. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggest that mixed methods represents a “third research paradigm” that reconciles the quantitative and the qualitative; as the authors say, mixed methods, “offers great promise for practicing [sic] researchers who would like to see methodologists describe and develop techniques that are closer to what researchers actually use in practice” (page 15). Indeed, they explicitly connect mixed methods to a pragmatic research strategy. My own research benefits from these authors’ ideas, since the questionnaires I used were not a purely quantitative measure and the follow-up interviews were not necessarily exclusively qualitative - it would have been possible to, for example, count the number of participants who mentioned a particular phenomenon and draw conclusions from that. I hoped, then, that the survey and the case studies would work together to allow the formation of a subtle and complete picture of the area under investigation.

All of that having been said, the claim that mixed methods can be described as a methodology is still regarded as controversial, and, in the instance of my own research, “mixed methods” more readily has the practical application of straightforwardly encompassing the instruments used in data gathering. As a methodological framework, a likely candidate for my work would be the survey, since both the questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews could be seen as constituting what Cohen et al (2005) describe as a “cross-sectional survey”, the research instruments used being designed to paint a picture of the phenomenon under investigation at one particular moment. Cohen et al (2005) outline several benefits of the survey: it is efficient in that it generates a large

amount of data for relatively little effort; it allows a large population to be targeted; it can provide a basis for quantitative analysis; it provides data of various types; it can provide data that are “uncluttered” by context and, thus, complement other data effectively. Although a cross-sectional survey has the particular advantage of supplying data that are comparable by dint of being generated simultaneously, it has disadvantages. As Robson (1993) says, data obtained in this way are prone to superficiality and the honesty of questionnaire respondents is almost impossible to check, a position reinforced by Verma and Mallick (1999) who argue that survey data can be poor at saying why something is the case, being better for indicating connections and associations than describing a definite causal link.

It is this point that leads to the claim that the over-arching methodological framework for this research was the case study. Given my philosophical stance and constructivist-interpretivist strategy, I used the research to explore the attitudes, values and beliefs of individuals in specific contexts and inter-relationships. The semi-structured interviews certainly accomplished this, but even the questionnaires, while having many of the characteristics of a survey, informed the interviews, focussing on the personal realities of respondents. Moreover, the range of participants to which they were distributed allowed ideas to be formed about the running of particular departments in a way that was analogous to the interviews. Therefore, notwithstanding what has been said of the questionnaires and the strategy surrounding them, they played a specific role in a mixed methods study carried out according to a case study methodology.

Various definitions of case study have been proposed over the years. To Cohen et al (2005), it, “provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers

to understand ideas ... clearly" (page 181). Macdonald and Walker (1977) prefer, "the study of the instance in action" (page 181) while Kemmis (1980) contributes, "case study consists in the imagination of the case and the invention of the study" (page 119). What these writers share is a conviction that case study is centred on the actions of people in specific contexts. Adelman et al (1980) give a more detailed outline of the characteristics of case study as they see them: case study data are "strong in reality" - that is, based closely on the so-called real world - but are difficult to organise; case studies allow generalisations, but they are particularly adept at dealing with the complexities of the case in its own right; case studies can reflect "multiple realities" and give some sense of the different viewpoints investigated; case studies can be a spur to actions of benefit to the field investigated; case studies are comprehensible to a wide range of potential readers. Only the claim to "generalisability" is contentious; as will be discussed later, this is not always possible and was not necessarily even an aspiration of this project.

Bassey (1999) states that there are fundamentally three categories of case study in educational research: theory-seeking and theory-testing case studies; story-telling case studies and evaluative case studies. In this, he takes a slightly different line from Stenhouse (1985), who describes four different "styles" of case study: ethnographic, evaluative, educational and action research. Of these, perhaps the most relevant is educational case study which is defined as being concerned with, "the understanding of educational action" in order to, "enrich the thinking and discourse of educators" (page 50). It can thus be seen that this research fits into the category of educational case study with a theory-seeking element to it, if by "theory" is meant what Verma and Mallick (1999) describe as, "a series of statements describing and explaining the relationship between human behaviour and the factors that affect or explain it" (page 7).

Before going further, the word “case” requires interrogation. Yin (1989) states that there is no “case”, be it an individual or an organisation, which can be investigated in its entirety. Instead, he counsels (once again) to ensure that the cases selected, and the level of detail in which those cases are investigated, be determined by the initial research questions. This is true of this research design, as is the fact that it adopts what Yin (1989) terms a “multiple-case study” approach. The advantages of this, as Yin (1989) argues, are that the sourcing of information from a variety of locations gives the study an air of being more “robust” than if only one case is investigated, the justification being that “replication” of data gives more support to whichever initial proposition is being explored. On the other hand, he makes the point that a multiple-case design, by definition, is not focused on the rare, the critical or the “quirky”, since these attributes are only likely to be found in singular cases. This creates problems with the choice of specific research methods. That said, the aim of this research is not to count the incidence of middle leadership but to explore its distinctive qualities and, on this basis, it is entirely proper to gather a large and varied quantity of data by investigating numerous departments in a range of settings - in line with Yin’s (1989) ideas on the matter. One final point Yin (1989) makes is that case studies are as susceptible as any other research methodology to alteration as the research progresses, especially from pilot research stage to beginning the main body of the work of data gathering. This has certainly been the case with this research – the pilot research at Three Spires, Firthside and The Royal Grammar Schools provided several insights of later value, such as confirmation of the usefulness of semi-structured interviews and, conversely, suspicion of the value of observations and the ethnographic strategy to which they were linked. At the same time, it allowed me to perform a “dry run” of possible interview prompt questions to gauge their relevance and appropriateness. This was taken into account as the fieldwork progressed.

Case study as a research methodology has been heavily critiqued. Typical is an article by Atkinson and Delamont (1985) in which the authors deride the apparent lack of rigour in case studies, arguing – with some reason, given what has already been said in this section – that nothing exists that could be called a firm definition of what case study actually is. Nomnian (2005) also makes the point that it is all too easy for a case study researcher to lapse into straightforward description where analysis and argument are required. However, perhaps the key criticism (put forward by Atkinson and Delamont, 1985) is of data analysis and the problems caused for it by case study as a methodology. This is a very real concern which will be dealt with in the section on Research Management. At this point, though, we will turn to a consideration of the methods used in data-gathering and, specifically, how they complemented each other within a case study methodology using a mixed methods approach.

Methods

As has been frequently alluded to in the foregoing sections, this project gathered its data using mixed methods. Gillham (2000b) argues for the virtues of such an approach, highlighting the complementary nature of different methods and, indeed, methodologies, when he writes that, “surveys give you large-scale data that are relatively superficial; case studies give you in-depth data with limited claims to representativeness” (page 16). Many authors have echoed these arguments. Day et al (2008), for example, contend that the mixing of methods permits theory to be developed and deepened on an on-going basis and that, during a research project, unpredictable data can emerge from the use of a different method which addresses the research questions in a fresh manner. Johnson et

al (2007) broaden the discussion by not simply accepting “mixed methods research” as a term without subjecting it to some criticism; they detail a spectrum of such approaches, ranging from those with a qualitative bias through “pure mixed” research to those with a quantitative bias. Of these three broad definitions, the one that conformed most closely to the conduct of this research was the first, since the majority of the data obtained were qualitative in the respect that their analysis required a measure of interpretation that would be alien to a truly quantitative approach. As has been stated, once piloting had been completed, the two methods settled upon were a survey-style questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) support such a combination when they write, “in a qualitative research study the researcher might want to qualitatively research and interview, but supplement this with a closed-ended instrument to systematically measure certain factors considered important in the relevant research literature” (page 19).

The initial stage of the main research, then, was driven by a questionnaire. As might be expected, “the survey questionnaire is guided by the research questions and is the data collection tool” (Punch, 2003, page 30). Further detail about the piloting of the questionnaires will be given later. The specific type of questionnaire was what Punch (2003) calls a “self-report questionnaire” – administered to the chosen sample to be completed individually and returned to me for analysis (copies of the questionnaires administered to both subject leaders and members of departments are included as Appendix 3).

Youngman (1994) counsels the researcher to be clear, before proceeding, that a questionnaire is the one method that will produce data that cannot be obtained in other

ways. Again, this depends on the research questions; in this instance, the questions looking for common themes and similar practices demanded a research tool that can provide a sizeable quantity of directly comparable high-quality data. Designing the questionnaire itself calls for a number of decisions to be made. Picking up on Youngman's (1994) cautions, I firstly needed to be certain that it had a role to play in an essentially qualitative study. Punch (2003) strongly advocates the use of a questionnaire for quantitative research and comes close to dismissing any other use for one. This somewhat extreme view is not shared by Fowler (1998) who, even so, highlights some of the problems of using surveys for qualitative research. A questionnaire must ask the same questions of all respondents, but measuring subjective states means that there can rarely be a single "right" or "wrong" answer. Instead, questions must be phrased so as to allow both candour and self-expression on the part of the respondents. Fowler (1998) gives a number of characteristics of good questionnaire questions: they should be comprehensible to potential respondents; they should be consistently communicated or administered to respondents; it should be clear to respondents what constitutes adequate answers; all respondents should have access to the knowledge needed to answer the questions and, finally, respondents should be willing to answer the questions. In the event, the questions I used were a mixture of those requiring short narrative answers – "open" questions – and those that asked for respondents to rate certain phenomena according to a scale – "closed" questions. The ways in which these types of questions would operate together occasioned some thought – as Scherpenzeel and Saris (1997) have found, the position of a question relative to others can have an effect on the validity of the data it uncovers – meaning that I saw the design of the questionnaire as an important aspect of its creation. Verma and Mallick (1999) add to this debate concerns over the length of a questionnaire, speaking of the need to avoid excessive strain on

participants. Limiting the total length to somewhere between six and eight pages is advised by Czaja and Blair (1996).

As has been previously stated, the purpose of the questionnaire was to operationalise the research problem – that is, to discover whether there was, in fact, a problem to investigate at all – and to identify and isolate themes for further exploration through a more intensive, interview-based second stage. On this basis, the design of the questionnaire instrument itself was a process that required some consideration. As Youngman (1994) argues, a successful questionnaire is not one that is put together as a mere technical exercise, but one in which the types of data being gathered are orientated towards a goal which is known in advance; as will be seen, the questionnaires used within this research were linked closely to the research questions. The form individual questions took was also influenced by relevant literature from the field of educational leadership and management. The pilot was another resource for the design of the final questionnaire: some questions were re-phrased in response to what it discovered and some were added or dropped altogether. An example of this would be two questions on the subject leader questionnaires dealing with the relative merits of internal and external appointments – feedback from pilot participants suggested that this area was important when considering relationships between subject leaders and followers. Further feedback from those who had taken part in the pilot meant that alterations were made to the layout of the questionnaire; closed questions requiring scaled answers and selections from a list were re-designed and re-worded to make them easier to understand while the covering letter which explained the purpose of the survey and dealt with ethical matters was (in line with the advice given by Gillham, 2000a) incorporated into the questionnaire itself instead of being sent as a separate document.

As with any other method of data collection, there are many potential difficulties with survey-style questionnaires. That the researcher is usually non-present when they are completed is mentioned by Fowler (1998) who goes on to suggest that this may lead to respondents not answering questions in a way that is useful to the researcher. Moreover, if a respondent does not understand, or know the answer to, a question, then he or she is unable to request clarification – with ramifications for ease of analysis of the results obtained.

By far the biggest hurdle for the researcher to overcome, though, is that of response rates. Verma and Mallick (1999) state that an initial response rate of under 20% would be disappointing and would not provide sufficiently detailed data. Cohen et al (2005), however, give a more typical response rate as close to 75%, providing that follow-up reminders are sent out to potential respondents. That it is necessary to ensure as high a response rate as possible is attested to by numerous authors – “response rate” being defined, as by Mitchell and Carson (1989), as the number of returned questionnaires divided by the total sample to which they were sent out. Gillham (2000a) suggests that a rate of, “less than 30 per cent, for example” (page 48) would lead to questions being asked about the validity of the researcher’s methods. Such a situation would cause what Fincham (2008) calls “non-response bias”, the data being unreliable simply because they do not reflect the views of a sufficiently broad conspectus of all those who could contribute; in such a case, a preparedness to answer the questionnaire could be seen as, in itself, a defining characteristic of the sample surveyed, but one which, by its nature, is unrecognised and unexplored. Authors advocate a number of strategies for promoting high response rates; Smith and Bost (2007) advise that this consideration should influence the design of the questionnaire, which should be attractive and user-friendly for

its intended audience. A pilot of the survey is one way of testing these ideas and gauging precisely what sort of response rate can be expected – more will be said about the one carried out for this stage of the research later.

As regards the actual number of questionnaires that would be needed, I decided to aim to gather at least one hundred responses, on the basis that this amount would be sufficient to meet the objectives of this stage of the research. However, a complicating factor was the fact that, in effect, I was looking for data from two samples, subject leaders and department members. Munn and Drever (1995) state that thirty responses should be seen as the minimum if meaningful analysis is to be carried out; I aimed, therefore, to ensure that this level was reached for both of the target constituencies, achieving fifty nine responses for subject leaders and sixty for department members. It may be asked why the numbers for the two groups are so similar when the expectation might be that the former would be markedly lower than the latter. The answer relates to the means of distribution (to be discussed shortly), but it also reflects a probable greater willingness on the part of subject leaders to contribute to research than their followers; why this should be so is by its very nature difficult to ascertain. This notwithstanding, I reached, and, indeed, exceeded, my target number for both groups.

Ensuring an acceptable response rate meant that how the questionnaires were to reach hoped-for respondents needed to be carefully planned. On this topic, Smith and Bost (2007) stress that thought must be given to two elements: methods of distributing the questionnaires and what follow-up approaches to adopt. As Gillham (2000a) has identified, questionnaires that are delivered personally to possible respondents who are known to the researcher have a better chance of eliciting a positive response than those

that are sent out to people who are not known to the researcher and who, therefore, have no personal loyalty to induce participation.

The pilot aimed to address all of these issues. My initial thought was to use email as a quick, efficient and cost-effective way in which to distribute questionnaires. I expected that, once permission to carry out the survey in a school had been obtained, I would simply have to send copies of the questionnaires to a contact within the school who could then forward them via internal email to every other member of staff with an instruction to send completed questionnaires back to my email account. This idea was piloted at Three Spires School with a result that was somewhat disappointing, the response rate being around 25% (forty questionnaires were distributed, ten returns were received). This was the final figure even after a follow-up was sent out (about which more will be said later). Possible reasons for this were gathered as part of feedback emails and conversations with some of the participants. A major problem seemed to be that there is a perception that one strength of email surveys – access to large numbers of potential participants – is also a weakness in that individuals tended to believe that their own failure to respond would not matter as many others would be taking part (a similar phenomenon may account for the relative imbalance in the proportion of department member returns received relative to those from subject leaders). Concerns were also expressed that email networks are not completely secure and that potentially career-damaging viewpoints could easily be traced to those who had expressed them (a danger highlighted by Colorado State University in a paper on the ethical bases of electronic surveys, accessed online). As a consequence of the pilot, email was not entirely abandoned as a distribution method, but was thenceforth used more selectively, questionnaires being sent out to individuals who had agreed to participate, usually after an email correspondence, such

individuals being subject leaders and department members from within schools who had given their consent to take part in my research. This change led to an improvement in response rates from email distribution to in excess of 80%; for example, twelve questionnaires were distributed to the Modern Languages and English departments in an independent grammar school in the English West Midlands, ten responses being received.

Lessons having been learned from the pilot, I opted to use several methods of distribution during the main research period. One was to deliver hard-copy questionnaires in-person; by this method, used during three school research visits – to schools in the English West Midlands, the South of England and East Anglia - I handed questionnaires to participants in person and they either completed them there and then or returned them to me later in the day. This approach ensured a high response rate; I received 14 responses from the school in the West Midlands, 22 from the school in East Anglia and 5 from the school in the South, these figures representing a response rate of close to 100%. This came as a result of participants being asked to contribute at the moment of initial contact with few declining. Such an approach is not without potential pitfalls, as Dillman et al (1996), for example, have pointed out. In research into telephone surveys, these authors found a number of “mode effects” to which respondents can be prone when the researcher is in some way “present”, among those of relevance here being “social desirability” – a tendency to give answers that are acceptable rather than necessarily true – and “general, reflex responses” – answers which, due to time pressures in the administration of the questionnaire, reflect commonly held views rather than those which, with more time for reflection, might be more specifically the respondent’s own. In the respect that “in-person” distribution bears some similarities to a

telephone survey, there was a danger that such effects could occur, but, in common with Sturman and Taggart (2008), I found these concerns to be unfounded, there being no evidence of them in the completed questionnaires.

The same was true of another method of distribution used: sending out questionnaires by post. This involved, again, using a staff member within a school as a point of contact to distribute and collect questionnaires before returning them to me. The major possible disadvantage of this strategy was that the selection of actual participants was, by necessity, left to the in-school contacts – perhaps, again, accounting for the preponderance of subject leaders returns. However, since the defining characteristics of participants (as described above) were relatively broad, this was not seen as a significant drawback. The postal survey proved to be particularly successful; my experience would agree with the findings of Mavis and Brocato (1998) that response rates to postal surveys are, in general, higher than those for email surveys (although these authors carried out their work prior to the widespread adoption of email within organisations). Why this should have been so is hard to identify, other than to say that a physical questionnaire in a real inbox is harder to ignore than an email attachment in a virtual inbox. Whatever the reason, the response rates were high; in each of three schools, for example, ten questionnaires were distributed, all three yielding a return of six, or 60%, while, in another school, twenty questionnaires were sent out, with sixteen returns, a response rate of 80%. In a third example, twelve questionnaires were sent to a comprehensive school in the West Midlands, eight being returned, a response rate of 75%. The numbers sent out were those that had been “negotiated” with in-school contacts and questionnaires were bundled in the ratio 2:1 in favour of department members.

Overall, then, response rates were of a level that allow the data to be treated as reliable, but, in order to reach this point, it was often necessary to follow-up initial contacts with reminders, usually via email or by telephone. Judging when to do this, as Gillham (2000a) counsels, is a key part of the administration of any questionnaire. The pilot suggested that email responses were likely to come within a very short time or not at all – perhaps as little as a day (certainly the majority of all email responses received arrived within twenty four hours of the questionnaire being sent out). Follow-ups were, therefore, sent out after no more than a week. With the questionnaires distributed by post a longer period was given – around two to three weeks from first posting – although returns were often not received for some time after that (in the case of one large body of returns the time lag was over three months). With in-person distribution, clearly there was no requirement for a follow-up.

While follow-up reminders are a much-advocated way to ensure a workable response rate, they should not be used uncritically, as Dunn and Huss (2004) argue; these authors have found that efforts to promote higher response rates can be a source of unreliability if respondents feel pressured to complete a questionnaire quickly rather than diligently. That this danger is difficult to legislate for is underlined by Kerlinger (1973) who reminds the researcher that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to check the accuracy of the data provided by questionnaires distributed and returned through the post. The same applies in large measure to email, although that medium, due to its speed, allows a certain amount of dialogue between researcher and participant to take place. In part, the decision to allow postal returns to come at an unforced pace was an attempt to overcome this problem, but, again, it seemed that a common sense approach was called for. A

comparison of postal returns with those done in person revealed no noticeable differences in the type and detail of the data and so they were accepted as valid.

The method used during the next phase of the research, as has been said, was the semi-structured interview. Charmaz (2002) believes that interviews fit the interpretivist strategy particularly well in that they have the requisite level of “flexibility”. This is backed up by Drever (2003) who adds that they can provide high-quality data that are within the power of the researcher to influence (for example, misunderstandings on the part of the interviewee can easily be corrected “in situ” without any risk to the validity of the data). He also sees a strength of interviews being their capacity to, “seek explanations by exploring individual viewpoints” (page 5) – again an important attribute when following a constructivist-interpretivist strategy. Many of my fellow small-scale, individual researchers, such as Singh (2010), have valued an interview’s ability to allow some measure of comparison between respondents within a conversational and supportive environment. All of these points were at the forefront of my mind when I made the decision to persevere with interviews after the experience of the pilot research.

As Gillham (2000b) has identified, people were, on the whole, more willing to participate in interviews than to fill in a survey questionnaire, despite the larger time commitment involved. Gillham (2000b) accounts for this by suggesting that people, “find it much easier to talk than to write, even if the writing doesn’t amount to much” (page 17). The issues surrounding response rates covered above were not relevant to this stage of the research because everyone approached was a willing participant.

Interviews are not, however, without some problems which become apparent both at the time of their use and, more significantly, when the data come to be analysed. Warren (2002) agrees that the epistemology of the interview is constructivist rather than positivist, believing that their data tend to be emergent; in other words, the interview does not only uncover meanings but is a vehicle through which meanings are constructed. A similar point is made by Holstein and Gubrium (1995) who describe interviews as, “reality-constructing, meaning-making occasions” (page 4). Walford (2001) puts across the same idea when he says that, “identity is created rather than revealed through [interviews]. Lives are not inherently coherent” (page 92). Moreover, meanings do not appear from nowhere; Warren (2002) posits the notion of “fractured subjectives” to explain the variety of different perspectives which a participant will bring to an interview. By this, she means the social, historical and professional baggage that will influence, if not condition, that person’s viewpoint - we may recall Eisner’s (1992) discussion of the difficulties of attaining ontological objectivity in this connection. Examples would be assumptions regarding race, gender and hierarchy from whichever society the interviewee has come. Another consideration is the danger – outlined by Drever (2003) – that the interview participant may not have considered the issue in advance of the interview and may be constructing an ad hoc position. Sands and Krumer-Nevo (2006) draw out other hazards, such as interviewees dictating the direction of an interview or losing control of their emotions in an interview situation. Walford (2001) makes the further point that an interview participant may differ from the researcher regarding what the interview is intended to achieve and will thus not necessarily provide information of the type sought. Interviews, as Walford (2001) reminds us, are intended to uncover what people do and not what they say they do. This project attempted to identify

what underlies the professional practice of teachers and so this issue was very much “live” as the interviews were being planned.

Equally important when thinking about semi-structured interviews as a method are questions of the validity of the data obtained. Means of ensuring validity will be discussed in detail later, but, for now, it is worth giving some attention to the specific issues surrounding interviews. Drever (2003) is correct in saying that, although the interview is “one-sided” in that the interviewer has empowering knowledge resources not open to the interviewee, the interview is, nevertheless, a conversation, and, as the above cited authors argue, both parties bring pre-conceptions to it so that meanings are co-constructed by both participants. Verma and Mallick (1999) concur and, taking the argument further, suggest that any rapport that has developed between the interviewer and the interviewee will colour the data. The degree of pre-structuring is also a factor; in general, the “looser” the interview in structure, the more difficult it is to analyse the data obtained in order to reach conclusions although, arguably, the data will be a truer reflection of the interviewee’s opinions than would be the case were the interview more rigidly constructed. Also worthy of mention is Oancea’s (2004) caution that language is a rhetorical system that does not, in itself, encapsulate reality, many elements of sense-making lying beyond its reach. The upshot of this is that a sizeable proportion of a person’s meaning is communicated by non-verbal means – facial expression, gesture, tone of voice, even the length of pauses between question and answer. I have written elsewhere on this issue (Jarvis, 2008b, included as Appendix 7) and the interviews which were carried out for this research threw up numerous examples of it, but one will suffice: a subject leader of modern languages was asked about her relationship with her school’s senior management, the answer she eventually gave being relatively bland. More telling

was the lengthy pause which preceded it. An analysis of the interview could not afford to ignore this, but placing a precise interpretation on it was no easy task.

This whole issue has implications for the way in which the interview is recorded. Written notes have little hope of capturing the full range of nuance at work in an interview. I have argued that, “an ability to re-experience the physical reality of the interview is the only way to evince the full range of meanings in the answers” (Jarvis, 2008b, page 101), but Warren (2002) contends that electronic means of recording, such as the tape recorder, have their own sets of meanings which will affect the reliability and validity of information gained from an interview scenario. The tape recorder creates a context for the interview that is, ipso facto, an artificial frame for the interviewee’s experiences. It can alter the way in which an interviewee will respond, there being a built-in dichotomy between “on-” and “off-the-record” utterances. Interviewees may be unwilling to make particular comments “on-the-record”, fearing that they might be reported in a way that is disadvantageous to them personally or professionally. Moreover, they will frequently continue to talk after the tape recorder has been switched off, much of what they say being no less relevant to the aims of the research than answers given to formal questions. For this project, I was scrupulous in insisting that all comments be recorded and they are thus all “on-the-record”; not only does this remove the need for some of the other methods of recording data discussed above to be used, but it avoids a number of ethical problems regarding use of data in a confidential environment which may have resulted from a less rigorous posture.

On a more technical level, tape recorders are limited by what they can record. They can capture revealing verbal subtleties, but they give no clues about an interviewee’s visual

“giveaways”. A video camera might deal with this difficulty to some extent, but it is an even more self-conscious environment which can make for an uncomfortable – and, therefore, less honest – atmosphere. For this project, I opted to record the interviews on a small media-player type device with a built-in sound recorder. This was unobtrusive enough to be quickly forgotten by both parties to the interview while providing crisp, accurate recordings. Clearly, this solution does not answer all of the questions raised above, but it proved to be an acceptable compromise and it also achieved Robson’s (2000) goal of removing the need to laboriously record responses in some other medium.

Furthermore, the fact that the recordings were digital and could, thus, be “downloaded” onto a computer meant that they could readily be accessed in ways that would have been difficult with tape, a feature that helped to expedite the process of transcription. That transcriptions are a normal part of the process of carrying out and analysing interviews has been argued by Gillham (2000b) who states that, “you can’t really study an interview’s content except in complete written form” (page 62). That said, Nisbet (2006) argues that what is conventionally called a “transcript” is no such thing because it privileges language above context and all of the non-verbal methods of communication dealt with above. Similarly, Kvale (1996) berates transcriber “selectivity” as a possible source of data unreliability. Nevertheless, in terms of performing comparative analyses of the type that were central to the addressing of the fourth of my research questions, I found transcripts of interviews to be indispensable; a sample transcript is included as Appendix 5.

It has already been stated that the interviews were “semi-structured”, certain pre-considered questions being used to stimulate a wider discussion in which issues could be

explored in detail and in a way appropriate to each interviewee. As regards the interview schedule, I followed Drever's (2003) advice in viewing the pre-considered questions as vital to both the structuring of the interviews and their analysis. As Drever (2003) puts it, the questions are there, "to guide the interview" (page 18) and, because they guarantee, "consistency of treatment across a range of interviews", they allow the researcher, "to compare people's answers to questions which [have been posed] in the same way to everyone" (page 18). Individual questions were developed in response to the literature, the pilot and the themes which emerged from the questionnaires and were essentially what Gillham (2000b) calls "open" questions which were intended, without being too prescriptive, to give the interviewees the opportunity to expand on a topic. Following Robson's (1993) advice, the questions were worded to be as non-threatening as possible to interlocutors unfamiliar with the "jargon" of educational research. There was, though, little attempt to sequence the questions - as writers such as Robson (1993) would recommend there should not be. This is because the interviews were, in part, intended to "get below the surface" of the interviewees' practice; there is a real danger of interviewees seeing the interview as a game with right answers, resulting in their saying what they think the researcher wants to hear, rather than what may be useful. Therefore, the questions were ordered so as to be unpredictable and they were often introduced into the conversation as and when they became relevant and not according to a pre-ordained "schedule" (this approach can be seen in action in Appendix 5). Since subject leaders and members of their departments took part in the interviews, there needed to be a specific schedule for each group - for the same reasons of relevance that we saw with the questionnaires. The schedules are included as Appendix 4. Even then, the fact that the interviews were semi-structured meant that there was a large measure of flexibility in the overall shape of each interview. Prompts and probes (Drever, 2003) were used

extensively to guide the interviews and add clarity and detail to answers; as the research progressed making what was being sought clearer of definition, these became more uniform between interviews until they almost turned into a “shadow schedule”. Appendix 5 gives an indication of how the dynamics between questions, prompts, probes and answers shaped the interviews, the limitations of transcripts noted above being borne in mind. Despite all this, the implications of semi-structured interviews are not merely practical in the respect that they throw up obstacles to data analysis, but, as will be seen, ethical.

As has been stated, I paid visits to the sample schools described earlier and in Appendix 2, spending time in the chosen departments and interviewing the subject leaders and some of their followers, the number of the latter ranging from one to three, depending on the size of the departments and the willingness of people to be involved in the research; again, Appendix 2 gives full details of individuals interviewed. In total, I interviewed twenty subject leaders and twenty eight department members. The visits varied in length. The Royal Grammar School was visited twice, the visits being three days each. By contrast, I spent an intensive week researching City Grammar School. Three Spires, Firthside and Fenham Grammar were all schools in which I worked either just before or during the course of this research and so I was able to build up considerable levels of personal and professional trust with participants prior to carrying out interviews; I did not, however, involve members of departments in which I had worked, on the basis that participants who enjoyed a close professional relationship with myself might give responses that were coloured by this fact, and, therefore, potentially unreliable. In Mackintosh, Anglia Community College, Hilltop High, Queenswood and Castleton accommodating contacts allowed me to pay several one day visits over a period of some months. KBS was covered

in two days during two separate visits. As I have previously said, observations of lessons and everyday interpersonal interactions were piloted, but, for reasons to be discussed, evidence from them has not been used in the final research report.

What constitutes the ideal length of a research visit has taxed many authors (such as Walford, 1991, who is aware that, in permitting a relatively short period, he is at odds with others). The key criterion is the length of time needed to obtain reliable data. In the case of my research sites, it was proliferation, not profile, which was of paramount importance. To answer research question four I needed to form a picture of practice in a wide range of departments rather than going into any one in exhaustive depth. Furthermore, since the interview was the primary method of data collection, it could be accomplished relatively quickly.

On that point, the ideal length for an interview has also occasioned much debate. Robson (1993) rejects interviews of less than half an hour's duration as unlikely to produce a sufficient quantity of data to be truly worthwhile, while contending that much over an hour is asking a lot of an interviewee's patience and concentration. Wragg (1994), by contrast, sees an hour as a minimum, with two to three hours as an upper limit and about an hour and a half as an acceptable middle point. The interviews for this research were rather "self-determining" in that the pre-planning was not so prescriptive as to dictate their length with any consistency. Interviewees were allowed to express their thoughts and ideas in a non-pressured way and this meant considerable latitude in how long each interview lasted; the shortest were around three quarters of an hour long, while the longest lasted well over an hour, about an hour being the mean length.

The piloting of observations led to a change in my original intention which had been to compare what participants claimed about their practice in interviews with what I was able to observe of it in classroom situations, the hoped-for outcome being that I would identify in a teacher's practice those elements that had been influenced by a subject leader, or otherwise. This strategy did, indeed, feed into the early published work based on pilot studies for this research (Jarvis, 2008a). Moreover, observation has often been cited as the defining characteristic of the ethnographic strategy I initially planned to use; Pring (2004), for example, writes, "if one wants to know something, one goes out and has a look" (page 33). My observations of the informal interactions of departments were broadly what Cohen et al (2005) term "participant observations" while lesson observations - which I also undertook - were in the "non-participant" mode.

However, it quickly became obvious that problems of data reliability in this approach were emerging. Of perhaps greatest importance is the question, raised by Morrison and Lumby (2009) of how observable leadership actually is. As these authors say, "power and influence allows leaders ... to stage manage or perform their research role... in much the same way as they perform or manage their leader role" (page 80). Cautions raised by Pring (2004) also apply: even when multiple patterns of observed behaviour superficially appear to be similar, if not identical, they may, in fact, be very different - as in the example of two teachers who may be doing exactly the same things but, internally, one may be relaxed and confident while the other may be anxious and nervous. How, therefore, is the researcher to judge the extent to which any given observed interaction or classroom event is evidence of leadership? Regarding lesson observations, Radford (2006) has noted that classrooms are complex, even chaotic, places and that comparing one with another is a difficult, if not impossible, undertaking. His view found support in

my efforts during the pilot. For instance, some of my observations occurred at the end of terms and were of work that was untypical of a particular class and teacher. It also proved difficult to make comparisons between, say, science lessons based on practical work with limited teacher input and languages lessons that were highly teacher-centred. Equally significant is the question of what, in a busy classroom, should be the focus of the observing researcher's attention – a problem that was noted in a project focussed on lesson observations which was carried out by Saitoa et al (2008). Locke and Riley (2009) argue that this problem leads to a partiality in the recording of observed phenomena that foregrounds the observer's voice at the expense of others in a research report which, as they say, "is ... inevitably coloured by the first-person's discursive frame" (page 498).

Observations, then, would have required me to interpret indeterminate data in a way that would not necessarily have revealed anything that could with confidence be termed "the truth". Even had this issue not been encountered, it is questionable how useful observation data would have been; as the Introduction stated, this research is primarily concerned with attitudes. Given what was said of leadership in Chapter 2, it became clear that the best way to explore it was to investigate the professional identities of individual participants and that meant getting their views either in verbal form or in writing. On this basis, a questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews - performed in an atmosphere in which there was a complete guarantee of confidentiality - was judged to be the optimum admixture of research methods.

Having looked at the choices of methods and how they were arrived at following the pilots, this chapter will now turn to the issue of research management; this essentially

means considering how data validity was ensured through triangulation and the ways in which the findings were analysed.

Research Management

The issue of validity is particularly important to any researcher working within a qualitative paradigm. Cohen et al (2005) define validity both simply, by stating that it is, “a demonstration that a particular instrument in fact measures what it purports to measure” (page 105) and in more complex terms, giving a list of different types of validity. The gist of this is that validity should not be seen as an absolute, but as a question of degree. Gorard (2008) puts the question in terms of the “warrant” that should be given to an evidence-based argument: he urges the researcher to ask of any piece of evidence, “what else might this mean?” (page 3) before jumping to any conclusions. Validity, in these terms, is open to nuance and interpretation. Of most relevance to this research is internal validity – the extent to which findings can be justified by the data presented – rather than external validity – how far the findings can be generalised to other settings and replicated by repetition of the research. Schofield (1989) makes a case that qualitative research could be seen as generalizable if the cases studied are in some way “typical” and studied in sufficient numbers for the data to be trustworthy – this is essentially the issue of triangulation which will be discussed later; for the moment, it is enough to say that this research makes little claim to describe every possible instance of the situations being explored. Rather, it attempts to notice themes which may be relatable to other settings and which make a contribution to the ongoing debate about middle management in education. In this regard, it is worth bearing in mind

the position of Pring (2004) who reminds us that, unless we are prepared to make general statements about particular types or groups of people, there is little point in making any attempt at a “scientific” study of society or aspects of society. He outlines the so-called “uniqueness fallacy” which he summarises as being, “[it is fallacious] to argue from the fact that everyone or every group is unique in some respect to the claim that everyone and every group is unique in every respect” (page 109). As Pring (2004) contends, it is the job of research to spot the similarities between different situations and to explore those.

If validity is a fundamental feature of sound research, the need for the data to be reliable is paramount. According to Cohen et al (2005), reliability is, “a synonym for consistency and replicability over time” (page 117). As has been seen, and as LeCompte and Preissle (1993) would agree, standards of reliability which might be taken for granted for quantitative research are not necessarily applicable to qualitative enquiry. Denscombe (1998) argues that qualitative research, by its nature, is filtered through the personality of the researcher and this can militate against the reliability of the data gathered. Although various writers (such as Denzin and Lincoln, 1994) have attempted to devise ways to ensure reliability in spite of this (an example being “inter-rater reliability” which refers to the question of whether two different observers of the same phenomenon would have reached the same conclusion about it), ultimately, data have to be considered reliable if they are used to reach convincing conclusions – this is a matter of comprehensive coverage and “best fit” between what are recorded as data and what actually occurs in the “real world” (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). Attempts by some commentators, such as Lincoln and Guba (1985), to replace “reliability” as a term with

such substitutes as “dependability” or “credibility” involve semantic niceties of scant relevance to the concept itself.

The standard of – what, for the sake of simplicity will be called - reliability is determined by how data are collected. This brings in methods of triangulation and how data are interpreted. Denzin (1970) identifies several types of triangulation: data, investigation, theory and methodological. For this research, the two types of most relevance were data and methodological. Data triangulation means gathering data from a variety of contexts and settings in order to ensure comparability and breadth of coverage. Scott (1996a) lists a number of procedures which researchers should follow in order to achieve this: they should engage in prolonged fieldwork, they should use other researchers to confirm findings and conclusions and they should use so-called negative case analysis (which means continually refining hypotheses until they can account for all known cases). Methodological triangulation can be split into the “within-method” approach – which means using the same method on different occasions – or the “across-method” approach, which involves mixing methods within one overall research design. As has been seen, this research adopted both approaches. The pilot study not only allowed the methods to be rated for their potential reliability, but, in the case of the interviews, gave a clear idea of how well particular questions might elicit useful and valid responses: individual questions and the overall approach were refined in the light of the experience of the pilot. For example, during interviews performed at Three Spires School, participants were asked the question, “to what extent do you feel that you are able to exercise autonomy in the planning and delivery of your lessons?” As Appendix 4 indicates, this wording was rejected in the full-scale research as being too prescriptive, responses being too narrow in scope.

More problematic is the interpretation and analysis of the data collected. Spriggle (1994) suggests that data collected using the methods described can lack structure. Miles and Huberman (1994) advocate looking for, “patterns and processes, commonalities and differences” (page 9) in the data, or common themes and interconnections, between the different pieces of information available. All of that having been said, the actual analysis of data is a far from straightforward operation. The chief difficulty was thrown up by the interview data. As Scott (1996a) reminds us, interviews are generally given by people talking about events which have occurred at some point in the past, the only guide to the reliability of the data obtained being the interviewee’s memory. The notion of “narrativity” (Ricoeur, 1991) describes this, suggesting that social actors, embedded in time, give new meaning to their past, but always in terms of the present. They will rationalise events that have already occurred, diluting the purity of the data. Taleb (2007) labels this “the narrative fallacy”, saying, “[the] inability to remember not the true sequence of events but a reconstructed one will make history appear in hindsight to be far more explainable than it actually was” (page 70). To some extent, this problem has been dealt with, in this study, through triangulation, the pursuit of themes through comparative analysis allowing judgements to be formed about which answers might contain an element of overstatement or inaccuracy.

Equally significant was the decision about how data from different interviews were to be compared, an issue that far from being solved by triangulation, is potentially exacerbated by it. By their very nature, semi-structured interviews are not identical to one another. The replies to the pre-considered questions were divergent in depth and detail and all participants took off from them to go into areas not touched upon in other interviews. An exacerbating factor was the need, as has been seen, for not only what was said, but how

it was said and in what context it was said, to be taken into account. A way around this difficulty is the concept of “indexicality” (Lepper, 2000); this is the idea that, in everyday life, the meanings of words are dependent on the context of their use. Closely linked to this is the theory that multiple realities can be regarded as “members’ issues” (Lepper, 2000). According to this, the ways in which people make inferences about what is being said occur within “Membership Categorization Devices”; in other words, spoken language is understood by individuals in relation to a context, or category, of which they are members, the “rules” of which they understand. This is useful because it meant that interview data could be analysed on a somewhat more subtextual level than might otherwise have been the case: the “common ground” between the interviews was not the answers, but the context, and, thus, any given interview could be viewed in the light of how it commented upon, and altered, its context. Although much of the data from the questionnaires were more susceptible of a comparative analysis, this approach was also helpful when it came to considering the more narrative-based responses.

In analysing the questionnaire data, the first stage, as Munn and Drever (1995) counsel was to put them into a more manageable form. This meant creating a series of computer spreadsheets containing “grids” into which the answers to closed, numerically-based questions could be placed. Coding the answers was thus a straightforward operation, since, as Munn and Drever (1995) remind us, “the categories of response [were] preset” (page 42). For scaled questions, each respondent was assigned a number and answers coded either by a letter (“Y” = “yes”, for example) or a number (“1” = most preferred choice) as appropriate. Open questions were coded according to a system of what Munn and Drever (1995) call, “categories derived from the data” (page 45). As these two authors say, this calls for the researcher to, “take a batch of responses” and then,

“summarise each into a few simple statements” before trying to, “group similar statements together, decide what they have in common, and so define the categories into which... the answers might naturally fall” (page 45). In fact, the analysis of open questions had much in common with a “grounded theory” analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Easterby-Smith et al (1991) give a good working definition of this approach: it means, “systematically analysing [data] to tease out themes, patterns and categories” (page 107). Charmaz (2002) adds detail to this notion, stating that grounded theory analysis calls for simultaneous data collection and analysis, the pursuit of emergent themes resulting from this analysis, the discovery of social processes through analysis of the data and, crucially, an inductive stance towards the data. In sum, this means “letting the data speak for themselves”, or, as Charmaz (2002) puts it, “grounded theory researchers must guard against forcing data into pre-conceived categories” (page 681). That said, the analysis was used to generate categories which provided much of the framework for the semi-structured interviews during the next stage of the research.

The interviews, having been transcribed, were analysed according to a system of coding of the type described by Robson (1993) and Miles and Huberman (1994). The themes identified by the questionnaires effectively constituted codes and each was assigned a colour. Where answers in the transcripts seemed to allude to a particular theme, they were coded, using highlighter pens, with the given colour. The unit of analysis was the sentence, meaning that more lengthy answers often touched on a number of themes. Analysis was led by similarity of phrasing between answers within and between transcripts and use of the same or similar phrases to those used by either the questions or particular answers in the survey questionnaires. For example, the questionnaire asked about methods of motivation and the words “thanks” and “praise” appeared frequently in

open answers. This led to the identification of a theme for the case studies of “departmental influence relationships and morale, motivation and job satisfaction” which was given a particular colour code for analysis (it happened to be pink). Where an answer mentioned motivational methods involving the use of thanks and praise, it was so coded. To give specific cases: a head of English stated that she, “[tries] and [says] sort of thanks to people when they have done something that is above and beyond”. Similarly, a head of Art told me that, “without going over the top, I would be very effusive in my praise and take them to one side and say, ‘You know, you did a really fantastic job there’”. Both answers were coded under the motivation theme and this created a basis for comparison and the opportunity to construct an overall picture. In a sense, therefore, the codes were what Miles and Huberman (1994) would term “pre-determined” and, given that the initial structure of the interviews was influenced by the questionnaire data, the entire interview stage could be described in this way. That said, as Miles and Huberman (1994) remark, “codes will change and develop as field experience continues” (page 61) and they add, “still other codes emerge progressively during data collection” (page 62). The presentation of the interview data, which will follow in a later chapter, relies on quotations which were identified during the coding process.

Two further methods of analysis were used on the interview transcripts. One was what Miles and Huberman (1994) term “marginal remarks” – interpretative annotations on transcripts; as the authors state, such comments are, “one way of retaining mindfulness in coding” (page 67). Indeed, marginal remarks were a key method of finding a narrative within the interviews. Once they had been coded, the interview transcripts were also indexed, a sheet being created for each transcript which indicated on which pages particular themes received treatment. This meant that answers dealing with these

themes within a transcript could be grouped and cross-referenced with those from other transcripts (Lepper's, 2000, concept of "indexicality" was relevant at this stage, since the themes effectively constituted Membership Categorization Devices). Again, this process helped to isolate an overall narrative by indicating the individual points that acquired salience across all of the interviews. It also meant that an initial stage of analysing subject leader and department member interviews as separate groups gave way to a more detailed consideration of the data in which the two constituencies were compared with each other.

Ethical considerations were highly important during the data-gathering stage and strongly influenced the analysis of the data. Much has already been said about confidentiality, but the entire period of fieldwork, from pilot through to main research, was strictly controlled by an ethical framework derived from numerous sources, primarily BERA (2004). The "informed consent" (Berger and Patchner, 1988) of all participants was sought and obtained for the semi-structured interviews. For the questionnaires, this was assumed when they were returned. All participants took part voluntarily and were assured that no findings would be reported in such a way as to cause them either professional or personal embarrassment; a statement outlining the ethical issues and promising confidentiality constituted the opening section of every questionnaire. For the interviews, the ethics of the situation were brought out at initial contact stage and all communications made clear the purpose of the research and the method to be used before an undertaking to maintain full confidentiality was given (see Appendix 1 for examples of such communications); again, an agreement to participate was taken as informed consent.

All of the above having been said, not every potential ethical dilemma could be addressed ahead of time. For example, the interviews being semi-structured, it was not always possible to predict the direction they might take to the extent that any prior undertaking could be given regarding the subjects to be touched upon. It was thus often necessary to acquire informal verbal consent during the course of an interview; I always, however, bore in mind the requirement to, “ensure that all participants in the research understand the process in which they are to be engaged, including why their participation is necessary” (BERA, 2004, page 6). Where interviews moved into unexpected areas, participants were given every opportunity to decline to make a contribution (a minimum ethical requirement, according to Dockrell, 1988).

Having described the methods by which the data were gathered, we will now turn to a presentation of what was discovered. In order to retain the sense of narrativity, the outcomes of the questionnaires will be given first with particular emphasis on how this method was used to isolate themes for the interview stage. Following on from this, the findings from the interviews will be presented, structured around the themes which came through from the questionnaires.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS 1: THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Introduction

The present chapter is the first of two which present the research findings, giving the outcomes from the questionnaires, with the results from the semi-structured interviews to follow in Chapter 6. Of the numerous ways in which the findings could have been presented – thematically, say, with both data sets being drawn upon as and when needed – I deemed this approach to be the most appropriate in this instance. The reasoning behind this decision was largely, as the previous chapter stated, to retain a feeling of narrative determined by the chronology of the research. It will be recalled that the research was designed in two stages with emergent themes from the (first) questionnaire stage being further explored by the (second) semi-structured interview stage; the former can be said to have “triggered” and, indeed, conditioned the latter. The data from the semi-structured interviews, then, can only be fully understood if they are presented within the context of what came out of the questionnaires, making two chapters focussing on each method in turn the logical structure for data presentation.

Turning to the first stage, we saw in Chapter 4 that questionnaires were designed for both subject leaders and members of subject departments (samples of the questionnaires are included as Appendix 3). For the most part the questionnaires were very similar, the wording being changed only to make the documents relevant to the specific constituencies concerned; where there are noteworthy differences, these will be

commented upon. The main area in which the two questionnaires diverge from one another is in that the one aimed at subject leaders has a number of questions probing the effect of being internally or externally appointed. These were included partly to address research question 3, which deals with teamwork in departments, and partly to test whether, more generally, relationships could be affected by the extent to which members of departments have previously known their subject leaders, perhaps in other, non-leadership, roles.

The first section of the questionnaires for both subject leaders and members of departments asked for details which may have had a bearing on the relationships mentioned above. The first question asked for the respondent to name their department; as will become clear, this yielded some interesting sidelights on to the data obtained. The second question asked for respondents to give their length of service in their current positions. Research has indicated that this variable can have a bearing on how teachers, and educational leaders, perceive, and perform in, their roles; Robertson and Murrin (2006), for example, cite fieldwork which has shown that it is important, “to teachers and their practice of where they are in their life cycles and of the particular issues ... [they] are facing at ... particular time[s] in their lives” (page 8). For this reason, too, respondents were asked about other responsibilities, either, in the case of subject leaders, any that pre-dated their taking on of their present posts, or, for department members, any that went alongside their day-to-day work. These questions were aimed at creating context – which also explains the requirement for participants to give their gender – and, perhaps, explain any anomalous or unusual answers that might arise in the questionnaires proper.

What follows is a presentation of the data from the questionnaires arranged according to how they addressed the research questions outlined in the introductory chapter. In each section, data from the subject leader questionnaires will be presented first, followed by data from the department member questionnaires. It is worth saying that, due to its nature, the fourth research question was not addressed by the survey since an answer to it was only possible once all research data had been gathered and analysed.

The First Research Question

A number of questions were prompted by the first of the research questions: “What constitutes “leadership” insofar as it is evident within secondary school subject departments and on what resources of power, authority and influence is it based?”

The first main survey question for both department members (question 6) and subject leaders (question 7) falls into this category, asking for respondents to look at a series of statements about what might constitute subject leadership and to rate the top ten in order of importance. The statements were either generated from research literature, being suggested by, for example, the gaps in research highlighted by Bennett et al (2003b) and, in some cases, the outcomes of previous projects such as those of Howling (2006) or were added or amended as a result of feedback from the pilot (“providing schemes of work for the department” being one example). This question was not so much about finding out what is the case, but in examining expectations. Thus, the question was, again, about setting a context, an ideal against which what was happening in

practice could be examined. The purpose of asking for weightings was to try to detect differences in emphasis between subject leaders and their followers.

The results for subject leaders are summarised in Table 2. The numbers represent the percentage of responses that rated a particular statement in, firstly, the top ten, secondly, the top five and, finally, the percentage that weighted the statement as a “1”, or, the single most important statement applying to subject leadership. Breaking down the responses in this way allows a picture to be built up of the emphases that subject leaders place on different aspects of their roles. For example, as can be seen, 61% of respondents viewed “Monitoring the work of members of the department” as one of the top ten tasks performed by a subject leader, making it, to them at least, a relatively important aspect of the job. However, it only appeared in the top five of 16% of responses and no-one rated it the number one priority. The conclusion, then, is that, while monitoring is considered to be a key activity for subject leaders, it is, perhaps surprisingly, given less stress than several of the other possibilities mooted by the question.

Leadership Statement	Top ten	Top five	"1" weightings
Teaching the subject	47	42	15
Being a model of good teaching practice	87	74	23
Having a vision for the department	81	71	19
Using power to achieve goals	3	0	0
Working with staff to implement action	39	23	3
Taking a role in whole-school planning	19	10	0
Co-ordinating/implementing action effectively	45	16	0
Putting school policy into effect	29	6	0
Mediating between dept and SMT	52	16	0
Supporting / promoting interests of department	81	29	3
"Publicising" the department	29	13	0
Leading curriculum development	65	45	10
Leading teaching and learning	77	61	19
Taking lead role in co-ordinating assessment	48	6	0
Monitoring the work of members of the dept	61	16	0
Providing schemes of work for the subject	39	16	3
Providing guidance on teaching methodology	52	16	0
Administration (of, for example, pupil records	23	16	5
Managing the department's budget	45	10	0
Managing resources	29	10	0
Leading INSET in the subject area	13	0	0
Recruiting/mentoring new members of the dept	35	13	0

Table 2: Findings of Subject Leader Questionnaire question 7

A graphical representation of these numbers (Figure 3) indicates some interesting trends and will provide the basis for a later comparison with the results of the department member questionnaires:

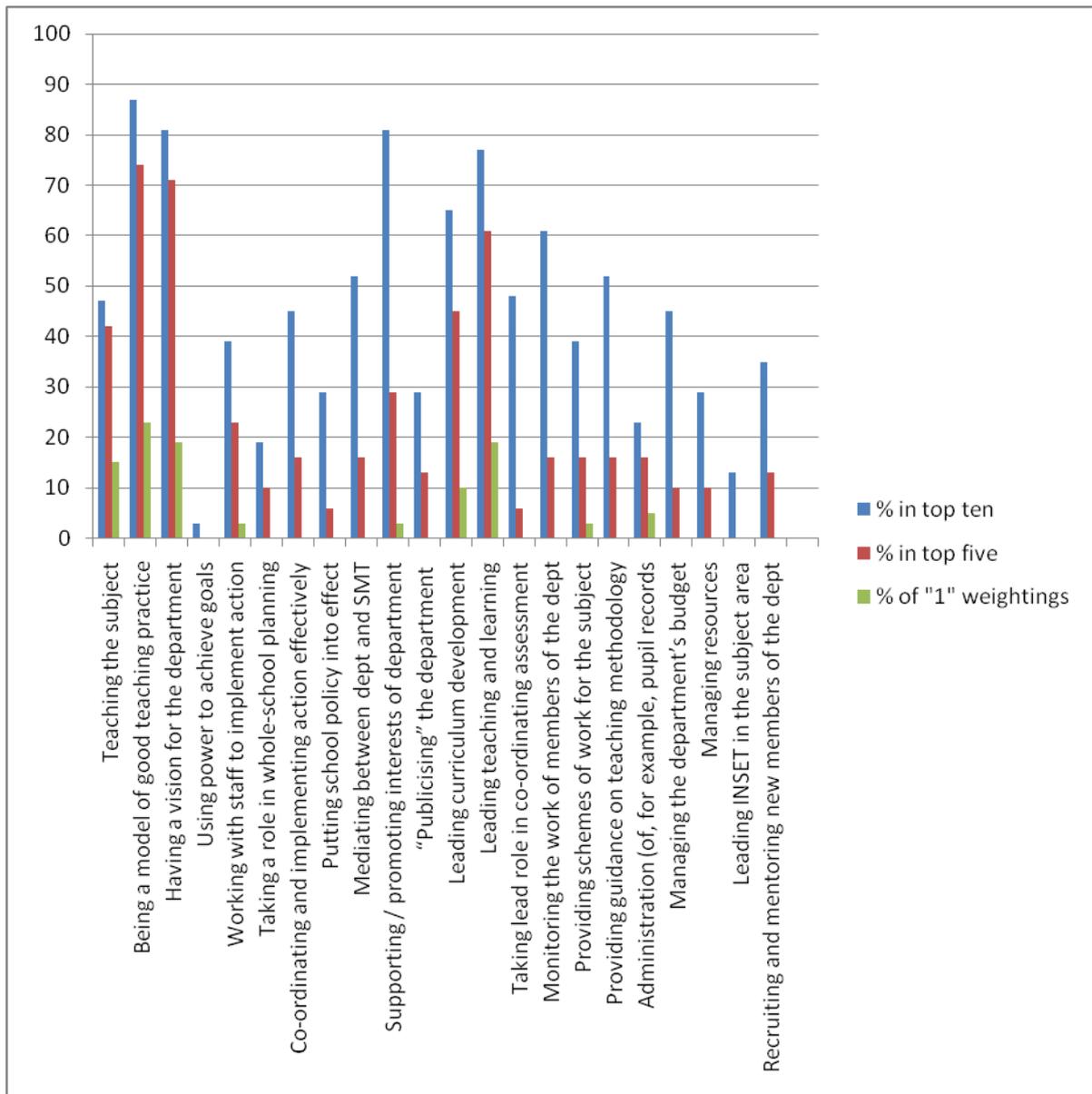


Figure 3: Graphical representation of the data from Subject Leader Questionnaire question 7

The first point to notice from Figure 3 is that there is little direct correlation between the different levels of response. While “being a model of good teaching practice” is mentioned in the top ten of 87% of the answers and remains at a high level throughout,

being given the largest single percentage of “1” weightings (23%), this is not a consistent pattern. “Supporting/promoting the interests of members of the department” appears in the top ten 81% of the time, but is only given as the highest priority by 3% of respondents. Many of the statements do not appear as the highest priority at all. An answer to the next, follow-up, question from one participant suggested a possible reason for this; he felt that all of the statements described subject leader tasks and that one not appearing in a respondent’s top ten did not mean that it was not part of their job. This may illuminate how participants engaged with their questionnaires but it slightly misses the purpose of the exercise, which was to gauge priorities and emphases.

On that topic, what is most interesting about the above graph and table is how the preponderance of highly weighted answers is in favour of activities that are neither primarily managerial nor especially centred on interaction with others. “Being a model of good teaching practice” scores most highly, followed by “having a vision for the department”. Neither of these activities is teamwork-based. The former is another way of stating the notion of being the “leading professional in a department” while the latter would certainly involve communicating a vision, but the statement places the onus for generating a vision on the subject leader alone; indeed, the statement that would more closely approximate to the idea of shared vision-generation would be “working with staff to implement action” which achieves modest scores across all levels. It is noteworthy how many “1” weightings are given to the entirely non-leadership role of “teaching one’s subject” (15%), although it appears in less than half of respondents’ top tens, implying that a small number felt strongly about it, rather than it gaining favour across the full range of responses.

Other areas that were given high ratings include the aforementioned “Supporting / promoting the interests of the department” which appears in many top tens (81%). Again, though, this is not a task that is mainly concerned with intra-departmental interactions. Conversely, the teamwork-orientated task of “recruiting and mentoring new members of the department” appeared in only 35% of top tens. On the face of it, teamwork is more integral to two other statements that gained large percentages of “1” weightings, “leading teaching and learning” (19%) and “leading curriculum development” (10%). However, remembering Fowler’s (1998) caveats about the conceptual uncertainty of survey questions, it is worth saying that what the respondents understood by the word “leading” is not obvious and that the answers given here would tend to indicate that the ensuing interview-based stage of the research was necessary.

Among the statements that were given relatively low weightings, two broad types emerge as unexpected. Firstly, subject leaders placed a low value on their intermediary role. “Mediating between the department and senior management” appeared in only 52% of top tens and was given no “1” weightings, while “putting school policy into effect” was a top ten priority for only 29% of respondents, again scoring no “1”s. “Taking a role in whole-school planning” likewise only appeared in 19% of top tens. Equally surprising is the lack of emphasis placed on purely managerial tasks with no “1” weightings being given to “taking the lead role in co-ordinating assessment”, “managing the department’s budget”, “managing resources” or “leading INSET”. Of these, only the first makes a significant impact on top tens, appearing in 48% of them, a score which, even so, does not accord the activity much overall significance.

The department member questionnaires yielded the results to the equivalent question - summarised in Table 3:

Leadership Statement	Top ten	Top five	"1" weightings
Teaching the subject	38	24	6
Being a model of good teaching practice	88	53	21
Having a vision for the department	85	71	18
Using power to achieve goals	9	6	0
Working with staff to implement action	65	35	0
Taking a role in whole-school planning	26	6	0
Co-ordinating/implementing action effectively	44	26	0
Putting school policy into effect	12	0	0
Mediating between dept and SMT	59	38	3
Supporting / promoting interests of department	79	44	18
"Publicising" the department	29	9	0
Leading curriculum development	53	29	0
Leading teaching and learning	76	53	32
Taking lead role in co-ordinating assessment	47	18	0
Monitoring the work of members of the dept	53	9	0
Providing schemes of work for the subject	32	18	0
Providing guidance on teaching methodology	41	24	0
Administration (of, for example, pupil records	26	6	3
Managing the department's budget	53	15	0
Managing resources	44	15	0
Leading INSET in the subject area	9	0	0
Recruiting/mentoring new members of the dept	41	9	0

Table 3: Findings of Department Member Questionnaire question 6

Represented graphically, in Figure 4, the above looks, superficially, much like the graph for the subject leader results:

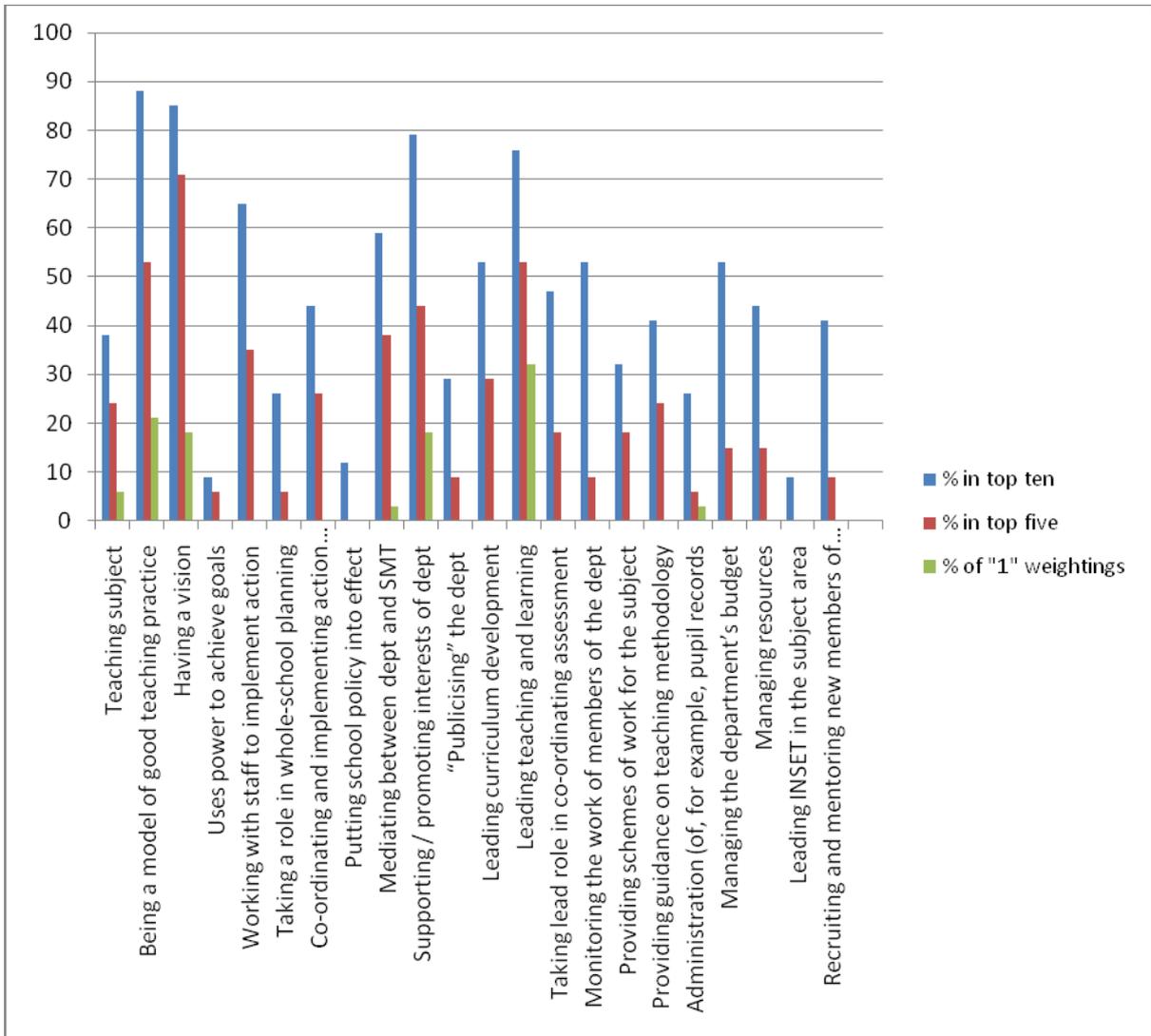


Figure 4: Graphical representation of the data from Department Member Questionnaire question 6

Strangely, as Figure 4 demonstrates, department members seemed to be more willing to grant subject leaders a measure of, apparently coercive, power in that 9% of them placed

“using power to achieve goals” in their top ten. Moreover, on the strength of these results, department members also seemed aware of a more managerial side to the job, straightforwardly administrative tasks appearing in higher percentages of top tens and top fives than for the subject leader question, although, in common with the results for subject leaders, the very highest priorities were given to statements in other areas. This phenomenon may reflect the relative perspective of these respondents; if department members were only privy to actions that had a more administrative or organisational bent, then that fact might explain such actions’ high placings. A similar effect might explain the high degree of emphasis placed upon “working with staff to implement action”, which, as has been seen, registered poorly with subject leaders; of all the statements it is the one that grants particular importance to the role of the department member (although, even so, department members gave it no “1” weightings). This could also lie behind the fact that the highest priorities tend to be concentrated in a small number of specific areas. As with the subject leader responses, the statements relating to vision and being a role model of teaching receive a large percentage of “1” weightings, but almost all of the other “1”s are concentrated into just two statements, “supporting and promoting the interests of the department” and “leading teaching and learning” which has the largest single percentage (32%). Charting the “1” weightings for subject leaders and department members on one graph (Figure 5) reveals the following:

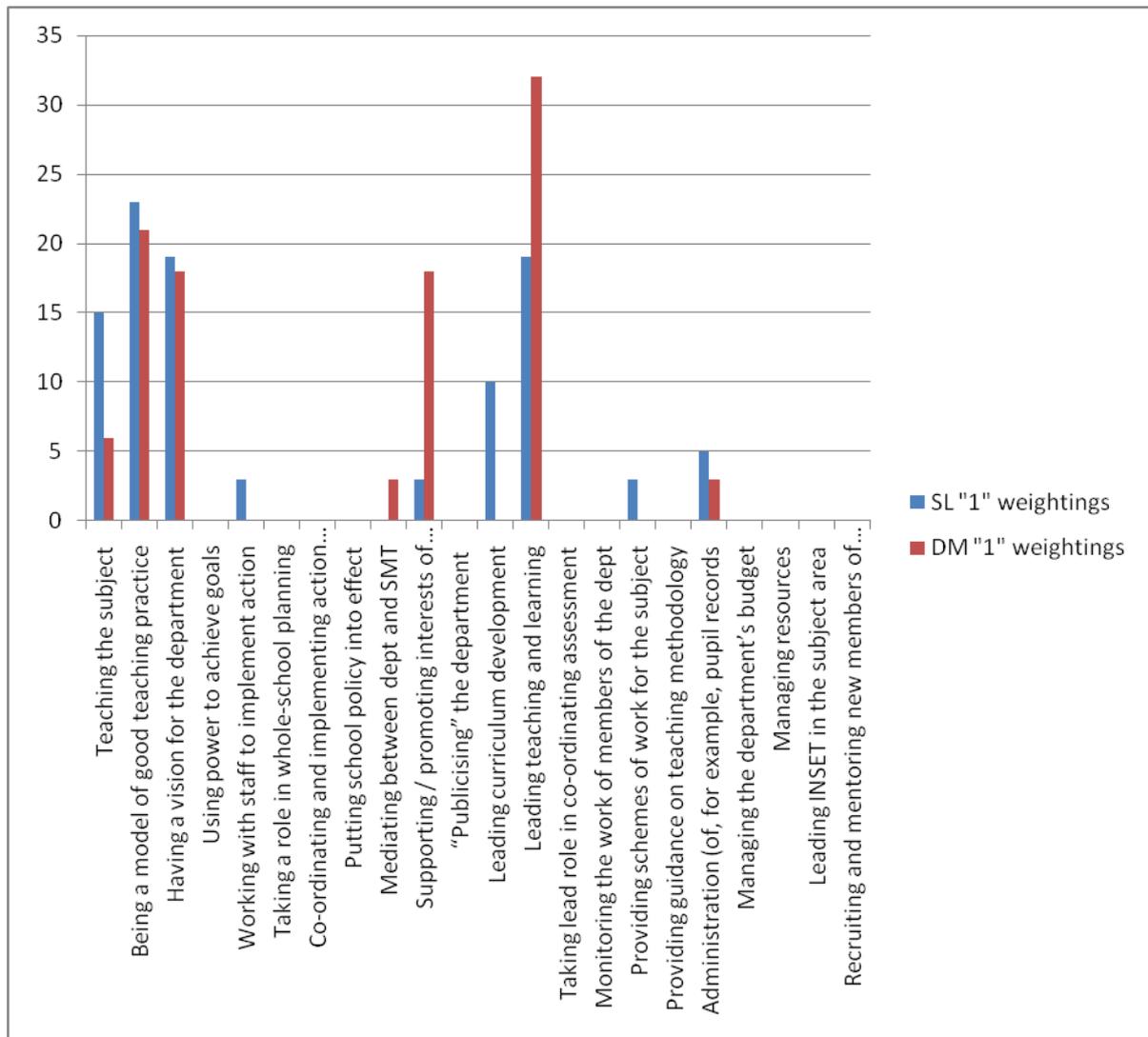


Figure 5: Comparison of “1” weightings for subject leader question 7 and department member question 6

This demonstrates the key differences in emphasis which emerged. Subject leaders gave “1”s to a broader range of statements including those, such as teaching the subject and providing schemes of work, which are essentially solo activities. Department members, by contrast, concentrated on activities that may be more visible to them and which affect them as individuals most directly (supporting and promoting the interests of the

department being a good example), but they are also those which are more concerned with being led in some way. It is worth remarking that over half of their “1” weightings (53%) come under the similar headings of “being a role model of good teaching practice” and “leading teaching and learning”. The total of subject leader “1”s for these statements is still high – 42% of the total – but considerably below that of department members.

An open follow-up question (question 8 for subject leaders, 7 for department members) asked for any suggestions regarding aspects of the subject leader role that had not been covered in the given list. Of the answers obtained from subject leaders, a number centred on aspects of the job that are closely related to teaching. One subject leader mentioned that, “keeping up to date with curriculum developments” was important while another proffered, “raising achievement” and, “consistency of assessments”. On a similar theme, pupil discipline – or “behaviour for learning” as one respondent called it – figured prominently, one respondent stating that the subject leader’s job is to, “set an image ... for pupils”. Much comment dealt with what one respondent characterised as, “liaising with parents and other internal/external stakeholders”. This touches on the broader context to the subject leader role, but, again, has little bearing on how subject leaders deal with members of their departments.

Several answers did begin to locate subject leadership within a more recognisably leadership-based paradigm. One respondent spoke of, “creating a harmonious team spirit”, echoing other responses that brought to the fore, “day-to-day interface with department members”, and, “building up effective working relationships”. Another mentioned motivation and morale in seeing her role as being to, “motivate staff to stretch and challenge students” while another underlined the need to, “ensure [that] morale is

high". Others saw added levels of complexity in departmental relationships, believing that the subject leader's role encompassed, "dealing with relationship problems between staff and students/parents", as one respondent put it, and, "managing disputes" in the words of another.

Relatively few of the department member questionnaires included responses to the equivalent question. This is, in many ways, understandable - department members cannot be blamed for having not reflected upon a job they do not do. Of the responses that were received, there were some overlaps with the subject leader responses, discipline and liaising with parents both being given coverage. However, there was a certain amount of egocentrism in many of the responses. One department member voiced the opinion that subject leaders should promote the professional development of the members of their departments. Others expressed a strong feeling that subject leaders should "support" the members of their departments; this was sometimes vaguely expressed, but sometimes received more specific treatment as in the answer from one respondent who wrote that subject leaders should, "support the members of [their] department, especially when they make mistakes". Another protested that subject leaders should exhibit, "empathy with teachers and pupils".

These answers begin to isolate some themes for further exploration. In general, the subject leaders had a broader concept of what leading an academic department involves and department members tended to stress intra-departmental relationships and the subject leader's role in building them. Subject leaders did not ignore these areas, being cognisant of their role as models of good practice. In fact, there was quite a lot of agreement between the two groups. They both treated strictly managerial tasks as being

only of moderate importance and, surprisingly, the “bridging and brokering function” (Busher and Harris, 1999) tended not to be highly rated at all. Moreover, both groups gave most weight to roles that fall under the heading of “leadership”, although, as we have seen, this is not necessarily to say that all such activities would call for close interactions between subject leaders and the members of their departments.

However, that this is a broad summary can be demonstrated by considering some individual responses in more detail. It was interesting to note how many responses that placed “teaching my subject” in the top ten came from leaders of subjects that are often taught by relatively small teams in schools, such as Art/Design and single languages. There were some higher weightings from “core” subjects such as English and Mathematics, but these were infrequent, leaders of these subjects usually leaving this heading outside the top ten. The results for “being a model of good teaching practice” were almost exactly the reverse of this, with leaders of larger departments rating the statement quite highly. It can be inferred from this that those subject leaders with few followers felt less need to consider the impact of their work on those around them. At the other end of the scale, managing the budget mostly scored more highly with heads of larger departments – those who would have larger budgets with which to cope – while managing resources was a popular choice for leaders of Art/Design and Science, subjects which require a heavy application of physical assets. Among department members, the high ratings for teaching the subject almost all came from those who taught the “core” subjects of English, Mathematics and Science, a pattern that was repeated for being a role model of good teaching practice, only two of the “1” weightings coming from non-core subjects (these being Sport and Geography). Managing resources again scored most highly with teachers from Art/Design, Textiles and Science. From this it would be easy to

reach the simple conclusion that different subjects have different priorities which are recognised by all members of the departments that teach them. While this may be true, it does indicate that a full answer to the research question cannot be reached through a questionnaire alone; the findings presented above gave encouragement to explore the topic in more detail in the second stage of research.

The first research question was further addressed by question 15 of the subject leader questionnaire and its equivalent for department members, question 14. The question asked the two groups to give an indication of where a subject leader's authority came from. Subject leaders were given statements about what aspects of their character or professional practice allowed them to exercise leadership over the members of their departments. Department members were given a similar list asking them what it was about their subject leaders that elicited an investment of followership. The headings were largely suggested by French and Raven's (1959) typology of power. Respondents were, again, asked to rank the headings 1 through to 6; this was on the assumption that all of the statements might be relevant but that some would merit greater emphasis than others. The purpose, as with the question on subject leader priorities, was to gain a sense of the relative importance of the statements for the two constituencies. The results are summarised in Table 4:

Source of Subject Leader Authority	Subject Leaders	Dept Members
Position in the school's hierarchy	13	14
Expertise as a teacher	21	19
Record as a leader	19	17
Access to coercive power resources	7	9
Personal relationship with members of dept	22	22
Dept members' desire to do professional job	19	19

Table 4: Responses to Subject Leader question 15 and Department Member question 14

Again, the numbers represent the percentage of responses under each heading. They were arrived at by weighting the responses so that, for example, a “1” – which would indicate that a respondent was placing the highest priority on a statement - was rated “6”, a “2” was rated “5” and so on, down to a “1” rating for a “6” answer. The numbers for each statement were then added together and what this total represented as a percentage of all responses calculated. Pilot feedback suggested that, psychologically, respondents were more likely to give a “1” to their top answer than a “6”, despite the latter being more useful for analysis. While this approach gives a workable feel for overall trends and emphases, it is wise, again, to treat these results with some caution. They show aggregates. A percentage score will, in most cases, include responses from across the range of possible weightings, some respondents giving a particular statement a “1”, others giving it a “6”. As with the previous question, some discussion of this will follow an analysis of the main results.

The two sets of results are similar in many ways. Coercive power resources are disregarded by both constituencies, almost all respondents weighting the statement as a “6”. Likewise, a subject leader’s position in a school hierarchy was also seen as less significant. These two statements aside, the difference between the two groups reveals no particularly significant disagreements and, within the two groups, there is a narrow range between the remaining percentages. Certainly, no one statement emerged as clearly the most important, it being manifest that authority in subject departments originates from a variety of sources. Nevertheless, some nuances are detectable. In light of what was discovered in the previously discussed question, it is to be expected that department members should privilege their own contribution, giving their second highest weighting to their own desire to do a professional job. Subject leaders here give their second highest rating to their expertise as teachers. In both instances, however, the highest weighting – which, by co-incidence is identical – is for subject leaders’ personal relationships with members of their departments. This finding will be seen to have large implications for the level of influence that subject leaders have over the members of their departments.

Overall, the questions relating to research question one revealed several themes worthy of further investigation. It seemed that some greater exploration of how concepts of leadership and management impacted upon the role would be profitable. Managerial tasks did not feature highly in the list of key activities, but those requiring more interaction within departments did, especially where that interaction is orientated towards influencing professional practice and, in the respect that role-modelling was an element to this, professional identity. Moreover, interesting themes surrounding the power resources upon which professional relationships are built were prominent. As the

questions analysed so far would appear to indicate, coercive power and legitimate power are not recognised as the essence of subject leadership by either those in the post or their followers, more stress being placed on referent power and a form of position power centred upon inter-relationships. A desire to add more detail to these findings triggered further exploration via the interviews.

Having given some consideration to how the questionnaires helped to provide data towards the answering of the first of the research questions, the next section will move on to findings of relevance to the second research question.

The Second Research Question

In generating data germane to the second research question – “to what extent is the professional practice of department members influenced by subject leadership and what, by extension, are the implications for leadership for learning?” – the questionnaires began to isolate themes of particular interest to the overall research problem, “influence” and “leadership for learning “ being two intimately linked terms. The answers received also hinted at significant differences between the views of subject leaders and their followers.

Question 9 of the questionnaire for subject leaders was a closed question which asked subject leaders to estimate the number of hours per week that they spent on specific leadership tasks. The requirement was for a single box to be ticked. The results shown in

Table 5 were achieved, the right column showing the percentage of total responses under each heading:

	%
Under 1 hour	8
1 - 3 hours	27
4 - 6 hours	41
7 - 9 hours	17
Over 10 hours	7

Table 5: Hours spent in subject-leadership specific tasks by subject leaders

It can be seen that 76% of the subject leaders surveyed estimated that they spent no more than six hours per week on leadership activities, while over a third of the total (35%) claimed to spend no more than three hours per week so engaged. A small, but noteworthy, eight per cent said that they spent under one hour per week being subject leaders. At the other end of the scale, nearly a quarter of respondents said that they spent over seven hours per week doing subject leader jobs. This would equate to more than an entire working day so it would have to be asked to what extent these respondents were including within their answers work carried out at home, which, by its nature, would not involve interaction with members of their departments.

An implied answer came from looking at the answers given to question 10 of the subject leader questionnaire. This was another closed question which asked subject leaders to estimate what percentage of the time they spent on subject leader activities actually called for direct interaction with members of their departments. If it emerged, for

example, that subject leaders spent little time in contact with their followers, then it would cast claims about leadership into a new perspective. Since this research is about the impact of subject leaders on the practice of department members, it was important to establish what proportion of a subject leader's time was spent on activities related to this. The question yielded the results shown in Table 6:

	%
100%	0
99 - 75%	7
74 - 50%	26
49 - 25%	39
Below 24%	28

Table 6: Proportion of time spent by subject leaders in direct interaction with the members of their departments

In evaluating the significance of these numbers it is worth remembering that the question specifically asked for an estimate of the percentage of the time given in the previous answer. Taken with the answers to the previous question, the implication would seem to be that subject leaders do not spend much of their working week dealing with members of their departments.

To give more focus to this last point, it is necessary to subject the tables above to a further level of interpretation. An individual subject leader might, for example, have claimed to spend over ten hours on activities related to his or her post, but that less than 24% of that time involved direct contact with members of the department. Equally, a

respondent may have claimed one to three hours but that 75% of that was direct contact time. These two hypothetical subject leaders would actually be claiming roughly the same amount of contact time with followers. The reason subject leaders were not asked directly to state the estimated number of hours was that, as we have seen, their role is comprised of disparate tasks and so it was useful to look at overall time spent on them before focussing on the time spent working specifically with department members. The same argument holds for the department member data to be considered shortly. Making the calculation for individual respondents resulted in the following; Table 7 expresses the percentage of respondents who claimed each of the given numbers of hours:

	%
Under 1 hour	25
1 - 2 hours	37
2 - 3 hours	18
3 - 4 hours	9
4- 5 hours	11
Over 5 hours	2

Table 7: Subject leaders' claimed weekly hours of contact time with the members of their departments

It is startling how little time is indicated. Nearly two thirds of the sample stated that they spend two hours per week or less in contact with followers and nearly a quarter claimed less than one hour. Even at the other end of the scale, only 22% of respondents answered that they are in contact with the members of their departments for over three

hours per week. The picture that is being formed is of subject leaders having little time in which to exercise influence over department members.

More light was shed on this issue by the parallel questions from the department member questionnaires, questions 8 and 9. Because of the differing perspective of department members, it was not possible to ask an exact equivalent of subject leader question 9. Thus, question 8 for department members asked respondents to estimate the number of hours per week that they spent in direct contact with their subject leaders. The results – given in Table 8 – make for an interesting comparison with the subject leader questionnaires:

	%
Under 1 hour	36
1 - 3 hours	48
4 - 6 hours	14
7 - 9 hours	0
Over 10 hours	2

Table 8: Department members’ claimed weekly hours of contact time with their subject leaders

It is first worth noting that the totals shown in Table 8 are broadly in agreement with those from subject leaders – 78% of subject leaders claimed to spend zero to three hours in contact with their departments and here the total for the same heading at 84% shows a similar inclination in that direction. The second point is that this outcome – and that for

subject leaders - argues that previously discussed data suggesting that personal relationships lie at the core of subject leader authority must be considered afresh.

The follow up question, number 9 on the department member questionnaire, asked for an estimate of how much of this time was spent in guiding professional practice. Respondents were required to give a judgement as to the extent to which their professional practice was influenced by their subject leaders, the time that they were identifying being distinct from, say, social time or time devoted to administrative tasks. The question began to narrow down on to the notion of professional influence and its results are given in Table 9. The answers add some significant dimensions to the data already discussed:

	%
100%	2
99 - 75%	5
74 - 50%	25
49 - 25%	26
Below 24%	42

Table 9: Department members' estimates of the proportion of contact time with their subject leader devoted to him or her guiding professional practice

Once again, it is remarkable how little time is being indicated. Although 93% of respondents answered that guiding professional practice accounted for less than 75% of their contact time with their subject leaders – which, as we have seen, was in itself not much – perhaps the more interesting outcome is that 68% put the proportion at less than

50%. The same, of course, applies here as to the subject leader returns: the amounts of real time represented by 50% of 6 hours and 50% of 2 hours are very different. A similar calculation to that outlined above was performed on the department member data, then, in order to gain some sense of how long each department member was claiming to spend per week being professionally guided by his or her subject leader. The results are shown in Table 10, presented in the same way as the previous tables:

	%
Under 30 minutes	30
30 to 60 minutes	42
60 to 90 minutes	15
90 minutes to 2 hours	3
2 to 2.5 hours	2
2.5 to 3 hours	3
Over 3 hours	5

Table 10: Number of hours per week department members claim are spent by subject leaders in guiding their professional practice

Again, the implication of these data is that subject leaders have little opportunity to have an influence on the members of their departments. As can be seen, 72% of the respondents claimed that their subject leaders spent under one hour per week on activities related to professional guidance, fully 30% putting the figure at under half an hour. Even those answers at the higher end of the range, the 8% of respondents that claimed over two and a half hours, came from respondents who had completed less than one year's service, the totals they gave presumably reflecting an intensive induction programme. The familiar caveat that respondents may have had differing ideas as to

what is meant by guiding professional practice applies, but, even so, it seems clear that these responses do not credit subject leaders with a great deal of influence on, or even visibility in, the working lives of their followers.

At the very least, if subject leaders are to exercise any kind of influence on the work of their followers, it is necessary to have some awareness of how followers are performing their duties. The next questionnaire question, therefore, to address the second research question, asked for both subject leaders and department members to state how often in an average academic year lesson observations occurred. This was question 11 of the subject leader questionnaire and 10 from the department member questionnaire.

Subject leaders supplied the information given in Table 11:

	%
Never	9
Once	46
Twice	23
At least once per term	12
Often	10

Table 11: Number of lesson observations per year according to subject leaders

Clearly, one lesson observation per year was overwhelmingly the most popular choice, being picked by twice as many respondents (46%) as the next favourite, which was still only two observations per year. Subject leaders who observe the members of their departments teaching more often than this seem to be rare; only 12% opt for at least

once per term. The proportion of subject leaders who state that they never observe lessons is relatively small, but, at 9%, is not insignificant. Again, these data would seem to indicate that a majority of subject leaders (55%) observe the members of their departments in action at most once in an academic year and that over three quarters (78%) observe no more than twice in a year. That 10% stated that they observe lessons “often” suggests that there is a significant minority of subject leaders who pay close attention to the work of their followers, but this should not distract from the fact that most apparently do not.

When asked the same question, department members supplied data (summarised in Table 12) that, strangely, appeared to contradict that of subject leaders in some important respects:

	%
Never	28
Once	40
Twice	7
At least once a term	15
Often	10

Table 12: Number of lesson observations per year according to department members

While the totals for one observation per year, at 40%, and at least once a term, at 15%, are close to those of subject leaders, 28% claimed never to be observed at all. One explanation for the discrepancy between this and the responses from subject leaders may be that all of the responses did not necessarily come from members of the same

departments and the disparity simply reflects the breadth of the sample. Differences in perception may also have come into play again; what subject leaders and department members understand by the term “observation” may not be the same thing - another issue further researched in the project’s interview stage.

The next question to address the second research question built on the above by asking respondents to give an opinion as to how much influence a subject leader has over the classroom practice of department members (question 12 for subject leaders, 11 for department members). Although this was a closed question, it was very much probing attitudes and I anticipated that it would be here that any disagreements between the two constituencies would become manifest. In planning the next stages of research, I regarded the answers to this question as crucial, especially insofar as it began to consider how leadership for learning might operate.

Subject leaders, therefore, were asked to identify a statement that, in their opinion, best described the amount of influence that they had over the classroom practice of their followers, with the results given in Table 13:

	%
Total control	0
A great deal of influence	25
Some influence	61
Very little influence	12
No influence	2

Table 13: Subject leaders' claimed influence over the classroom practice of the members of their departments

It is perhaps not surprising that the largest body of responses (61%) favoured the middle statement "some influence"; Gillham (2000a) and Munn and Drever (1995) agree that a flaw in scaled questions is a tendency for respondents to favour moderate, rather than extreme, statements. This is evident in the above table in which the statements at the outlying edges of the range are all but ignored. Moreover, "some" is another word which may have meant different things to different respondents, although those who opted for it obviously wished to distinguish themselves from any claim to have "a great deal of influence" (which was still chosen by a quarter of all participating subject leaders) and "very little influence" (chosen by only 12%). As we have seen, however, subject leaders estimated that their contact time with department members was very limited; it might be wondered, then, when the influence being claimed here is brought to bear and what form it might take. In order to arrive at a prima facie solution to this conundrum, an open follow-up question was asked which will be considered later.

Turning to the department member responses, there were, as anticipated, some striking differences of opinion with their subject leaders, as Table 14 indicates:

	%
Total control	0
A great deal of influence	22
Some influence	41
Very little influence	32
No influence	5

Table 14: Subject leaders' levels of influence on classroom practice according to department members

Again, “some influence” gained the largest single percentage of responses – albeit one that is significantly smaller than that for subject leaders. Likewise, the extreme answers were mostly ignored, although it is worth noting that a larger proportion (5%) were prepared to dismiss all subject leader influence. Most intriguing are the percentages for the statements that flank the top-rating central point when compared to the subject leader returns: fewer conceded “a great deal” of influence – although it was still a not-insignificant 22% - but nearly a third went for “very little influence”, nearly three times the amount claimed in the subject leader responses.

The follow-up open questions for subject leaders (questions 13 and 14) asked either for examples of how they influence the classroom practice of their followers (for those who answered that they have “total control”, “a great deal of influence” or “some influence”) or to account for their lack of influence (for those who had answered “very little influence” or “no influence”).

From those who had claimed a great deal of influence, three general points emerged. Firstly, there was an emphasis placed on sharing and discussion, as one respondent put it, “sharing of best practice, developing an open door policy to classrooms”. Another made much the same point when she said that she and her department, “plan collaboratively and have materials copied so that we are synchronised”. This brings in the second broad theme which was the provision of resources and schemes of work. The third main idea to arise from these responses was that of the subject leader structuring teaching methodologies for their followers and, as one put it, “teaching by example”.

Many of these themes could also be detected in the responses from those who had answered “some influence”. Discussion and the collaborative generation of schemes of work featured prominently. Schemes of work, indeed, were often seen as the chief vehicle by which subject leaders could exercise influence, as in one response which underlined, “recommendations in schemes of work”. However, a more interventionist tone was noticeable in some responses in which subject leaders spoke of attempting to directly influence the teaching style of their followers. Few were quite as forthright as the head of Physics who stated that he would, “tell [department members] where their teaching is ineffective and give feedback/complaints from parents and pupils”, but several responses included versions of this from a head of Science: “suggesting some teaching methodology which has been found to be effective”. There was an awareness that such suggestions might be triggered by lesson observations – despite their apparent rarity – and a handful of responses introduced a new term, “appraisal”, as a structured forum for the giving of advice on teaching practice.

Of the subject leaders who had chosen “little” or “no” influence as the statement that best described their impact on their followers’ classroom practice, a number gave purely pragmatic reasons, such as, “timetable too full”, and, “we are always teaching at the same time so observation and feedback ... [are] not possible”. Both of these answers recognise monitoring as an aspect of influence. Another respondent alluded to the fact that, “teaching is an autonomous profession in which individuals work alone” as a reason for his inability to have much influence. Two factors which came through strongly were, firstly, that where subject leaders were less experienced as teachers than members of their departments, they often lacked confidence when giving advice on teaching methodology, and, secondly, that there was evidence of active resistance from department members. One head of mathematics, for example, complained that his attempts to influence practice did not work because he had a, “load of stubborn old goats in [his] department”.

The follow-up questions for department members (12 and 13) explored similar points. For those respondents who had chosen “a great deal of influence”, the main examples again centred on the provision of schemes of work and resources. Sometimes, there was a suggestion that these were imposed - one respondent mentioning “compulsory resources” - or in some way self-determining, another mentioning the “implement[ation] of MyMaths Software”. Several answers spoke of the broader dimension, a subject leader’s power to select a syllabus to be followed by all members of a department. None mentioned interpersonal relationships and none mentioned how the “great deal of influence” operated on a classroom level; all conceptualised the claimed influence in terms of what are essentially management decisions.

As we saw, the majority of department members said that their subject leaders had “some influence” on their classroom practice. When giving examples, they, too, tended to stress choice of syllabus and provision of resources and schemes of work. This suggested that the distinction between “great deal of influence” and “some influence” was largely a matter of interpretation. Some of these answers did, however, bring in notions of interpersonal dynamics which were in the area of leadership; for example, one respondent wrote that, “[my subject leader and I] discuss tactics with difficult groups and ideas for challenging subjects”. The hint that emulation of practice is a facet of subject leader influence is echoed in another respondent’s answer that, “I have used successfully some of her teaching ideas”. A final example emphasised that the experience and expertise of subject leaders were crucial: “With one particularly disruptive Year 10 group I have been advised not to make lessons fun but just to make them write”.

Of those respondents who opted for “little” or “no” influence, the majority described it as a positive; typical comments were, “Subject leader trusts our professional ability” and, “he recognises my practice as very good”. Some comments acknowledged the individual nature of teaching, for example, “[he] allows us to teach in our own individual way”. Others, though, sprang more naturally from the conditions of the relationship as uncovered by other questions. Time was a factor (“[subject leader is] too busy to talk outside of departmental meetings”) and divergences in practice (“[subject leader] teaches different things”). More seriously, some of the responses were openly critical of subject leaders; one, for example, stated that, “no discussions on my teaching or observations of my teaching have ever taken place between us”, while another doubted the subject leader’s expertise with, “he’s not a great teacher himself, we don’t think he knows best”.

The final question to address the second research question was an open question posed to subject leaders alone, asking them what sanctions were available to them to ensure compliance among department members who might not be performing as required (question 23). The main reasons for including it were partly to more clearly define the types of power available to subject leaders and partly to explore the organisational dynamics which condition their work. The responses universally denied that any meaningful sanctions exist. There was some mention of the use of observations and advice-orientated dialogue emanating from them, but subject leaders mostly bemoaned their lack of power in this respect. A head of Computer Studies, for example, put it in this way: "There are no sanctions that I can apply directly". Some tried to avoid the issue by locating sanctions in the realm of the unacceptable or unworkable; one wrote that she, "[did] not believe in sanctions" and another contributed, "I cannot imagine applying a sanction – other than letting [department members] know of my disapproval". Generally, though, the responses portrayed subject leaders as agents for the upwards referral of professional competence problems among department members. Subject leaders saw themselves as evidence gatherers reporting their findings to senior managers who might then apply sanctions or withhold rewards. At best, the subject leader might be involved in setting targets for improvement. This was not always seen as a perfect system; a head of English and Media described the process as one in which she would, "see my line manager, have a meeting, create an action plan (nothing much gets done)".

The limits placed on a subject leader's ability to influence the members of his or her department came through as a major theme from these answers. Subject leaders claimed to have little time in which to impact on the practice of their followers together with a narrow repertoire of power and authority resources. That they are middle leaders in

a school also bears on the problem. These were areas which were examined in more depth in the interview stage of the research. Perhaps the key theme for exploration via interview, however, was the apparent disjunction in perceptions between subject leaders and department members that has come through in this section.

The next section will deal in detail with those survey questions which were designed to gain data towards answering the third of the research questions.

The Third Research Question

The third research question centres on teamwork as the manifestation of subject leader influence in action. Its wording – “what are the implications of the answers to [research] questions 1 and 2 for purposeful teamwork in subject departments?” – shows that it is linked to the questions that precede it, and this was reflected in the questionnaires in which the questions looked at above led on to a section on team dynamics.

The first question to deal with this topic was question 16 for subject leaders and question 15 for department members. This was another attitudes-orientated closed question which asked respondents to select a statement which best described teamwork within their departments as they saw it – follow-up open questions sought to expand on the raw answers. The statements, although not covering every possibility, formed a spectrum of team dynamic scenarios, one of which, it was hoped, would reflect the trend in every department surveyed. The statements were suggested by the literature on collegiality and organisational structures discussed in Chapter 3 and were intended to complement the

questions posed in answer to research question 2 by providing a more detailed picture of the ways in which influence within departments operates. Subject leader responses produced the percentages given in Table 15:

		%
1	We are a closely bonded team with clear aims and objectives which are followed by everyone	40
2	We work well together, although not all members of the department follow the stated aims and objectives	36
3	We get on well personally, but tend to follow individual teaching methodologies	17
4	There are some tensions in the department and little sharing of practice	7
5	There is almost no interaction between members of the department	0

Table 15: Subject leader descriptions of teamwork within their departments

With 76% of responses coming in the top two categories, it appeared that respondents perceived their departments as operating on a solid basis of teamwork. Nevertheless, the second statement, which was chosen by over a third of all respondents, is not entirely positive, including as it does the concession that not all department members adhere with complete fidelity to targets set by subject leaders. It could be pointed out that between the first statement and the second there is a wide range of situations which are not covered directly by the statements as written, but it should be remembered that the purpose of this question was to find a “best fit” and not to identify every subtle nuance. Furthermore, an open follow-up question (to be discussed shortly) gave respondents the opportunity to consider other possibilities. The responses begged the question of what the precise sources of the avowed teamwork were – especially given the constraints on

subject leader influence identified elsewhere. The follow-up questions and the interview stage of the research sought some clarification of this issue. When these data are combined with the almost a fifth of respondents who went for the third option – that teaching methodologies were not shared across the department – implications for the question of subject leader influence began to emerge.

As with other questions, the subject leader responses are most clearly illuminated by the department member responses to the same question, as shown by Table 16:

		%
1	We are a closely bonded team with clear aims and objectives which are followed by everyone	23
2	We work well together, although not all members of the department follow the stated aims and objectives	38
3	We get on well personally, but tend to follow individual teaching methodologies	32
4	There are some tensions in the department and little sharing of practice	7
5	There is almost no interaction between members of the department	0

Table 16: Department member descriptions of teamwork within their departments

It is interesting that the percentages of respondents who opted for statements 4 and 5 are identical to those for subject leaders, with the final statement receiving no votes at all. Worthy of comment here is the fact that the first option was chosen less often than was the case with subject leaders. We can see that statements 2 and 3, which do not completely deny departmental cohesion, but make the department members themselves more pro-active, receive between them the bulk of responses - 70% - with almost a third

of respondents stating that members of their departments tend to follow individual teaching methodologies, a figure that almost doubles that for subject leaders. The interview stage of the research went on to explore what these data might mean for notions of collegiality and distributed leadership within subject departments.

The open follow-up questions for subject leaders (questions 17 and 18) asked respondents to outline the strategies they use to engender teamwork (if they opted for either of the first two of the above possibilities) or to account for problems with teamwork in their departments (if they chose one of the bottom three options). From the reasons given for choosing one of statements 3, 4 and 5, two major themes emerged. The first is that teamwork is a matter of how individual personalities integrate and that, when this does not happen, there is no teamwork. One respondent wrote that, “There is a clash of personalities in the department which leads to tensions and little desire to share practice or work as a cohesive unit”, and another stated, “see ‘stubborn old goat’ quote. Lots of individuals with other priorities” As with some previous answers, active resistance to subject leader influence was noted, as in, “Individual agendas. Unwillingness to implement change”. Some responses attempted to locate these problems in specific aspects of practice; one stated that a problem with teamwork was, “unequal levels of experience. Difficulty of sharing practice”, and yet another – a head of Design and Technology - claimed to have detected a basis for his complaints in department member genders: “Female resistance to change and new technology”. The second theme that was apparent in these answers was a denial that there is a tension between individual approaches and team cohesion, as one respondent said, “I do not accept the premise that when colleagues ‘follow individual teaching methodologies’ that it signifies a problem

in teamwork”. This was echoed in another answer that looked to a broader concept for its justification: “allowing the individual to thrive is surely good leadership”.

Those subject leaders who opted for either of statements 1 and 2 gave a number of strategies that they use, some of which introduced interesting new ideas into the data. There was more talk of sharing ideas and resources with schemes of work again appearing prominently in responses. One respondent described this process as having a deeper level when she wrote that teamwork in her department came from, “values-driven decision making with all contributing to core values”. Another mentioned the value of letting department members take, “ownership of areas”. While these ideas are similar to those raised in answer to other questions, what was fresh in many of these responses was an emphasis on social relationships as the foundation of effective teamwork. This was characterised by some in a relatively weak form, as by the head of Business Studies who highlighted, “informal bonding – sitting together at break/lunch”, or as by a head of Modern Foreign Languages who attributed to her department an, “atmosphere of fellow professionals ... recognition of a job well done (using mentoring/coaching model)”. Others, however, viewed such social relationships as needing to be cultivated and maintained, as in the response that spoke of, “coffee and biscuits/cakes during departmental time”, and another that discussed the benefits of, “engender[ing] good working relationships through social contact outside school”.

The department member follow-up questions were equally illuminating. Of those who chose either of the top two options, some gave resource provision as a factor, but fewer than was the case with the subject leaders. Keeping members of the department informed about decisions, developments and changes was also mentioned, as in,

“regular meetings and memos so everyone knows expectations” and “department meetings are well organised ... good documentation to back up ... plans and keep us informed”. The personal relationship between subject leaders and their followers, however, figured more prominently. A number of respondents appreciated the empathetic approaches of their subject leaders, one, for example, praising his, “easy-going attitude” and another valuing a, “supporting [of] department members to follow their strengths”. The most complete answer gave examples of how this might operate in action:

“He treats us all equally and listens to everyone’s perspective. Jobs are shared out between everyone in the department. No one is singled out if they can’t do something or made to feel inadequate. He is emotionally literate and caters to each person’s needs and personalities. Is always on our side when we have a problem with senior leadership”.

Other answers contained similar points, several using the word “informal”, as in, “He encourages both formal and informal discussion” and, “informal feedback (in staffroom during breaks, etc)”.

The follow-up answers from those who had selected one of the bottom three options were sometimes openly critical of the subject leader’s style and/or approach. A Chemistry teacher stated that her subject head, “rules by fear and aggression” and a Geography teacher wrote of, “personality clashes between [Head of Department] and members of the department”. Another respondent attributed a lack of a team ethic to, “poor management and leadership”, while the most cryptic answer saw it as a consequence of, “history!”. A small number of respondents located problems with teamwork in the

attitudes of department members themselves, such as the one who answered, “individualists to the death!” A more frequently given reason was that individual teaching styles tended to militate against teamwork. Typical responses included, “there is a mix of teaching styles that don’t lend themselves to much resource sharing or teamwork” and, “teachers are unwilling/unable to change their styles”. Again, this was not generally seen as a problem, one Commerce teacher writing that, “[department members] prefer to be left to their own devices and are happy to work with the department strategic plan”. Clearly, these data are highly relevant to the central problem of how subject leaders influence members of their departments and merited further exploration through the interview stage of the research.

Building on the above, the next question dealt with motivation (question 19 for subject leaders, 18 for department members). Subject leader responses centred on three broad areas. The first was summed up by the head of Design and Technology who wrote that motivation was, “not needed – we both have a desire to succeed”; several respondents answered with variations on this – that department members are self-motivating and do not need additional input from subject leaders. The second major area was the frequent talk of using praise and other methods of positive reinforcement to engender a sense of well-being in department members; sometimes, this was seen to take the form of simple rewards, as in this from a head of English, “I provide tea, coffee, milk and biscuits for the department and make sure the office is a pleasant place to be”. Other rewards were also listed, ranging from informing senior management of department members’ successes to offering the prospect of career advancement. Within departments, this was sometimes manifested as a version of a collegial environment: one head of modern languages commented that she motivated through, “shared ownership/expertise”, and, “distributed

leadership perceived by the wider community". On the whole, though, the responses highlighted informal methods, such as "persuasion", "recognising contributions" and "celebrating achievements", or, in the words of one head of Science, "making them feel liked and valued". Occasionally, these were placed in the broader context of performance management, an example being from a different head of Science who wrote that he, "gives positive and constructive criticism with suggestions for improvement". The third main area revealed by the responses was one that is relevant to the types of authority noted earlier: it was summed up by a head of RE who viewed motivation as emanating from the subject leader's "belief and passion" and "enthusiasm". Another respondent stated it more straightforwardly – "lead by example".

Department members gave motivational methods that were often very similar to the above, but a sizeable number of responses hinted at tensions in departments worthy of further research. The reward culture was in evidence again, as in "wine at Xmas!" and "doughnuts!" There was also mention of resource provision, such as, "supplying additional handouts for practice". Several answers echoed the sentiment in one Mathematics teacher's response - "people feel involved and empowered" - in feeling motivated by being allowed to work autonomously and have an impact on the overall running of the department. Generally, though, the emphasis was on interpersonal relationships and shared practice. A response that sums this up came from a history teacher: "He is a respected colleague and inspires that respect by leading by example. He is willing to ask for advice as often as give it. He makes me feel valued by picking on things I have achieved and defends my corner if necessary". Other respondents underlined the importance of praise and positive feedback.

As with previous questions, however, it was clear that not all of these relationships were entirely harmonious and that not all respondents felt motivated by their subject leaders. A number of respondents did not even answer the question on motivation and, of those that did, over 20% either claimed not to be motivated by their subject leaders at all (sometimes, this was characterised once again as a function of “self-motivation”, in one case this being “despite” the subject leader’s input) or they gave reasons why their subject leaders actively de-motivated them. One answer mentioned a culture of, “little positive feedback”, while another went further in speaking of, “very few supportive and positive comments, if any they are mostly negative criticism”. A Science teacher stated that her subject leader adopted, “bullying behaviour” as her chief motivational strategy.

In order to fully address the third research question it was deemed important to discover the extent to which departments operate as collegial units, the spur for this being the literature considered in Chapter 3. That said, as Munn and Drever (1995) point out, “questions have to be phrased in a way that matches the vocabulary of your respondents” (page 21). With this in mind, I decided to avoid the somewhat specialised term “collegiality”, which, for some respondents, would have required explanation, and word the question as an enquiry about the more readily-understood notion of delegation. As we have seen, authors such as Court (2003) have drawn a clear distinction between the two concepts. Nevertheless, delegation is a necessary first step towards the creation of a department based around distributed leadership and so I considered it valid to seek evidence of it in the departments researched - with a view to going deeper in the next stage of research. The questions were number 20 for subject leaders and 19 for department members and were closed questions which again asked for respondents to indicate one statement that was a “best fit” for the situation in their departments.

The subject leader responses yielded the data given in Table 17:

		%
1	I delegate freely	16
2	I often delegate, but ensure that certain responsibilities are mine alone	49
3	I sometimes delegate, largely to ease the pressure on myself	21
4	I rarely delegate and then only reluctantly	12
5	I never delegate	2

Table 17: Subject leaders' estimations of the extent to which they delegate

Of these responses 70% fall into categories 2 and 3, neither of which could be said to describe a truly collegial situation in which distributed leadership is the norm. Certainly, they suggest that there is much delegation and, therefore, a measure of distributed leadership, but, in both instances, the subject leader is very much in control and is the apparent source of whatever leadership opportunities are made available. It is also worth mentioning that options 4 and 5, in which delegation is largely dismissed as a practice, attracted almost as many responses between them as the more collegially-orientated option 1, which was chosen by an unexpectedly low 16%.

The department member answers to the equivalent question produced the data contained in Table 18:

		%
1	My subject leader delegates freely	23
2	My subject leader often delegates, but he or she ensures that certain responsibilities are reserved for himself or herself	45
3	My subject leader sometimes delegates, largely to ease the pressure on himself or herself	21
4	My subject leader rarely delegates and then only reluctantly	9
5	My subject leader never delegates	2

Table 18: Department members’ estimations of the extent to which subject leaders delegate

Table 18 clearly shows that options 2 and 3 were again the most popular, the percentages for the individual options being slightly lower than those for subject leaders. More remarkable is the fact that almost 50% more department members believed that subject leaders delegate freely than was the case with the subject leader responses. It may have been that interpretations of the word “freely” varied and that, moreover, department members, viewing events from purely personal perspectives, perhaps tended to see delegation in whatever form as unrestrained by broader considerations. Open follow-up questions were used as a way to add dimension to the bare percentages.

The follow-up questions for subject leaders asked respondents to outline the chief benefits of delegation if they had opted for statement 1, 2 or 3 (question 21), or to account for their failure to use delegation if they had chosen 4 or 5 (question 22). The responses to the former often mentioned that delegation is a method of evincing leadership throughout the department; a head of History wrote that it, “encourages

ownership and leadership at different levels”, a sentiment mirrored in the response from a head of English who stated that delegation allowed the “empowerment” of department members. This was, indeed, a word that appeared in a number of responses. Linked to it was a feeling among respondents that delegation also aids the creation of teamwork, a head of Mathematics, for instance, stating that it is, “inclusive to all, help [sic] engender teamwork”. Notions of collegiality are being touched on here, a trend that is even more apparent in a response that saw delegation as a way for all department members to, “feel that it is our department”. A head of PSHE said much the same thing, giving more detail with, “[delegation] resists the notion that only you are capable of certain tasks ... collaboration is much better than autocracy”. Again, trust was often cited as central to this, as in one response that gave delegation as a practice that, “makes [department members] feel involved, valued and trusted”.

Capacity building featured in some answers, the suggestion being that delegated tasks allowed individuals to develop their competences. A head of English and Media believed that, “taking responsibility is good for morale and professional development”, while a head of ICT said that delegation, “develops abilities of the team”. That delegation also allows a certain amount of specialisation was mentioned by several respondents, one pinpointing “shared expertise” as a benefit. This was given as a motivating factor by a number of respondents. Several responses, however, focused on the advantages of delegation to subject leaders themselves. A head of Geography saw it as allowing, “all jobs to be done without undue stress on one person”, a head of History going further with, “it is not possible to do everything yourself”. A head of Science had it that it allows the subject leader to concentrate, “on the essential HOD jobs”. A head of Physics adopted

the stance that delegation is a condition of leadership itself, writing that, “my job is not to do everything – it is to lead – delegation is therefore essential”.

Of those respondents that answered question 22, some gave structural reasons for the lack of delegation in their departments with one stating that she had, “a small department; no need for [delegation]”. Others avoided delegation because of wider responsibilities held by their followers, a head of Art saying of her department, “they were already too overwhelmed to do anything but teach their textile and photography lessons”. A small number of respondents identified other problems as responsible for their approach. One head of Science said simply that delegation is not used because, when it is tried, “things don’t get done”, and a certain antagonism underlies the answer from a head of Design and Technology who wrote, “I feel that they feel that I am paid to do the job”.

The equivalent questions for department members (20 and 21) were more narrowly focused in the responses that were given. Those respondents who answered question 21, enumerating the positive aspects of delegation, almost all focussed on empowerment and the unlocking of individual expertise. A PE teacher, for example, said that delegation works by, “letting ‘experts’ lead their expertise [sic]” and a Mathematics teacher contributed, “I am pretty autonomous in my specialist work and trusted to do a good job”. A small number of respondents did also discuss workload issues; a Science teacher wrote that delegation creates, “less stress for the subject leader, more time to develop ideas, meetings and chasing up pupil discipline problems”, and an Economics teacher stated that it, “keeps workload of Head of Department down so has time to lead effectively”. Professional development was also prominently mentioned. A History teacher

put the notion in very specific terms by stating that, “[the subject leader] knows that most of us would like to be HODs ourselves one day, so he has an eye on our professional development”. This idea also informed the response of a Mathematics teacher who stated that, “ambitious people get things to put on their CV”.

Those department members who chose question 21 - giving reasons why they believed that delegation was not used - fell into two groups. The first took a positive attitude, exemplified by a Biology teacher who said that delegation was eschewed by her subject leader, “because she wants to ease pressure on the teachers in the department”. A Geography teacher said something similar when she stated that her subject leader did not use delegation, “to relieve pressure on the rest of the department. Plus she is a workaholic!” The gist of these answers is that the subject leaders in question avoided delegating tasks as a service to their followers, to allow them to concentrate on their primary responsibilities. Not all respondents saw this as a good thing, however, and the second group pointed to what they saw as deficiencies in their subject leaders’ practice. A different Biology teacher, for instance, spoke of her subject leader’s, “insecurity, anxiety and worry about taking responsibility for things that go wrong” and an ICT teacher claimed that his subject leader “likes control”.

Although it can be said that subject leaders and department members were broadly in agreement regarding the merits of delegation, certain differences of tone and emphasis emerged which gave a direction for more detailed research. The subject leaders were, on the whole, more willing or able to define delegation in the conceptual light of ideas about leadership and team-building whereas department members tended to view it from a more personal angle, giving priority to it as a vehicle for their own involvement and future

development. As with previously discussed questions, the wider implications of subject leadership were more readily grasped by the subject leaders themselves than their followers.

A final series of open questions was posed for subject leaders alone. These, questions 24, 25, 26 and 27, followed on from the query at the start of the survey about whether the respondent had been appointed internally or externally. The first two questions asked about the advantages and disadvantages of having been appointed internally – if that were the case with an individual respondent – and the latter two questions did likewise for externally-appointed respondents. As was mentioned earlier, these questions were intended to add further depth and detail to the data about relationships within departments. On the theme of subject leader authority and its sources, it was considered valid to investigate whether the extent to which leaders have been previously known – perhaps in non-leadership capacities – had a bearing on the power relationships at work in departments. I also saw some validity in considering what this issue meant for professional identity: not only is an appointment to a leadership role potentially the beginning of a change in an individual's professional identity, but there is the possibility that the professional identities of those around him or her will also be impacted. For an external appointment, these changes will possibly have stark “start” and “end” points, but, for an internal appointment, the process may be more subtle, operating through a lengthier period of re-adjustment and re-framing.

Internally appointed respondents mainly highlighted the levels of authority that came along with their situation. A head of Media Studies said that, “[department members] know more about why my experience and skills make me suitable to lead the subject”. A

head of History stated that he, “already had a reputation in the school”. A head of Modern Languages linked this to the “middle leadership” aspects of the post: “strengthen ability to manage up (head) and down given established track record”. Equally important, though, was the sense that being appointed internally meant that relationships within the department were already established; this was both personal (a head of German commenting, “relationship already in place. Able to relate”) and professional (the fact that an internal appointment gave the incumbent sound knowledge of department members’ practices; as one head of RE put it, “I already knew their strengths and weaknesses”). Having prior knowledge of the culture of a school as an organisation was also seen as a positive. This was often linked to the idea that an internal appointment avoided a “time lag” that could occur when a new subject leader was appointed externally. A head of Modern Languages, for example, said, “situational knowledge makes it possible to ramp up from the get-go”, a contention echoed by a head of Mathematics: “Smooth transition to the new regime”.

The chief disadvantages were located largely in the region of intra-departmental relationships. In some cases professional jealousy seemed to be the root of any problems, more than one respondent talking of “bad feeling” from members of the department who may have been competitor applicants for the post. One respondent spoke of how she did not enjoy, “dealing with disappointed colleagues who may not have been appointed”. Resulting difficulties of performing the job came through in some answers. One respondent talked of having to prove that she could do it and another expressed frustration at the, “difficulty in bringing in brand new ideas”. Partly this seemed to come from a lack of co-operation among department members, (one subject leader said that, “[department members] still deferred to the old HOD who is now a member of

SMT”) but, just as often, subject leaders themselves were hesitant to wield their new-found power. A head of Mathematics remarked that being appointed internally, “can make one reluctant to take a strong line”, a point also made by a head of Design and Technology who rued his tendency to be “too lenient” with the consequence that he was “taken advantage of”. Other disadvantages of being appointed internally that emerged included the danger that students may suffer some uncertainty and confusion as to who is, in fact, the subject leader in a department and the obverse of some of the above advantages in what one respondent called the, “inherent myopia that stems from coming from the inside”.

Externally appointed subject leaders mostly viewed the chance to bring new ideas into the organisation as the chief advantage of their position. A head of Science characterised this as, “helping to think outside the school’s comfort zone box”. Several answers added to similar sentiments the phrase “no pre-conceptions”, meaning that they were able to bring a fresh eye to the organisation that was unblinkered by what one head of Computer Studies described as, “the micro-politics of the institution”. The opportunity this gave for self-reinvention – a new professional identity - was discussed by some respondents, the basis being that a lack of pre-conceptions could go both ways; a head of PSHE, for example, stated that, “I was an unknown quantity to staff so they had no pre-conceived ideas about me or my abilities.” In practical terms, the consequence of this was seen to be an ability to bring new ideas into the department and move them forward quickly, and, on top of this, to, “bring in good practice from elsewhere”, as a head of Business Studies put it.

Again, the ramifications for subject leader authority were remarked upon by some respondents. One respondent said that being externally appointed meant that the post-holder was, “not perceived as a teacher in another role, [which] give[s] authority to the role”. Another contrasted the situation with what may have been the case had his appointment been internal: “My record speaks for itself and [has] not been ameliorated by any prior relationship”.

The disadvantages of having been appointed externally were almost always characterised in terms of the need to establish authority in a new, unfamiliar organisational environment. This was generally seen to be a facet of relationship-building. A head of History, for example, perceived problems with, “lack of knowledge of existing departmental relationships”. A head of Modern Languages said that, “learning the context of the department and the school through appreciative enquiry takes time”. The dangers inherent in this situation were pointed out by many; these included, “you can make ‘political mistakes’ as you don’t know any better regarding staff relationships, etc”, and not being fully integrated into the culture of the department and school, or, as a head of German put it, “not having insight into the ‘history’ or ‘working’ of the school”. Another issue that caused some anxiety for subject leaders was the possibility of their own irrelevance upon being externally appointed, a point made by a head of Geography who said that she joined a, “very established and effective dept with excellent results – difficult to see how I could make a difference”.

As was the case with many of the answers bearing on the first two research questions, the key themes to emerge from these responses are multifarious. Once more, subject leaders and their followers came across as having very different perceptions of what

occurs in departments. This was evident in the questions on how closely bonded the departments were as teams: both constituencies identified the difficulties of engendering teamwork in what is a largely autonomous occupation. The extent to which this was seen to be the case varied between the two groups. How far delegation and its corollary, collegiality, is used to alleviate the problems was also a source of disagreement, although there was a common feeling that subject leaders only had limited scope to do it. Again, and this is perhaps the key theme of this section, subject leader power and authority lay at the root of the issues. The motivational methods open to subject leaders were seen to be limited and relatively weak in their force. That this was a condition of their relationships with department members came through in the questions on respondents' mode of appointment. The interview stage of the research, then, sought to explore the extent to which subject leaders were able to build teams and make use of distributed leadership strategies. It also tried to draw some conclusions regarding the nature of the relationships that underlie these phenomena with a particular emphasis on motivation as the chief means by which subject leaders exercise influence.

Towards the Interview Stage

This chapter has presented the findings from the questionnaires and, by looking at them under the headings of the research questions, identified themes for further investigation through more in-depth semi structured interviews. Summaries of what was revealed under the headings of the individual research questions have been given throughout the discussion and themes for further investigation have also emerged. Perhaps the key overall theme to come through is that of the differences in perception between the two

groups researched. In terms of leadership for learning, this is, arguably, the most important aspect of these findings. While, as we saw, there was broad agreement as to what should constitute the subject leader role and much common ground regarding sources of authority, differences began to manifest themselves as we worked through what the questionnaires had to say about the research questions. The divergence in responses between subject leaders and department members became clear on such issues as proportion of time spent in guiding professional practice and even number of lessons observed, issues which would appear to be susceptible of some form of simple quantitative measurement: on a side note, these findings give further support to the views explored in Chapter 4 regarding the epistemological weaknesses of positivism. Where the need for opinion and interpretation underpinned a question, marked differences between our two sample constituencies started to appear. Questions of influence on practice and the degree of teamwork in departments exposed major bifurcations between the social world as viewed from the two positions. Open questions also began to suggest that, despite many of the departments investigated being harmonious and co-operative in nature, personal and professional rifts between subject leaders and their followers were evident.

As Greene (2008) reminds us, research should be led by the research questions and what they indicate to be the ultimate aim of the enquiry and, in this chapter, the research questions have indeed provided a framework for the findings presented. Greene (2008) has argued that such a stance has largely driven the development of mixed methods research in which, as is the case here, both qualitative and quantitative research tools are employed in a pragmatic fashion to meet the research aims. However, a note of caution needs to be sounded. Arnon and Reichel (2009) argue that different methods are

not always complementary and can actually produce contradictory findings. In their own research, they noted that answers to closed and open questions in a survey did not mesh together easily into a coherent narrative. Similar points could be made about some of the evidence presented above. As we have seen, questions that were worded in much the same way for the two constituencies surveyed sometimes appear to have been understood differently - with consequences for the data obtained. Moreover, what may have been viewed negatively by subject leaders - their relative lack of influence on practice, for instance - was often presented more positively by department members. Of course, these trends were evident in the pilot and, in many respects, are to be treated as expected and even exciting; it is precisely such differences in the meanings attached to phenomena that justify the decision to research both subject leaders and department members and which, ultimately, provide data of relevance to a judgement on the implications for leadership for learning. This project, in fact, exemplifies what Greene (2008) means when she counsels that mixed method research should only be undertaken if it is the sole approach that will meet the research aims. The questionnaires produced data which will inform a later chapter discussing the findings, and the literature which provides their context, to reach firm conclusions and recommendations for practice. However, they also identified themes for further analysis and begged questions which required more in-depth treatment. The questionnaires completed, I took what I had discovered from them into the interview stage of the research, the findings of which are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS 2: THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Introduction

In order to further explore the themes identified by the questionnaires, the research moved on to the semi-structured interview stage. The following consideration of the data gathered at this stage is arranged according to the themes. In each case, the findings from subject leaders are presented first, followed by those from department members, fully-attributed quotations from the interviews being given when they are relevant (occasionally, a response from a participant is summarised rather than quoted verbatim to allow focus on the salient points). The chapter presents findings from both the pilot and main stage of the research, generally making no distinction between the two. This is because the data from the pilot addressed the research questions and so are worthy of inclusion, quotations being used when useful, irrespective of their source.

It will be recalled that, in looking at how the questionnaires addressed the first of the research questions, we looked at concepts of leadership and management in relation to subject departments - this provides the substance of the first theme to be explored in what follows. Next, with relevance to the second research question, we look at what the interviews had to say about authority and influence and how these factors determine the power relationships that lie behind departmental leadership. With reference to the same research question, we then turn to another theme revealed by the questionnaires, the limitations on subject leader influence. From there, I present interview findings to

illuminate themes that came from those questionnaire data which addressed the third research question dealing with implications for teamwork. Finally, we look at how motivation, morale and job satisfaction were dealt with. It is also worth remembering that the differing perceptions of subject leaders and their followers will have a major impact on the way in which these findings are interpreted in the last chapter, which attempts to reach some conclusions from addressing the first three research questions, making recommendations for further action and research, and, in doing so, try to provide an answer to research question 4.

As Chapter 4 has shown – and as Appendix 2 demonstrates – the semi-structured interviews took place in twenty two departments in eleven schools of various types, the schools being: Three Spires School, The Royal Grammar School, Firthside School, Fenham Grammar School, Mackintosh College, City Grammar School, Kowloon British School (KBS), Castleton School, Anglia Community College, Hilltop High School and Queenswood College. For more detail about these sites, Appendix 2 should be consulted. These sites yielded interviews with twenty subject leaders and twenty eight department members.

In broadly considering data of relevance to research question 1, we will now look at the first of the themes to emerge from the questionnaires, the ways in which leadership and management were seen to operate within subject departments.

Concepts of Management and Leadership in the Context of Departmental Practice

The previous chapter has shown that the questionnaires dealt extensively with issues of leadership and management and how they impact upon the subject leader role. Purely management-based tasks were not, in general, seen to be the essence of the job, more emphasis being placed on interpersonal relationships. The interview schedules - presented as Appendix 4 - demonstrate that this was an area that figured prominently in the second research stage.

Like the questionnaire respondents, participants were asked to give their opinion as to what the role of subject leader should include. The head of English at KBS gave a succinct definition:

“... the primary responsibility that I see, is managing the staff and the resources of the department, so that they operate as efficiently and as effectively as possible”.

A similar, more detailed, reply came from the head of Chemistry at Firthside who highlighted some of the tasks that need to be carried out within the broad parameters of the post:

“... my role ... is to support the teachers in my department and to make sure that they have everything they require to teach well ... [that] they have everything ready to deliver the lessons that they need to deliver”.

The head of Design and Technology at City Grammar highlighted similar areas, saying that the essence of his job was, “getting the schemes of work in place”. A pupil-centred notion was espoused by the head of English at the Royal Grammar School:

“[my role is] making sure that the girls that we teach get their sort of diet of English that they are entitled to”.

Such a view generally agrees with that of the head of Music at Fenham Grammar who stated that his role was to:

“... enable all musicians to achieve their best and to enable the resources and opportunities to be provided for them”.

Yet another possibility was mooted by the head of Drama at Castleton School who opined that the role has a public dimension:

“... to ensure the continued development of the department to see year on year developments in a range of areas... it’s the public side of building the reputation of the department”.

However, some participants were less precise, there being an uncertainty about the role which mirrored that noted in the questionnaire data; the head of History at Anglia Community College had this to say:

“Well, ooh, uhhm, that’s quite a broad question. Uhhhm... well, I... I... the thing I

rank the most, above everything else, for me, is responsibility for results”.

The lack of confidence here is seen again in the answer from the head of French at Fenham Grammar who dealt with the question thus:

“Yeah, well, this is a tricky one... the number of different jobs that you have is huge, and it will vary from time to time, from season to season”.

This all alludes to the lack of clear role definition that has historically bedevilled subject leadership. In terms of influence over department members it poses a problem in that it makes judgements regarding the expected relationships difficult to ground in a specific context.

To begin to address the first research question, the interviews asked participants to give their opinions about what is meant by leadership and management. That there is usually seen to be a theoretical distinction between the two was generally accepted and recognised, as the head of Art at Mackintosh College demonstrated:

“I think that lots of people can MANAGE a department, but I think that leadership is one of those sorts of... I don't think it's one of those simple things, but I think that leadership is more synonymous with inspiration...”.

Similarly, the head of Design and Technology from City Grammar stated that:

“You can be an extremely efficient manager and you can be totally impersonal”.

That said, the level of sophistication in the answers given on this topic varied. All participants articulated some concept of management. The head of Computing at City Grammar's definition was: "merely overseeing what is, and making what is work reasonably well". The head of Languages at KBS offered: "that's just kind of admin, making sure that things tick over". Occasionally, a subject leader was narrower in focus; the head of History at Anglia Community College, for instance, saw management in terms of a single task, stating that it is all about, "who's teaching which classes this year". On the whole, the emphasis in these answers was on "traditional" management tasks – administration and the organisation of everyday transactions (indeed, the head of Languages at Firthside gave the single word "organisation" as her entire definition of management).

While the responses on management accord reasonably closely with accepted ideas, the same was not always true of what subject leaders said about leadership. The head of Languages at KBS stated that, "leadership should give things momentum", while the head of Drama at Castleton had it that leadership is,

"... what you can also personify, you know, you can actually be it, you know, just a little bit more yourself".

Other subject leaders gave greater salience to the interpersonal angle; the head of Physics at Fenham Grammar saw leadership as:

"... to do with selling [department members] ideas and getting people on board, getting people thinking the same way that you're thinking".

Perhaps the closest to a “textbook” definition came from the head of Chemistry at Firthside:

“... [leadership is] getting [department members] to do what you want them to do in a way that suits their needs and their development”.

While these ideas are diverse, what they have in common is a sense that leadership is personal to the individual leader and operates by the leader somehow communicating that personal dimension to his or her followers.

However, when the interviews turned in more detail to management and leadership in action, it became obvious that idealism did not always survive reality. In keeping with the results of the questionnaires, “vision” was mentioned as an aspect of leadership. The head of Music at Fenham Grammar stressed this area, giving as his personal definition of vision that it is:

“... something that ... that you want to aspire to, you want to bring into reality, something that is tangible, something that is realistic”.

Two aspects of this quotation are worthy of comment; firstly, it places an emphasis on the long-term, aspirational nature of vision. This was evident in other interviews. The head of Mathematics at Anglia Community College saw it as a key aspect of the subject leader role:

“... there is the longer term, the more visionary work, such as the development of

the Development Plan, the Faculty Improvement Plan”.

How such visions are to be achieved leads on to the second idea to spring from the Fenham Grammar head of Music’s answer: pragmatism. He stated that vision is worthless unless it can be realised. In fact, the word “vision” was only used by ten of the interviewed subject leaders and the visions they described tended to be limited in scope.

The head of Lower School Science at Fenham Grammar gave her vision as being to:

“... [have] a lot more interactive teaching, and also trying to get more excitement back into Science”.

Likewise, the head of Science at The Royal Grammar was open about the constraints on her vision:

“I want the teachers to be confident in the classroom and be able to work together as a team. It doesn’t always happen”.

These data seem to be suggesting that the priority placed on vision in the questionnaires was describing a situation in which visions are partial and centred on realistic, readily achievable goals.

In describing the operation of leadership and management, participants spoke of relatively mundane organisational tasks as predominating in their working lives. The head of Mathematics at Castleton denied that there was time for much activity that could be described as “visionary and philosophical”, saying that her job was “mainly managerial”,

as, “one’s time is devoted to the day-to-day, operational matters; not strategic matters”. The head of Chemistry at The Royal Grammar School spoke of how he, “[makes] sure that the scheme of work is acceptable ... that the resources are there”. He said, however, that this was, “... more of a management role... my leadership role has been quite sort of minimal”.

Having been given some attention in the questionnaires, Schemes of Work were discussed by all interview participants, although they were either seen as an exclusively management-orientated organisational task or as a means of encouraging collegiality, of which more will be said later. Another major facet of the subject leader role according to the interviews was administration, which had failed to excite much interest among the questionnaire respondents. Although, for instance, the head of English at KBS spoke of his role as being about, “encouraging collaboration and collective thinking in terms of the curriculum”, he ended by confessing that, “the reality of my job... is that admin dominates it”.

Even participants who spoke in idealistic terms about vision tended to give less inspirational examples of their practice. The head of Languages at City Grammar, for example, faced with a declining take up for her subject, saw the solutions as being management-based (to re-structure the courses and change the textbooks). The head of French at Fenham Grammar placed management in a visionary context when he said that he, “looks at the philosophy of what we’re trying to do”, before giving examples of this in practice which dwelt on the procurement and deployment of resources.

Communication within departments was discussed by all twenty subject leader

participants. Departmental meetings came across as a major communication channel. The heads of English and Science at The Royal Grammar gave a typical situation when they said that their meetings have pre-arranged agendas and full minutes are taken. Such formal structures were not always seen as inviolable. The head of History from Anglia Community College when asked whether he provided agendas for his meetings replied:

“... no, no, no, not like that, not at all. I don't ... not ... not formal meetings, not taking up lots of time; all I will say is, 'Can we have a quick get together?'”

Similarly, the head of Mathematics at Castleton stated that, “often the agendas... are quite informal”, while the head of Chemistry at Firthside responded to my request to examine some minutes with, “If I wrote some minutes you could have some”.

This last point hints at a key feature of the interviews - that communication within departments was mainly seen as informal. The head of History and Politics from Queenswood College said that, “informal contacts within the team” were necessitated by difficulties in getting the department together. The head of ICT at City Grammar similarly said that communication in his department was carried out, “by talking to each other when you get the chance during the day”. The head of Mathematics at Castleton spoke of how the, “busy lives of teachers” made this inevitable. The head of English at The Royal Grammar claimed to make use of email, although she said that communication was more frequently verbal because, “it's a small department, so it is easy to keep up with people”.

This sense that informal methods of communication were of paramount importance in

departmental dynamics was suggested by all the subject leaders. The head of Mathematics at Anglia Community College spoke of how she likes to have a, “my door is always open kind of policy”. The head of Design and Technology at City Grammar said that members of his department spent much of their free time together, conversation being a mixture of the casual and the work-related. The potential for informal methods of communication to falter was accepted by several participants, such as the head of Expressive Arts at Hilltop High, who said that, “generally [informal methods] are probably nicer [than formal channels] but possibly not always with being told the truth”.

As a basis for the later discussion chapter, therefore, it can be seen that, while management was generally well understood by subject leader participants, the nature of the post is not a matter of general consensus even among those that hold it, and that, mostly, the job is seen as being comprised of managerial tasks, leadership being exercised through largely informal channels.

Many of the interviews with department members broadly agreed with the above in stressing the prominence of the managerial in the lives of subject leaders. In the Three Spires School pilot, an English teacher opined that leadership in his department was, “not particularly noticeable”, but that schemes of work, provided by his subject leader, were, “very important”. Such views accorded with those of a wide range of the department members interviewed. An English teacher from The Royal Grammar said that a key aspect of her subject leader’s job was, “to make sure that the schemes of work are... up-to-date”. Similarly, a Languages teacher from Firthside gave as her subject leader’s main job the organisation of, “all of the exam entries and things like that”. Interestingly, she went on to say, “I don’t know if someone who does administration is necessarily a

manager". She concluded by touching on leadership in stating that, "a manager would be managing people". All of the participants to some degree agreed with the Design and Technology teacher from City Grammar who told me that his subject leader, "does all the managerial tasks".

Department members sometimes mentioned leadership in relation to its absence, as when a Languages teacher from KBS said of his subject leader:

"I think his role should be leading the subject and I think to a large extent ... that probably wasn't happening as it should".

That this disagrees with the views of his subject leader suggests that both constituencies were capable of pushing individual agendas. It certainly references the theme of differing perceptions between subject leaders and followers identified in the questionnaires. Department members actually demonstrated some inability to conceptualise leadership in relation to subject leaders – there was little discussion of "vision". Instead, a favourite term was "co-ordination". A Science teacher from The Royal Grammar saw her subject leader's job as, "more of a co-ordination role", giving examples of this focussing on managerial tasks, such as devising schemes of work. A French teacher from Fenham Grammar saw co-ordinating in a more people-orientated way when he said that it meant identifying a department's, "certain strengths and certain weaknesses", to ascertain what the department members, "do best, what they do not so well", the result being that, "good practice should be shared", although the stated vehicle for this would be a common store of, "exercises and resources". Even when department members used more visionary vocabulary, there was an evident inability to describe their subject leaders

in anything other than managerial and transactional contexts. Typical was a Languages teacher from Firthside who said that his subject leader, “has got to look at the bigger picture”, but, inevitably, “she has also got a lot of administrative jobs”. Likewise, a Castleton Mathematics teacher who spoke of his subject leader as being, “somebody within the department who [has] a short and a long term plan”, saw these plans as realisable through, “advancement with technology”, and, “pooling resources”.

Communication within departments was, again, discussed by all participants. Formal meetings received coverage, as by a Castleton School Mathematics teacher who said that, “there is a meeting... every Thursday”, at which his department, “can discuss various Mathematical matters... and people can say things, silly things as well”. However, most participants made little of such formal means of communication, the emphasis, again, being on the informal. Indeed, a Physics teacher from Fenham Grammar mentioned formal meetings only to downplay them, saying, “we have a scheduled meeting once a week which possibly, in reality, works out as once every couple of weeks”. A City Grammar Mathematics teacher stated that formal meetings were rare, being only, “half-termly”. More common was the sort of communication described by the Fenham Physics teacher who said, “we will have discussions in the midst of the week, at any stage, just exchanging ideas and whatever else”. That such an approach can be favoured by department members came through from an interview with a City Grammar Design and Technology teacher who told me that, “those informal meetings, I believe, are extremely useful ... we know what’s going on”. Again, the prevalence of such means of communication as described by department members did not always agree with what subject leaders had said. Most starkly, a Drama teacher from Castleton directly contradicted her subject leader in suggesting that email was a last resort and that he,

“still values the kind of face-to-face contact”.

That said, department members did describe breakdowns in these informal lines of communication. A Fenham Grammar teacher of Science, when asked how her subject leader communicated with her, said, “I will get a written note in my pigeonhole”. Organisational context was seen to have an effect on the amount and quality of communication within departments. A Languages teacher from KBS offered the contribution that, “communication... it’s more challenging, I think, when the school is bigger”. He went on to doubt how well his subject leader handled this, saying that, as a communicator, he was only, “on the good side of adequate”. Moreover, the nature of subject leadership as a middle role was viewed by seventeen participants as significant to the success of departmental communications; an English teacher from KBS stated that, “if anything has come out of a meeting that [the subject leader] has been in, he feeds down from the senior management to us”.

In summary, the department member interviews portrayed subject leadership as primarily a management role. In addition, they stressed the informal in communications, seeing more formal channels as less effective in a departmental context. In many ways, then, the interviews confirmed the findings of the questionnaires. The emphasis on informality was a major source of agreement between the two stages of the research. However, there were some interesting differences. Whereas the questionnaires gave greater priority to interpersonal relationships in their definitions of the subject leader role, the interviews found that the managerial predominates. Perhaps most excitingly, though, the divergences in opinion between subject leaders and their followers in the questionnaires were, if anything, intensified by the interviews. What comes through from the data

presented above is the sense that department members view the subject leader role as being more limited in scope than those who actually hold it; this is a significant finding that will be dealt with in detail in the concluding chapter. The next section will investigate this theme in more detail, looking at what the interviews revealed about subject leader influence – perhaps the key attribute of leadership for learning - and its implications for power relationships within departments.

How Authority and Influence Operate in Secondary School Subject Departments and their Implications for Power Relationships

In the questionnaire stage, subject leaders generally saw their authority as emanating from a combination of personal qualities, experience and personal relationships with department members. Moreover, they generally granted themselves a level of influence, the majority of answers on the matter suggesting that they enjoyed “some” or “a great deal” of influence over department members’ professional practice. While department members concurred broadly regarding authority, we saw that there were divergences on the question of influence. The interviews sought to add colour to these findings, probing claimed sources of authority and attempting to isolate and define the power resources available to subject leaders.

In the interviews, subject leaders tended to view authority as being located in their own records and personal qualities. The head of Modern Languages at City Grammar expressed the matter in much-echoed terms when she claimed that her authority came from:

“... experience ... being here over twenty years. And... by example, in that I don’t ever ask [department members] to do anything that I wouldn’t do... myself”.

Both aspects of this response could be found elsewhere. The head of Drama at Castleton gave “experience” as a major source of his authority, while the head of Music at Fenham Grammar stated that a subject leader builds authority by a willingness to, “set an example” by, in his case, “actually being a member of one or two ... ensembles”. The head of Languages at Firthside spoke of how she would not:

“... ask people to do anything that I either haven’t done myself or wouldn’t be prepared to do myself”.

This notion – of leading by example – came through in one form or another in all of the interviews. Indeed, the phrase “leading by example” was used by eleven of the subject leaders (such as the head of History at Anglia Community College).

It was not, however, the only source of claimed authority. The survey finding that a subject leader’s expertise has a bearing on his or her authority within a department was reflected in, for example, the responses from the head of Mathematics at Anglia Community College who called herself a “good role model” for department members and that of the head of IT at City Grammar who said that, “... a great deal [of authority] is to do with the fact that I actually ... know what I’m doing”.

An underlying modesty was detectable in the responses of some participants. The head of Music at Fenham Grammar said that he, “wouldn’t necessarily label [himself] as an

expert, so much as a facilitator". The head of French at the same school was equally self-effacing when he said that, "I have always worked with those whose scholarship I would regard as greater than my own". All of this notwithstanding, and, perhaps, surprisingly, the claim that authority was vested in department members' respect for a subject leader's expertise was made infrequently, appearing in only five of the subject leader interviews.

Three participants spoke of the authority inherent to the role. The head of Art at Mackintosh College spoke of how department members would respond to him:

"... kind of symbolically, because they know that I'm ... or, at least, I hope ... they know that I'm head of the department"

The head of French at Fenham Grammar stated baldly that, "... authority comes essentially from my position. I am the head of department"; City Grammar's head of ICT concurred, saying, "I suppose that it does derive from the fact that I have that job [of subject leader]".

All participants - in agreement with the outcomes of the questionnaires - claimed interpersonal relationships within departments as a source of authority. The head of Languages at KBS had it that his authority came from the fact that he was "trusted", the basis of that trust being, "a kind of fair-handedness". Similarly, the head of Music at Fenham Grammar said: "[department members are] willing to work with me... because I create an environment in which they enjoy working". The head of Physics at the same school linked authority to power relationships, saying that, "there is that negotiation at

the beginning, to see whether a situation turns into a power play or not". He went on to say that, "when you can show yourself to be willing to work hard" then, "you start to develop authority". The premise here again is that the subject leader will derive his or her authority from leading by example. These quotations all site authority as generated from among the department members and not imposed by the subject leader; again, this finding will receive attention in the final discussion chapter.

This last point leads on to the nature of subject leader influence as described by participants. As in the questionnaires, coercive influence was generally dismissed. The head of Lower School Science at Fenham Grammar did claim that she could, "withhold the resources so that [a department member] can't do [a practical lesson]", before conceding that she had never actually exercised this option. The head of Languages at Firthside spoke of the need to, "subtly ... apply the pressure if necessary", although the pressure in question was more the use of persuasive techniques than any direct application of sanctions or withholding of rewards. An appeal to schemes of work was the method favoured by the head of French from Fenham Grammar who said that he would prevent a colleague from being too radical in his or her use of textbooks with the argument that, "there are three, four different classes in every given year and they must have had the same tuition". Even when such a process is necessary, though, there was some sense that the power resources open to subject leaders are limited; the head of English at The Royal Grammar said that, "dictating" to people was "not [her] job", going on to add:

“... sometimes you have to say ‘Well, we have got to do this’ but I think that there are ways of presenting that to people... without necessarily having to stamp on them”.

Examples of coercive approaches were rare, however, being confined exclusively to those participants quoted. As can be seen, such views were stated with less than complete conviction. In fact, influence in departments was largely said to be situated in informal relationships. The essence of this was seen to be problems encountered by subject leaders in monitoring the work of their followers. The head of Science at The Royal Grammar, despite citing various formal mechanisms by which monitoring is carried out (checking marking, departmental meetings and formal lesson observations), stressed the significance of the “informal”, although she claimed that, via this route, she knew, “exactly what goes on in everybody’s classroom”. The head of Chemistry at the same school spoke of, “one way of monitoring ... just basically discussing with G___ and K___”. The head of Mathematics at Anglia Community College saw the students themselves as a vehicle through which informal monitoring can occur saying that:

“... students will quite often pop in and say ... I’m not happy with how things are going with this particular teacher”.

Seven participants, especially in subjects with practical elements to them – the City Grammar head of Design and Technology being an example – spoke of how a level of monitoring came from the frequency with which they visited the classrooms of members of their departments. That this approach was less possible in other subjects was brought out by the head of English from KBS who said, “I don’t spend a lot of time in people’s

classrooms and so I don't have that kind of direct observation". Again, he described his influence as springing from informal discussion and interpersonal relationships within the department, saying that, "it's like puppetry ... what we do as a department in terms of discussing curriculum and methodology".

Such methods were seen, on some levels, to be effective in influencing practice. The head of English at KBS talked of how he, "would hope that that [informal discussion] will influence people", in the respect that, "people... picking up the resources, are looking at the lesson plans", meaning that, "there is an influence on what people are doing and also, in some sense, how they are doing it". The head of Mathematics at Anglia Community College was very positive about her role in influencing the practice of her department members, saying, "... we have transformed the teaching and learning". When asked how this process was carried out, she stated that she was, "talking mainly about strategy materials" (in other words, schemes of work and teaching resources) which have allowed her to, "share the practice at faculty meetings so that everybody has access to the ideas". The head of Chemistry at Firthside argued that, "the department reflects my way of seeing the education process in Chemistry, a very structured approach". Examples that he gave included, "in terms of classroom management, I've suggested a few strategies and so on". As will be seen in the next section, however, such claims were not frequently made and were usually qualified.

The interviews with subject leaders, therefore, indicated that authority in subject departments largely derives from a combination of position and personality. The result appears to be a form of power based on informal interactions which can have a positive impact on the professional practice of department members. The interviews with

department members showed that, while they were often sympathetic to these views, there were some significant differences.

Of particular interest in the department member interviews was what came out about the sources of subject leader authority. While different models of authority were touched upon, most revealing was how they were seen to condition compliance relationships. The main determinants of authority within departments were seen to be the legitimacy attaching to the position of subject leader and various forms of professional and personal esteem. More than half of the department members interviewed cited the former as the source of authority. A Fenham Grammar Science teacher, to give one, stated that her subject leader's authority was engendered because, "she is head of department". An English teacher from The Royal Grammar told me that, "there's a hierarchy, that's her title, Head of Department, so... yes, she is the boss".

That said, an equally common answer, being stated, again, in over half of the department member interviews, was that the participants recognised the authority of a subject leader because of his or her professional record or personal qualities or demonstrable abilities. A City Grammar Design and Technology teacher, for instance, spoke of how his subject leader was, "an inspiring person". In a similar way, a Drama teacher from Castleton said that she respected her subject leader because, "[he's] very good at the job, the work, the things that he produces". Some participants developed similar ideas into a discussion of how such personal qualities drove relationships, an English teacher from KBS being a good example when she revealed that:

“I like [my subject leader’s] way of dealing with people. He’s got a very ... nice manner. He’s very kind of ... engaging”.

Subject leader authority based on being personally liked by department members was a theme of ten of the interviews. An Anglia Community College Mathematics teacher, to cite one, was vocal in this regard, “I like [my subject leader]. I like her style an awful lot”. Despite this – as we will see - the types of compliance offered by department members did not always suggest complete acceptance of their subject leaders’ ideas.

As in the subject leader interviews, various methods of reinforcing authority via monitoring were talked about by all of the department members. Interestingly, though, monitoring was rarely said to be a particularly rigorous aspect of practice. Where it was seen to occur, it was, again, lesson observations that dominated. A City Grammar Mathematics teacher described how, in his school, it was “normal” for teachers to be observed “twice a year”. A Mathematics teacher from Anglia Community College described observations as being about ensuring that OfSted requirements for a three part lesson structure are being adhered to. When asked how frequently they occurred, she said, “I have no clue. Of me, if anything, one [per year]”. That lesson observations need not be threatening was brought out by a different Mathematics teacher from Anglia Community College who said that, “I don’t ever feel under pressure by observations ... it’s a chance or opportunity to get some feedback on [practice]”. Informal levels of monitoring - prominent in the subject leader interviews - were mentioned by some department members. A Chemistry teacher from Firthside echoed her subject leader in talking about how going into each other’s classrooms during lessons was common, while

a Castleton Drama teacher said that, “[both members of the department are] aware of what the other is doing”.

Other methods of monitoring were brought out. An English teacher from The Royal Grammar spoke of work scrutinies: “We swap pieces of work fairly regularly... and [subject leaders and senior managers] can see how we mark a piece of work, exam results”. However, it will be seen that such methods did not seem to have been widely adopted and that even lesson observations were rarely used as a method of exerting authority.

Given all of the above, it is, perhaps, surprising that eight of the department members interviewed were willing to concede to their subject leaders a measure of influence on their practice. A Fenham Grammar Physics teacher spoke of “exchanging ideas” with his subject leader so that he could, “absorb [them] into [his] lessons”, and that he would always, “defer to his [subject leader’s] ... desires in the long run”, because he felt that, “if you’re going to lead the department, you’ve got to be given the range and scope to make the decisions”. A Firthside Languages teacher gave an account of precisely how her subject leader influenced her teaching, saying, “she is always helpful about the sort of the ... classroom management issues, which I sometimes have a problem with”. In this, she echoed a History teacher from Anglia Community College who said that her subject leader, “might, for example, say, uh-hm, ‘Have you thought about taking such and such an approach in your lessons?’”. In these examples, it is worth noting that the Physics teacher was highly experienced, whereas the Languages and History teachers were in the early stages of their careers. The attitudes expressed can in part be explained by these contexts. While the extent to which experience affects power relations is beyond

this project's scope, the final chapter's section on recommendations will suggest that further research in this area might yield some interesting outcomes.

Influence based on the legitimate authority evidenced earlier was shown by some of the interviews; a good example is a Castleton Drama teacher who gave a positive account of her personal relationship with her subject leader, before saying, "but, at the end of the day, he is still my boss and so I will do what he asks me to do".

There was detectable in a small number of the interviews a use of coercive power by subject leaders to influence followers; a Science teacher from Fenham Grammar, for example, told of how one subject leader she had had would, "chew [her] head off" with the consequence that, "...he has made me cry with criticism". A similar type of influence was alluded to by a Science teacher from The Royal Grammar who acknowledged that her subject leader did influence her practice, but gave a context for this influence that suggested the influence was not always willingly granted:

"I know how she's likely to react if you say certain things, but you don't say those things, you ... you look for a way around it".

Overall, the department member interviews offered a divergent range of answers under the theme being discussed here. Authority was given as residing in both the role of subject leader and the personal qualities of those individuals inhabiting it. Expertise was less often cited and there was some mention of coercion. Monitoring received much coverage as a way of enforcing authority, but, as with the subject leader interviews, it was not accorded great significance.

Comparing the responses of the subject leaders and department members again brings out some subtle differences that will be further explored in the next section. An advocacy of the primacy of personal relationships comes through from both sets of interviews. However, as the above indicates, department members were more ready to stress the importance of the position of subject leader itself, rather than any individual holder of it. Thus, while subject leaders gave more importance to leading by example and their personal qualities as sources of authority, department members, while broadly agreeing, also gave a definite sense that authority is vested in the role. Similarly, as regards influence, subject leaders tended to argue that, where it was present, it came about through discussion and suggestion. Department members were more ambiguous in their claims; indeed, even those who were largely positive about their subject leaders often gave the impression that influence came about as a result of their formal position and coercion was not dismissed as a means of ensuring such influence.

What these findings mean for the power relationships to be found in subject departments will be discussed in a later chapter. For now, it is necessary to consider a major theme of both the questionnaires and the interviews – the extent to which subject leader influence is severely restricted in several important ways. Given the prominence of leadership for learning in this project's research questions, this is an area of concern.

The Limitations of Subject Leader Influence

The questionnaires indicated that subject leader influence in departments is constrained in several areas, not least in the amount of time available to subject leaders to actually

carry out their responsibilities. It was here, too, that the greatest divergences between subject leaders and their followers were detected in the interviews.

As was alluded to in the previous section, the chief limitation on subject leaders exercising influence was seen to be a lack of information about department member practice. In the interviews, all participants discussed lesson observations, but they came across as being infrequently carried out. The head of Science at The Royal Grammar gave a standard answer on this point when she stated that, “ordinarily, I see people teach at least once a year”. By contrast, the head of Chemistry at Firthside told me that, “I don’t tend to do many formal sit-down-at-the-back-of-the-class observation type things”. This position was mirrored in that of the head of History at Anglia Community College who claimed that he does not favour formal monitoring but tells his colleagues that, “it’s good for us all to pop into each other’s rooms and have a look at what each other is doing”; when asked whether this ever actually happened, though, his reply was, “no, not at all”, because, “everyone is too busy”. Interestingly, he went on to say that, “you don’t NEED to watch lessons to know what’s going on; you just need to keep your ear to the ground”. Here, again, the informal is being underlined, a position reinforced by the head of Mathematics from Castleton who described how information can be gleaned informally by talking to students. The head of Languages at KBS described a system in place at his school, “the walk through” that allowed a large amount of observation to occur in a relatively short space of time:

“... myself and the Principal, we spent an hour just walking through... seven or eight different classrooms... just to get a feel for what goes on”.

Importantly, though, this process was not described as occurring often – once per term at most – and was relatively informal in style, feedback being impressionistic and verbal. Only the head of Mathematics at Anglia Community College outlined a scenario in which formal observations, including written feedback and target-setting, take place more than once per year, the frequency being, “up to three [times] ... a year”.

Although they received overwhelmingly the bulk of attention, lesson observations were not seen as the only method of monitoring department member activity; the head of Mathematics at Castleton described “book trawls” and a “work scrutiny” as monitoring methods. Strangely, though, such strategies appeared only rarely in the interviews, suggesting that they were not much used by the research participants. Even school-wide appraisal processes did not seem to merit much attention, although the head of Languages at Firthside outlined how she used one as a structure for lesson observations, a point echoed by the head of Art from Mackintosh College. Student outcomes as a means of monitoring were occasionally mentioned, variations on the phrase, “as long as the bottom line’s all right” appearing in twelve of the interviews, one being that of the head of English from the Royal Grammar. The head of Expressive Arts at Hilltop High also talked about how she would use student outcomes to form judgements about her followers’ effectiveness.

Subject leaders’ lack of knowledge of what was happening in their departments was seen to impact on two areas of particular interest to this research – influence on practice and the projection of power. Of the former - the comments reported in the previous section notwithstanding - there was a general acceptance that subject leaders enjoy little

influence over the educational practice of members of their departments. The head of Art from Mackintosh College stated the preponderant view when he said that:

“I think that I would like [department members] to be influenced by me in terms of a leader, at setting a positive atmosphere ... but, beyond that, I have to trust them to do the best job that they can”.

In the same vein, the head of History from Anglia Community College said that, “you can’t control what happens in all of your classrooms all of the time”. For the most part, the individual nature of teaching as a profession was the given cause of this situation. The same participant continued, for example, to say that, “people will do as they wish in their classroom”. The head of English at KBS, having claimed some influence on practice, went on to qualify it with:

“I don’t think it’s hugely deep. I think that everybody, ultimately, with their kids and within their classrooms, are going to be different”.

The head of Chemistry from The Royal Grammar spoke of how, as a teacher, “you’re quite isolated most of the time because you’re in your classroom”.

On the whole, this trend was presented in a positive light. Certain metaphors appeared repeatedly to indicate that individual teaching styles are to be encouraged. The head of History from Anglia Community College, for instance, said that:

“... if you dictate how a thing is actually going to be taught, then what is the point in ... being a qualified teacher... you might as well just set a robot off...”

The head of English from The Royal Grammar also said of her followers that, “they’re not robots”, while both the head of English at KBS and the head of Languages at City Grammar spoke of not wishing their departments to consist of “clones” of themselves. That teaching style is an intensely personal matter was mentioned by the head of Mathematics at Anglia Community College who believed that, “a lot of it comes down to individual personalities”. The head of Mathematics at Castleton advocated, “trusting the professionalism” of those around her, while the City Grammar head of Languages said that, “everybody has their own different styles”. A strength of this that she identified was the opportunity that individual styles give for teachers to “share good practice” which might be the consequence of a situation, for instance, in which, “you observe a lesson and you think, ‘That plenary was great. I could do that’”. Of course, this comment needs to be considered in the light of the data presented above which suggest that lesson observations are a rarity in most subject departments. Furthermore, that length of service, both of the subject leader and the department member, can have an effect on levels of influence needs to be borne in mind. The participants quoted above had all been in post for differing periods at the time of their interviews; the longest serving was the head of Languages from City Grammar, while the head of History from Anglia Community College had only been running a department for a relatively brief time. While, superficially, their answers appear to accord with one another, their context is all-important and will receive appropriate attention in the Discussion chapter.

The second area touched on above – the implications of these findings for the projection of power by subject leaders – gave another slant to the apparent limitations on the influence enjoyed by subject leaders over their followers. In some cases, subject leaders expressed a feeling of inferiority in relation to members of their departments. This was particularly evident where department members held senior posts elsewhere in a school. The Chemistry department at The Royal Grammar contained two of the school’s senior management team, both highly experienced teachers, who made their subject leader, “feel a bit more like an apprentice”, although he tried to present this as a benefit when he added, “I just see it as an opportunity to learn”. The head of French at Fenham Grammar touched upon another issue when he described his own character as a barrier to power projection:

“... the desire to dictate and to require to stand my ground is not something which is in my ... in my personality as such”.

The head of Lower School Science at the same school made a similar point in respect of a certain member of her department, saying, “she can be quite belligerent and I’m probably not quite strong enough a character”.

The influence of gender on power relationships is beyond the scope of this project – although, as I will argue in the Recommendations section of the final chapter, further research into it would be profitable – but the above two quotations do suggest that power distributions in departments are not necessarily a function of gender. Indeed, we might compare them to quotations given elsewhere which suggest that female subject leaders are as capable of strong leadership as any of their male counterparts. Nevertheless, in

the light of a weighty literature on the subject, it can be posited that gender may be a source of the limitations on subject leader influence being presented here; again, further research with that specific focus would yield a clearer picture.

Prevalent was a sense of subject leader impotence when dealing with professional problems among department members. The head of Music at Fenham Grammar stated that, in such a situation, he would, “have to be authoritative and decree certain things”. There was a widespread advocacy of subject leaders being pro-active in bringing such matters out and, as the head of Languages at KBS put it, avoiding, “it [looking] like you’re going behind [department members’] backs”. However, such subject leader centred action was seen to have limits, partly organisational, and partly as a result of power relationships within departments. Of the first of these, the Fenham Grammar head of Physics set the tone when he stated that professional problems would be dealt with through, “whatever mechanism we’ve got”, meaning a whole school policy. The head of IT at City Grammar said that he would, “talk to the people concerned or get somebody else to talk to the people concerned”, examples of the latter being, “the line manager or possibly some other senior member of staff”. The head of Music at Fenham Grammar told me that, in his view:

“... if somebody is being very stubborn with you and isn’t co-operating with what you’re saying, then you need to involve senior management”.

The head of Drama from Castleton described an actual situation in which he was forced to cede the management of a teacher in his department to a senior leader, so difficult did he find it to address her professional issues. While this was an extreme case, it fitted into

a general pattern of subject leaders speaking of how little power they have to resolve professional problems, needing the intervention of a more senior member of the school organisation. When asked what action was open to them, all subject leader participants could only offer the methods of monitoring detailed above, specifically, observing lessons, giving feedback and setting targets; an example came from Mackintosh College's head of Art who said that he would, "just kind of monitor [the failing department member's] work, monitor their teaching or whatever". That these measures did not always complement senior management involvement was underlined by the head of Languages from Firthside who said:

"I never felt that I was fully supported by the management team in my efforts [to resolve a professional problem]".

Power relationships came through in a reluctance among subject leaders to face up to the types of problems mentioned above. The head of IT at City Grammar was at one extreme when he stated that, if faced with a problem in his department, "I would tend not to do anything about it, on the grounds that we're not into causing disruptions", although he went on to add, "perhaps I should". A more often-noted opinion was that given by the head of Physics from Fenham Grammar who said that a problem:

"... needs to be addressed. Quite how one would address it, depends really on the character we're talking about. I don't know if there is a possibility of moving, changing what they're actually doing on a day-to-day basis".

Some participants placed this issue into the context of personal relationships; the head of Drama from Castleton (in the issue referenced earlier) was one, as was the head of History from Anglia Community College who, speaking of a former member of his department, said:

“She ... she was very defensive; she knew she was struggling and ... I think ... you know ... she was ... you know ... you couldn’t really say it to her straight”.

The point is being made, then, that confronting a department member who is under-performing or experiencing some other problem is not a simple matter – in spite of the common advocacy of doing just that which was looked at above.

Much of the frustration which comes through from the quotations considered thus far was seen to have its roots in subject leadership being located in the middle of an organisational hierarchy. The head of Mathematics at Anglia Community College, to give an instance, said that, “one of the hardest things about being a [subject leader], I think, you’re ... you’re almost everybody’s ... you’re kind of answerable to everybody, aren’t you?” The head of History and Politics from Queenswood College described this as the most stressful part of the job. Considered as a whole, though, the interviews revealed a large measure of ambivalence regarding the middle leadership position. Many participants were keen to emphasise that their location between senior management – and, indeed, macro-curricular factors – on one side and their departments on the other was not a cause of tension in their roles; the head of Art at Mackintosh College said that:

“... even though, by dint of title, you ... you have senior and then you have middle management... I think that everyone is very much involved in the decision-making process”.

Tension tended to come through anyway. A good example was The Royal Grammar's head of Science who stated that she, “wouldn't see that as having tension between two roles”, but then confessed that, “sometimes it's quite difficult to go and give negative feedback [to members of the department from senior management]”. She also spoke of a former colleague who had been a subject leader and had found it so difficult to, “act as a buffer between the senior leadership team and the department”, that he, “in the end gave it up because he wouldn't pass on those negative messages”.

In attempting to rationalise this tension, participants looked for ways to position themselves in the school hierarchy such that they could meet all the competing demands upon them while avoiding the conflicts that might result. The head of Drama at Castleton appealed to pragmatism when he opined that, “if you're doing what you need to do, and you are a good example of an effective department, I think that opportunity comes your way”. The head of Mathematics from the same school spoke of the need for subject leaders to avoid being too narrow in their interpretation of what they should be doing, saying of the possible tensions of leading from the middle:

“I don't think it's a conflict, I think it's a case of ... uuuhm ... understanding why ... senior management or the head... is putting restrictions on things happening and see your subject set within the context of the school”.

The levels of accountability that accompany this position excited much comment. The head of Physics from Fenham Grammar was particularly vocal, but his attitude was by no means unique to him:

“One is accountable for what the kids do and how well they perform, and that is to be expected in this role, but it is completely wrong not then to be supported throughout the year [by senior management]”.

However, the anger evident here was not shared by everyone. The head of Mathematics at Anglia Community College claimed to feel understood by senior managers because, “most of them, at some point, would have been the head of faculty themselves”.

This participant implies that subject leaders have personal ambitions of their own. In considering evidence under the current theme, it is important to be aware that, as a group, subject leaders are not necessarily agenda-free in their dealings with their followers. The head of History from Anglia Community College, for instance, speaking of a department member whom he regarded as his “right hand man”, stated that:

“... we’re hopefully just biding our time until, with a bit of luck, I could get the head of Humanities and then he can become head of History”.

That there are implications for teamwork in this will be dealt with later, but it can be viewed as a self-imposed limitation on this subject leader’s overall influence across his department. As we will see, it can also be placed into a trend in the interviews in which

communications within departments – mostly informal – were not always seen to flow smoothly, particularly by department members.

The quotations given above tend, on the whole, to view subject leaders as agents of the school as a hierarchical organisation and, thus, as the head of English from The Royal Grammar put it, “a conduit”, for school policy, or, in the words of the Fenham Grammar head of Music, one who has to, “carry out a decree [from senior management]”. Others, however, aligned themselves with their departments. The head of Expressive Arts from Hilltop High said that she sees herself as representing, “the [department] to the senior management”. A further six participants stated that, in the event of bifurcation between the interests of their departments and those of the school as a whole, the former would be their highest priority. The head of Languages at KBS, for example, having said that he tries, “not to end up in one camp or the other”, went on, “I try to represent, as fairly as I can, the views of my department”, before railing against his, “feeling that there’s not quite sufficient space for constructively ... constructive criticism of the senior leadership team”. A similar position was taken by the head of Design and Technology from City Grammar who stated that he was a “filter” but that, even so, he was, “always fighting the corner for the department”, going on to claim that he tried to deal with problems, “within the department because senior management... they’re not always as sympathetic, they’re not always as accommodating”. The head of Languages at Firthside took an even more strident view, arguing that, “part of my job is to support the staff, no matter what ... to support the people who are working for you at all costs”, although, in this instance, she was talking about defending department members against parental complaints.

Ten of the subject leaders interviewed used the macro-curricular context as a way of bypassing their senior management teams and, thus, finding a way to avoid the hierarchical tensions of their role. The heads of English and Science from The Royal Grammar removed themselves from the question of influence on practice by arguing that lessons should follow a “three part structure” laid down by OFSTED. The head of English continued to use broader frameworks as a justification for her approach to departmental dynamics, saying that an aspect of her job was:

“... how you sort of balance what you want to do as a department [with] what you have got to do because somebody outside the school says, ‘That is how it must be done’”.

The head of Languages at KBS also brought in a wider “self-evaluation” initiative being adopted by his school. He used it to demonstrate his lack of power and, thereby, allied himself with his followers:

“... the timing is .. is absolutely insane; so, so ... and I mean this is, people are saying ‘Why, why now?’ and I ... I can’t [explain to them] ... and so, things impinge from the outside, which I could definitely do without”.

In the interviews with department members a number of the points regarding subject leader authority discussed in the previous section were developed in ways which suggested that they were not always susceptible of a simple interpretation. A theme of many interviews was that, while such sources of authority were acknowledged by department members, they were not always a spur to normative compliance, half of the

participants alluding to a more calculative or strategic basis to their involvement. The Design and Technology teacher from City Grammar mentioned previously, for example - having given high praise to his subject leader - was less generous in his description of how the members of the department responded to him, saying that, “when he really wants us to do something that we perhaps don’t want to do, we just get on with it”, going on to say that, “[he] gets his own way”. An English teacher from The Royal Grammar was even more explicit, commenting, “I would just have to live with [a situation to which I was not committed], wouldn’t I? I don’t have any power. I don’t have any clout”.

In placing a similar attitude in the context of departmental inter-relationships, a Firthside Chemistry teacher suggested that compliance is not necessarily determined by interpersonal factors when she opined that, “I don’t think that you have to LIKE your Head of Department”. An Anglia Community College Mathematics teacher adopted the stance that compliance could be difficult, saying, “I think that if you really don’t agree with [the subject leader’s] vision, then it’s hard for you to do what you’ve been asked to do”. A degree of apathy was claimed by a Physics teacher from Fenham Grammar who said that he went along with his subject leader’s plans because he had, “never felt particularly strongly about any of the decisions that he’s made”.

The clear implication of all this is that department members did not always agree with their subject leaders in seeing authority as a matter of negotiation; that it is often granted to the subject leader with a greater or lesser amount of unwillingness or calculation on the part of department members underlies all of the quotations given here. That there are dangers inherent to authority based on non-normative compliance was suggested by a Languages teacher from KBS who (referring to a previous department to which he had

belonged) went into the possible consequences of what he termed an “autocratic style” when he said, “needless to say, the turnover in that department was ... was ... was huge, you know, very rapid”.

Following on from these limitations on authority was the claim – made by the overwhelming majority of participants - that subject leaders enjoy little influence over the practice of members of their departments. Typical was a Languages teacher from Firthside who said:

“I don’t think my [teaching] style has been affected by [my subject leader] because I just think that comes quite naturally from me”.

A different Languages teacher from the same school stated that occasions when his subject leader attempted to influence his practice were “relatively few and far between” because there was, “a very high level of trust and all of the trust within the department to get on”. An English teacher from The Royal Grammar used a familiar metaphor when she argued that she eschewed the influence of her subject leader because she, “wouldn’t want to be cloned”. Adding further detail, she reconciled some of the ideas of compliance previously discussed with questions of influence when she said:

“I do as I’m told, obviously, to a certain extent, but I feel that me, as a teacher, I have my own style, and I think it’s important that we don’t ALL have the same style of teaching”.

Fifteen participants described specific differences in teaching style between themselves and their subject leaders. A Castleton Drama teacher, for instance, said of her subject leader, “he’s more comfortable with some things more than I am, so ... so he does a lot of whole class work and I ... I think that I am a bit more of a control freak and I tend to work with more small groups”. A Languages teacher from Firthside spoke of how she favoured group work in contrast to her subject leader who adopted a more “traditional” style which was teacher-centred and whiteboard-based.

The given reasons for this professed lack of influence were multifarious. Some department members saw it as the fault of the subject leaders themselves; a Mathematics teacher from City Grammar said of his subject leader that, “he does go through the motions of sharing [practice] but he won’t ... he won’t follow it up”. In a similar way, a Languages teacher from KBS claimed to know little about his subject leader’s philosophy of, and approach to, teaching because he had never observed his subject leader teach and, “when we have discussions about best practice, as we occasionally do... he doesn’t lead from the front”. The notion that department members lacked knowledge of their subject leaders’ practice is a counterpoint to the picture formed hitherto of departmental monitoring. It seems that communication in departments goes in many directions and subject leaders can be guilty of failing to adequately convey their expectations to their followers. This point was also made by a Science teacher from The Royal Grammar who outlined the drawbacks of informal communication, complaining that, “sometimes things will happen over tea or over coffee and, if you’re not there, you don’t get to hear about it until later”.

A major claimed reason for a lack of subject leader influence over the practice of department members was the individual nature of teaching as an occupation. A Languages teacher from Firthside described his teaching as being entirely an individual phenomenon, emanating from, “partly my own personal character and my own approach to life and not just teaching”. Here the distance between the professional and the personal is reduced to virtually nothing. Others focused more on professional aspects and, in particular, the physical limitations on influence – the fact that teachers operate in their own classrooms and have little interaction with peers, including subject leaders. A Mathematics teacher from Anglia Community College summed up this feature of a teacher’s job when she told me that, “if you’re teaching a full day you can almost be quite lonely, because, although you’re seeing the students coming in and out all day, you may not see another ... necessarily see another teacher”. This autonomy was not always seen as a negative, however; a Languages teacher from KBS characterised it as “professional space” and spoke of how it allowed him to get on with his work unfettered by subject leader interference. This point was echoed by a Physics teacher from Fenham Grammar who said that, even when his subject leader attempted to exert influence by giving, “a blow-by-blow account of what he’s going to do”, it was still, “up to [the physics teacher] to decide whether [he] follow[s] it exactly like that or not”.

Regarding organizational structures, department members were generally aware of the tensions of the subject leader “middle” role. A Design and Technology teacher from City Grammar put it succinctly when he said of his subject leader, “I see him as part of us”, before adding, “and one of them”. The idea of a subject leader as a “filter”, “buffer” or “conduit” between senior management and his or her department was referenced in thirteen interviews. A Mathematics teacher from Anglia Community College saw his

subject leader as a, “filter ... having to pass on some of the instructions from [senior management] to [the department]”, and was prepared to acknowledge that this role did not always mean supporting the department unstintingly; when asked what she should do in the case of conflict between the interests of the department and the demands of senior management, he answered, “I would expect her to do what she felt was right”. Such an attitude was not shared by everyone. A KBS English teacher saw her subject leader as being there to represent the department’s best interests, telling me that his job was, “to make sure that we get as good a deal as we can... in terms of resources and time”. Another Mathematics teacher from Anglia Community College shared this opinion, saying that her subject leader was her, “link to ... higher up the school”. Several other participants also opined that their subject leaders should be primarily their representative to senior management.

It is apparent, therefore, that differences were evident between subject leaders and department members on the topic of the limitations of subject leader influence. That there are limitations was generally accepted. However, while subject leaders tended to view their authority as constrained and defined by their access to information regarding the practice of their followers, the picture was less clear as far as department members were concerned. As we have seen, they often described how they themselves begrudged the acknowledgement of authority, vesting it abstractly in the subject leader role or even placing themselves under it through various forms of duress. The practical consequence, as became clear from the interviews with both constituencies, was that subject leader influence on practice was far less pervasive than some of the quotations considered in the previous section suggested. Indeed, the above quotations portray a situation in which subject leaders enjoy little influence over the teaching and learning that occurs within

department members' classrooms. In essence, the individual nature of teaching - both geographically since teachers operate in disparate classrooms, and professionally, in that teaching as an activity is located in the personalities of those doing it - was seen as the root cause of this. That it made exercising any form of power in a department difficult was a theme of, in particular, the subject leader interviews. Seen as equally important was the fact that the subject leader role is positioned in the middle of a school hierarchy. Subject leaders mostly saw themselves as representatives of a school's senior management, although this did not, apparently, give them much direct power over their followers when action aimed at re-calibrating professionalism was required. From the other perspective, department members were, on the whole, adamant that their subject leaders should, primarily, be serving them as representatives upwards towards senior management. The result of this was yet more uncertainty as to the precise focus of the role.

It will be recalled that the questionnaires probed the extent to which leadership was distributed within departments in order to uncover the nature of departments as teams and, especially, how prevalent collegial approaches were within them. What the interviews revealed about these matters will be considered in the next section.

Implications for Teamwork

The ideas on teamwork explored by the questionnaires were expanded upon in the interview phase. Whereas the vocabulary demanded by the questionnaires limited the discussion to delegation, the interviews afforded an opportunity to go into broader areas and to look at the philosophical and professional bases of departmental practice in more

detail. As will be seen, the advocacy of collegiality and distributed leadership noted in the literature proved to be only partially applicable to the more complex pattern of inter-relationships within the subject departments researched.

Although the head of Science at The Royal Grammar expressed the belief that, “everybody has got their own ideas on teamwork”, participating subject leaders generally agreed with one another in placing emphasis on sharing, whether that be of objectives or resources or an ethical foundation. The head of Lower School Science at Fenham Grammar described teamwork as, “all working towards one common goal, one common aim”. The head of Mathematics at Anglia Community College made a similar point, saying that, in a team, “everybody has ownership of the faculty, and where it’s going... and have [sic] a common vision”. The head of History at Anglia Community College placed the question in the moral and intellectual realm when he spoke of teamwork as being a situation in which:

“... we’ve all got responsibility to the department, it’s not ... not just about teaching your lessons, everyone’s ideas and values are shared”.

The head of IT at City Grammar suggested that teamwork is not necessarily a matter of reflection, describing it as “unconscious” and manifested, “if something needs to be done, people just do it”.

The extent to which personal relationships are a factor in good teamwork came up explicitly in nine interviews. These subject leaders described their teams as closely bonded and filled with people who would describe each other as friends. The head of

Mathematics at Anglia Community College gave one version of this when she said of herself and her department:

“.. we’ll meet up and have a girly night somewhere, and so, we have a lot of informal chats anyway, outside of work”.

The head of History at the same school spoke of how he would regard members of his department, “as really good friends”. The head of Design and Technology at City Grammar told me that:

“... as far as I know, we don’t talk about each other behind our backs, you know, if there’s a ... if someone’s done something wrong, you know, we tend to ... laugh it off is the wrong term, but we ... as a team, we will try to sort it out”.

What was perhaps a little less expected was subject leaders (six in total) being prepared to acknowledge the presence of tensions and personal conflicts within teams that they otherwise saw as effective. The head of Lower School Science at Fenham Grammar said of relationships within her department that, “there can be awful tensions”, and she even claimed that there were “power struggles” among members of the department who held non-departmental responsibility posts. This was echoed in the words of the head of Languages at City Grammar who answered that, regarding intra-departmental relationships, “you can have professional esteem without having personal esteem”. Answers like this add a particular resonance to other sections of this chapter which have consistently shown how subject leaders value the informal; it would seem that “informal” is not necessarily synonymous with “personable” or “social”.

If questions on personal relationships yielded a range of responses, those which sought to probe the presence of a collegial approach universally found the concept strongly advocated by subject leaders. A possible reason for this was given by the head of History and Politics at Queenswood College who said that, “anyone who is managing intelligent people has got to realise that it’s not a command structure”. The head of Languages at KBS added more detail when he described the running of his department:

“I like to think that ... that we use a collegiate [sic] ... the basis of it is to do with co-operation, co-operation and a certain amount of compromise, a sense in which people’s views, all of them, are made known, and create an environment in which they can make their views known”.

The head of Physics at Fenham Grammar told me that he prefers to take a “democratic” approach, “rather than pushing something which perhaps doesn’t resonate with everyone”. The head of French at the same school used the metaphor of a football team to describe a subject department, but a football team in which, “everybody should be playing the role of captain”. The apparent paradox of adopting a collegial approach within the strict hierarchy of a school or department was explored by the head of English at KBS who said:

“... in a hierarchy, there’s a structure and it gives people certain roles to initiate and carry things forward, but it doesn’t mean they have to do it all on their own”.

That collegiality is largely a state of mind and a philosophical attitude towards practice was recognised by the head of Languages at City Grammar who talked about, “that kind of collegial approach continuing BEYOND the particular task that you’re doing”.

The above ideas were said to manifest themselves in practice through the sharing out of leadership roles – in this respect, the case studies built directly on the data obtained from the questionnaires. The head of Mathematics from Anglia Community College told of how she was always, “looking for opportunities where people can get involved”. She went on to describe how:

“... there are some people within the faculty who are very good at coming forward and saying... ‘Can I help you, have you got anything to do, is there anything extra I can do?’”

Twelve participants described the leadership roles alluded to here as centred on the production of schemes of work or the creation of teaching resources. For example, the head of Languages at Firthside was effusive in the praise she gave to members of her department who had been instrumental in the introduction of new teaching techniques into her department:

“L___’s had some good ideas. K___ has had some good ideas that I haven’t had, so we have had input into things like computing where I hold up my hands and say, ‘I know nothing’”.

The head of Chemistry at the same school told me that a relatively inexperienced member of his department had, “rewritten the Year 9 exam”. Some subject leaders also claimed that they were open to allowing the agendas for departmental meetings to be, at least in part, driven by department members – the head of Art at Mackintosh College spoke of how he welcomed such a contribution.

Distributed leadership having been detected in subject departments, however, it was remarkable how often subject leaders tended, perhaps unconsciously, to deny any claim that it was initiated by department members themselves. Continuing with his thoughts in this area, Mackintosh College’s head of Art was less confident about how often department members actually do impact upon the leadership of the department:

“... the offer is there, but not as often as I would like. I would... I mean, I would like... I would like them to do it on a more regular basis”.

The head of English at KBS stated that ideas for leadership opportunities mostly came from him, that, “they are offered as suggestions, to which people can respond, and people are invited to contribute”. Even a number of the examples of distributed leadership given previously were said to originate with the subject leader: the head of Mathematics from Anglia Community College, after all, was saying no more than that members of her department requested that she provide them with ideas for broader, leadership-based, contributions to the running of the department. The head of Languages at KBS summed up the attitude of many of the subject leaders when he stated that:

“... if a decision needs to be made, then I will make it, but it will be on the basis of having had... having given the team, all of them, an opportunity to contribute to whatever that decision is that needed to be made”.

Distributed leadership, then, is placed here within strictly defined borders. Certainly, there is, as many of these subject leaders see it, an expectation among department members that it will be the subject leader who will create the environment within which distributed leadership is possible.

Interestingly, while department members mostly agreed with this position, a motif in their interviews was a notion that the hierarchical nature of departments can be a barrier to the adoption of truly collegial or distributed leadership approaches. This is not to say that the presence of either phenomenon was denied by all; a Languages teacher from KBS described how, in his department, people tended to, “share things, you know, in, I suppose, a fairly natural sort of way... swapping ideas and comments about our work”. This was echoed by a Design and Technology teacher from City Grammar who said that collegiality in his department was evident, “not necessarily in ways that are obvious”, but came through because, “we are committed as a team; we ... we work together, we help each other if someone is stuck”. Others spoke of how schemes of work, for example, were collaboratively generated within their departments. On this topic, a Drama teacher from Castleton said that, “I think that a teacher should have ownership of the things that they teach; I think it should be shared and I think it should be a collaborative process”. A *laissez faire* attitude was described by another Design and Technology teacher from City Grammar: “[the subject leader] lets [department members] develop our own schemes of work in our own particular way”.

Despite all this, though, there was a trend in the interviews for department members – like subject leaders – to insist upon the centrality of the subject leader to the running of the team. An English teacher from The Royal Grammar outlined what she saw as the limits of collegiality in her department by saying that her subject leader, “has the final say, but she’s not autocratic in any sense, so it’s maybe a democratic department”. By this argument, then, collegiality is subservient to hierarchical structure, a theme that, as will become apparent, was common to many of the responses received. A Mathematics teacher from Anglia Community College said that, in his school, subject leaders, “offer us opportunities to do extra things, but not forcing us to”. Significantly, he went on to say that, “they couldn’t even if they wanted”, evoking the notions of authority dealt with elsewhere in this chapter, but suggesting that collegiality must be self-engendering if it is to operate in any meaningful way. That this does not always occur was seen by some participants to be a function of the centrality of the subject leader, with the consequence that attempts by department members to show leadership can often be ignored by subject leaders. This was underlined by a Music teacher from Fenham Grammar who said, “there have been times over the last year when my opinions have been asked for and I’ve offered them but they’ve met with some resistance”, the given reason being that her subject leader found it difficult to, “let go of certain things”; in other words, he liked to retain control. A Mathematics teacher from Anglia Community College made an analogous complaint, answering the question about how democratically her department was run with, “It .. it can be, not always, but it ... is, but not always, not always”.

That said, it was also often clear from the findings that distributed leadership responsibilities are not universally aspired to by department members – as a Science teacher from The Royal Grammar pointed out when she said of such responsibilities, “I

don't really want them, to be honest – not within the department". Moreover, those interviewees who expressed a definite enthusiasm for collegiality and distributed leadership did not always appear to be pro-active in promoting them. A Languages teacher from Firthside, having described how open her subject leader was to receiving ideas from members of the department added, "I can't really think of a specific occasion when that has happened". An English teacher from KBS talked about how her subject leader would solicit ideas for improvement from his department through meetings that were, "literally open floor", but that when it came to putting them into action, department members would, "if he asked them to". Even where schemes of work were said to have been devised by the team as a whole, there was a sense that distributed leadership did not go much beyond delegation.

On top of this was an apparent inability on the part of many department members to form a coherent concept of collegiality and distributed leadership. Where distributed leadership was acknowledged, it was often linked to a specific formal responsibility post. The History and Mathematics departments at Anglia Community College and the English department at KBS are merely three examples of departments in which there were various "post holders". A member of the Mathematics department at Anglia Community College, in response to a question about leadership within the department gave the following list: "[a] teacher is responsible for Key Stage 4 and another is responsible for Key Stage 5 and then another is responsible for Key Stage 3". Similarly, an English teacher from KBS was asked to talk about leadership among members of her department and replied, "I mean, there are people with responsibilities and so people who are in charge of ... or were in charge of GCSE and Key Stage 3". The closest she got to a description of a more informal version of collegiality in action was when she went on to

say, “this new management structure ... hasn’t really come into place this year, so there have been a few kind of vacuums where we have all been contributing to kind of fulfil that”. The obvious conclusion here is that department members sometimes view their departments in purely hierarchical terms - a natural consequence, perhaps, of the tendency noted earlier to place the subject leader in a central role.

Implications for a subject leader who wishes to create a collegial atmosphere within his or her department appeared in another potentially important claim from a Chemistry teacher from Firthside. She argued that the very diversity of teaching approaches that has been a central theme of this research can itself be an impediment to collegiality: “... we do share; it’s mainly ... it’s mainly worksheets. I think with the other three chemists, because they are older, they do a lot more chalk and talk”. A similar idea was conveyed by a Languages teacher from Fenham Grammar who argued that even a practice as simple as sharing physical resources was not easy because, as he put it:

“... there are certain exercises and resources, that are very good for a particular colleague, that you’re trying to teach, but you never see him enough, or you don’t ... you know, you’ve tried them out, and yours failed”.

Resources and practices are not, he is saying, readily transferable from one practitioner to another.

What comes through from all these data, then, is a sense that subject leaders only have limited scope to organise their departments according to collegial principles and to distribute leadership among their followers. While collegiality is certainly the desired state

for subject departments and is present in many to a greater or lesser extent, the subject leader is still ultimately the one accountable and so is tasked with responsibility for driving the enterprise, often in the face of resistance. The shape that this often takes is an expectation among department members that the subject leader will occupy the central position coupled with a frequent inability to conceptualise a department in other than hierarchical terms. The nature of teaching as an individual occupation also, again, has an impact in that one teacher's professional style is not necessarily compatible with another's, thus making the sharing of approaches difficult. None of this, perhaps, should come as a surprise given what has previously been discovered about the limitations of subject leader influence within departments.

Having seen what the interviews revealed about subject leader influence on departmental structures, it only remains to follow up the questionnaires' findings about morale, motivation and job satisfaction or how subject leaders influence individual teachers within departmental structures.

Departmental Influence Relationships and Morale, Motivation and Job Satisfaction

The notions of motivation explored in the questionnaires were mostly confirmed by the interviews. A limited appreciation of, and capacity for, motivating followers on the part of subject leaders emerged. Department member viewpoints were similarly constrained, participants often denying that their subject leaders had any real role in motivation.

Department members also mentioned job satisfaction and the capacity or otherwise of subject leaders to promote it within the departmental relationship.

Subject leaders mostly had an unsophisticated view of the whole concept and process of motivation and morale-building. The head of Languages at KBS was untypical in appreciating a link between motivation and an individual's professional identity:

“... to motivate someone would be to get them to contribute to a level that I felt that they were capable of doing without selling themselves short or taking on too much”.

Even here, though, the emphasis is largely on the practical, there being little sense that motivation is an aspect of the condition which we have characterised as “professionality”. The head of Art from Mackintosh College was also unusual in ascribing motivational force to a charismatic leadership style:

“I feel that being a good leader also, rather than perhaps a manager, means your staff are kind of in a state of awe, really, you know, that maybe your leadership is so inspirational that they will be kind of inspired to do other things”.

The head of Drama from Castleton made a similar claim, suggesting that inspirational leadership can bring out the specific expertises of department members by, “finding positive areas of development for [them] that gives them something substantial to hook on to”. The head of Languages at City Grammar extended this notion to cover motivation through the provision of opportunities for distributed leadership, claiming that a part of

motivation is, “making sure [department members’] ideas are acknowledged; [that I] don’t take their ideas and make them mine”.

Motivation as an aspect of informal personal relationships came through in a number of interviews. The head of English at The Royal Grammar, for example, saw her chief motivational tool being the, “promoting [of] positive relationships within the department”, and, “being supportive and understanding”. The Firthside head of Languages described an analogous situation, saying that motivation in her department was conditioned by, “an ethos where we all actually respect each other and get along with each other”. A version of this was also described by the head of Mathematics at Castleton who told me that her followers were motivated by the fact that they, “work in a fairly open environment, where there is that kind of dialogue”.

That said, some nine subject leaders disavowed all responsibility for creating a state of motivation in their followers by resorting to the argument that the members of their departments were “self-motivated”. The head of Chemistry at The Royal Grammar said of his team, “they are very self-motivated people”. His counterpart at Firthside stated much the same thing, equating self-motivation with, “a good sense of purpose and where [department members] are going”.

Where subject leaders saw a role for themselves, it was mostly in the area of providing praise for, and acknowledgement of, the efforts put in by department members. Participants talked about thanking department members and ensuring that their work did not go unrecognised; this position was taken by the head of Mathematics from Castleton who said that motivation is, “valuing what [department members] are providing, value

what they do, take an interest in things”. The head of English at KBS related this issue to “happiness”, saying:

“I work quite hard to keep people happy. I mean, I make people feel that they are being treated fairly and are getting credit for what they do and... so they are generally motivated by simply being happy by what they are doing”.

All interviewed subject leaders mentioned praise as a means of showing proper appreciation to department members. The head of Languages at City Grammar, for one, spoke of motivating followers as being, “like motivating kids” in that, “it’s a day-to-day thing; it’s a supporting thing; it’s a ... you know, praising”. The Fenham Grammar head of Physics took this idea further, making an important connection between motivation and power relationships when he said that, “there are several ways of influencing people, and I think that one of them is the idea of ‘stroking’, which is to kind of compliment them on the way they’re doing things and the way they’re operating”. He went on to add that, “there is a darker side always to influence; the reason to influence is to get your own way”.

Almost as frequently, subject leaders alluded to an “exchange culture” within their departments by which notable effort on the part of department members would elicit a simple reward as an inducement to continue in the same vein. The head of English at The Royal Grammar spoke of giving, “the occasional box of chocolates when [effort] has been above and beyond the call of duty”. The head of Design and Technology from City Grammar said that, “if ever I am out on a trip, you know, say a school, or whatever, when I come back I’ll bring back a couple of bottles of beer for everybody”. In a similar way, the

head of Music at Fenham Grammar said that rewards, “could be bottles of wine” or, “a thank you Christmas Card”. He also articulated the motivational effect of these, saying that this approach, “counts towards a good rapport with these individuals who will then go that extra mile willingly because they know that you appreciate what they do”.

Several subject leaders were aware of factors for de-motivation within their departments. The head of ICT at City Grammar blamed himself for giving too little praise, saying that he would not tend to do it, “apart from when we get, you know, good results and ... or whatever”, although he admitted that this was, “not as much as I should do, probably”. The head of Mathematics at Anglia Community College saw a lack of praise and acknowledgement as a major source of de-motivation, stating that, “[department members] get de-motivated when they maybe feel that ... they’re not being valued”. She said, however, that, in her department’s case, this was not something that occurred on a departmental level, but could come from senior management indifference or, more likely, because:

“... there are so many pressure points that come up, all at the same time, even your ... your biggest players, your best professionals, get ... get a bit de-motivated”.

The problem here, then, is macro-curricular and, thus, beyond the control of the subject leader. The head of Lower School Science at Fenham Grammar gave resistance from department members themselves as a de-motivator; she told me that trying to motivate a particular follower was something she had, “struggled with”, saying that, “I don’t know how to get her to be interested”, giving the example of, “trying to give her some project to get working on”, only to find that, “she doesn’t want to do that”.

For their part, department members often spoke of their motivation being self-generated. Typical was a teacher of Physics from Fenham Grammar who, when asked what his subject leader did to motivate him, replied, “I suspect he doesn’t need to really”, before alluding to a notion of vocation by comparing teaching his own children with those of other people:

“I realised that they were exactly ... treated EXACTLY the same as the other children within the school, and I realised that I DID have that kind of motivation to ... to teach people”.

A KBS English teacher, in attempting to describe how her subject leader promoted her motivation, said, “I’m trying to think of a situation where anyone has ever been ... lacking in motivation, and he has had to pep us up, but I like to think that we’re all pretty motivated as it is”. A third case would be a Mathematics teacher from Anglia Community College who could only answer a question about how her subject leader motivated her with, “I’m quite self-motivated anyway”. Other participants, such as an English teacher from The Royal Grammar spoke of how motivation came from, “the people in front of you” – again touching on notions of personal vocation.

In fact methods by which subject leaders were able to energise the members of their departments were viewed, for the most part, in a relatively simplistic light. A number of participants were unable to identify any specific approaches; a Languages teacher from Fenham Grammar, for instance, when asked about his subject leader’s impact on his motivation, responded, “I don’t know really. The fact that I don’t know is rather telling, isn’t it?” Equally negative was a Firthside Chemistry teacher who said of her subject

leader that, as far as motivational techniques were concerned, “I don’t think he does anything like that”.

Subject leaders were sometimes credited with providing motivation. Several participants claimed to find motivation in their subject leaders’ capacities for creating a purposeful working environment. A Firthside Chemistry teacher said that her subject leader focused on her strengths, providing encouragement and support as necessary, while a Fenham Grammar Languages teacher talked of the benign impact of his subject leader, “not making the job any more difficult”. A Physics teacher from the same school gave his subject leader’s organisational acuity as a motivating factor, saying, “he’s well-organised; I know that I can relax on that issue [of teaching] and just move through and make sure that I’ve done what I have to do”. He also stated that such matters are: “not necessarily things that he could do to motivate me, but they are things that you can DEFINITELY do to DE-MOTIVATE somebody”.

On this point, fifteen participants were prepared to concede that their subject leaders did not actively de-motivate them. An example of this was a Mathematics teacher from Anglia Community College who stated that his subject leader was, “not somebody who will put you down... so, I mean, that obviously she doesn’t de-motivate you at all”. That said, some participants were not as sanguine on the topic of de-motivation. A different Anglia Community College Mathematics teacher found her subject leader’s personality uninspiring, saying, “it’s just the way that she is; I think she is, naturally, quite an introverted person”. A Science teacher from Fenham Grammar felt that a lack of “consistency” from her subject leader was a source of active de-motivation in her.

Where motivational tactics were acknowledged, they, once again, were usually based around praise and reward. A Design and Technology teacher from City Grammar told me that, “praise is there, so the morale of the department is good”, a situation he attributed to his subject leader’s high, “EQ, as opposed to IQ”. A Mathematics teacher from the same school spoke of how, in his department, “there’s a lot of encouragement” and positioned his relationship with his subject leader as founded on “mutual respect”. Much the same point was made by a History teacher from Anglia Community College who lauded her subject leader for his ability to make, “you feel that you’re doing well, you feel that you are doing a good job”. Praise occasionally was said to operate in tandem with rewards; a Science teacher from The Royal Grammar gave a list of some of the rewards offered by her subject leader: “sometimes there will be cake and biscuits, and, yesterday, she made a lovely lemon meringue pie and we all had that”. Other rewards mentioned resonated with those outlined by subject leaders themselves and included social events – as described by Languages teachers from both KBS and Firthside.

An interesting category of motivating factors centred on the qualities of the subject leaders themselves. As we have seen, a subject leader’s personality was sometimes given as a de-motivator, but seven participants were more positive in their appraisals of their subject leaders’ personal attributes. A Firthside Languages teacher remarked on his subject leader’s emollient style, speaking of the way she engendered, “a good bit of banter”, and the fact that, “there is humour at work as well”. A Castleton Drama teacher claimed to admire the high level of expertise exhibited by her subject leader.

The extent to which subject leaders are able to promote job satisfaction in their followers excited some comment. That there is a connection between motivation – and by

extension, a subject leader's influence upon it - and job satisfaction was seen by an Anglia Community College History teacher who said, "if your motivation is low, your job satisfaction will be low as well; I think that they interlink". A Mathematics teacher from Castleton talked explicitly about the other condition for job satisfaction, morale, and how his subject leader helped to build it for him. His take on the topic was: "if people are enjoying what they do, then they will probably put more into the job, and so, from that point of view, yes, I think it's important to have good morale within the department". He went on to suggest that good communications between himself and his subject leader lay at the heart of this morale by adding, "because we have these meetings every week, we ... we tend to be quite a happy department". An Anglia Community College Mathematics teacher also stated that her subject leader helped to improve her morale and job satisfaction by being organised: "if she didn't sort things out, I would be getting frustrated and, because there is none of that, then my job is easier".

Having said that, not all of the participants were as sure that their subject leaders helped to increase their job satisfaction. A different Mathematics teacher from Anglia Community College argued that the creation of job satisfaction in an individual member of staff, "was more a part of a whole school approach really". Yet another Anglia College Mathematics teacher ascribed an inability on the part of a subject leader to influence morale to, again, the solitary nature of teaching, saying, "you're off in your ... your little room, hoping, you know, for the best". At most, and in common with her counterpart from Castleton, she implied that job satisfaction could be promoted by communication within the department: "I suppose if that did happen, it would have to be part of our, sort of our faculty meetings".

In sum, subject leaders were seen to have a narrow, and specific, role in motivating their followers and fostering morale and job satisfaction. Apparent limitations on subject leader influence were seen to circumscribe their role in the motivational process to the point at which it became little more than the offering of encouragement, occasionally supported by token rewards. Even in this respect, motivational tactics were not always recognised by those to whom they were directed. As a consequence, the extent to which subject leaders are able to enhance the job satisfaction of their followers was presented as minimal, consisting of, essentially, the giving of trust and some ability to affect environmental factors favourably. Whether this amounts to the increasing of motivation or the decreasing of de-motivation is, of course, a moot point to be dealt with in the next chapter, but it is worth stating that both interview constituencies were keenly aware of the presence of de-motivators in their departmental relationships.

At this stage in the argument, we have completed two chapters which have examined the data gathered during the fieldwork stage of the research. The themes identified by the questionnaire stage have provided the sub-headings for this chapter and, under these, we have looked at what subject leaders and department members had to say about leadership within academic departments and the types of authority and power which underlie it. Influence, or its absence, has also been looked at and how it connects to the motivational role of subject leaders. How these ideas help to determine the way departmental teams operate has also been dealt with. Critically, a trend within all of these themes has been the limitations on influence faced by subject leaders. It remains to apply some layers of interpretation and to consider how what has been discovered works with, or against, extant literature in the answering of the original research questions. The next chapter will seek to accomplish this.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

As we have seen, the interviews developed a number of the themes which emerged from the questionnaires. Together, both aspects of the research undertaken for this project present a body of data which are inherently linked to what Pring (2004) terms the “common sense world”, that is, “the range of unquestioned beliefs which groups of people share and which provide a basic view of the world” (page 84). In the sense in which this definition is useful for this project, it indicates that the participants in the research were not, in general, discussing ideas and generalities, but describing and, at times, commenting upon, subjective experience. As Pring (2004) goes on to say, “a feature of such common sense is its changing content” (page 84) and, “research is often a challenge to common sense” (page 85). In order, then, to mount this challenge and to generate the type of theoretical material that can largely be viewed as dissent from common sense, it is necessary to consider all of the research data in the light of the literature which was reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 to look for those ways in which it either confirms or refutes the ideas of other researchers in the field. In doing so, we will be addressing the gaps in the literature which were identified in the introductory chapter and find a space for this project to make its own original contribution to the educational research debate.

What follows, therefore, returns to the initial research questions and attempts to answer them in the light of the evidence presented in the previous two chapters. This process will allow the fourth research question - "What common features can be identified from a comparison of different departments in a range of schools?" - to be answered and, from this, a number of conclusions to be drawn and recommendations made. The structure of the chapter is tripartite. The first section is a discussion of the findings from both stages of the research in the light of the literature considered in Chapters 2 and 3. This, being the first opportunity to look at the fieldwork and the theoretical background which informed it, is an analysis which creates the material from which the research questions can be directly addressed. The subsequent section, entitled "Conclusions", places the research questions at the centre and uses the analysis so given to answer them as directly as possible. The final section returns to the actual practice of classroom teachers - the "common sense world" - providing recommendations for practice to emerge from this project, as well as giving a roadmap for further research to strengthen and deepen the conclusions reached here.

Discussion

When considering the potential impact of leadership for learning, we have grounds to doubt whether subject leaders are able to exercise the type of "transformational leadership" which authors such as Burns (1978) and Northouse (2001) describe. Indeed, both the questionnaires and the interviews indicated that the job of subject leader is, as Busher and Harris (1999) and Glover et al (1998) have argued, not easy to define. The participants in this research gave priority to different facets of the role depending on

situation and viewpoint, whether these be defined hierarchically or in terms of subject areas taught. Since Lumby and English (2009) summarise leadership as ultimately being the construction of a follower's sense of self through the shaping of meanings, it is, perhaps, encouraging that many questionnaire participants placed a high value on such potentially transformational activities as subject leaders providing a model of good teaching practice. However, both of the surveyed constituencies, and department members in particular, also saw the role as encompassing administrative tasks, broadly managerial in orientation, of the type enumerated by, for example, Dean (1993) and Howling (2006); arguably, even the highly-rated "leading teaching and learning" does not automatically include transformational qualities.

The interviews proved no more adept at isolating the specific nature of the role. Interviewed subject leaders gave a variety of responses when talking about this point, but department members tended, once more, to concentrate on managerial tasks. There was, as we have seen, much discussion of the vital component of transformational leadership (Northouse, 2001), "vision", but, on the whole, Simkins' (2005) arguments regarding the difficulty of establishing one were seen to be well-founded. Despite the in-principle findings from the questionnaires suggesting that both subject leaders and department members agreed in seeing a vision as crucial to successful departmental leadership, the more biographical interviews painted a different picture, with subject leaders championing vision, but often articulating only a partial version of one, and department members frequently failing to see vision as important at all. In the interviews, both constituencies placed managerial activities at the centre of the role, which would tend to point to "transactional leadership" (Burns, 1978) being more readily observable than transformational leadership. Those participants who, for example, spoke of subject

leadership as being focused on the provision of schemes of work and the organisation of the curriculum were dealing far more obviously with the management-centred notions of “efficiency” and “effectiveness” outlined by Bennett (1996) than the trust and emotion-based interpersonal relationships envisioned by, say, Beatty and Brew (1994) which are more redolent of leadership. In that such activities amount to “subjective norms” (Armitage and Conner, 2001), though, they can be seen as having an influence on the intentions to action of department members; this is an area that will be returned to later in a discussion of teacher professionalism and intra-departmental discourse.

On a practical level, the findings confirmed what authors such as Turner (1996) and Glover and Miller (1999) have discovered about the time constraints within which subject leaders work. The proportion of an average school day that subject leaders spend on work associated with departmental leadership mostly came across as moderate. It also seemed clear that the amount of personal contact between subject leaders and their followers is minimal – since leadership requires the medium of other people (Hallinger and Heck, 1997), power and influence relationships are central to it and these will be dealt with later. For now, it is worth commenting on what this all means for the extent to which subject leaders are able to influence the social and psychological worlds of their followers to sponsor the development of their “professional identities” (Beijaard et al, 2004; Rhodes, 2006), which was seen in Chapter 2 to be a vital aspect of leadership and, specifically, leadership for learning. In terms of planned behaviour theory as espoused by Ajzen (1991), this is the means by which leaders influence the perceptions inherent to the “controls” which regulate the realisation of an individual’s intentions.

If this process is predicated on discourse as the medium through which social realities are constructed (Svedberg, 2004), then the findings would suggest that there is only a small window within which subject leaders are able to act. Although the questionnaires found that the chief source of a subject leader's authority was his or her personal relationship with department members, the relative scarcity of contact time between subject leaders and their followers had a considerable effect on the type and quality of discourse within departments. That this is a serious point can be underlined by reference to the work of Morrison and Lumby (2009) who remind us that, "the ability to communicate within and among teams has also emerged as a key skill associated with effective leadership" (page 76). As the interviews indicated, formal methods of communication, such as meetings, were not seen as the chief vehicle by which subject leaders and their followers interacted. Neither were they seen to have the mythic element of ritual to them which Lumby and English (2009) view as the means by which individual identities within a group overlap to construct a meta-identity for the group as an entity in its own right. Rather, they were largely viewed as the forum for transactional business related to administrative matters.

In general, it was informal methods of communication that were said to predominate in subject departments. In the respect that these allow subject leaders to influence a teacher's "agency" (Antonek et al, 1997) through being, as Crawford (2007) has observed, social encounters which evoke an emotional response, they have some bearing on the creation of professional identity and more will be said about them when the discussion turns to implications for departmental structures. As we saw, though, the interviews did not portray informal methods of communication as infallible; department

members, especially, often complained that they were unable to achieve as much personal interface with their subject leaders as they would have liked.

Taking this issue further, both phases of the research granted subject leaders only a limited ability to promote and guide the professionalism (Evans, 2008) of their followers in that they had only a marginal effect on job satisfaction. Some of the motivational methods through which this can be accomplished (Czubaj, 1996), and which were outlined by Rhodes et al (2004), were visible: the questionnaires described how subject leaders frequently use praise and rewards as motivational methods, a theme that was echoed in the interviews. Such strategies, although valued by department members - as the interviews in particular indicated - must be placed in a proper perspective, since, as Herzberg et al (1959) found, "good feelings from specific acts of verbal recognition (the 'pat on the back') are more often than not only of short duration" (page 68). It is thus questionable how far they condition an individual's intention to action (Ajzen, 1991). That they are essentially transactional in nature and do not touch too profoundly on the social and psychological realities of followers came through from the interviews. Moreover, as we saw, many of the subject leaders removed themselves from the process of motivating their followers altogether by arguing that "self-motivation" was the norm in their departments, controls on intentions to action (Ajzen, 1991) being self-generated and rooted in the individual perceptions of department members. For their part, department members - especially those who took part in the questionnaires - often dismissed the motivational force of their subject leaders, making the claim for self-motivation on their own behalf. If we were to align ourselves with such authors as Caladarci (1992) and Mercer (1997), we should not be surprised by this. Whatever our stance, it certainly means that the question of how far subject leaders have a role in the satisfaction of

Maslow's (1970) "higher order needs" – the crux of transformational leadership according to Burns' (1978) - remains open. To introduce a different motivational theory, it seemed that subject leaders are mostly able merely to affect Herzberg et al's (1959) "hygiene factors", touching only lightly on the more job-satisfaction relevant, "motivation factors". In other words, it seems that subject leaders have a role in decreasing demotivation, but are largely impotent to increase motivation – or that they can improve "job comfort", but not "job satisfaction" (Evans, 1998).

In attempting to account for such results, it is best to place them within the context of the multifarious constraining factors evinced by both phases of the research. Time limitations have already been touched upon, but their effect was seen to be exacerbated by other, organisational and practical, difficulties. As Wise and Bush (1999) comment, subject leaders, "usually have a substantial teaching load and little time set aside for their management role" (page 194). Furthermore, the position of subject leaders in the centre of a school's hierarchy was – as Bush (1997) has also found - the cause of much ambivalence and was often seen as a problem. Questionnaire participants from both constituencies were surprisingly uninterested in it, relegating it to a minor entry in the list of subject leader priorities, but it was accorded rather more importance in the interviews. Many of the subject leaders interviewed tended to concur with Buser and Harris (1999) and Buser (2005) in stressing their role as conduits of senior management and, indeed, the macro-curriculum. In some instances, as we saw, this may have been a reflection of the subject leaders' own ambitions and agendas. That said, the role conflict found by Wise (2001) was certainly present with a number of the subject leaders conceptualising themselves as, primarily, agents of their departments. That this group did not always express its position with great clarity or confidence merely reinforces the impression that

many subject leaders are uncertain of where their loyalties should be placed. As Poultney (2007) would have predicted, department members usually expected their subject leaders to be their representatives to senior management. Again, this would tend to suggest that subject leaders' impact on the professionalism (Evans, 2008) of their followers is not as penetrating as writers on leadership would desire.

Much of the above comes down to what was possibly the key finding from the research: that, based on this sample, subject leaders enjoy limited impact on the professional practice of department members. The questionnaires indicated that subject leaders believe themselves to have a measure of such influence, with 86% claiming "some" or "a great deal" of influence on the practice of their followers, but, arguably, the more important finding was that the comparable figure for department members was only 63% with fully 32% opting for "very little influence". Such a divergence of viewpoints between subject leaders and their followers is particularly revealing; if, as Svedberg (2004) and Edwards and Potter (1992) proposed, leadership involves leaders and followers "co-constructing" reality with leaders exercising power by affecting the internal lives of their followers (helping to write their "autobiographical stories" as Kelchtermans, 1993, would put it), then empathy is a prerequisite for its very existence. If there is a divergence between the outlooks of leaders and followers, then clearly this condition is impossible, or, at least, unlikely. That this will impact on influence in the interpersonal terms given by Busher (2006) should be obvious, particularly if we agree with Anderson and Kilduff's (2009) proposition that influence is, effectively, a "bottom up" process; followers will not grant influence to leaders with whom they enjoy no relationship. Given that we have characterised leadership for learning as hinging on the degree of a subject leader's

influence on the professional practice of his or her followers, this highlights a potentially serious trend.

Nowhere was it more clearly witnessed than in the interviews. As we saw, subject leaders often concurred with those authors, such as Harris et al (2001), who attribute to them influence over the practice of their department members. Equally, some department members accepted that their subject leaders influenced them – sometimes, to be sure, this group consisted of those in specific contexts (length of service, etc.) which could explain their views, but, nevertheless, some measure of influence was evident. That said, a general lack of subject leader influence was more often spoken of. Subject leaders themselves acknowledged this situation, although they were inclined to see it in the positive light of encouraging a range of teaching inputs within a department. Department members were usually dismissive of any suggestion that their subject leaders had a role in shaping their practice. Where influence tactics were identified, they were usually those that would fit into Yukl and Falbe's (1990) typology at the levels of rational persuasion, inspiration aspects, ingratiation and coalition. Consultation was much discussed, but department members often implied, or openly stated, that they did not agree with everything they were asked to do and had not been party to the decisions that led to it – this alludes to the sort of compliance relationships that will be dealt with later. In bringing this situation about, pressure and exchange tactics were rarely mentioned. Upward appeals were mostly seen as being used by subject leaders when it was necessary to question the performance of a department member, but they were also characterised as a feature of the problematic “middle role”. This all, again, points to the conclusion that a teacher's “professional identity” (Beijaard et al, 2004; Coldron and Smith, 1999) will remain, for the most part, unaffected by the actions of his or her subject leader.

Much of the explanation for this situation came from the difficulties subject leaders described regarding the monitoring of their followers' work, despite the increasing expectation, outlined by, for example, Wise and Bush (1999) that it will form a key part of a subject leader's remit. The questionnaires found that lesson observations were, in most departments, an infrequent occurrence, although, as we saw, subject leaders believed them to be more prevalent than did department members. The interviews provided one possible resolution of this paradox in that the word "informal" was, again, much used. Subject leaders, while often conceding that formal monitoring of practice happened only rarely, were apt to evoke in their departments a culture of mutual monitoring engendered by the porous physical and professional boundaries that they encouraged between colleagues and workspaces. A reluctance on the part of subject leaders to acknowledge that lesson observations constitute a formal aspect of their role may reflect the findings of Glover and Harris (1998) that they can be seen as a professional challenge to others and are, therefore, to be treated as a necessary embarrassment rather than a context for professional dialogue. The preferred, informal, routes for monitoring, though, did not permit a totally free flow of information. Subject leaders themselves often accepted that their knowledge of their followers' activities was incomplete. Department members mostly agreed, but, interestingly, gave failures in monitoring as only one reason to do so; relationship problems or perceptions of the personal and professional inadequacies of their subject leaders were also commonly cited. With Southworth's (2002) dictum that followers are crucial to the leadership equation in mind, we must, again, query the extent to which department members habitually allow themselves to be influenced by those in middle leadership positions over them.

Monitoring was only one aspect of the paucity of subject leader impact on the practice of their followers. Perhaps even more significant was seen to be pedagogical autonomy (Eden, 2001). Given what has previously been said on how time limitations constrain the relationships between subject leaders and their followers, it should not surprise us that the solitary nature of teaching came through as a strong theme. In the questionnaires, the phenomenon was brought to light in numerous ways: over one third of department members who responded, for example, stated that individuals in their departments follow their own teaching practices or work in departments in which there is almost no contact between individuals. In open questions department members usually presented pedagogical autonomy (Eden, 2001) as beneficial, being the most appropriate vehicle for them to exhibit their individual styles, or, in some cases, to avoid undue influence from subject leaders for whom they often had little professional respect. Those subject leaders who took part in the interviews also highlighted the individual character of teaching as a reason for their perceived lack of influence over the practice of their followers. Once again, however, they were inclined to stress the positives, as was demonstrated by their frequent recourse to “robot” and “clone” metaphors. Department members took a similar view, with one participant’s notion of “professional space” being an endorsement of teacher autonomy as a way to promote effectiveness. In this respect, then, the findings seemed to directly contradict the work of those authors (among them, Bush, 2003, and Martin et al, 2003) who have argued that subject leaders make a marked difference to school effectiveness. It also has to be asked how, given the difficulty that subject leaders apparently have in showing genuine leadership, they can show poor leadership of the type which Harris (1998) isolated as a “failure criterion” of those academic departments deemed to be below an acceptable standard. Perhaps even more seriously for theories of leadership for learning, the stance taken by the Teacher Training Agency (1998) that

subject leaders are responsible for the quality of teaching in their departments seems difficult to sustain.

What all of this means is that power relationships in subject departments cover a very specific range. Using as a basis Hales' (1993) concept of authority as influence attempts legitimated by the acceptance of those to whom they are directed, the types of authority which subject leaders enjoy came through as limited in scope. The questionnaire data suggest that subject leaders and their followers largely concur in attributing the former's authority to interpersonal relationships within departments – although, as the earlier discussion showed, difficulties inherent in the pursuit of these were seen to adversely affect their success. The records and expertise of subject leaders also gained much support as touchstones of authority. The interviews backed up these findings. Subject leaders tended to see their authority as premised on their expertise, records and a willingness to “lead by example”, while department members added to this list authority based on position within a hierarchy. Coercive strategies were generally dismissed by both groups in the questionnaires, but a small number of the department members who participated in the interviews identified some ways in which they were used. In the sense that they are a means of enforcing an externally-generated standard of practice, the methods of monitoring found by the research – mainly lesson observations, but also work scrutinies and the like – could be said to have a coercive element to them.

While, according to the typology developed by Etzioni (1975), many of the compliance relationships outlined could be described as normative/moral, this was by no means a universal rule. Those department members who spoke of having to do as their subject leaders told them regardless of their own wishes were exhibiting characteristics of

calculative and even alienative modes of involvement. The compliance relationships that were entailed by these, however, were not as straightforward as might be thought. Although, as we have seen, there was some mention of coercive approaches by subject leaders, remunerative strategies, by contrast, were seen to be entirely absent from subject leaders' repertoires, giving them, in Burns' (1978) terms, "motive", but little "resource". Subject leaders, then, came across as being forced to adopt a normative approach to ensuring compliance, embodied in the kinds of "informal" relationships so often brought to light in the findings. As a result of this, compliance relationships in the departments researched were often normative/calculative or normative/alienative. Since transformational leadership is only possible in an environment that is normative/moral, this gives our discussion's opening proposition a persuasive boost. Certainly, compliance relationships with an alienative or calculative element appear to lie behind department members' much vouched "self-motivation" and the limited discourse and intra-departmental sympathy noted earlier.

The same factors do much to condition the power relations that were witnessed in the research. The discourse that was seen to engender leadership (Svedberg, 2004) is the medium by which the imaginative codes through which power relations are enacted can be shared (Bourdieu, 2000). It is the means by which power is wielded over others (Ricken, 2006) and the means by which the knowledge which Foucault (2001b) identified as the root of power is either disclosed or concealed. The above discussion suggests that, in the departments researched, discourse, for all the talk of "informal" channels, mostly enjoyed imperfect fluency. In consequence, power relations were restricted in their scope. According to French and Raven's (1959) typology, subject leaders were seen to possess little coercive power and no reward power. Although subject leaders themselves often

saw expert power as the basis of their leadership, it was acknowledged less often by department members. An awareness of legitimate power underlay the responses from a number of subject leaders and department members. Most commonly, though, the compliance relationships described above allowed only referent power and position power to characterise interactions within the departments investigated. With this in mind, a consideration of the exchange models propounded by such authors as Emerson (1962) and Bennis et al (1958) might validly lead us to ask what subject leaders are able to offer their followers in order to ensure compliance?

The short answer appears to be very little. Again, this was seen to be a function of the role's hierarchical position. Subject leaders' lack of coercive power meant that, in both the questionnaires and interviews, it was found that professional problems were habitually referred to a senior manager. Equally, although some offering of rewards was mentioned at both stages of the research, it was generally seen to be tokenistic – the giving of bottles of wine, greetings cards and so forth – and not of the type that might touch in any profound way on the professional advancement or development of an individual teacher. The general lack of influence on practice that was found by both stages of the research also suggests that subject leaders do not, as a rule, possess any professional “capital” that might be desired by their followers – hence the weak presence of expert power in the findings.

That said, subject leaders were, arguably, seen to have an opportunity to impact upon their followers' physical environments in the stress that was placed upon their role as managers. Although this received less attention in the questionnaires – perhaps, again, because they encouraged respondents to give answers that were aspirational or “in

principle” – than other aspects of the role, it was a marked theme in the interviews. As managers, subject leaders, we can posit, are able to influence professionalism – as defined by, for example, Hoyle (1975) and Hilferty (2008) – just as they make little impression on professionalism (Evans 2008). If professionalism is all about context, both stages of this research discovered that subject leaders can help to guide it by making adequate resources available to their followers and, through monitoring, enforcing standards imposed by schools as organisations and the broader agencies which determine schools’ policies – the caveats regarding the quantity of monitoring that have previously been noted still being borne in mind. In considering this point it is worth linking it back to what was said earlier on the subject of motivation: in having an effect on professionalism, subject leaders are still working with Herzberg et al’s (1959) hygiene factors or building Evans’ (1998) “job comfort” and this is a relatively narrow role. It involves some ability to set the subjective norms (Armitage and Conner, 2001) within which intentions are formed, but has scant impact on those intentions. Thus, while subject leaders are able to set the physical and contextual conditions for their followers to some extent, their power certainly does not extend to what Foucault (1975) would have recognised as control over those same followers’ personal physical entities – “discipline” in the sense that he meant it is nowhere to be found in subject departments.

Given, then, that subject leaders have only minor influence upon the physical/contextual realm and are forced to project power primarily in the intellectual/moral dimension, a general advocacy of collegial approaches and distributed leadership in the research is a logical expectation. The questionnaires suggested that the presence of the prime condition for collegiality – that a team is closely bonded with clear flows of information – is identified more readily by subject leaders than department members. Indeed, as we

saw, fewer than a quarter of the latter group acknowledged its presence. Instead, they tended to favour statements regarding teamwork that centred on pedagogical autonomy (Eden, 2001). Interestingly, the reverse was true of delegation, which was less often seen by subject leaders; here we need to re-invoke the distinction between delegation and distributed leadership that was developed in Chapter 3 and remember that delegation is a management task. In fact, the divergence of views on this question does not imply that department members more readily saw their departments as collegial, merely that they viewed their subject leaders as managers rather than leaders. Such a finding agrees with those of Bolden et al (2009) who (albeit in a university setting) found that delegation is by far the most common vehicle for so-called distributed leadership. The interviews gave greater detail to the point, but little more encouragement to those authors – Tschannen-Moran (2009) and de Lima (2008) among them – who would like to see collegiality adopted as the prevailing orthodoxy in educational organisations. Although subject leaders were mostly firm advocates of collegial approaches, when it came to putting principle into practice by promoting distributed leadership, they were unable to excise themselves sufficiently from the process for it to become anything other than delegation by another name; again, Bolden et al (2009) would agree, arguing that distributed leadership is, in the educational settings that they researched, merely a rhetorical device. In the current research, subject leaders did not always seem to understand what distributed leadership in practice might look like or, more perniciously, fully trust that their followers had the initiative to follow what would essentially be a “bottom up” approach to leadership. It must be said that this conclusion was not entirely incomprehensible, since some of the department members were unable to identify collegiality in their working lives, complaining of the limits placed upon it by hierarchies and often failing to conceive of it as anything other than a formal appointment within a

hierarchy. Hammersley-Fletcher and Brundrett's (2008) contention that many teachers lack the conceptual tools to properly grasp collegiality and so feel safer in the familiar environment of a hierarchy gains some support from these findings.

Further, they suggest that, in subject departments, the informal is often mistaken for the collegial. The constant emphasis on informal means of communication in the interviews seems to have created the illusion – much of it in the minds of participants – that collegiality existed where it clearly did not – a situation that accords with the findings of, for instance, Brown et al (1999). The barriers to free-flowing discourse discussed earlier mean that the conditions for true collegiality were rarely found, making of the notion an unattainable ideal. The claimed informal communication can be seen as a species of micro-politics as defined by Hoyle (1982), but the connections with collegiality made by West (1999) should be modified in the light of the work of Honingh and Hooge (2009) and Anderson and Kilduff (2009) in reaching the conclusion that the micro-politics observed had less to do with lubricating the machinery of collegiality than with being a means of overcoming the difficulties inherent to subject departments as work groupings. Subject departments are complex structures – this point emerged from both stages of the research to convincing effect. In the interviews, for example, the intra-departmental tensions that often emerged challenged many of the claims made by questionnaire participants that their departments consisted of close-knit individuals all working to similar goals. Moreover, the fact that subject departments are components of larger organisations that bear many of the hallmarks of a “metapower” (Foucault, 1984) means that they are in an unpredictable environment (Morrison, 2002) which limits the power of individuals within them and conditions their behaviour. This is especially true when individuals in a subject department are also members of other teams within the school.

Despite West's (1999) own scepticism, his idea of informal groups operating within a formal hierarchy appears to be highly relevant to subject departments. The presence of informal interactions was – as we have seen - stressed constantly by subject leaders, and often by department members, in both the questionnaires and the interviews. Whether what lies behind this is Morrison's (2002) contention that organisations will always revert to a complex, even chaotic, state, though, has to be questioned. In fact, informality more often came across as a deliberate strategy adopted by subject leaders to compensate for their relative lack of influence. The clue here comes from the frequent talk in the interviews of subject leader impotence in the face of misconduct or incompetence from their followers. The point is supported by department members' often derisive attitude towards the possibility of their subject leaders enforcing their compliance. The formal structure of a department thus came across – contrary to the ideas of Foucault (2001a) – as a weak vehicle for the projection of power, or, to put it another way, the distribution of power within a school hierarchy was not seen to favour subject departments because, in Busher's (2006) terms, they are too low down the pyramid. The informal, therefore, can be seen as a necessity, but, as we have seen, the central placing of the subject leader in their structure argues less for the presence of collegiality than Ribbins' (2007) observed "paternalism", hence, the greater prominence in subject departments of delegation than distributed leadership. The stress on management in the working lives of subject leaders also follows from this.

An objection to this conclusion might be raised of the type that this is only to be expected in a hierarchical organisation, that subject departments, by dint of their central placing, are naturally going to be characterised by some, or all, of the limitations enumerated above and that to point out the fact is merely to state the obvious. Such a contention

would be valid were it not for the expectation that departments, and those who lead them, will be key players in the delivery of a school's mission to promote teaching and learning, that, as the Teacher Training Agency (1998), among others, has pointed out, subject leaders should be providing leadership for learning. The final section of this chapter, Recommendations, will take the ideas discussed above forward and attempt to identify ways in which practice could be developed to account for them.

On that note, we can now return to the problem with which this section began and further explore the types of leadership which subject leaders are able to demonstrate within their departments. As we have seen, it would be wrong to attribute transformational effects (Crawford, 2002) to much of the leadership demonstrated by the subject leaders researched. Charismatic leadership in the sense in which Crawford (2002) meant it was not, therefore, readily isolatable within the subject departments looked at for this study. This may seem a strange conclusion given not only the number of department members in the interviews who expressed their admiration for their subject leaders but the argument, followed above, that referent power underpinned many of the relationships observed. Referent power, however, does not necessarily imply a desire to emulate and can be the consequence of a calculative (Etzioni, 1975) mode of involvement. That subject leaders were seen to enjoy little success at influencing the professional identities (Rhodes, 2006) of their followers means that they generally did not create the specific levels of emotional arousal and excitement (Crawford, 2002) required by the charismatic leadership style; individual subject leaders could often be described, in layman's terms, as possessing "charisma" – and, indeed, department members, in various ways, often did so describe them - but it rarely appeared to impact upon the personally constructed meanings and realities of the members of their departments.

The frequently-placed emphasis on management in both stages of the research suggests – as was argued earlier - that varieties of transactional leadership (Burns, 1978) are more likely to be found in subject departments. Were we to follow Allix (2000) and recalibrate all forms of leadership as nothing more than a series of transactions, we might end the debate at this stage and seek consolation in Rost's (1991) contention that management is a vital component of a multi-faceted and sophisticated society. That, though, would be to ignore some of the nuances that have emerged through this discussion; the focus on the informal and the compliance and power relationships which emanate from it argue for a subject leader's role having broader dimensions than the exclusively organisational. The "ambiguity" model of leadership developed by Meyerson and Martin (1987) and the "pragmatic" style championed by Russell (2003) both suggest themselves as appropriate ways to conceptualise these dimensions. Both are described as being pursued via influence tactics that fall under the general heading of "micro-politics" as defined by West (1999) and Hoyle (1982) and both stress the relational nature of leadership. They are also characteristic of complex organisations (Morrison, 2002), especially those which, by virtue of being structured hierarchically, restrict the formal power resources available to many of their members, thus encouraging the informal sub-groupings which Youngs (2009), among others, would argue are vital for their survival and success.

This discussion, then, has addressed the first three of this project's research questions in arriving at the beginnings of an answer to the fourth. We have seen that subject leaders are restricted in the types of leadership that they are able to demonstrate. The reasons have been seen to be the power resources open to them which have come across as conditioned partly by the organisational structures within which they are forced to

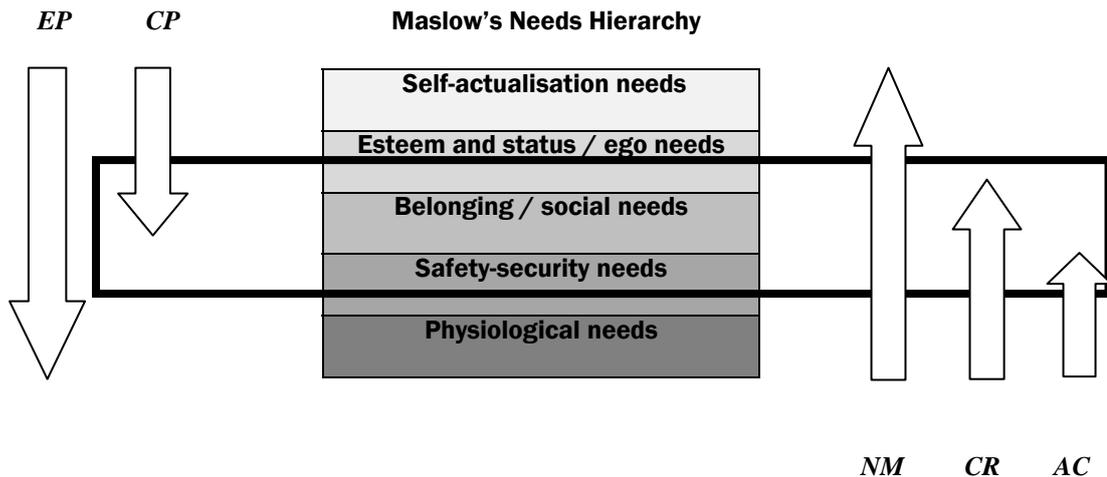
operate, but, to an even greater extent, by the relative lack of influence they exert over the professional practice of their followers. This chapter will now turn in a more explicit way to the research questions and, in answering them, conclude the argument, providing a tentative conceptual model that, it is hoped, will be this project's primary contribution to the mass of educational research dealt with in the introductory chapter. The project set out to look at school effectiveness in relation to the subject leader's influence space. Insofar as "effectiveness" here is linked closely to leadership for learning, the problem has been examined through the prism of influence; it is necessary, therefore, to develop this concept and provide a definition of what is meant by "influence space", especially in the respect that the term applies to subject leaders and their ability to impact upon the pedagogical practice of the members of their departments. The next section will answer the research questions in turn, in the light of the issues discussed above, and provide two models; the first will be an extension of Figure 1 from Chapter 3 which will illustrate the notion of a subject leader's influence space, while the second will revisit Figure 2 in order to attempt to isolate how this influence space is, or is not, a vehicle for the effective application of leadership for learning. It is the second of these that will most closely and succinctly convey the essence of this project's initial remit and, thus, make an original contribution to knowledge in the particular field under examination.

Conclusions

As we saw in the introductory chapter and subsequent literature reviews, much research has addressed the nature of the subject leader's role in secondary schools. That subject leaders are expected to shoulder a great deal of responsibility for the quality of teaching

and learning in schools has been seen not only through a consideration of official documents on the matter and papers produced by the National College for School Leadership, but through the work of those researchers, such as Rhodes and Brundrett (2010) and Moller (2009), who have explored the area of “leadership for learning”. The literature has not, however, had a great deal to say about the relationships between leaders and their followers and how it bears on the quality of leadership in subject departments; department members, in particular, have been given few chances to express their views. Having, in the previous section, considered the findings of the research in the context of extant literature, the argument will now return to this project’s initial research questions and, by using what has been learned to answer them, attempt to fill this gap in the literature.

The first of this project’s research questions asks, “What constitutes “leadership” insofar as it is evident within secondary school subject departments and on what resources of power, authority and influence is it based?” As the above discussion has indicated, the type of dynamic leadership for the twenty first century which Turner (2003) has called for from subject leaders seemed to be in little evidence in the sample investigated for this study. What has emerged is the argument that subject leadership is a severely circumscribed phenomenon. To place this point in a theoretical context, it is now possible to adapt the model developed in Chapter 3 and present the following modified diagram:



CP = Consensual Power; *EP* = Essential Power; *NM* = Normative/Moral Compliance Relationships; *CR* = Calculative/Remunerative Compliance Relationships; *AC* = Alienative/Coercive Compliance Relationships.

Figure 6: The subject leader's "influence space"

In Figure 6, the thick-edged box represents the subject leader's "influence space". This term is preferred to "influence range" in that it reminds us that the social and psychological aspects of influence enumerated earlier are themselves strongly influenced by contexts which are physical, material and, quite possibly, geographical (in the respect that proximity can affect influence); it also reminds us of Bourdieu's (2000) concept of an individual's "space", but emphasises its social dimension. For types of leaders other than subject leaders, the box might be expanded, contracted or moved upwards or downwards to include essential power; for someone who was extraordinarily powerful, for example, the box would cover the whole of the ranges indicated. Indeed, the diagram could be amended to accommodate different individual leaders of the same theoretical status. It must, of course, be remembered that the model represents a simplification of all possible compliance relationships. Here the three starkest varieties are given, but the right hand side of the diagram would be more complicated if different shades of compliance were

accommodated. Moreover, the criticisms of Maslow's needs hierarchy noted in Chapter 3 remain. Nevertheless, such a diagram is beneficial in that it provides a visual shorthand for what is a highly complex series of relationships; as we have seen, if further variables such as gender and length of service were to be factored in, the discussion's premises might alter. In that sense, the diagram provides a guide to further research and testing of the type that will be recommended in the final section of this chapter.

That having been said, what the model is intended to demonstrate is how - to use the typology of power developed in Chapter 3 - subject leaders are limited by the fact that they do not, for the most part, hold "essential" power, but can only project a certain measure of "consensual" power. It is always necessary to state that such a conclusion is based on the specific sample investigated in this research and that further work may subtly change the outcome; what a project such as this ultimately accomplishes is the outlining of a potential concern that would merit further research. With that in mind, the findings for this project led to the production of Figure 6 which can be interpreted in the ways that follow.

That subject leaders ultimately lack power over the physical entities of their followers (Foucault, 1975) is demonstrated by the fact that their influence space does not cover physiological needs or the full range of safety/security needs. Some of the latter are met by the management and organisational tasks that came through in the research as being major elements of a subject leader's remit. At the other end of the spectrum, the apparent inability of subject leaders to show genuine transformational leadership prevents them from impacting on the self-actualisation of their followers, but what motivational tools are available to them do not prevent them from having a limited affect

on ego and esteem needs; again, the emphasis in this project's findings on the use of praise and tokenistic rewards demonstrated this. Even so, as Figure 6 shows, much of a subject leader's role is located in the belonging and social needs area – precisely what might be expected given the consistent emphasis placed on the informal in the findings. Figure 6 also indicates how little “essential” power is wielded by subject leaders; in the findings, the fact that subject leaders and their followers both spoke of the former's impotence when dealing with major professional problems brought this point out. The informal nature of the subject leader role allows them only to project “consensual” power, a consequence of the fact – illustrated by the right of the diagram – that compliance relationships touch only lightly on the normative/moral (Etzioni, 1975), most being better characterised as calculative or alienative in tone. To state all of this in terms that would be familiar to French and Raven (1959), subject leaders mainly possess referent power which has no coercive element to it but is engendered by the more-or-less willing participation of both leaders and followers. That this is a continuous process (Dall'Alba, 2009) explains the much-stressed need for constant informal dialogue within subject departments; no relationship remains fixed, as Rhodes et al (2004) and Crawford (2007) remind us, and the subject leaders who participated in the interviews were in the position of having to work hard to maintain their influence space with their followers. Subject leaders were also seen, particularly by department members, to hold some legitimate power vested in the role itself. Their leadership, then, can be characterised as consisting of interpersonal transactions legitimated, but not empowered, by hierarchical status.

Considering these conclusions in the light of leadership for learning (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2010) allows an answer to the second research question – “To what extent is the professional practice of department members influenced by subject leadership and

what, by extension, are the implications for leadership for learning?” – to be proposed. Turner and Bolam’s (1998) flowchart places subject leaders at the core of a school’s main mission – to deliver high quality teaching and learning with a strong focus on student attainment. In answering the second of this project’s research questions, however, we have discovered a significant potential blockage to this process in that a subject leader’s influence on educational outcomes is mediated by the members of his or her department. The influence space identified above describes a situation - which came through clearly from the research - in which subject leaders make little difference to the professional practice of their followers beyond being able to affect some contextual factors through their managerial role, together with what little they can achieve through informal, micro-political (Hoyle, 1992) contacts. Some evidence that department members identify their subject leaders as role models was detectable, but, on the whole, this was a minor factor.

Turner and Bolam (1998) base their notions on Contingency Theory (Fiedler, 1967), which states that leadership style and effectiveness will largely be determined by organisational factors outside of the individual leader’s control, and, in that respect, they agree with this research’s conclusions. It cannot be denied, though, that they are somewhat more optimistic about the impact of subject leaders on teaching and learning than the participants in this research have led the present author to be. A subject leader’s role in the “instructional dynamic” (Ball and Forzani, 2007) between an individual teacher and his or her students came across as marginal at best. Both stages of the research granted the subject leader a role in the organisation of the curriculum, the provision of resources and the production of schemes of work – exactly, in other words, the type of contingent factors mentioned by Turner and Bolam (1998). However, a

teacher's approach, favoured instructional methods, personal organisation and, perhaps above all, relationship with his or her students were seen to remain largely untouched by a subject leader's influence, perhaps because teaching is, as Ryken (2004) observed, a personal matter that is intimately informed by a teacher's personality and professionalism (Evans, 2008). Since this research has not been able to isolate ways in which subject leaders have a significant bearing on these elements, the conclusion must be that their influence space does not, ultimately, cover the key aspects that might be required if leadership for learning (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2010) is to be an unqualified success, the caution once more being sounded that wider research may yield a fuller picture. Again, we might be tempted to ask how this matters if educational outcomes are satisfactory and, indeed, Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) list respect for a teacher's individual approach as a key aspect of leadership for learning. This research is not at variance with their conclusions, but, equally, it must be said that until teaching ceases to be performed within hierarchically-structured organisations, leadership will always have a bearing upon it and it is, therefore, not illegitimate to ask – as so many of the authors cited within this thesis have – how that leadership can be optimised to improve the overall standard of education provided by schools.

The interpersonal dynamics which emanated from the above were at the heart of the answer to the third of this project's research questions: "What are the implications of the answers to questions 1 and 2 for purposeful teamwork in subject departments?" Foucault's assertion (2001a) that an organisational structure exists as a vehicle for the imposition of power proved to be only partly true of the subject departments investigated in this study. The research certainly indicated that an awareness of the hierarchical nature of a school was uppermost in the minds of most participants and, indeed, most

found thinking beyond a hierarchy and their place within it – even on the level of the individual subject department – surprisingly difficult, thus seeming to validate the claims of authors such as Ryan and Rottman (2009) who see hierarchies as the natural form for an organisation. This trend was especially evident in the responses of department members and does much to explain their tendency to conceptualise their subject leaders as occupying a central role in departments. As a means of conditioning compliance, though, the subject department was consistently seen to be over-ridden by higher, more potent, structures. In this respect, the subject department as an organisational entity can be seen as one of the chief limiting conditions on a subject leader's influence space. Hence subject leaders' near-universal advocacy of collegiality and its actual manifestation in practice, informality. A subject leader's restricted influence space was seen to make informality a necessary condition of the role: if he or she were to demonstrate any form of effective leadership, it could only be by de-emphasising, or even by-passing, the formal structure of the department and operating, as West (1999) and Youngs (2009) would recognise, through informal groupings within it. That the departments researched were generally speaking quite "successful" in that they obtained examination results that were deemed acceptable by the schools to which they belonged, argues that the informal is a viable vehicle for leadership in their case. Irrespective of that, it must be said that any change in their circumstances would have placed a strain on their mode of operation. As we saw, in two of the departments that took part in the interview stage, breakdowns in the informal relationships between subject leaders and members of their departments led to rifts within the teams which were only resolved by the departure of the department members in question.

An answer to the fourth research question, then – “What common features can be identified from a comparison of different departments in a range of schools?” – is beginning to emerge. Although this thesis has rarely addressed the question directly, its presence being inherent to the argument’s entire structure, the answer to it is essentially this project’s original contribution to knowledge: the discussion and conclusions drawn above have allowed us to reach a point at which some broader conclusions can be drawn that add something new to that body of research which looks at subject departments and their role in the delivery of a school’s primary remit. In posing the question, it is necessary to bear in mind the caveats regarding generalisation given in Chapter 4, but, that done, we can now revisit Figure 2 from Chapter 3 and revise it in the light of what has been discovered through fieldwork; Figure 7 proposes some alterations to the original diagram which are entailed by this project’s findings:

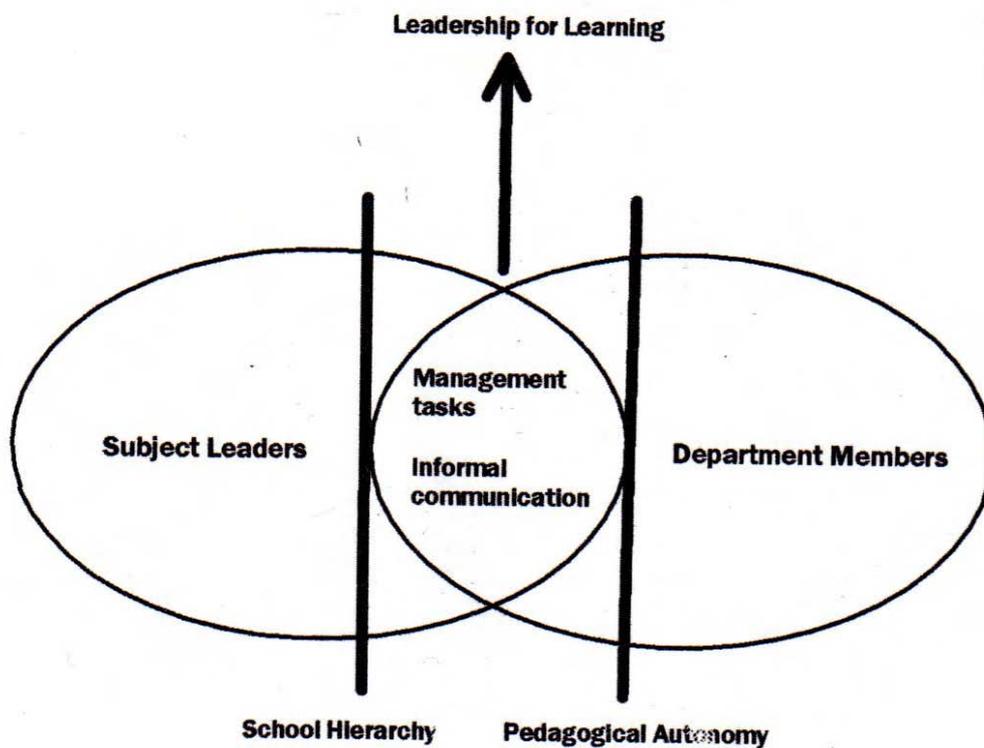


Figure 7: The subject leader’s “influence space” with implications for “leadership for learning”

Once again, such a visual representation of a large body of findings is inevitably going to be a simplification of those findings. That said, we should recall that McMurdo (2010), a practising educational manager, has extolled the benefits of such diagrams to decision-making within school environments. In this instance, the diagram is intended as a summary, but one which, as we shall see, makes concrete the conceptual leaps that might be necessary if educational effectiveness and improvement are to be further promoted. In Figure 7, the subject leader influence space is seen in relation to the structure of a department. The area of overlap is the region within which a subject leader is able to exercise influence on the practice of the members of his or her department. As

the diagram shows, the chief vehicle for this was found, in the departments investigated, to be management tasks and informal, micro-political strategies. This is not, in itself, surprising and perhaps merely describes the operation of a working group within a hierarchical organisation. More significant are the major impediments to subject leader influence which are given by the perpendicular bars; the hierarchy of a school is a constraint on subject leader power and so appears on that side of the diagram, while pedagogical autonomy is a constraint on department member involvement and therefore appears where it does. While, again, it must be stressed that this represents a simplified version of the findings and, in any case, can only with confidence be seen as a common feature of the departments investigated, it does follow naturally from what I discovered during my fieldwork. That subject leaders are only able to wield consensual power is predicated essentially on these two factors. The resources open to them, which are a function of hierarchical position, restrict them largely to referent power, supplemented, occasionally, by legitimate power and/or expert power. From the point of view of department members, the alienative and calculative modes of involvement that we identified as those which they most commonly yield, have their basis in the autonomy which characterises their primary role as teachers. Given that leadership for learning depends on the area of influence, the chief implication of Figure 7, as it stands, is that subject leaders have strictly limited opportunities to provide leadership of relevance to school effectiveness and improvement. It must be added, though, that in a normative/moral environment that would admit the possibility of Burns' (1978) transformational leadership, the constraining bars may be rendered irrelevant. The constraints would still be present, but they would no longer condition the subject leader influence space; in terms of Figure 7, the bars would move outwards, allowing, if needed, a greater overlap between the practice of subject leaders and that of department

members and, hence, a more flexible influence space for subject leaders. How this might be achieved will be explored in the next section, Recommendations.

The main import of Figure 7, and, thus, of this research, can be summarised in a number of statements regarding subject leadership that follow on naturally from the data gathered. These may briefly be given as:

- Subject leadership is mainly transactional in nature.
- This is because subject leaders are largely unable to influence the professional identities and professionalism of the members of their departments.
- As a result, subject leaders possess only various forms of consensual power, such as referent power and, to some extent, expert and legitimate power.
- The consequence of this is that subject leaders are forced to adopt informal, micro-political influence tactics in order to project their power.
- The ramification is that subject leaders ultimately have a less than maximal impact on student outcomes.

While such bald statements may seem unduly reductive, they are not only a summary answer to the fourth research question, but the foundation for a series of recommendations for action. It is to these that this chapter will now turn.

Recommendations

If leadership for learning is to have maximum impact, the leadership potential of those in formal charge of schools' curricula needs to be optimised. This means examining subject leaders' influence space and maximising its effectiveness – which does not necessarily mean increasing it. As will be seen, part of the process of building leadership for learning may involve enhancing the roles of those department members who actually teach lessons and deliver the curriculum. In the terms given in Figure 7, the need is to shift the perpendicular restraining bars outwards to create more opportunity for subject leader influence space to grow or contract as necessary.

Looking at the right-hand side of the diagram, we have seen how pedagogical autonomy is a formidable barrier to subject leaders' ability to impact on the practice of their followers. Clearly, it would be impractical for subject leaders to take too active a role in the lessons of others. Moreover, the extent to which it would be desirable in most situations is open to question; the subject leaders who participated in this research were sometimes coy about their own professional excellence while advertising that of their followers. Equally, department members did not always seem to want too much interference from their subject leaders, as their frequent denials of influence attested. That said, it is, as we have seen, a subject leader's primary remit to lead teaching and learning within his or her department and this can only be achieved if they enjoy sufficient influence space, should greater involvement be required.

The informality that has underpinned so much of the research data for this project is a possible vehicle for the accomplishment of this. Recent research by Wong et al (2010) has found that the emotional engagement of leaders with their followers is crucial to effectiveness. Basing their ideas on those of “emotional intelligence” (as developed by, for example, Mayer et al, 2000) these authors suggest that the ability to, “use emotions and to direct them toward constructive activities and personal performance” (page 60) is a major characteristic of good leadership. While this notion has only been touched on by implication in the current project (as in the discussions of how leaders influence the social and psychological worlds of their followers), the interviews, in particular, suggested that many of the informal interactions that were seen as central to departmental relationships were prosecuted in environments that were as much governed by the emotional as the rational – again, the work of Crawford (2007) is applicable here. Where the work of Wong et al (2010) is especially relevant is in their claim that leadership practice based on emotional interactions is the most effective method of promoting teacher job satisfaction. While the authors acknowledge the contributions of such researchers as Spector and O’Connell (1994) towards identifying the psychological bases of job satisfaction, they agree with this project in stating that little work has concentrated on how leaders’ behaviours are integral to the concept. Further research into this area, therefore, would be a recommendation of this research, but, on top of that, there is more than a suggestion here that subject leaders should see the promotion of job satisfaction among their followers as an ongoing, relational process, and not merely a “one-off” recognition of a specific achievement conveyed by, say, the gift of a bottle of wine or the giving of a greetings card.

More generally, what seems clear is that the informality that conditions many departmental interactions is fertile ground for school improvement. As Bush (2010) argues, the skill set for leadership is distinct from that of teaching, and, yet, as we have found, the subject leaders investigated for this research were left to construct the role themselves, with the consequence that they too often saw it as an administration-orientated extension to their teaching load. There is a case, therefore, for more training for potential subject leaders and a greater sense of what the role does, or should, involve; as Lumby and English (2009) write, “leadership preparation and development are not about normalizing and routinizing decision-making but about improvising within novel situations of great complexity which require at least a pluralistic notion of identity” (page 111). That this accords closely with the type of leadership that this project has identified within departments run on informal lines should be clear. It should also lead us to the recommendation that training for subject leadership should centre less on administrative tasks and more on how the role involves the establishment and continuous development of professional relationships which are the crucibles within which mutually held values and commonly acknowledged meanings are formed. This is the means by which subject leaders could influence the perceptions behind the controls which drive intentions to action according to planned behaviour theory (Ajzen, 1991).

We have characterised subject leadership as the process of influencing the professionalism of followers through means of power sources that are largely what has been termed “conceptual” in nature. If this process is to become an effective vehicle for the improvement of educational outcomes, there is a case for suggesting that it should not merely be a side-effect of the subject leader role, but the heart of it. A minimising of the management focus of the subject leader role would be one way to accomplish this;

how this might be achieved will be looked at shortly in the context of distributed leadership. Allied to that, there is much to be said for a re-conceptualisation of how monitoring operates. As we saw, for many of the departments investigated, monitoring was a perfunctory exercise, performed infrequently and aimed at rating the professional competence of the member of staff observed. To realise the aspirations of such authors as Wong et al (2010), monitoring needs to be transformed from the act of ensuring that a teacher meets a set of pre-conceived “performance indicators” into a professional dialogue between subject leader and department member that is unique to the professional circumstances of both. In this respect, “effectiveness” itself needs to be seen, to make use of the terminology devised by Evans (2008), not as an aspect of “professionalism”, but as an element of “professionality”. In order to reach this position, there would be a need to ensure that discourse according to Svedberg’s (2004) definition flowed freely within departments in the type of trusting environment envisaged by, for example, Crawford (2007). The varieties of leadership preparation discussed by Lumby and English (2009) would be one approach to this issue.

However, that monitoring is not, in and of itself, a guarantee of effectiveness has been found by Hulpia et al (2009); these authors have discovered that a teacher’s “organisational commitment” – which is subsumed within professionalism – is enhanced by his or her being supervised by one person only, rather than a whole raft of managers and leaders. Again, this recalls planned behaviour theory (Ajzen, 1991) in that to ensure such commitment involves influencing an individual’s controls on intention to action. It can be seen, once more, as an argument for more clearly defining the subject leader role – especially as Hulpia et al (2009) have found that teacher job satisfaction is promoted by there being people in readily-identifiable leadership positions within a school

organisation. An ancillary benefit might be a clearer sense of person/role fit in relation to subject leadership; in some of the departments researched for this project, we saw that department members did not seem to place their subject leaders in the position described by Hulpia et al (2009) and this was at least in part because of a failure by some subject leaders to take on the role. An unequivocal awareness that this is a requirement would go some way towards addressing this issue.

Within the model they construct, Hulpia et al (2009) argue that distribution of leadership is desirable, provided that its sources and purposes are clearly-defined and “cohesive”. This is not at variance with this research, which often discovered that department members demanded some form of direction from their subject leaders. Again, this leads to the proposition that relationships between subject leaders and their followers need to be made central to a department’s mission. In fact, what needs to occur in subject departments is a movement towards what Gronn (2009) calls “hybrid leadership”, that is, a form of leadership that is collegial and distributed, but which allows scope for formal office holders – in this case, subject leaders – to play an appropriate part. From what has been said before, we can see how the “ambiguity approach” to leadership espoused by such authors as Meyerson and Martin (1987) would be a fitting vehicle for this. It would also allow management tasks to be shared out around the department and de-emphasised as an aspect of the subject leader role; while this would seem to conform to the prevailing situation found in many of the departments investigated in which delegation took the place of distributed leadership, the point is not to view it as delegation of subject leader responsibilities so much as a re-definition of those responsibilities as parts of the remit of interested department members.

Turning to the left-hand side of Figure 7, then, effective leadership for learning perhaps could be promoted by both a fully articulated re-conceptualisation of the leadership dimensions of subject leadership and a re-configuration of a school's hierarchy to make it more hospitable to collegiality and distributed leadership. Harris (2005) has stated that this is an ambitious aspiration, since the formal structures of schools are somewhat inimical to both qualities. Changing this calls for two effects to occur. Firstly, subject leaders need to be less in the thrall of school- and policy-wide structures that ignore their individual circumstances; they need to be given the scope to design departmental structures that suit the requirements of the pupils to be taught and the teachers doing the teaching. Schools should, thus, come to be viewed less as monolithic technical-rational organisations and more as federations of broadly autonomous academic departments. This would call for senior managers and, indeed, agencies beyond the school (such as OFSTED), to restrict their involvement to that of overall standard-setters and budgetary arbiters. Of course, describing what a department in such an ideal world might look like is difficult because much would depend upon the individuals – both staff and pupils – involved in any given case. Moreover, the need to ensure consistency of standards across the entire education system would still entail constraints being placed on the practice and ambitions of subject leaders. Even so, it is not impossible to imagine a world in which subject leaders and their followers build professional relationships which allow them to create a teaching approach and methodology that is specific to the circumstances of their department and that does not, for example, have to consist of lessons that conform to an externally-imposed “three part structure”; in effect, this is a plea to adopt Simkins' (2005) philosophy of “what works”.

The second of the potential changes mentioned above needs to be generated by the teachers themselves: informality needs to become true collegiality. This is not, it will be recalled, the same as advocating an unfettered distribution of leadership. Collegiality is a state of mind, but one which springs from the sort of normative/moral compliance relationships (Etzioni, 1975) which allow true consensual power to operate to maximum effect. Informality alone does not remove the dangers of alienative or calculative modes of involvement. In a properly collegial environment, subject leaders would not be disadvantaged by their lack of what we have characterised as “essential” power – the commitment of their followers would be such that their departments would exhibit all the signs of hybrid leadership (Gronn, 2009). Indeed, in such an environment, it would even be possible for some subject leadership to attain the transformational. How this might be achieved is again less easy to state straightforwardly. Planned behaviour theory (Ajzen, 1991) offers one route: teachers need to be open and honest about the worries, concerns and perceptions which act as controls on their intentions to action and to discuss them in a trusting environment with their subject leaders. This is an argument for subject leaders operating in a manner that is as much emotional as rational (Crawford, 2007) and involves a continuous co-construction of a version of reality (Lumby and English, 2009) with their followers. An ability to do this would thus need to be a crucial part of a subject leader’s skill set and should inform training courses relevant to the post.

The above recommendations for practice follow from this research, but, if they are to be reflected in policy or, indeed, be adopted in the professional world, they need to be further investigated and tested. This having been a piece of small-scale research by a lone researcher inevitably means that a large proportion of the field has been left untouched. The concepts and conclusions presented above would benefit from being

further explored through a larger sample, selected not only to answer my initial research questions, but in a way conditioned by this project's conclusions. Moreover, as has been frequently stated in the presentation of findings and the discussion, this project has looked at the broad area of subject leader/department member relationships and, in doing so, has proposed some basic ideas and arguments. As we have seen, though, the relationships in question can be affected by various subtle nuances, some of which have been touched on above, all of which could form the topic for a project in their own right. Length of service is crucial; we have noted that those subject leaders from our sample with greater experience approached problems and relationships differently from those relatively new to the post. It was also evident that department members of long standing often demonstrated a different attitude towards their subject leaders from recent entrants to the profession. Another potential factor was gender. The project certainly implied that power relations were affected by the genders of the power holders and those subject to power. Gender also appeared to impact upon intra-departmental relationships. The next stage of this research, then, would involve testing the ideas proposed in this thesis on a larger scale and focusing in on one or more of the factors just alluded to. The result would be a shift in focus; the research would no longer be simply an answer to the question, "How do subject leaders influence department members?", but would be an approach to, for example, the question, "How does length of service affect subject leader/department member relationships?" While this would be a logical extension of this project, it is a question that can only be properly answered in the light of the conclusions outlined above.

APPENDIX 1:

A letter requesting access in order to conduct the questionnaires and an email requesting access to carry out interview-based research.

2 Peterhouse Crescent
March
Cambridgeshire
PE15 8RE

Dear [Name of Head Teacher]

This letter is to ask for your and your school's help with a research project I am conducting as part of my PhD in Education, on the subject of the implications of leadership in the professional practice of subject leaders and their teams in secondary schools. I am undertaking this PhD through the School of Education at the University of Birmingham: my supervisor is Dr Christopher Rhodes.

Brief details of my background are attached. In summary, I am a teacher with sixteen years of experience in teaching 11 to 18 year old students in the UK: in line with the learning I have gained throughout my career, I have decided to work on my PhD to contribute to current educational research.

The focus of my research is the professional relationship between subject leaders and members of their departments.

I have already conducted pilot research in secondary schools, in both the state and independent sectors. I now need to widen that research to survey a broader sample of colleagues, to be able to isolate some key concepts which have emerged from that preliminary work.

It would greatly help my research if staff at your school would take part in the survey. I would be grateful if you could distribute the enclosed questionnaires to members of your staff (both subject leaders and their department members) to complete and return to me, either by email or by post, whichever is easiest for the respondent. I enclose a stamped envelope addressed to myself to facilitate the latter option.

When completing the survey, **respondents can be assured that ethical guidelines will be observed and that their full confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Neither your school nor any individuals associated with it will be named in any thesis or published work resulting from this fieldwork.** Respondents will simply be identified as, for example, "a head of French" or "a teacher of Chemistry".

I would be more than happy to talk to you or any of your staff about this project in more detail and I can be contacted on the details below at any time.

Yours sincerely and with many thanks for your help,

Adrian Jarvis (signed)
Email: adrian.jarvis@-----
Mobile phone: 077- ----3

Dear Headmaster,

May I introduce myself? I am, primarily, a teacher in the independent sector, but, for the purposes of this request, I am a Ph.D student in Education at the University of Birmingham and I was wondering if it would be possible to request the assistance of some members of your school's staff with the data-gathering that I need to carry out?

My research focuses on the professional relationships between subject leaders and the members of their departments; I have already published some material related to this, an example of which can be consulted in the January 2008 issue of "Management in Education". I have been carrying out interviews over the last year or so and would like to continue this process by taking one or more departments at your school as case studies. This would call for me to spend time in the departments and conduct semi-structured interviews on several members of staff, both subject leaders and members of their departments.

You can rest assured that full confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Neither _____ School nor any individuals associated with it will be named in any thesis or published work resulting from this research. My most recent paper (which was delivered at a research conference) did not even hint at the schools in which participants worked, identifying the individuals concerned as no more than "a head of French" or "a teacher of Chemistry".

I hope that you will allow me to proceed with this research. Should you require any further clarification about any aspect of it whatsoever, please do not hesitate to respond to this email or call me on 077-- -----3. I am most grateful for your time.

Adrian Jarvis,
University of Birmingham,
School of Education.

APPENDIX 2:

Description of the research sites visited during the interview stage.

Name of School	Description of School	Location of School	Interviews Carried Out
Three Spires School	Independent 13 – 18 co-educational school with a student body that is largely boarding but which includes a significant proportion of day pupils.	Worcestershire, West Midlands, England.	Pilot interviews with two members of the English department.
The Royal Grammar School	Girls only 11 – 18 state grammar school. Day pupils only.	West Midlands, England.	The head of the English department. Two members of the English department. The head of Science. Two members of the Science department.
Firthside School	Independent boarding school, co-educational with a 13 – 18 age range. Follows the English curriculum.	Moray, North East Scotland.	The Head of Modern Languages. Two members of the Modern Languages department. The head of the Chemistry department. One member of the Chemistry department.
Fenham Grammar School	Independent day grammar school. Co-educational with an 11 – 18 age range.	Cambridgeshire, East Anglia, England.	The head of the Physics department. One member of the Physics department. The head of the Music department. One member of the Music department. The head of the French department.

			<p>One member of the French department.</p> <p>The head of years 7, 8 and 9 Science.</p> <p>One member of the Science department who teaches years 7, 8 and 9.</p>
Mackintosh College	Independent boarding school with a 13 – 18 age range. Boys only until the sixth form at which age girls are admitted.	Berkshire, South East of England.	The head of the Art department.
City Grammar School	Boys only state grammar school with an 11 – 18 age range.	Central Birmingham, England.	<p>The head of the Design and Technology department.</p> <p>Two members of the Design and Technology department.</p> <p>The head of Modern Languages.</p> <p>The head of Information and Communication Technology.</p> <p>A member of the Mathematics department.</p>
Kowloon British School (KBS)	Part-independent, part-state funded co-educational school with an 11 – 18 age range. The school follows the British curriculum and is largely staffed by British ex-pat teachers.	Kowloon, Hong Kong, Republic of China.	<p>The head of Modern Languages.</p> <p>Two members of the Modern Languages Department.</p> <p>The head of the English department.</p> <p>One member of the English department.</p>

Castleton School	An independent school for boys aged 7 – 18. Mostly day pupils, although there is a small number of boarders who are mostly international students who have come from abroad to study in the UK.	Warwickshire, England.	The head of Drama. A member of the Drama Department. The head of Mathematics. A member of the Mathematics Department.
Anglia Community College	A state co-educational comprehensive school for students aged 11 – 18.	Cambridgeshire, East Anglia, England.	The head of History. Three members of the History Department. The head of Mathematics. Two members of the Mathematics Department.
Hilltop High School	A large state co-educational comprehensive with an 11 – 18 intake.	Cheshire. North West of England.	The head of Expressive Arts. A Music teacher
Queenswood College	An independent day school with a Roman Catholic ethos. Co-educational. 11 – 18 intake.	Warwickshire, West Midlands. England.	The head of History and Politics. A member of the History and Politics department.
Total number of interviews.			Subject Leaders: 20 Department Members: 28 Overall: 48

APPENDIX 3: Copies of the questionnaires.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SUBJECT LEADERS

Dear respondent

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this project. This questionnaire, and your responses to it, will help form the basis of research I am conducting as part of my PhD in Education, on the subject of the implications of leadership in the professional practice of subject leaders and their teams in secondary schools. I am undertaking this PhD through the School of Education at the University of Birmingham: my supervisor is Dr Christopher Rhodes.

You should note that all responses obtained will be reported anonymously. Neither individuals nor institutions will be identified by name in any publication or thesis arising from this research. Moreover, the data will be held securely and will not be disclosed to any third party without the express consent of all relevant participants.

Once you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to me by email to adrian.jarvis@----- or by post to 2 Peterhouse Crescent, March, Cambridgeshire PE15 8QT.

I am more than happy to discuss any aspect of it with you in more detail: please call me on (077--) -----3.

Yours sincerely and with many thanks

Adrian Jarvis

SECTION 1: RESPONDENT DETAILS

1. Please state the subject of which you are the leader: _____
2. How long have you been a subject leader? _____ years
3. What is your gender: male/female*
4. Were you appointed to subject leadership: internally/externally*
5. Upon appointment, had you previously been in a leadership role, such as that of subject leader? yes/no*
6. If the answer to Q5 is "yes", please indicate your previous role:

* Please delete as appropriate

SECTION 2: THE NATURE OF SUBJECT LEADERSHIP

7. The table below shows a number of statements about the priorities of subject leadership. Please rank your personal top ten statements in the order of the importance you would give each, numbering your chosen statements from 1 – 10, with 1 being the highest and 10 the lowest.

	TABLE 1: I THINK THE PRIORITIES OF SUBJECT LEADERSHIP ARE...	RANKING GIVEN (FROM 1 – 10)
A	Teaching my subject	
B	Being a model of good teaching practice for members of my department	
C	Having a vision for my department	
D	Having the will to use power to achieve my goals	
E	Working with staff to implement action	
F	Taking a role in whole-school planning	
G	Co-ordinating and implementing action effectively	
H	Putting school policy into effect	
I	Mediating between my department and senior management	
J	Supporting/promoting the interests of my department and its members	
K	“Publicising” my department both within my school and beyond it	
L	Leading curriculum development in my subject	
M	Leading teaching and learning for my subject	
N	Taking the leading role in co-ordinating and supervising assessment in my subject	
O	Monitoring the work of members of my department	
P	Providing schemes of work for my subject	
Q	Providing guidance on teaching methodology to the members of my department	
R	Administration (of, for example, pupil records)	
S	Managing my department’s budget	
T	Managing resources	
U	Leading INSET in my subject area	
V	Recruiting and mentoring new members of my department	

8. Please give any other instances of subject leadership roles, which you may regard as important, but which do not appear in the table at Q7:

9. How many hours a week are you able to give to being a subject leader, as opposed to teaching and the preparation/marking that goes into it? (Please put an X in the relevant box):

	TABLE 2: HOURS A WEEK GIVEN TO BEING A SUBJECT LEADER	MARKING (X)
A	Under 1 hour	
B	1 - 3 hours	
C	4 - 6 hours	
D	7 - 9 hours	
E	Over 10 hours	

10. Of your answer to Q9, roughly what proportion of your time is spent in direct interaction with members of your department: this can be a very rough guesstimate. (Please put an X in the relevant box):

	TABLE 3: PROPORTION OF TIME SPENT IN DIRECT INTERACTION WITH MEMBERS OF DEPARTMENT	MARKING (X)
A	100%	
B	99 – 75%	
C	74 – 50%	
D	49 – 25%	
E	Below 24%	

11. How often in any given academic year would you observe a member of your department teaching? (Please put an X in the relevant box):

	TABLE 4: AMOUNT OF OBSERVATION OF MEMBER OF DEPARTMENT IN ANY GIVEN ACADEMIC YEAR	MARKING (X)
A	Never	
B	Once	
C	Twice	
D	At least once a term	
E	Often	

SECTION 3: THE INFLUENCE OF SUBJECT LEADERS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

12. How much influence would you say that you have over the classroom practice of the members of your department? (Please put an X in the relevant box):

	TABLE 5: AMOUNT OF INFLUENCE OVER CLASSROOM PRACTICE OF MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT	MARKING (X)
1	Total control	
2	A great deal of influence	
3	Some influence	
4	Very little influence	
5	No influence	

13. If your answer to Q12 was in the range 1 – 3, can you give at least one example of how you influence the teaching of members of your department?

14. If your answer to Q12 was in the range 4 – 5, can you indicate the reasons, in your opinion, why you are unable to influence classroom teaching to any significant extent?

15. On what do you think your authority with the department is based? Please rank the following statements in order of the importance you would give each, numbering your chosen statements from 1 – 6, with 1 being the highest and 6 the lowest.

	TABLE 6: I THINK MY AUTHORITY WITH THE DEPARTMENT IS BASED ON...	RANKING GIVEN (FROM 1 – 6)
A	My position in the school's hierarchy	
B	My expertise as a teacher	
C	My record as a leader	
D	My access to coercive power resources (such as the ability to discipline underperforming teachers)	
E	My personal relationship with the members of my department	
F	The department members' desire to do a professional job	

SECTION 4: DEPARTMENTS AS TEAMS

16. How would you characterise your department from a teamwork perspective? (Please put an X in the relevant box):

	TABLE 7: THE DEPARTMENT FROM A TEAMWORK PERSPECTIVE	MARKING (X)
1	We are a closely bonded team with clear aims and objectives which are followed by everyone	
2	We work well together, although not all members of the department follow the stated aims and objectives	
3	We get on well personally, but tend to follow individual teaching methodologies	
4	There are some tensions in the department and little sharing of practice	
5	There is almost no interaction between members of the department	

17. If your answer to Q16 was in the range 1 – 2, what strategies do you follow to engender and sustain teamwork within your department?

18. If your answer to Q16 was in the range 3 – 5, what reasons would you give for the problems with teamwork in your department?

19. What approaches do you take towards motivating the members of your department?

20. To what extent is delegation of responsibilities a factor in the way that you run your department? (Please put an X in the relevant box)

	TABLE 8: THE EXTENT TO WHICH DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES IS A FACTOR IN THE WAY IN WHICH THE SUBJECT LEADER RUNS THE DEPARTMENT	MARKING (X)
1	I delegate freely	
2	I often delegate, but ensure that certain responsibilities are mine alone	
3	I sometimes delegate, largely to ease the pressure on myself	
4	I rarely delegate and then only reluctantly	
5	I never delegate	

21. If your answer to Q20 was in the 1 – 3 range, what, in your opinion, are the chief benefits of delegation as a leadership strategy:

22. If your answer to Q20 was in the 4 – 5 range, can you give a reason (or reasons) why you tend not to make use of delegation in the running of your department:

23. If a member of your team is underperforming, or refusing to follow the policies and practices that you wish them to follow, what sanctions are open to you in order to ensure their compliance?

The following questions are about your views on the benefits or otherwise of external and internal appointments. They should be answered by:

- Internally appointed respondents: answer Q24 and Q25 **only**
- Externally appointed respondents: answer Q26 and Q27 **only**

Internally appointed respondents

24. If you were appointed internally, in what ways do you feel this has helped you to relate the members of your department as their leader?

25. What, if any, are the weaknesses associated with having been appointed internally?

Externally appointed respondents

26. If you were appointed externally, what benefits do you think this has had for your leadership role?

27. What, if any, are the weaknesses associated with having been appointed externally?

End of survey – thank you.

Please return completed questionnaires to me, Adrian Jarvis, by email to adrian.jarvis@----- or by post to 2, P_____ Crescent, M____, C_____shire PE__ 8__.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DEPARTMENT MEMBERS

Dear respondent,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this project. This questionnaire, and your responses to it, will help form the basis of research I am conducting as part of my PhD in Education, on the subject of the implications of leadership in the professional practice of subject leaders and their teams in secondary schools. I am undertaking this PhD through the School of Education at the University of Birmingham: my supervisor is Dr Christopher Rhodes.

You should note that all responses obtained will be reported anonymously. Neither individuals nor institutions will be identified by name in any publication or thesis arising from this research. Moreover, the data will be held securely and will not be disclosed to any third party without the express consent of all relevant participants.

Once you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to me by email to adrian.jarvis@----- or by post to 2 Peterhouse Crescent, March, Cambridgeshire PE15 8QT.

Thank you for your help. I am more than happy to discuss any aspect of it with you in more detail: please call me on (07710) 677983.

Adrian Jarvis

SECTION 1: RESPONDENT DETAILS

1. Please state the subject you teach _____
2. How long have you been in your current post? _____ years
3. What is your gender: male/female*
4. Do you have any positions of responsibility within the department? yes/no*
5. If the answer to Q4 is "yes", please indicate the nature of the responsibility:

* Please delete as appropriate

SECTION 2: YOUR EXPECTATIONS OF YOUR SUBJECT LEADER

6. The table below shows a number of statements about the nature of your subject leader's role subject leadership. Please rank your personal top ten statements in the order of the importance you would give each, numbering your chosen statements from 1 – 10, with 1 being the highest and 10 the lowest.

	TABLE 1: I THINK THE PRIORITIES OF MY SUBJECT LEADER'S ROLE SHOULD BE...	RANKING GIVEN (FROM 1 – 10)
A	Teaching his or her subject	
B	Being a model of good teaching practice for members of the department	
C	Having a vision for the department	
D	Having the will to use power to achieve his or her goals	
E	Working with staff to implement action	
F	Taking a role in whole-school planning	
G	Co-ordinating and implementing action effectively	
H	Putting school policy into effect	
I	Mediating between the department and senior management	
J	Supporting / promoting the interests of the department and its members	
K	"Publicising" the department both within the school and beyond it	
L	Leading curriculum development in your subject	
M	Leading teaching and learning for the subject	
N	Taking the leading role in co-ordinating and supervising assessment in the subject	
O	Monitoring the work of members of the department	
P	Providing schemes of work for the subject	
Q	Providing guidance on teaching methodology to the members of the department	
R	Administration (of, for example, pupil records	
S	Managing the department's budget	
T	Managing resources	
U	Leading INSET in the subject area	
V	Recruiting and mentoring new members of the department	

7. Please give any other instances of subject leadership roles, which you would regard as important for a subject leader, but which do not appear in the table at Q6:

8. Please indicate the number of hours of contact time you have with your Subject leader per week. (Please put an X in the relevant box):

	TABLE 2: THE NUMBER OF HOURS OF CONTACT TIME WITH SUBJECT LEADER	MARKING (X)
A	Under 1 hour	
B	1 - 3 hours	
C	4 - 6 hours	
D	7 - 9 hours	
E	Over 10 hours	

9. Of your response to Q8, approximately what proportion would you say is spent by your subject leader in guiding your professional practice? (Please put an X in the relevant box):

	TABLE 3: PROPORTION OF TIME SPENT BY SUBJECT LEADER IN GUIDING PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE	MARKING (X)
A	100%	
B	99 – 75%	
C	74 – 50%	
D	49 – 25%	
E	Below 24%	

10. How often in the last year has your subject leader observed your teaching? (Please put an X in the relevant box):

	TABLE 4: AMOUNT OF OBSERVATION BY SUBJECT LEADER	MARKING (X)
A	Never	
B	Once	
C	Twice	
D	At least once a term	
E	Often	

SECTION 3: THE INFLUENCE OF SUBJECT LEADERS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

11. How much influence would you say that your subject leader has over your classroom practice? (Please put an X in the relevant box):

	TABLE 5: AMOUNT OF INFLUENCE SUBJECT LEADER HAS OVER CLASSROOM PRACTICE	MARKING (X)
1	Total control	
2	A great deal of influence	
3	Some influence	
4	Very little influence	
5	No influence	

12. If your answer to Q11 was in the range 1 – 3, can you give at least one example of how your teaching has been influenced by your subject leader?

13. If your answer to Q11 was in the range 4 – 5, can you indicate the reasons, in your opinion, why your subject leader is unable to influence your teaching practice?

14. On what do you think your subject leader's authority with the department is based? Please rank the following statements in order of the importance you would give each, numbering your chosen statements from 1 – 6, with 1 being the highest and 6 the lowest.

	TABLE 6: I THINK MY SUBJECT LEADER'S AUTHORITY WITH THE DEPARTMENT IS BASED ON...	RANKING GIVEN (1 – 6)
A	His or her position in the school's hierarchy	
B	His or her expertise as a teacher	
C	His or her record as a leader	
D	His or her access to coercive power resources (such as the ability to discipline underperforming teachers)	
E	His or her personal relationship with the members of the department	
F	The department members' desire to do a professional job	

SECTION 4: DEPARTMENTS AS TEAMS

15. How would you characterise your department from a teamwork perspective? (Please put an X in the relevant box):

	TABLE 7: THE DEPARTMENT FROM A TEAMWORK POINT OF VIEW	MARKING (X)
1	We are a closely bonded team with clear aims and objectives which are followed by everyone	
2	We work well together, although not all members of the department follow the stated aims and objectives	
3	We get on well personally, but tend to follow individual teaching methodologies	
4	There are some tensions in the department and little sharing of practice	
5	There is almost no interaction between members of the department	

16. If your answer to Q15 was in the range 1 – 2, what strategies do you think your subject leader adopts to foster teamwork within the department?

17. If your answer to Q15 was in the range 3 – 5, what reasons would you give for the problems with teamwork in the department?

18. What approaches does your subject leader take towards motivating you?

19. To what extent is delegation of responsibilities a factor in the way that the department is run? (Please put an X in the relevant box):

TABLE 8: THE EXTENT TO WHICH DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES IS A FACTOR IN THE WAY THE DEPARTMENT IS RUN	MARKING (X)
My subject leader delegates freely	
My subject leader often delegates, but he or she ensures that certain responsibilities are reserved for himself or herself	
My subject leader sometimes delegates, largely to ease the pressure on himself or herself	
My subject leader rarely delegates and then only reluctantly	
My subject leader never delegates	

20. If your answer to Q19 was in the 1 – 3 range, could you state what, in your opinion, are the chief benefits of delegation as a team working strategy:

21. If your answer to Q19 was in the 4 – 5 range, can you give a reason (or reasons) why you think your subject leader tends not to make use of delegation in the running of the department:

End of survey – thank you.

Please return completed questionnaires to me by email to adrian.jarvis@----- or by post to 2, P_____ Crescent, M_____, C_____shire PE__ 8__.

APPENDIX 4:
Schedules used during the semi-structured interviews.

**SCHEDULE FOR A SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW
WITH A SUBJECT LEADER**

1. Outline what you see as the major responsibilities of your leadership role.
2. What, in your opinion, are leadership and management? What are the distinctions between them and how do you think they are manifested in your role?
3. What power resources do you think are available to you?
4. From where do you derive your authority with your department?
5. How would you define “teamwork”?
6. What, in your opinion is your role in the process of team-building?
7. Describe how you think your team operates (consider how responsibilities are shared out, how you relate to members of your team, how they relate to one another). What is your relationship to the members of your team?
8. What do you see as the key roles and responsibilities of the members of your team?
9. How do you communicate this to the members of your team? (If departmental meetings, would it be possible to acquire copies of some sample minutes?)
10. What methods do you use to motivate the members of your team?
11. What evidence would you expect to see of your management and leadership in the practice of members of your team?

SCHEDULE FOR A SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW WITH A DEPARTMENT MEMBER

1. Outline what you see as your key responsibilities within the department.
2. Describe what you see as the key responsibilities of your subject leader.
3. To what extent is it important for your subject leader to have a vision for the department?
4. To what extent are these responsibilities mirrored in the way the department is organised?
5. What do you think you do that reflects the influence of your subject leader? Both inside the classroom and more generally around the school.
6. To what extent do you see it as necessary for you to follow the advice/dictats/practices of your subject leader?
7. Describe your professional and personal relationship with your subject leader.
8. What would you say is the chief source of your subject leader's authority?
9. What does your subject leader do to make you feel motivated in your work?
10. To what extent do you feel that you influence your subject leader?
11. Describe how you think the team operates (consider how responsibilities are shared out, how you relate to members of your team, how they relate to one another).

**APPENDIX 5:
A sample interview transcript.**

M_____ R_____

Anglia Community College

AJ

Could you just start by saying who you are, and what you do and where you do it, and all of that kind of thing, just erm..., just for the record?

MR

[*Chuckles*] Yeah. My name is M_____ R____, I am a mathematics teacher at Anglia Community College.

AJ

And that's in M_____?

MR

That's in M_____, yes.

AJ

OK, brilliant, great. Could we just start then, with you saying what you think your key roles and responsibilities in the department are, just as an a..., you know, an Assistant Teacher in the department?

MR

Uhhh..., key roles? Well, I don't..., I don't have any kind of major role I suppose, but in the meantime, it's supporting each other, uhhh..., and I just deliver lessons to students.

AJ

OK. How does it..., what form does this supporting each other take?

MR

I think that __, we can you know, help each other with uhhh..., lessons, issues, uhhh..., behavioural issues, certainly children, uhhh..., people with..., if a certain child has __, or even the bright, gifted and talented students, we can speak to previous teachers, and see how they got on, and things like that.

AJ

OK. Would you say that your department then, is quite sort of collegial, in the way it's run, that it's quite kind of democratic really?

MR

It..., it can be, not always, but, it..., is, but not always, not always.

AJ

So, have you got any examples of when it isn't?

MR

Uhhhm..., when it comes..., when it comes to..., I feel really guilty, because I do..., I do really like my department, but sometimes..., [Pauses]... I'm sorry, it's just difficult.

AJ

Well this is all..., this is all confidential, no one will hear this, so...

MR

Yeah I know, I know. But uhhhm, sometimes, when it comes to like..., __ decisions, and I know..., I appreciate that that's going to come from the top..., but, there is a particular example, at the moment, there's..., there's several things happening in the department at the moment, uhhhm, with..., shuffling, who was going to do what in the Department, and become the Key Stage 3 Co-ordinator. Now, the Key Stage 3 Co-ordinator job, I didn't really feel that was opened up to everybody in the department.

AJ

Oh right, OK. So you think there was an element of it being targeted at a particular person?

MR

Yes.

AJ

Who the Head of Department wanted?

MR

Yes.

AJ

OK, alright. So..., so what you're saying then, is that the Head of Department is quite..., is quite in control really, does..., you know, she does what she wants to do?

MR

Eerrm..., she is very much in control, but she does go past..., she will speak to us, and uhhhm..., to have our views on things, uhhhm, but sometimes, she just makes a decision, but, whether or not that is what you are supposed to..., you should do anyway, errrm, as Head of Department, then maybe, I think there's things that we don't need to know, but, uhhhm, I think that with things like that, that should be opened up..., to..., lots of people. It doesn't affect me, because I am leaving.

AJ

Right.

MR

And I don't know if you are aware of that?

AJ

No, I'm not actually, no.

MR

But... but I am... I am leaving, in five weeks time, to go to New Zealand, and, for... if I hadn't been, then I would have probably went for the job.

AJ
Right.

MR
But it doesn't really affect me, but I feel that it could have been opened up to the rest of the department.

AJ
Right, yeah, OK. So, uhhh, what does that mean for communications within the department do you think, do you think that communications within the department are generally good?

MR
The communication is... is very good, uhhh, at times, again, but I think that with something like that happening, it kind of feels like... things are going to get done... the way they want anyway, and you don't really feel... you're part of it.

AJ
Right.

MR
Uhhh, and that makes people... that makes certain people feel that they're not worth... even asking about the job.

AJ
Right. OK.

MR
That..., that is just an opinion.

AJ
OK. So, uhhh, the communication in the department then, it's..., is it mainly informal, or are there formal meetings? This particular problem that we're talking about then, would you have expected that to have been broached to you on an informal basis perhaps, if you had been... if... if you had been considered?

MR
Errr... [*Exhales deeply*]... perhaps. They do open up a lot of avenues, errr, for us, but we do have... we do have an informal approach, talking about certain... anything really, and we are... we are always kept pretty much... clear of what's happening in the department, but this... this particular stuff, this particular issue, I know that other things - to discuss, uhhh, have led to a feeling of... you don't really know what's going on within the department.

AJ
Right. OK, and...?

MR
And anyway, if you had spoken to me perhaps a few months ago, I would probably have... would have had a TOTALLY different view.

AJ
Right.

MR
Uhhh, and that is a difficult thing for me.

AJ

OK. And so... so the communication isn't quite as good as you think it should be then?

MR

Yes, now, yes [*Chuckles*], but originally, it was really good, because I felt that the last part of it was completely rock solid, and I knew that it was going to be a difficult school, but I knew that the department was absolutely fantastic.

AJ

Right.

MR

That... that's why I took the job.

AJ

OK. And so, are there things that M_____ asks you to do, as Head of Department, that you don't agree with, but do anyway?

MR

Yes.

AJ

Such... such as what for example?

MR

Eerrr..., kind of admin things, it's like erm, it's silly things that take up quite a lot of our time, as class teachers, but because if you are teaching 27 lessons out of 30.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

Uhhhm, I feel that you shouldn't be doing admin, uhhhm, things, uhhhm, yes, __ which may be relevant, but because we've got so little free time, it... it just feels like..., [*Exhales deeply*], you have got so much to do.

AJ

Right. So..., so why do you do the things that you're asked to do, if..., that you don't agree with, because you feel that you have got to, or... or there's something else?

MR

I think that sometimes, if there's something I really really don't agree with...

AJ

Go on.

MR

I speak out.

AJ

OK.

MR

And I will..., I will..., you know, and if I really don't think that I should be doing this, uhhhm, other than you know, there being a discussion about why..., I mean, I get on great with the roles within the other department, uhhhm, and so I am quite happy to do some extra, if that makes sense?

AJ

Yeah.

MR

Errrm, but something less, because I am not paid as much.

AJ

Right.

MR

That sounds really..., but I think there should be a limit to what I'm actually doing.

AJ

OK.

MR

If you know what I mean?

AJ

No, that's fine. So when you...?

MR

So there are certain things as well, like... let me think. If you had to find all of those kids ____.

AJ

Right.

MR

That would take ages for all of our groups.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

Uhhhm... and I... I personally think that that's a Key Stage 3, or a Key Stage 4, that... the Key Stage 4 stuff, more is done, but the Key Stage3 stuff, it's not done.

AJ

Right.

MR

So, that will take up all of my time, and really frustrated me, because I then feel like I shouldn't be doing that sort of thing, when someone is paid to be a Key Stage 3 Co-ordinator, if that makes sense?

AJ

Alright, OK. Then... but... but you did it under protest, but you did it anyway did you?

MR

Well I needed it, because I want to know how my kids get on. Errrm, I needed the information, because I want to know where my kids should be targeted.

AJ

I see, right, OK.

MR

And so I needed it anyway, because, whether or not I agreed with it, I needed to get that information anyway.

AJ

Right. So you... you got the information to... to improve your own teaching, or facilitate your own teaching?

MR

Yes.

AJ

OK, cool. So, uhhm, what then do you expect from M_____, as your Head of Department then?

MR

Errrm...

AJ

What do you expect, what do you think that her role is? We've talked a little bit about your role there.

MR

Yes.

AJ

We'll come back to some of those things, but, what do you think that HER role is, as Head of Department should be?

MR

Certainly, keeping us informed, which she does do, of... they are very good at telling us things, and what we should be doing, not always that, but they're very... they're very good, dealing with Ofsted, but I think they could, when it comes to sharing, but I think that they could make more of the resources.

AJ

OK. So...?

MR

So unless you actually go to someone, yourself...

AJ

Yeah.

MR

And say "Do you have anything in this... in particular?" the... then you don't really get given anything.

AJ

Do you think that...?

MR

To do with what you need to teach, but then you have just got to do it all.

AJ

OK. Do you think then, that providing you with resources is one of the major jobs of a Head of Department?

MR

I don't think that it's a major job, but I think that it would certainly help uhhh, you know, the people that have got a much fuller timetable, of course they have got... the reasons they have got a light timetable, is because they have got... it's their role to develop.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

And I understand that.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

But, I think that it is... but that... that's not quite a Head of Department role, that's more of a... whoever the Key Stage 3 Co-ordinator... should get those... that sort of thing sorted out, and who ever is Key Stage 4, and whoever is Key Stage 5.

AJ

OK.

MR

I personally feel. So, as Head of Department, I think that you're just communicating between all of the people who are running the Key Stage 3, the Key Stage 4 and the Key Stage 5.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

And you know, uhhh, things like that. So I think that we should be keeping on check that these things are happening.

AJ

OK. So, it's much more a co-ordinating type role, you're saying?

MR

Yes, and... yes, I think... I think that would be good, yep, and then just making sure that we have, again, making sure that we have everything that we need as well, you know, because you might want to do something like maybe something like different.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

And yet I can't get hold of the resources.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
I know that sounds really really silly, but I think that all of the things that do come in, I think that a Head of Department should be sorting us all out for that sort of thing.

AJ
Right.

MR
But supporting us uh-hm... again, with issues with students, and management.

AJ
OK.

MR
Yeah, that kind of a thing, but more of a kind of leading role than anything.

AJ
Right, OK. So in fact, that's what I was going to come on to really, what you're expecting, is that your Head of Department would be more of a leader?

MR
Yes.

AJ
And that these other Key Stage 3 organisers, are doing more the sort of the management type stuff, is that what you're saying?

MR
I think... I think so, yes.

AJ
OK. So that's interesting then, you do expect your Head of Department to be a... to be an actual sort of a leader? Do you think that your Head of Department is also your link to the Senior Management?

MR
[Exhales Deeply]... Uh-hm..., *[Lengthy pause]* uh-hm...

AJ
[Chuckles]

MR
Errr... that is a difficult one. Uh-hm... no.

AJ
No?

MR
No.

AJ

So... so what do you think her... her role in relation to the department and to the school as a whole, should be then, where... where do you think she should stand?

MR

I... I think that maybe I might have misunderstood the question. I think... I think she should be.

AJ

Mmm?

MR

My link to the... higher up the school, because I think she is, to me, she is my first person that I would go to.

AJ

Right.

MR

Uhhhm... errr... yeah, and I think that's... yeah, a good place for her to be, because I think that any Head of Department, that's their... I think that should be the first place to go, and then if there's something, then she could go to the management. But yes, I suppose there's a link, there should be a link, but I don't always feel... but I don't think that's her fault, I think that's the Senior Management's fault.

AJ

Right. In what way, in what way is it Senior Management's fault?

MR

Uhhhm... I don't... I don't think that they're great at being uhhhm... a leading role in this school, as a whole.

AJ

Right.

MR

Uhhhm, and that's purely a lack of communication in the Senior Management.

AJ

Right. But do you see your Head of Department as being, in a way, the person who should be communicating what Senior Management want of you?

MR

Yeah, yes, but I would say that personally, that I would go to Senior Management, if... if I really felt that things weren't going well, I would go there anyway, but she should be.

AJ

Right. Do you see her though, as your representative to Senior Management, or as Senior Management's representative to you? In other words, is her first duty to uhhhm, defend the interests of the department against anything they might be saying, or is it just to act as a kind of conduit for their ideas, down to the department, the members of the department?

MR

I think that she should defend us.

AJ

OK. And do you think that she DOES defend you?

MR

Yeah, I do.

AJ

Have... have there been any instances of... do you think, where she has had to uhhh... you know, I'm not necessarily talking about yourself, but where she has perhaps had to stand up for a member of the department, who is being... who is getting criticised by the Senior Management?

MR

I think so, I think she would, yes, I can't... I can't think of anything in particular.

AJ

Right.

MR

Because that would be again, it would be with that person, and them, and I think that's the way that it should, I really don't think that should be opened up to all of us.

AJ

Right.

MR

But I think that she would defend her department, uhhh, if they were in criticism, but I think that she would also take... because she is extremely professional.

AJ

Right.

MR

And I think that she would take on board what the Senior Management had to say about a certain individual in particular.

AJ

Right.

MR

And then I think that she would go through all of the right lines.

AJ

OK. Uhhh, OK, what do you do in your professional practice, in your teaching, that reflects M_____ 's leadership?

MR

Uhhh... what do I do? [Pauses]

AJ

How do you...?

MR

I... I don't know... she... I don't know if this is relevant, but she makes sure that we are teaching a three part lesson, does

that... does that sound about right?

AJ

How does she do that, how does she make sure of that?

MR

She has given..., she has other people in the department, who have given us quite a lot of information about how we should be... how we should be delivering our lessons.

AJ

Right.

MR

The content, not as much, but how we should be delivering, which I think is part of her role.

AJ

Right.

MR

How we deliver it, and how she checks that we are doing that, is by... we have some buddying.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

And so we paired up with certain people, and the good thing about that, was it wasn't "You're with that person, and you're with that person". It was a case of "Right, what would you like to be better at, if there is anything?"

AJ

Yeah.

MR

Or "What do you think you're good at?" So just for instance, say I was writing on an interactive board.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

And somebody really wanted to help, he would come and watch me do a lesson.

AJ

Right.

MR

And there would be feedback on that, and she would have... she might not come into that lesson, but it's still having that check, that there is a three part lesson, and how we deliver it, and what we use.

AJ

Yes.

MR

And she would also... she would also watch some lessons as well.

AJ

OK. So she... she actually observes lessons? How many do you think that she would observe in a year?

MR

I have no clue. Of me, if anything, one, but then it would be uhhh, other people have got roles, so... maybe a Key Stage 4 Co-ordinator would watch Key Stage 4, and the Key Stage 5 Co-ordinator would watch a Key Stage 5 lesson.

AJ

Right.

MR

I think it's because I am on my second year of teaching.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

Last year I was observed more, but I think there's also a... she's also aware that people don't like being observed, and so I think the buddying thing came in quite nicely.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

Because it was more of it helping, than watching, if that makes sense?

AJ

Oh, OK. So when you get observed by a Key Stage Co-ordinator, do they report back to M_____ then?

MR

Yes, uhhh, all of our feedback sheets should be in a file, the same as we have got a thing called METAL, have you heard of that before?

AJ

I've heard... I've... yeah, a couple of people that I've spoken to mentioned it, yeah.

MR

It's for... she would have... I think she should have a copy of all, she would have access to them. She is very much... I... I have not seen it, but I am pretty sure that she would have all of these things, and it's the same with Ofsted, we gave her, her and M_____ a lesson plan in the department, uhhh, and stuff.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

And if we wanted to show her the lesson plan, and she would nip over it for us.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
So, it is very much all for helping us.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
But, she's only part-time.

AJ
Right.

MR
Because I do quite feel that... but then again, this is a personal opinion, but if you are a leader, then you should be full-time.

AJ
Right, OK, yeah. Well, that's very interesting, because... you... you think that she should be there to support and communicate, and have an overview all of the time?

MR
Uhhhm, [*Chuckles nervously*] uhhhm..., yes, actually, yes.

AJ
OK. So how do you feel on the days when she's not there then, do you feel that there isn't any leadership happening?

MR
Oh there definitely is leadership, it's just the person, it's another person.

AJ
Oh, OK. So uhhhm...?

MR
I... I don't know whether it's that I'm old fashioned, or ___ of what school I've been to, because I'm fairly new to teaching, but I... I think that the children should also know who the Head of Department is.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
And it should be a sort of person who is... if... if you were to ask the children, I'm not entirely sure that she would be able to tell you.

AJ
Right, OK, yeah.

MR
But of course, she has been off with having a baby last year.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
And I think that has had some effect, where... *[Exhales deeply]*. I... I feel like I am being a bit critical, but I do think the person should be... it's pretty... it should be really obvious who the leader is.

AJ
Right.

MR
And I don't think the kids should be scared, or we should be scared of them like that, I think that it should be clear, and that is the person who deals with the immediate issues, if... if it comes to that.

AJ
Right, OK. Uhhhm, so it's also a bit about monitoring? You talked a bit... you said really, what... you know, when we talked about the kind of effects she would have on your lessons, what you you're saying, is that the structure she tells you, which is the three part thing, but do you think that the style of your lessons, is... is there any way that your Head of Department has an impact on?

MR
Uhhhm, no.

AJ
The... the way you deliver it, and the way you communicate with the pupils... it's uhhhm... have you received any advice, or any uhhhm... or has anybody said anything to you, about how that should be done?

MR
No, but I think that everybody is individual, I think that it's going to be individual.

AJ
Right.

MR
Errrm... uhhhm, I don't... I think that it only becomes a problem when your style is... you clash with the children, and then it starts to lose the kids' control, and I think that maybe she would intervene, and fortunately, I don't have that problem, because I have quite a friendly bunch, firm, firm but fair, I would like to think that I am fair with the children. I think that she would maybe talk about style, and, in fact, I know that there is somebody particular in the department... there was a couple of people in the department, and there was one who has now left, where they have tried to support two other teachers, and to help, I suppose, with their... I suppose their style.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
Of teaching.

AJ
And it hasn't... it hasn't worked in those cases?

MR

I don't know.

AJ

Right, OK. But on the whole, what you're saying, is that your Head of Department doesn't really have a huge impact on the way you actually teach your lessons, that's entirely uhhh, an individual thing?

MR

Not really, I teach my lessons, no.

AJ

OK, right, good. Uhhh, do you think that it's important to have a good personal relationship with your Head of Department?

MR

Errrm, personally? [*Exhales deeply*]... yes.

AJ

Do you think that on the whole, you do have a good personal relationship with M_____?

MR

Yes.

AJ

So... although sometimes then, some of the things she does, as Head of Department, you don't entirely agree with, but on a personal level, you actually get on with her very well?

MR

Yes.

AJ

And do you think that's an important thing?

MR

Yes.

AJ

Right, OK [*Chuckles*]

MR

Yes I do [*Chuckles*]

AJ

So... so what does M_____ do to uhhh... to motivate you, do you think, do you think that she has a role in motivating you?

MR

Errrm... I... [*Exhales deeply*]... I'm quite motivated, and so I think that's quite... that's quite difficult.

AJ

OK. You feel quite self-motivated?

MR

Ahhh, yes, yes, I'm quite self-motivated anyway, and so I think that's quite a difficult one. I think though, she's very good with stuff like that, she's very organised, and...

AJ

Right.

MR

Uhhhm, to deliver, she delivers, I have watched her teach quite a lot, because I had training with her a few years back.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

Uhhhm, and I like M_____, I like her style, an awful lot, I like the way she delivers the... the way she delivers, the way she speak to us, she doesn't... she isn't all "I'm the leader, and here's what you should be doing" uhhhm, she's not like that.

AJ

OK.

MR

Errrm, she is... she is very approachable.

AJ

Right, OK.

MR

I like her myself, but it's just certain issues.

AJ

Right. But you... you feel that working in her department, is a good environment, which you can be self-motivated?

MR

Yes.

AJ

Because you're allowed to be?

MR

Yes, definitely.

AJ

OK. Do you think that a part of her role is to uhhhm, increase your job satisfaction?

MR

I think she does it well, your job satisfaction, she increases it [*Chuckles*]

AJ

So, what sort of things would she do well to... to increase your job satisfaction then?

MR

Well, I think organisation, and if she didn't sort things out, I would be getting frustrated, and because there is none of that...

AJ

Right.

MR

Then my job is easier.

AJ

OK, alright, that's cool. Uhhh, sorry, what was I going to ask? I was going to ask something that... uhhh, it's gone out of my mind. Job satisfaction, what we're going to move on to, we talked about motivation, didn't we? Uhhh, yeah, leadership within the department? You talked a little bit... you talked a little bit about formal positions of leadership, does she... do you think that M_____ creates an environment in which you can be a leader in a slightly bit more informal way, which... by which I mean, showing initiative, and coming up with ideas and so on?

MR

Oh, yes, there's plenty of opportunities for that.

AJ

OK. OK, so what... what sort of things would she encourage you to do then?

MR

Errrm... it's like the... like the course materials and stuff.

AJ

Mmm.

MR

And it's not just M_____, it's other things as well, particular courses, and I think that she knows it all quite well.

AJ

Right.

MR

Uhhh, and she will know what I enjoy as well, and what other people in the department enjoy.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

Errrm, and so if she sees a course that she thinks that we might like, then she will say "What do you think of this?"

AJ

Right.

MR

And I will go, and she will give us the opportunity. And then we feed back to the whole department, uhhh, on... on that, and so yes, yes. What were we talking about?

AJ

Uhhh, well we were talking about informal types of leadership that you could... as opposed to the formal positions, the Heads of Key Stages and stuff.

MR

Yeah, leadership, yes she does, and so people will come and ask and they went and done, I think it was Functional Skills, two people went out.

AJ

Right.

MR

And they were looking at functional skills.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

And they came back, and they fed back. So, they are... pretty much, you know, with us, because we are getting to know it, pretty much from everyone in the department.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

So, you... you know, yes, there is that as well, and there was a Primary School Liaison.

AJ

Mmm.

MR

And that was opened up to us last year.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

And somebody took... and I was doing primary Liaison as well, and so there was that link. And so that was again, it's the opportunity of having a leading role, so that we can have... that option to have this.

AJ

But... but did these leading roles come from her, was it a case of her saying "We need somebody to do this" or was it... or is it an environment in which you could go up to them, M_____, and say "Look, I think that we need to do so and so" and she would let you do that?

MR

She uhhh, they sent an e-mail, saying "There will be a few things to cover"

AJ

Yeah.

MR

It is a type of environment, where I could easily say "I wouldn't mind trying Key Stage 5. Do you think that there's... I could be timetabled to do this?" and she would... she would try her best to do that.

AJ

Right.

MR

Because when I started, I really wanted to teach A Level classes, and she... she gave me that opportunity.

AJ

Oh right, OK. So you actually said to her "I want to teach A Level, and take... take on that" and she allowed you to do that?

MR

Yes.

AJ

What do you think that it is about M_____, that makes you follow her, what is it about her... uhhhm, her style, her leadership, her personal qualities, that... that gives her authority with you, do you think?

MR

Uhhhm, certainly, she is very organised, and so I feel that she knows what she's talking about.

AJ

Right.

MR

Which is very important I think, if she was scatty, I would be like, "Uhhhm, are you sure you want to do this?" [*Chuckles*]

AJ

Yeah.

MR

But she... she gives us good reasons for what she's doing.

AJ

Right.

MR

She doesn't just say "This is what we're doing, and that's it"

AJ

Mmm.

MR

She communicates, and she asks us our opinion.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

On things. I think that it's important that she's giving us good reasons. She gives us feedback on how things go, if there is anything in particular happening.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

And so she does, and.... and what else? She... she... uhhhm... she's not TOO friendly at first.

AJ

Right.

MR

And I think that's good.

AJ

OK.

MR

See, I... I don't know if you just want to try to be my buddy.

AJ

Right.

MR

You know, so that I have to do something for her.

AJ

Yeah.

MR

I think she's just like "Well, this is who I am"

AJ

Yeah.

MR

I don't know if she will have any hidden agendas with her.

AJ

Right.

MR

Uhhhm, but that's a personal quality I suppose, and I think uhhhm... as you develop, she... yeah, she kind of opens up more of the person to us. But it's just that... I think it's just that person who is there, that I can go to if there are any problems with anything at all, I know I could go, you know.

AJ

Mmm.

MR

At any time, and she makes that pretty obvious when you first meet her, that you can, although... but not everybody sees that in the department.

AJ

OK. So... so you trust her?

MR

Oh, definitely.

AJ

Yeah. Do... do you uhhh, you said earlier on about being organised, now is there anything about her teaching or anything perhaps, that you feel that she is particularly good at, and that you... you would want to emulate, or do you not really not know that much about that?

MR

No, as I said, I did go to quite a few of her lessons.

AJ

Mmm.

MR

And she... I... I think again, the quality of her organization, and her mathematical knowledge as well, and her knowledge of how to structure a group and deliver a good lesson, makes the kids aware.

AJ

Right.

MR

And the kids also seem to enjoy her lessons. I mean, if there is any feedback from children, like sometimes there's been things about certain teachers.

AJ

Mmm.

MR

As you're probably aware, but nobody has ever moaned about her, and they have always thought really highly of her.

AJ

Right.

MR

And if you were like, making progress.

AJ

Right.

MR

Uhhh, I mean, when I was first moved there, I thought "Well that's exactly what we're trying to get to do, progress the children.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
And... help them, and that's exactly what she does.

AJ
Right. So, you think that might have influenced you a little bit then, the way she does that?

MR
Uhhhm, yes, yes, I suppose that maybe it has, the style, maybe my style.

AJ
Mmm.

MR
Because we go back to that, and possibly, it has. Uhhhm, being... being a leader, but yet, you know... you know she's only there, and you wouldn't overstep that, but at the same time, you know that you can go and speak to her.

AJ
Right.

MR
Uhhhm... yes.

AJ
OK, alright, that sounds great. So, what about..., what about the team then, just a sort of... a last sort of point then, how do you think that the department operates as a team then? Uhhhm... does... does it... I mean, what do you understand by teamwork really?

MR
Uhhhm... I think that again, in any kind of a job as well, you... get on with some people more than others.

AJ
Right.

MR
Errrm, but our team... we have a good laugh, I haven't really mentioned that, but we do have fun when we meet together, it's not "Oh no, another meeting" and we go out, we socialise, we actually socialise.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
And sometimes, we just say "Oh, we've had a couple of hard weeks, let's go out for a Chinese"

AJ
Mmm.

MR
Or we will go maybe around to each other's house to have dinner, and I think that's important as well.

AJ
Right.

MR
Errrm... uhhhm, we're not fantastic at sharing resources, as a team.

AJ
Right.

MR
But we're good at collecting ideas.

AJ
OK.

MR
As a team.

AJ
Oh, that's good. So uhhhm, do you think that a team should have a goal, or an aim?

MR
[Pauses] Uhhhm.... I.... errrm... it depends [Chuckles]. I... I think that... like I say, at the moment we have got an aim, to cover the timetable, and doing...

AJ
Right.

MR
And we were put into teams for the other groups, and we were put into teams for goals for that, and so I don't know whether I'm understanding it properly.

AJ
Right.

MR
But we do have many goals, if that helps.

AJ
OK. And who uhhhm... who sets the goals?

MR
Errm, I think that the main goal...

AJ
Yeah.

MR
And I think that the obvious for it to be... we would like five... no, not five, you know, the Government wants these five standards.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
Pass rates. And we do have that. It's not... totally emphasised, we're dealing with random numbers anyway.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
But, that... I suppose that's our goal, "Lets try and get the kids to progress" but I think that... I mean obviously, she is more interested in how the kids as individuals are progressing over the years, that they're with us.

AJ
Right, yeah.

MR
And so that, I think would be her goal.

AJ
OK.

MR
And then also the many goals between what she sets.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
And we could, if... if there was particular feedback, or observation, and stuff like that, and appraisals.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
We have our own many goals for them.

AJ
OK.

MR
For example, I... I would like to have had so many C passes with my Year 10s.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
That I would have had, but, as a team, I don't think there's much get together, where individuals, a whole goal for all of us.

AJ
Right, OK. Uhhhm, so does uhhhm... do you think it's important that... that your Head of Department has a vision for the

department?

MR

Yes.

AJ

So... so what would be M_____’s vision, do you think?

MR

[*Exhales deeply*]..., I probably should know.

AJ

[Both *chuckle*]

MR

Errrm...

AJ

She hasn’t communicated it to you then?

MR

Well, she probably has [*Chuckles*]

AJ

Right.

MR

In a... she probably has. Her vision...? I actually don’t know, I’m going to ask her now [*Chuckles*]

AJ

Right, OK.

MR

Uhhhm... [*Pauses*]. Uhhhm, I don’t know, I can’t answer on that.

AJ

OK. What about Schemes of Work then, because they are sort of a goal, aren’t they?

MR

Errrm...

AJ

Where... where do they come from?

MR

Well, in the department, they come from... I think they come from her.

AJ

Right.

MR

The Schemes of Work. But then I think they get tiered off to Key Stage... well, she's always hands them out, and, the Key Stage 3 Co-ordinator usually gets involved with Key Stage 3, but yeah, the Schemes of Work, they come from her, I think.

AJ

Right.

MR

But I think that the communication, it's the Co-ordinators.

AJ

Right, OK. Alright, OK, that's great. Uhhhm, anything else you would like to say about any of this, before we... before we finish, are there any other points you want to raise about it, anything that you want to get off your chest?

MR

Uhhhm... no. I ... I will be sad to leave.

AJ

Right.

MR

To leave the department.

AJ

And are you going for... is that for a promotion, or just to go to a different school?

MR

I.... I'm moving to New Zealand.

AJ

Oh what, oh right, I'm going to New Zealand at Christmas.

MR

Oh, lovely.

AJ

There you go [*Chuckles*]

MR

Yeah, this is just uhhhm, my partner and I would like to go.

AJ

Mmm.

MR

And that was really nothing to do with the school, although I will be pleased to leave Anglia Community College.

AJ

Mmm.

MR

And that... and that's nothing to do with the Maths Department.

AJ
Yeah.

MR
But uhhh, I will be pleased, and I think that M_____ has done a fantastic job, but I feel that there is a lack of ownership.

AJ
Right.

MR
From the school.

AJ
OK.

MR
And I think that that must make it more... you know...

AJ
Well, on that bombshell, let's leave it there.

- END OF INTERVIEW -

APPENDIX 6:
Off-print from “Management in Education”, 22 (1), 24 – 30.

APPENDIX 7:

**Off-print from “Papers from the Student Conference, Education research:
Strengths and Weaknesses, Held on Saturday 5th July 2008”.**

**Corcoran C, Cooke S, Eden R, Lucas-Gardiner E and Macnab N (Eds),
95 – 104.**

Analysing Nuance: The Strengths and Limitations Of Interviews in Educational Research

Adrian Jarvis

Abstract

This paper explores the strengths and weaknesses of interviewing as a research method by looking at it through the lens of fieldwork into educational leadership and management. An overview of literature is followed by specific examples from the research. These illustrate that interview responses operate on a number of levels, all of which need to be taken into account if research is to make justifiable claims to be describing the truth of a situation. The conclusion is that interviewing remains a meaningful way to gather data, especially if they are factual or technical in character, but that, for interpretative comments, the researcher must be careful in the analysis to which he or she subjects them.

Introduction

Drever (2003) reminds us that interviewing is one of the “commonest methods used in ... educational research” (page 1). The major reason for this, as Wragg (1994) notes, would seem to be that an interview is a straightforward operation, the process of asking someone what he or she thinks or feels about a particular issue and recording the given response being a simple and effective way of gathering information. That said, the fact that interviews explore the social and psychological worlds of individuals leads to the data they obtain being laden with subtext and nuance that can make them difficult to interpret. This admits the possibility that the data may be unreliable and, therefore, invalid or “accidental” in that the research participant may be unaware of the full implications of what he or she is saying at the time of the interview.

That it is wrong to accord interviews any kind of “scientific” or objective status has been argued by numerous authors, such as Cohen et al (2005) who suggest instead that interviews are “intersubjective” or, to put it in less technical terms, rooted firmly in the participants’ points of view. Walford (2001), for one, sees this as a strength, commenting that interviews are useful because they allow participants to express their opinions about a wide range of topics and, furthermore, generate a large quantity of data very quickly and in a way that liberates the researcher from a reliance on naturally-occurring phenomena. He is, though, adamant that interviews are designed to reveal what people do and not merely what they say they do.

It is in attempting to satisfy this criterion that interviews can be exposed as rife with possible sources of unreliability. As Verma and Mallick (2001) have observed, the data can be contaminated by any rapport that has developed between the interviewer and the interviewee. At the other extreme, interviewees with no prior knowledge of the researcher and his or her agenda can be placed in the position of having to construct an ad hoc position rather than expressing deeply held convictions (Bassey, 1999) with, again, possible detriment to the reliability of their answers.

More fundamentally, the medium for interviews, language, is notoriously slippery. Some authors (such as Oppenheim, 1992) have wondered whether a question can ever truly be posed to more than one respondent since - as it is exported from one interview situation to another - it will be subject to changes in context, tone and emphasis that will

subtly alter its precise meaning. Answers are likely to be even more elusive. An interviewee will come into the interview with a perspective conditioned by various historical and social factors (“fractured subjectives” as Warren, 2002, calls them) which may cause his or her focus to shift as he or she structures answers according to different frames of reference. These inner transitions are often manifested in the interview through tone of voice, body language, choice of diction and even length of pauses. Exacerbating the problem is the time lag between the events being explored and the interview itself which will result in the researcher, at best, receiving a rationalised (Scott, 1996a) account - and that is not necessarily a true account.

The epistemology of the interview, then, is constructivist (Warren, 2002); it not only uncovers meanings, but is a vehicle through which meanings are created. The possible danger for the researcher here is that he or she might not merely be discovering data, but inventing it. To overcome this, Gadamer (1975) counsels the researcher to “bracket” his or her subjectivity by temporarily setting aside his or her own meanings and assumptions – which is no easy task. A similar hazard is highlighted by Charmaz (2002) who cautions against the researcher forcing data into any pre-conceived categories, it being necessary, in her opinion, for the interview to be a stand-alone event that is analysed on its own terms. But, if this is the case, it might reasonably be asked why the researcher should go to the trouble of conducting more than one, since any grounds for comparison between separate interviews would appear to be tenuous at best? One solution is to locate interview-based research within a qualitative “hermeneutic” (Usher, 1996) paradigm that gives primacy to the subjectivity of consciousness (Curtis, 1978) in the context of social practices and cultural codes: by dint of this, it can simply be accepted that the drawbacks of interviews are ontological and thus not susceptible of easy remedy. While this is a workable framework, it is wise to remember that the “multiple realities” (Fullan, 1991) being explored are not exclusively those that exist between different people. As the above discussion has indicated, a single individual contains within him- or herself a complex pattern of realities. The major problem facing the interviewer is to decide which reality is reflected in any given response.

Research Design

The research from which the following examples are taken looked at educational middle management, specifically the ways in which subject leaders and their followers relate to one another. As a locus for enquiry, this invited a phenomenological research design since it was an attempt to “understand and explain why people have different experiences” (Easterby-Smith et al, 1991, in Bennett et al, 1994, page 78) and, for this reason, the degree of pre-structuring was light in order to allow data to emerge in a natural way (Maxwell, 1998). Thus, the interviews were semi-structured, a strategy that allowed issues to be picked up and explored in detail as they arose during the conversation (Silverman, 1993). The sample, drawn from several schools, consisted of subject leaders and members of their departments, there being an interview schedule of prompt questions for each group.

The prompt questions were broadly of two types. The first, which can be termed “technical questions”, probed largely factual matters, an example (from the subject leader schedule) being: “What are the major responsibilities of your leadership role?” The second type can be labelled “interpretative questions” which called for respondents to reveal their own feelings and beliefs, as in “How would you describe your professional and personal relationship with your subject leader?” taken from the schedule for interviews with members of departments. The majority of any questions generated

spontaneously as the interviews progressed were interpretative in nature.

Findings and Discussion

For the most part, technical questions were answered in an uncontroversial manner. A head of Chemistry when faced with the question about his roles and responsibilities as a subject leader, gave the response:

"I see my role as head of department to be to support the teachers in my department and make sure they have everything they require to teach well in terms of resources..."

The answer was given fluently and in a neutral tone of voice. Even though it begins with the personal-sounding "I see...", it includes nothing that communicates anything of the speaker's "inner life", the remainder of the answer being akin to an extract from a job specification. A similar trend was noticeable in the interviews with members of departments. A French teacher answered a technical question about her own role with another list beginning:

"I should be teaching my lessons, planning my lessons, doing my marking..."

Technical questions, though, were not always so easy to analyse and did, at times, evoke responses that were somewhat multi-layered. The same French teacher was asked a relatively bland technical question about how responsibilities were distributed within her department, her response being:

"(Three second pause) Oh – er – no, there's not specific responsibilities in that but then the department's quite small, there's only actually four of us who teach French, so – we – er – work closely together rather than have specific responsibilities"

The factual content needed to answer the question scarcely justifies the speaker's obfuscation. The pause before answering, the hesitations and the offering of an explanation when one was neither requested nor required suggest that a different agenda is at work: the speaker clearly fears that her subject leader is open to criticism for failing to delegate, but, from personal and professional loyalty, is anxious to protect her.

It was in answers to interpretative questions that such nuances were particularly noticeable. A Chemistry teacher, having opined that her subject leader favoured a "chalk and talk" approach, went on:

"But then, having said that, they do, again, experiments and they do – they - he – he – stresses that they should all do individual experiments rather than in pairs or in groups, for example"

She was then asked whether she thought he would prefer her to adopt a similar methodology in her own teaching; her response was:

"(Interrupting the question at a raised volume) No! No, no, no, no. I just think he would – you know – for himself – he doesn't – he says I can work my way"

The speaker begins by “protesting too much” with a raised voice and repeated denials, as though she is aware of having revealed more than she had intended. She then goes on, in faltering style, to try to bring the conversation back to some sort of equilibrium. That she interrupts the questioner, too, is telling. Although she is claiming to work in a united and harmonious department, this section of the interview could better be seen as uncovering something of a rift between the subject leader and the speaker on the matter of teaching methodologies. To bring in some of the interview’s context: that the Chemistry teacher was newly qualified, while the subject leader was a man with entrenched ideas based on considerable experience, might suggest that this is, indeed, the case.

The examples given so far serve mainly to illustrate how interviewees can be caught “off guard” by the interview situation and not always say precisely what they mean. Another noticeable tendency in a lot of the research was that of interviewees using selective vocabulary and enunciation to foreground or downplay certain points. For instance, here is an extract from an interview with a teacher of Chemistry (not the one previously quoted). The question centred on how the overall Head of Science related to members of the department:

“(Four second pause) Erm – I think it can be difficult if there are staff who are not doing, are not performing as they, to the expectation, shall we say...erm, there would be some members of staff there...there are concerns about...I think it would be fair to say”

It is interesting that this speaker, having taken some time to formulate a response, has introduced into the conversation a colleague who, in her view, is a poor teacher: this, despite the question not being specifically about competence. Nor did it ask for members of the department to be described in detail. The speaker’s tone was guarded and the answer was expressed slowly and carefully. That there is a subtext is indicated by the use of the euphemistic “signpost” phrases, “Shall we say” and “it would be fair to say”. Some of the language is calculated to sound supportive (“I think it can be difficult”) but there is a veiled slight on the subject leader here – the implication is that her leadership leaves much to be desired. This response can be read as a political statement designed to highlight an area of grave misgiving on the part of the speaker but in a manner that prevents her from being open to the accusation of undermining any of her colleagues, especially her subject leader.

For the researcher, all of this is the cause of difficulties. As Bridges (1999) affirms, educational research must be “concerned in some sense with the truth” (page 597). But what is the truth in the examples discussed above? The actual words used by the participants rarely give the whole story and, in some cases, actually contradict the “true” message being put across. Moreover, what value is to be placed on pauses, hesitations and - although this has not been dealt with directly - body language?

The challenges are to ensure that the record of the interview retains all of any such nuances and that the method of analysis is sensitive to them. Hastily-scribbled notes will scarcely be adequate, although the researcher needs to bear in mind Warren’s (2002) warning that an electronic medium such as a tape recorder will have its own set of meanings which may influence the participants’ behaviour. Similarly, consulting a transcript will not, in itself, give scope for a full analysis of the interview data; an ability to re-experience the physical reality of the interview is the only way to evince the full range of meanings in the answers.

Many qualitative researchers subject their data to a “grounded theory” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) analysis which involves them searching for “patterns and processes, commonalities and differences” (Miles and Huberman, 1994, page 9). This is not wholly distinct from the notion of “emplotment” (Pokinghorne, 1995) whereby the researcher goes through the data, looking for a narrative through-line that, in some way, reaches a coherent conclusion. Even here the researcher needs to exercise some subtlety of insight. A Head of French had this to say on the subject of power and authority:

“I’ve certainly always seen leadership as – er – if one can use the footballing image of that of a captain playing for a team: there’s a common goal and there’s a common division of labour and, again, the leadership comes from not telling people where to run, how to kick, but playing the game with them, setting the example and I think this works”

When the conversation turned to how lessons should be taught, his attitude had emphatically shifted to a favouring of something more dictatorial:

“If you were coming to me and saying, I don’t want to use textbooks, I want to use little handouts and – er - produce my own, my own resources, I would say to you, not in year one you’re not going to, you’re not going to, because this is a department and we must all work [in the same way]”

If the analysis goes no deeper than the language used, this speaker’s inconsistency makes it difficult to find a plot that makes much sense. The researcher is thus forced to turn literary critic. With this subject leader, perhaps, we have encountered an idealist who would like his practice to embrace the collegial, but who is pragmatic enough to know that the best results are often obtained by utilising more direct power resources.

Conclusion

Ultimately, data are only as good as the validity they can be proven to possess. As Gorard (2008) writes, “the first question to ask of any evidence [] is ‘but what else might this mean?’” (page 3). For interviews, as has been shown, the answer may be, “any number of things”. Narrowing it down can hardly be accomplished by attempting to ensure external validity since what interviews communicate can only vaguely be generalised to a wider population (Cohen et al, 2005) and, by their very nature, interviews cannot be replicated. Even internal validity is threatened if there are doubts about the credibility of the data-gathering methods used (Scott, 1996b) and such doubts must be entertained about interviews – or, at any rate, some interviews and some interview questions.

Validity, though, is only one aspect of interview-based research worthy of reconsideration. Another outcome of this discussion is what it may mean for the ethics of interviews. BERA’s guidelines for research (2004) are insistent that participants in research must give “voluntary informed consent” (page 6) for their involvement. While the standard for this is not especially rigorous - Berger and Patchner (1988), for example, take it to mean no more than all participants having adequate information about a study and its purposes – those subject leaders and department members looked at above could plausibly protest that they were not fully informed about what they were being asked to disclose. Their consent may have extended no further than technical information or their stated opinions; they may not have anticipated that the unspoken subtexts of their responses would be used to form judgements about their characters.

For all the negatives, however, interviews remain a potent tool of the educational researcher. It is, after all, very difficult to imagine an alternative method of exploring the attitudes and beliefs of individuals. As has been shown, where research is essentially “technical” in nature, the threats to validity are relatively mild. It is when “interpretative” areas are ventured into (as by the research presented here) that the researcher needs to tread more warily. Even so, a common sense view is offered by Bridges (1999) who asserts that:

“To acknowledge [the] psycho-dynamic dimension of language is, however, entirely compatible with maintaining its propositional, truth-asserting character” (page 599).

It might be concluded, therefore, that Robson (1993) is right to describe interviews as “a flexible and adaptable way of finding things out” (page 229), but, as this paper has argued, “flexibility” can be as much a danger as an advantage.

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Biography

Adrian Jarvis has been subject head of English at various secondary schools in the independent sector. He is currently pursuing Ph.D. studies at the School of Education, University of Birmingham, his main area of interest being the influence and power

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Leadership lost: A case study in three selective secondary schools

Adrian Jarvis

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Leadership lost

A case study in three selective secondary schools

Adrian Jarvis

Birmingham University, UK

Introduction

Recent research by Leithwood et al. (2006) has brought to the fore once again the importance of leadership to the success of schools. Of the ‘strong claims’ they make, the first, that ‘leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning’ (ibid., p. 3), stands out as being particularly worthy of closer examination. The authors acknowledge that it will be ‘considered controversial by some’ (ibid., p. 4) and, anyway, they are talking mainly, although not exclusively, about headteachers. However, the statement could just as easily apply to heads of subject departments – those, in other words, who are primarily responsible for organising teaching and learning within a school on a day-to-day basis.

Research has long accorded heads of subject departments a key middle leadership role in secondary schools. Unfortunately, as Busher and Harris (1999), among others, have found, the exact nature of this leadership is ‘blurred’ in that it is difficult to isolate its distinctive qualities. To some extent, this is a question of definition, many pages of research journals having been devoted to trying to say exactly what a head of department does, or should do; Harris (1998), for example, puts it in terms of the ways in which subject leaders can improve ineffective departments. Moreover, as Bennett et al. (2003) have highlighted (in contrast to Leithwood et al., 2006), significant gaps in the research remain, notably ‘the influence of middle leaders on

teaching and learning’ (p. 1). The research presented here, which is ongoing, is an attempt to bridge this gap by identifying the precise influence of heads of department on the classroom practice of those they lead.

Much of the problem – as indicated by this research – is that the nature of the relationship between middle leaders and their followers remains elusive. Researchers have tended to stress the word ‘middle’ and, for example, have seen middle leaders as performing a ‘bridging and brokering’ function (Busher and Harris, 1990: 307) or, as Busher (2005) puts it, they ‘mediate the demands and values’ of wider contexts ‘to their colleagues, students and students’ parents’ (p. 139). Moreover, the purely managerial tasks of middle leaders have often been seen to constitute the bulk of the role – again, the research presented here would tend to confirm that even middle managers themselves can give primacy to the more straightforwardly administrative side of their job.

The waters have been further muddied by the marked enthusiasm among researchers and, indeed, policy-makers for ‘collegiality’ (as described by, for example, Bush, 1995) in the running of departments. Wallace (1988), for one, states that this has now become ‘the official model of good practice’ (p. 25). Kirkham (2005) points out, though, that ‘this is more aspired to than real’ (p. 160), often being no more than ‘a substitute term for professional autonomy’ (ibid). While this may be true – and is not at variance with the findings of the present

research – the whole debate focuses on the structure of a department rather than the specific personal, professional and emotional interactions between middle leaders and their followers, which, as Beatty and Brew (2004) and Russell (2003) have argued, are crucial to building the trusting relationships upon which leadership must be founded.

Research design and methodology

Sample and access

In attempting to explore this relationship, a preliminary study was carried out at Three Spires School, an independent co-educational boarding and day school, followed by more detailed research in two other schools: Firthside, a private co-educational boarding school, and The Royal, a girls' state grammar (the names of the schools have been changed to preserve the anonymity of all participants). At Three Spires, a humanities department was investigated, but the scope of the research was broadened to encompass a humanities department and a science department at the other schools. This was done in order to begin to test and, if necessary, eliminate difference in subject area as a factor in the style of middle leadership employed. The schools selected represent something of a 'convenience sample' (Cohen et al., 2005), but, in the event, this proved to be far from a limitation in that they were sufficiently unlike one another to allow some feeling that the results could potentially be related to other settings. Furthermore, in being mainly academic in orientation, the schools come from a sector that is arguably somewhat under-represented in research literature. That said, the research presented here is only the first stage of a larger project that will expand to include schools of different types.

The researcher spent several days in each school. Although it is worth bearing in mind Jeffrey and Troman's (2004) caution regarding data gathered when the 'luxury' of an extended research period is not available, there is no reason to suppose that this impacted on the reliability of the results. In total, 15 teachers participated, of whom six were heads of department.

Interviews

Two main methods were utilised in the gathering of data and, since the aim of the research was exploration rather than measurement, they were qualitative in nature. Of primary importance were semi-structured interviews. These were of two types: those directed at the heads of the

departments investigated and those directed at selected members of those departments. At Three Spires and Firthside, the participants were selected by the researcher to give as wide a spread of experience as possible. At The Royal, the heads of department pre-selected the interviewees themselves; however, the resulting data were equal in quality to those gathered in the other schools. Given the nature of the research topic, it was clear that the danger underlined by Bassey (1999) – that the respondents may not have previously reflected on the issues and were thus 'constructing their positions during the interviews' (p. 81) – was a possibility. The form of the interviews, then, was left open with only certain questions decided upon in advance, leaving 'the detailed structure to be worked out during the interview' (Drever, 1995: 1). The guide questions presented to the department members were:

1. Outline what you see as your key responsibilities within the department.
2. Describe what you see as the key responsibilities of your subject leader.
3. To what extent are these responsibilities mirrored in the way the department is organised?
4. What do you think you do that reflects the influence of your subject leader? Consider your practice inside the classroom and more generally around the school.
5. To what extent do you see it as necessary for you to follow the advice/directions/practices of your subject leader?
6. Describe your professional and personal relationship with your subject leader.
7. What does your subject leader do to make you feel motivated in your work?
8. To what extent do you feel that you influence your subject leader?
9. Describe how you think the team operates (consider how responsibilities are shared out, how you relate to members of your team, how they relate to one another).

The head of department interviews were based around the following questions:

1. Outline what you see as the major responsibilities of your leadership role.
2. What, in your opinion, are leadership and management? What are the distinctions between them and how do you think they are manifested in your role?
3. How would you define 'teamwork'?
4. What, in your opinion is your role in the process of team-building?

5. Describe how you think your team operates (consider how responsibilities are shared out, how you relate to members of your team, how they relate to one another). What is your own role in the dynamics of the team?
6. What do you see as the key roles and responsibilities of the members of your team?
7. How do you communicate these expectations to the members of your team?
8. What methods do you use to energise and inspire the members of your team?
9. What evidence would you expect to see of your management in the practice of the members of your team?
10. What evidence would you expect to see of your leadership in the practice of members of your team?

These questions were not sequenced to follow a logical linear progression. This was done to avoid the respondents 'catching on' too readily and simply giving what they might have regarded as the 'right' answers or consistent with what they may previously have said. The questions were phrased and ordered to allow topic areas to be approached in an oblique, unexpected (although not random) way that would lead to less structured conversation. It was hoped that the respondents would feel more comfortable with self-disclosure and so be more likely to give the truth as they saw it. Even so, some barriers remained, the most obvious being a desire to protect colleagues from criticism.

Observations

Partly to counteract these problems, but also to add richness to the data, the second method, classroom observations, was employed. The hope was that the responses regarding practice given in the interviews would either be confirmed or refuted (or, at times, both) by actual practice in the probably less consciously rationalised environment of the classroom. In effect, the research was attempting to discover the extent to which a head of department is able to influence a teacher's 'theory in use' (Eraut, 1993) when at work in the classroom. Of course, as Radford (2006) observes, classrooms are unpredictable, complex places that are not necessarily in the full control of the teacher. Thus, a teacher's intended practice and his or her actual practice may differ. There is also the danger, pointed out by Lacey (1976), that incidents in a classroom are not always readily interpretable. Nevertheless, the observations were,

on balance, viewed as a useful addition since any attempt to explore the effects of leadership on teaching and learning cannot afford to ignore the location in which teaching and learning occur. What was being sought was some sense that the teachers were following common aims and using common teaching approaches – perhaps even common forms of language – which could be traced back to the leadership that they had received from their heads of department. A comparison of this data with what had emerged from the interviews would allow teachers to be characterised in one of the ways indicated in Table 1.

A teacher of type 1, then, would have been strongly influenced by his or her head of department, while a type 4 teacher would be almost completely autonomous. A type 2 teacher would claim to have been influenced by his or her head of department, but then would behave in a way that showed the opposite, while a teacher of type 3 would dismiss the influence of leadership and then, unconsciously, act upon it anyway.

Ethics and analysis

Although the research took place in an environment conditioned by the BERA *Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2004), the teachers were not informed in detail about what was being looked-for in the observations. This was done, once again, to minimise any issue regarding the extent to which behaviour may have been altered to fit what the teachers believed the researcher to be seeking. Having said that, the teachers were told the reason for the researcher's coyness on this point (a minimum ethical requirement, according to Dockrell, 1988) and the fact that the findings are being reported anonymously means that the danger of detriment to individuals is removed. A 'grounded theory' (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991) analysis of the results was undertaken as it was considered best to let the data speak for themselves rather than to second-guess possible outcomes in advance.

Table 1. Different teacher 'types' in relation to subject leader influence

Teacher type	Claimed level of subject leader influence	Observed level of subject leader influence
1	High	High
2	High	Low
3	Low	High
4	Low	Low

Findings and discussion

The subject leader interviews

The interviews with the heads of department revealed some interesting issues, some expected and some less so. That there is generally considered to be a theoretical distinction between management and leadership was understood by most, although descriptions of the former ranging from 'organisation' to 'using one's resources in the most efficient way' indicated a spread of depth in these answers. Attempts to define leadership were even more varied: at one end of the spectrum, the head of chemistry at Firthside saw it as 'getting people to do what you want in a way that meets their aspirations and needs', but this was untypical, the rather nebulous 'taking people with me' being more characteristic of the answers given. The head of science at The Royal actually denied that her role involved leadership at all, stating bluntly that the tasks she was expected to perform were essentially managerial in nature.

It was when asked how leadership and management were applied in practice that the subject leaders' answers became more problematic. The descriptions of their responsibilities almost all dwelt on the procurement and distribution of 'resources' and ensuring that teachers 'know what they are doing'. As will be seen, it was not only the heads of department who took this view, but department members as well. Another major theme was the powerlessness the heads of department felt. They all saw themselves as caught between loyalty to their departments and the demands of senior management. The head of English at The Royal, for example, described herself as a 'conduit', while the head of chemistry at Firthside spoke of the difficulty of dealing with a troubled member of his department in a way that helped her but satisfied those in authority over him.

This impotence was carried over into how the subject heads saw their relationship with the members of their departments. They all claimed that helping their teams to feel motivated was a part of their remit, but any appreciation of motivation as a psychological and relational phenomenon was unsophisticated at best. Instead, a leader's role in energising and inspiring department members was seen largely in social terms, being embodied in simple rewards and tokens of thanks such as gifts, departmental 'dos' and greetings cards. Where there was an awareness of a deeper dimension to the process, it lacked reflection; for instance, the head of chemistry at The Royal talked about making his

'team feel like they are good teachers' but was unable to give any concrete examples of how this might be done. His counterpart at Firthside denied that his team needed much inspiring, since they were generally 'competent'. This attitude was fairly typical, most of the subject heads being proud to report that their departments were full of highly 'self-motivated' people. Unfortunately, this often came across more as a pragmatic response to account for the department head's own lack of influence than any expression of deliberate policy. It could also suggest a certain amount of 'strategic compliance' on the part of the teachers; that is, that they were prepared to do what they thought was expected of them in order to keep their bosses happy. This finding is particularly worrying, of course, in the light of Evans' (2001) contention that quality of leadership is a key motivating factor for teachers.

The word 'informal' was frequently used when describing how the departments were structured. There was much emphasis placed on 'informal' discussion, 'informal' guidance and 'informal' monitoring of practice. When prompted, the heads of department were prepared to view this as a version of collegiality, but, again, the word really did little more than legitimise a situation in which their leadership was severely circumscribed. Moreover, collegiality became, in the interviews, a convenient cover for what was a noticeable trend in the answers: a reluctance on the part of the department heads to be seen as leaders. This seemed to spring from an awareness of their being caught in the middle; they balked at any suggestion that their role was to act as 'stooges' for the senior management in their schools, preferring to hide decision-making in some form of collective responsibility. Where the leadership role was accepted, it was with qualifications: the head of modern languages at Firthside spoke of how she had asked her department what they wanted from her, receiving the answer 'a leader who told them what to do'. The examples she gave, however, were entirely managerial in nature and were, anyway, tempered by the claim that she 'shared out' tasks as far as possible.

The interviews with department members

The interviews with department members suggested that there is much ignorance about what a head of department's role encompasses. Again, there was a sense that he or she is a 'buffer' between senior management and assistant teachers, but large areas of the job seemed

to be invisible to members of the departments investigated (which would seem to deny the presence of collegiality in any meaningful sense). Instead, department members saw what their subject leaders do as almost exclusively administrative and managerial, centring on such tasks as examination entries and, like the heads of department themselves, the obtaining of resources. The department members also showed little inclination to involve themselves in these areas, thus confirming Brundrett's (1998) suspicion that many teachers have the wrong 'attitude' for collegiality to work in their departments.

There were mixed responses to the question of whether the department members felt motivated by their subject leaders. A modern languages teacher at Firthside said that he responded positively to the 'decent level of trust' that he believed his head of department had in him, but this can be contrasted with a chemistry teacher at the same school who stated categorically that her head of department did nothing to make her feel motivated. An English teacher at The Royal claimed to derive her motivation from 'the people in front of [her]'.

Teamwork was poorly understood by many of the department members interviewed. Few had a concept of 'team' beyond its use as a simple epithet for groups of people engaged upon the same series of tasks. In this respect, most described their teams as strong, the exception being the science department at The Royal, several members of which said that they and their colleagues did not gel as a team. In practice, most of the departments seemed to be loosely connected as teams, departmental meetings being the only time that anything like 'teamwork' could specifically be identified. Time was a major factor here; as a chemistry teacher from The Royal pointed out, there were few opportunities in the school day for members of the department to get together for anything other than simple exchanges of information.

The question which really penetrated to the heart of this research was that of how far the classroom practice of the department members was influenced or conditioned by the leadership of their heads of department. In almost every case, the answer was very little. It was acknowledged by all that their heads of department provided resources and had ultimate responsibility for schemes of work, but, as far as how lessons were actually taught was concerned, the teachers enjoyed almost complete 'pedagogical autonomy' (Eden, 2001). When asked to

account for their preferred teaching methodologies, the department members proposed various explanations: the younger teachers spoke of what they had learned on PGCE as being of major importance or how they had themselves been taught (although one chemistry teacher at Firthside viewed this as something to react against, since her teachers had been, she said, 'rubbish!'). Among the more experienced teachers, internal factors were favoured; one English teacher at The Royal described her methodology as 'inherent', whereas another believed that lessons are 'self-determining'.

The lesson observations

The lesson observations tended to confirm the above findings, little indication emerging of head of department influence on teaching approaches. The science lessons, mostly being practical in nature, usually had their form dictated by whichever experiment was being carried out, it being factors beyond the department, such as the syllabus being followed, which ultimately determined how the teachers taught. That said, the level of teacher involvement was inconsistent. The head of chemistry at Firthside took an almost entirely 'hands-off' approach to an A level lesson while a member of his department, working with the same age group, used the experiment as a starting point for a number of broader discussions around the subject. A chemistry teacher at The Royal allowed the experiment to progress, but made himself available to answer specific questions or to provide prompts when necessary.

It was in the humanities lessons that a broader range of teaching approaches was observable. A French teacher at Firthside took a group-work approach that was a stark contrast to the 'chalk-and-talk' style favoured by her head of department (despite having claimed in her interview that she had adjusted her methodology in response to input from the same head of department). The English department at The Royal all cited Ofsted requirements for a 'three-part' structure as the touchstone of their lesson planning, although, interestingly, none of the lessons observed followed them with any rigour. The head of department taught a lesson that had very obviously been worked out in advance – she gave a clear statement of aims and objectives at the beginning and issued worksheets at specific pre-decided intervals. By contrast, a member of her department went into her lesson with no more than a vague plan and allowed it to follow its own course, intervening only when she saw a need to do so. She also launched into a lengthy

unplanned monologue on essay technique that arose from a pupil's query. The content of the lessons and the year groups taught can, in part, explain these divergences, but, nevertheless, the lack of a 'house style' was very noticeable. Furthermore, the advice that pupils at the Royal were given by the English department about examination preparation and technique differed from teacher to teacher. It seemed that the individuals concerned were speaking from personal experience and sharing what had 'worked for them', but, again, this tended to demonstrate that a central head of department determined policy on the matter was not available or, if available, was being ignored.

Many would argue that individualism in teaching styles is to be welcomed; indeed, the head of chemistry at Firthside was unequivocal in his support for it, saying that results are 'the bottom line' and that, as long as they are acceptable, he does not care how teachers arrive at them. This was reflected in his approach to departmental schemes of work, which were, by his own admission, optional, thus removing him entirely from the planning process for many of his department's lessons. His counterpart at The Royal spoke of the great experience of the members of his department, arguing – strangely in the light of a head of department's remit – that it would not be his place to comment on how they did their jobs. But, since heads of subject departments are increasingly under pressure to ensure that results targets are met (especially in market-driven schools of the type researched), these findings raise doubts about how effectively they can be expected to do it.

Conclusion

Overall, then, it can be concluded that the head of department role undeniably includes many elements of management, such as simple organisational/administrative tasks and the marshalling of resources. Gronn (2003) has contended that this can be seen as a form of leadership and that a simple binary distinction between leadership and management is overly simplistic. While this may well be the case, the fact that the bulk of the department members investigated here neither felt nor acted as though they were being led must cast doubt on the quantity and quality of leadership that is generated at the middle level of a school's hierarchy. Certainly, opportunities for heads of department to demonstrate 'transformational leadership' by 'raising the level of motivation and morality' (Northouse, 2001: 132) of their teams appear to be rare at best. To put it in the terms summarised in Table 1,

there was, among the department members researched, a preponderance of type 4 teachers who were mostly impervious to the influence of their heads of department. Some of the younger, less experienced, teachers were type 2, in that they were prepared to claim a high degree of influence from their heads of department, but they then failed to act in accordance with it. Moreover, even when they acknowledged head of department influence, they were mostly unable to articulate how it was evidenced in any specific way.

It would be an exaggeration to speak of a 'crisis' at head of department level, but Leithwood et al.'s (2006) 'strong claim' that leadership is key to learning cannot, on the strength of the findings presented here, be made with respect to middle management as dogmatically as the authors would wish. On a broader level, what emerges from this research is a sense that the head of department role as currently constituted represents something of a 'missed opportunity' for leadership. It should be absolutely central to the delivery of any school's primary mission, but comes across as mired in confusion, timidity and obfuscation. Even those who hold the post are unable to conceive of it as anything more than managerial in orientation and the actual work of teaching and learning is hardly touched by it at all. Further research will add complexity to a growing picture of an under-utilised leadership resource.

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- Adrian Jarvis is currently undertaking PhD studies in the School of Education, University of Birmingham, UK.*

Contact

E-mail: adrian.jarvis1@btopenworld.com

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