The leadership role of middle leaders in six selected primary schools in Singapore

Hak Hiang Koh

BA DipEd (Merit), AdvPGDip Primary Social Studies, MEdMan (Hons)

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ABSTRACT

In the Singapore school system, school middle leaders (MLs) such as Head of Department, Subject Head and Level Head hold a formalised leadership role within the school organisational structure. They have responsibility for the operation of a department in their schools and they are part of the leadership team in many schools. When compared to school senior leaders (SLs) like Principals, the leadership role of MLs has received considerably less attention by researchers. This study investigated the leadership role of MLs in a sample of six primary schools in Singapore using a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology without an *a priori* theoretical framework. The perceptions of the leadership role of MLs were collected from SLs, MLs and classroom teachers using semi-structured one-on-one interviews. In total, twelve SLs, sixteen MLs and twenty-eight teachers from six primary schools participated in the study. The interview data were analysed using an interpretational analysis system adapted from Tesch (1990).

The perceptions of all three groups of participants (SLs, MLs and teachers) were found to be similar. The perceived leadership role of MLs was found to be complex and multi-dimensional, with a situational aspect evident and required both leadership and management. The leadership role comprised fourteen leadership themes which could be considered as the core components of the role. The role description reflected much of what had been written about MLs and their roles in the literature. Comparing the ML leadership role description with the school and middle leadership literature indicated support for the presence of aspects of seven current leadership conceptions; instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership, contingent and distributed leadership. It also highlighted that the simple conceptions of leadership might be inadequate to explain the leadership role MLs were enacting. The leadership role of MLs developed from this study confirmed the applicability of White's (2000) CAMM leadership model and Drysdale and Gurr's (2011) successful school leadership model to (middle) leadership practices that were located in the culture and context of primary schools in Singapore. Possibilities for further research, including the investigation of the ML role in other types of school in Singapore and the inclusion of other stakeholder groups in and beyond the school, were presented. Also presented were nine recommendations for practice that involved both system and school level initiatives.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

This is to certify that:

(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy except where indicated in the preface,

(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

(iii) the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies, and appendices.

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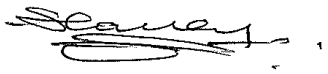

Hak Hiang Koh

PREFACE

Sections of Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 of this thesis have appeared in a published work by the candidate:

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My heartfelt thanks to my family, especially my wife Li Li and daughters Kaely and Kayla, who have been somewhat neglected, especially in the last months of writing up the thesis. Without their love and support, the completion of this thesis would be ‘Mission Impossible’. And yes, Kaely and Kayla, Daddy has finally finished writing that ‘book’.

DEDICATION

The thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather Teng Poh Koh and father Tai Seh Koh.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AED	Allied Educator
AM	Administration Manager
CCA	Co-Curricular Activities
CCPE	Co-Curricular Programme Executive
DDM	Diploma in Departmental Management
EAS	Executive and Administration Staff
EL	English Language
ELDC	Educational Leadership Development Centre
Exco	Executive Committee
FPDE	Further Professional Diploma in Education
GCE 'A' Level	General Certificate of Education 'Advanced' Level
GCE 'O' Level	General Certificate of Education 'Ordinary' Level
GEP	Gifted Education Programme
HOD	Head of Department
IPAM	Institute of Public Administration and Management
ISSPP	International Successful School Principalship Project
KP	Key Personnel
LC	Learning Circle
LH	Level Head
ML	School Middle leader
MLS	Management and Leadership in Schools
MOE	Ministry of Education
MTL	Mother Tongue Languages
NIE	National Institute of Education
OM	Operations Manager
PE	Physical Education
PERI	Primary Education Review and Implementation
P	Principal
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PSLE	Primary School Leaving Examinations
SAB	School Appraisal Branch
SAP	Special Assistance Plan
SEED	Strategies for Effective Engagement and Development

SEM	School Excellence Model
SEO	Senior Education Officer
SH	Subject Head
SL	School Senior Leader
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SMT	School Management Team
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SOW	Scheme of Work
SSD	School Staff Developer
STELLAR	Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading
TA	Technology Assistant
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TLLM	Teach Less, Learn More
TRAISI	Training Administration System on Internet
TSLN	Thinking Schools Learning Nation
VP	Vice Principal

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The thesis explores the leadership role of school middle leaders (MLs) in primary schools in Singapore. The chapter outlines the background to the study and its significance. The research questions are identified, an outline of the methodology used, including the limitations and delimitations, and a summary of the chapters.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Education systems around the world are on the quest for continuous improvements in learning outcomes and one of the keys to achieving improved learning outcomes is effective school leadership (Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, Brown, Ahtaridou & Kington, 2009; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Wahlstrom, Seashore Louis, Leithwood, & Anderson, 2010). Effective school leadership has been considered as a key element contributing to the success of the Singapore education system (Barber & Morshed, 2007; Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010; Ng, 2015b; OECD, 2010). In considering school leadership, a great deal of attention has been focussed on the leadership of school senior leaders (SLs), particularly the principal. As such, it is not surprising that the vast extant school leadership research has focussed exclusively on SLs. There is a growing recognition that the principal is not the sole leader in a school. Large scale school leadership studies (Day et al., 2009; Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010) have demonstrated that the impact of leadership on student learning is only indirect as SLs must work with and through others (teachers and MLs) to achieve improvements. Despite this recognition, the leadership role of MLs has received considerably less attention by researchers when compared to their SL colleagues (Cranston, 2009; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013).

In the literature, MLs have been identified as the crucial ‘linking pin’ in the school positions to influence school improvement and effectiveness and a key driving force to operationalise positive and meaningful education change in schools (Busher & Harris, 1999; Busher, Harris, & Wise, 2000; Harris, 2000, 2001; Harris, Jamieson, & Russ, 1995; Hoult, 2002; Leithwood, 2016). In fact, Hannay and Denby (1994, p. 2) argue that MLs are in a better position than SLs to implement change in schools:

1. MLs have responsibility for smaller groups of people than do SLs. This leads to stronger and more effective pressure and support that is required for change to be possible.
2. MLs are likely to benefit from a pre-existing sense of community and unity of purpose that exists within the department; and

3. It is often within departments that attempts to influence instructional practices are brought to bear.

Other research evidence (for example, Fleming, 2014; Leask & Terrell, 1997; Sammons, Thomas, & Mortimore, 1997) highlights that MLs play a pivotal role in securing better learning outcomes for students, resulting from their direct and positive influence on the classroom practice of teachers. This study was therefore developed to explore the leadership role of MLs in primary schools in Singapore.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study investigated school leadership in Singapore. Specifically, it explored the phenomenon of middle leadership in six selected primary schools in Singapore. MLs in Singapore are teachers formally appointed to the middle leadership positions in schools, with responsibility for the operation of what is acknowledged as subject areas, groupings of subject areas or non-subject areas. Perceptions from three key stakeholder groups within the schools, SLs (principals and vice-principals), MLs and teachers, were collected to determine the extent of similarity of ML role perception within and across the schools and to construct an overall role description.

The methodology employed was based around hermeneutic phenomenology, allowing both the description and the interpretation of the phenomenon of middle leadership, without requiring the use of an *a priori* theoretical framework. The use of such a methodology meant that participants were given considerable scope to discuss the leadership role of MLs and raise areas that they felt were relevant to the topic. The use of the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, in conjunction with the views of SLs, MLs and teachers involved in the study, provided a rich description of the leadership role of MLs as perceived by the participants. The literature views of the role of MLs in both primary and secondary schools and other related areas such as subject departments were documented. Contemporary conceptions of school leadership were examined and compared with the leadership role of MLs that emerged from this study. Such contemporary models included instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, contingent and distributed forms of school leadership.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Firstly, this study hopes to add to the “far from extensive” (Harris & Jones, 2017, p. 213) contemporary literature on middle leadership, contributing to the understanding of the role of MLs in schools. Tan, Ratnam-Lim and Heng (2017, p. 267) contend that “middle leadership is

a realm of leadership in schools that has not been given its due recognition" as "the literature on middle leaders and middle leadership in primary and secondary schools is still relatively sparse, if growing …" (Busher, Hammersley-Fletcher, & Turner, 2007, p. 405). The literature base on middle leadership in Singapore is limited to a relatively small corpus of unpublished dissertations, book chapters and articles in international journals. An electronic search of the library of the National Institute of Education (NIE), the sole teacher training institute in Singapore, found a small number of unpublished Masters dissertations which explored middle leadership and are related to this study. Most of these were written more than a decade ago (before 2007) and given the education landscape under which these studies were conducted has changed tremendously, "it is debatable whether the bulk of the literature on middle leadership roles in schools remains applicable or indeed, relevant" (Harris & Jones, 2017, p. 215).

Secondly, this study aims to fill the gap in knowledge between middle leadership in Western and Asian school contexts. Much of the extant literature on middle leadership is 'Western' in orientation as the field of educational leadership is dominated by Anglo-American perspectives (Dimmock, 2011b). The broadening of the types of national contexts for examining school leadership and management practices would provide useful international perspectives and comparisons. Studies on school leadership that examine a broader set of national contexts are likely to further enrich the understanding of the complexity of leadership practices (Crow, 2007).

Indeed, there are differences across cultures in terms of how people define leadership (Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996), in other words, "what is involved in leading and leadership in different national cultural contexts" (Ribbins & Zhang, 2006, p. 75). Given different contexts for school leadership (Hallinger, 2018) that differentiate Singapore from other countries, the understanding of middle leadership in Singapore is likely to be somewhat differently defined from those of their counterparts in United Kingdom, North America, Australasia or even other Asian countries. Inspired in part by Hallinger and Bryant's (2013) call for more empirical studies on Asian educational leadership, this study is an attempt to contribute to empirically-based knowledge about middle leadership in an Asian context such as Singapore that will in turn contribute to the international body of literature on middle leadership. Findings from this study would contribute to a growing comparative research on middle leadership and their enacted roles, particularly in the policy context of "department heads are expected and permitted to exercise middle-management functions including the evaluation and supervision of teachers" (Leithwood, 2016, p. 137) .

Lastly, the findings in this study aimed to provide Singapore education authorities and practitioners with knowledge and understanding of contemporary middle leadership in primary schools in Singapore. Much of the extant school leadership literature in the Singapore context mainly examined principal leadership (for example, Ng, Nguyen, Wong, & Choy, 2015a, 2015b; Nguyen & Ng, 2014; Nguyen, Ng, & Yap, 2017; Retna & Ng, 2016; Wang, 2010; Wang, Gurr, & Drysdale, 2016). Examining and understanding the leadership role of MLs in primary schools are some prerequisites if discussions about preparation of future MLs as well as professional development of incumbent MLs are to be undertaken. As Newton (1985, p. 9) has concluded, "Planning professional development and preparation programmes requires an indigenous knowledge base about the realities of school administration in a given context". Specifically, decision makers at both system and school levels may be able to utilise the findings to review the Management and Leadership in Schools (MLS), the milestone leadership programme for MLs in Singapore.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to gain an understanding of how MLs in Singapore primary schools experience being a ML and how SLs and teachers of the school view their role. As well as exploring further materials used previously to illustrate the significance of the study, the literature review presented as Chapter Three will show that MLs have a significant leadership role in schools but that is dependent on the context in which they work.

Specifically, the research questions addressed by the study were as follows:

1. How is the leadership role of a ML in a primary school as perceived by the holders of the position themselves, those to whom they are responsible to (SLs) and those for whom they have responsibility for (teachers)?

2. Are the perceptions of the leadership roles of MLs as described by the three groups consistent or different?

1.6 METHODOLOGY

This study has been undertaken from the perspective of the naturalistic or qualitative research paradigm (Merriam, 2014). The specific approach used in this study is the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology (van Manen, 1997) and it is based on that employed by Gurr (1996) in his study relating to the leadership role of principals in Victorian Schools of the Future and that of White's (2000) research on curriculum area middle managers (CAMMs) in Victorian secondary schools. This method of inquiry is both descriptive (phenomenological) and interpretive (hermeneutic). Hermeneutic phenomenology "wants to be attentive to how things

appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves … it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena", an "implied contradiction" that can be resolved "if one acknowledges that the (phenomenological) 'facts' of lived experience are always already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced" (van Manen, 1997, p. 180). It is based on naturalistic assumptions that are described in Chapter Four.

Consistent with the study by Gurr (1996) and that of White (2000), a theoretical framework was not used to guide this study. One of the key features of hermeneutic phenomenology is that it does not rely on having an *a priori* theoretical framework. In studying the leadership role of MLs, the researcher wanted the freedom to explore the various conceptions and give participants the freedom to communicate their own understanding of the leadership phenomenon under investigation. In addition, the researcher can minimise the influence of his own understandings in order to allow the participants to speak. If an *a priori* theoretical framework was used in this study, participants would have their thoughts directed in a specific direction when providing their descriptions of the leadership role of MLs.

A total of fifty-six interviews were conducted with fifty-six participants: twelve SLs (four principals, eight vice-principals), sixteen MLs and twenty-eight teachers across six primary schools. All interviews conducted for the study were face to face and between the researcher and one participant. All interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder and were later transcribed. The MLs interviewed at each school site were not the specific subjects under investigation. Rather, the focus was on the perspectives from which they themselves (as MLs), those to whom they report to (SLs within the school) and those who report to them (department teachers) viewed the role. The interview transcripts were analysed for themes that resulted in an aggregate description of the leadership role of MLs as held by the three participant groups across the six school sites.

The trustworthiness of the study was enhanced through the use of the following strategies:

- Multiple perspectives of SLs, MLs and teachers across six sites (triangulation).
- Provision of details concerning the analysis process including the presentation of interview transcripts and thematic analysis (rich, thick description).
- Exposition of the researcher's prior understandings by presenting a comprehensive review of the relevant literature.

As with Gurr (1996, p. 22) and White (2000, p. 22), the study is delimited by "the phenomenon chosen for study, the issues raised by the participants and the descriptive and interpretive

nature of the methodology used". The study is limited mainly by the extent to which the findings are trustworthy. A full discussion of these aspects is presented in Chapter Four.

1.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

This thesis is made up of seven chapters. The structure of this thesis is outlined in brief below in the chapter overviews:

Chapter One is the first of seven chapters. It provides an overview of the study and explained in brief its purpose, research problems, significances and methodology.

Chapter Two provides the background information to establish the context of the study. This chapter provides an overview of Singapore, its education system and how a typical primary school is organised and led.

Chapter Three presents a review of the literature relevant to this study. The literature reviewed is wide-ranging in scope owing to the nature of the phenomenon under investigation and serves to highlight the researcher's understanding of the extant literature. In addition, it provides a source of material to compare the resulting description of the ML leadership role with those contained in the extant literature.

Chapter Four outlines the methodological issues relating to this study. This chapter describes the hermeneutic phenomenological method, the selection of school sites and the method of data collection. This chapter also explains the chosen method of data analysis and its process, and discusses issues relating to the establishment of rigour and trustworthiness. The limitations and delimitations of the study are presented.

Chapter Five contains the results of the analysis of the interviews. Specific sections within the chapter are given over to judging the similarity of the perceptions of each of the three participant groups and describing the perceived leadership role of MLs. The role descriptions presented in this chapter are the end results of the hermeneutic phenomenological method. It is Chapter Five which constitutes the main part of the thesis.

Chapter Six provides a discussion of the findings of the study. The literature that was presented in Chapter Three is used here to illuminate the findings related to middle leadership presented in Chapter Five, and comparisons with some leadership conceptions and models in the literature are undertaken. The structure of this chapter resembles that of Chapter Five.

Chapter Seven is the final chapter of the thesis. The chapter concludes with a summary of the thesis findings, and recommendations for practice and further research.

References and appendices follow Chapter Seven. Appendix A comprises of the interview guides used in this study. Appendices B, C, D and E consist of letter of invitation, consent form for schools, plain language statement and consent form for individual participant respectively. Appendix F contains a summary of the analysis for the similarity between the interviews for the three groups of participants on a school by school basis.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background and context of the study. It refers specifically to the education system in Singapore. The first section provides an overview of the profile of Singapore. The second section describes the Singapore education system and the major changes in education policies in recent years and the implications for school leadership. The third section examines how a typical primary school is organised and led.

2.2 PROFILE OF SINGAPORE

Singapore is a small island city-state located at the southern tip of peninsular Malaysia in South-East Asia. Approximately 719.1 square km in size, Singapore has a total population of about 5.53 million. Government statistics show that the resident population is multi-ethnic, multi-racial and multi-religious, comprising 74.3% Chinese, 13.3% Malays, 9.1% Indians, and 3.2% other ethnic identities (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2016). The population, largely descendants of immigrants from China, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Indian subcontinent, while retaining its own languages, cultures, religious affiliations, customs and festivals, has gradually acquired a distinct Singapore identity.

Singapore was a British crown colony between 1819 and 1963 and was briefly occupied by the Japanese during the Second World War. In 1963, Singapore joined the Federation of Malaya and Borneo to form what is known today as Malaysia. However, the political merger with Malaysia was short-lived and Singapore became an independent nation in August 1965. Singapore is a parliamentary democracy, generally modelled after the British Westminster system of government. General elections take place once every five years. The dominant People Action Party (PAP) has been the governing party since the country attained full internal self-government from the British in 1959.

Singapore has no natural resources and is entirely reliant on its human capital for its continuing survival and prosperity. Since gaining independence in 1965, Singapore has pursued a highly successful industrialisation policy and the key sectors of the economy include manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, financial and business services, transport and communications. In recent years, Singapore is developing high technology and high value-adding service industries, such as life sciences and medical engineering. In 2014, Singapore has a per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US$55,909, amongst the highest in the world.

2.3 THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN SINGAPORE

A number of international reports (for example, Barber & Morshed, 2007; Jensen, Hunter, Sonnemann, & Burns, 2012; Mourshed et al., 2010; OECD, 2010) have ranked the Singapore education system as amongst the best in the world. It is internationally recognised for consistently producing one of the highest levels of students' overall performance and achievement in a range of international assessments such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Programme for International Student Assessment (PIRLS) and Programme in International Student Assessment (PISA).

This strong performance and achievement can be attributed to sustained large investments in education made by the Singapore government since independence. The budget allocated to education has been between 3% and 4% of GDP and has been increasing steadily over the last decade. In the 2014 fiscal year, the Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) received a budget of S$10.7 billion, which is about 25% of total government expenditure and is second only to that of defence expenditure (27.8%) (Singapore Department of Statistics, 2016).

The Singapore school education system is basically a public education system (Ng, 2017) and is built around a 6/4/2 model, with high stakes standardised national examinations at each point. Primary education lasts 6 years, culminating in the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). Based on the results of the PSLE, students are placed in different secondary education streams: 'Express' for the academically gifted, 'Normal' for the average ability students or 'Normal (Technical)' for the least academically inclined. An 'Express' pupil can complete secondary school in 4 years (5 years for 'Normal' students) and take the General Certificate of Education (GCE) 'Ordinary' Level examination ('O' levels), while 2 years at a junior college leads to the GCE 'Advanced' Level examination ('A' levels).

In 2016, there were 365 schools comprising 185 primary, 150 secondary, 16 mixed-level schools, 14 junior colleges and centralised institute (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2017). The post-secondary system is made up of Institute of Technical Education, five polytechnics and six universities. The exact number of schools varies from year to year as schools with small and dwindling enrolments are merged or closed while new schools are opened in areas where there is an increasing population of school-going children. Researchers (for example, Dimmock, 2011a; Dimmock, 2011b; Dimmock, Kwek, & Toh, 2013; Dimmock & Tan, 2013; Tan & Ng, 2007) have often described the Singapore education system as "highly centralised" with MOE overseeing all schools in Singapore. MOE ensures that educational policies and reform initiatives are effectively implemented at all levels of the system through a "strong and centralised control over policy and practice" (Dimmock, 2011b, p. 323).

Administratively, the Singapore school system is divided into four zones (North, South, East and West), each headed by a Zonal Director. Each zone is subdivided into approximately seven school clusters, each headed by a Cluster Superintendent. Schools are grouped in a cluster that consists of up to 15 primary and secondary schools and junior colleges. There are over 33,000 teachers in the school system, with an average age of 36 years old (OECD, 2014). The majority of teachers is female (71%) and as is the majority of principals and vice principals (60%) (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2017).

2.4 MAJOR CHANGES IN EDUCATION POLICIES AND THE IMPLICATIONS ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The Singapore education system has developed from a third world to one of the best performing systems in the world. Researchers (for example, Goh & Gopinathan, 2008; Gopinathan, Wong, & Tang, 2008; Tan & Dimmock, 2014) have identified three recognisable phases of education transformation: Survival Driven (1959-1978); Efficiency Driven (1979-1996); and Ability Driven (1997-current). In this section, each phase of education development is briefly described and the implications for school leadership discussed.

2.4.1 Survival driven phase (1959-1978)

The education policies of this 'survival driven' phase were focussed on promoting a sense of national identity and producing labour for the industrialisation process. Throughout this period, there was a need to quickly expand basic education and to ensure uniformity in quality of schooling. As a consequence, education policy and practices were centralised. Gopinathan et al. (2008) described the role of school principals in this phase as:

> *… a 'supervisor of routine tasks'. This was, in many ways, inevitable because the schools were large and it was also not easy to recruit suitably qualified administrative help. As a result, principals had to move away from the traditional role of a 'headmaster' and take on the role of a manager or administrator. Principals were seen as 'key digits' in the education system, and were expected to perform a variety of tasks, many of which were non-professional and some were even clerical in nature. (p. 243)*

2.4.2 Efficiency driven phase (1979-1996)

The focus of education policies of this 'efficiency driven' phase was on improving the quality of education and training through centralisation and standardisation. To this end, a centralised 'teacher proof curriculum' and a standardised system of assessment were implemented to ensure high uniform standards. The practice of 'streaming' was introduced at the end of Primary Three and at the start of Secondary One "to allow students to learn at a rate more suitable for them" (Ng, 2017, p. 30). Work procedures and processes in schools were

standardised and the Principal's Handbook, a document that contained all the policies and administrative procedures and guidelines required for 'the day-to-day running of their schools' were issued. Annual internal appraisals and external appraisals, conducted every four to five years, were introduced to ensure compliance with MOE policies and directives. Gopinathan et al. (2008) described the role of school principals in this phase as:

> *… efficient implementers in a highly centralised system … The primary role of the principal was to ensure that the processes and standards, as determined by MOE, were adhered to as closely as possible. (p. 243)*

2.4.3 Ability driven phase (1997 – current)

The education policies of this 'ability driven' phase are focussed on maximising the talents of all students and catering to the needs of a diversifying knowledge-based economy. The key overarching policy frameworks in this phase are Thinking Schools Learning Nations (TSLN) (introduced in 1997) and Teach Less Learn More (TLLM) (introduced in 2004). Specific initiatives introduced into the Singapore education system during this phase have been well documented by researchers, for example, Desired Outcomes of Education (Tan, 2013), National Education (Sim, 2013; Tan, 2005; Tan, 2008), School Excellence Model (Mok, 2003; Ng, 2003; Ng & Chan, 2008), Innovation and Enterprise (Ng, 2004, 2005, 2008b), Information-Communication Technology (IT) Masterplan for schools (Deng & Gopinathan, 2005; Lim, 2007); Program for School-based Excellence (Goh, 2006; Goh & Tan, 2009), Teach Less Learn More (Ng, 2008c; Retna & Ng, 2016; Teo, Deng, Lee, & Ratnam-Lim, 2013) and 21st Century Competency Framework (Trinidad, Patel, Shear, Goh, Quek & Tan, 2013).

These initiatives are designed "to loosen curriculum and pedagogic rigidities" (Gopinathan et al., 2008, p. 245) and "away from very narrowly-defined educational outcomes, based only on examinations in key subject areas, towards a more holistic education system that can encourage creativity" (Ng, 2017, p. 183). With the launch of TSLN, SLs (principals in particular) are no longer seen as "supervisors of routine tasks" (Gopinathan et al., 2008, p. 243). SLs now "exercise an increasing amount of autonomy and responsibility for implementing MOE policies" (Dimmock, 2011a, p. 454) as powers, responsibilities and accountabilities continues to shift from MOE to the schools (Deng, Gopinathan, & Lee, 2013; Ng, 2017).

> *More decision-making responsibility and accountability have devolved to school principals, and, in some cases, management responsibilities have devolved to teachers or department heads. Schools have become increasingly responsible for curricular and instructional decisions as well as managing financial and material resources and personnel. These reforms are adopted on the premise that schools themselves are more knowledgeable about their own needs and the most effective*

ways to allocate resources and design the curriculum so they can better meet the needs of their students. (Dimmock & Tan, 2016, p. 162)

Under the auspices of TLLM, SLs and schools are "exhorted to take school-based initiatives" (Dimmock & Goh, 2011, p. 218) to improve teaching and learning in Singapore schools to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. In spite of the efforts to transform the Singapore school system to be more student-centric, the reality is that Singapore schools are less learner-centric than countries like Finland (Lee, Hung & Teh, 2013). A recent system-wide research program sponsored by MOE (Hogan, Chan, Rahim, Kwek, Maung Aye, Loo, Sheng & Luo, 2013) found that the classroom instruction is still dominated by traditional "teacher-driven and exam-centric" (Lee et al., 2013, p. 238) forms of pedagogies.

2.5 PRIMARY EDUCATION

Primary schools provide students with a six-year course, comprising of a four-year foundation stage from Primary One to Four and a two-year orientation stage from Primary Five to Six (Figure 2.1). The subjects on offer are English language, Mother Tongue language, Mathematics, Science (which is taught from Primary Three onwards), Social Studies, Music, Art and Crafts, Health Education, Physical Education and Character and Citizenship Education, as well as participation in Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs) and Community Involvement Programme (CIP). Starting from the 2008 Primary 5 cohort, primary schools have introduced subject-based banding in place of 'streaming'. Students can offer a mix of 'Standard' or 'Foundation' subjects depending on their aptitude in each subject. At the end of Primary 6, students take the PSLE, which assesses their suitability for secondary education and places them in the appropriate learning track (that is Special/Express, Normal Academic and Normal Technical) according to the results.

In 2008, the Primary Education Review and Implementation (PERI) Committee was set up to study ways to raise the quality of primary education. In the following year, the PERI Committee made a number of recommendations to enhance primary education.

1. Use engaging pedagogy to teach skills and knowledge.
2. Emphasise non-academic programmes within curriculum.
3. More holistic assessment to support learning.
4. Provide additional manpower.
5. Recruit committed, quality educators.
6. Single session primary schools.

These recommendations have since been implemented or are currently being implemented across all primary schools in Singapore.

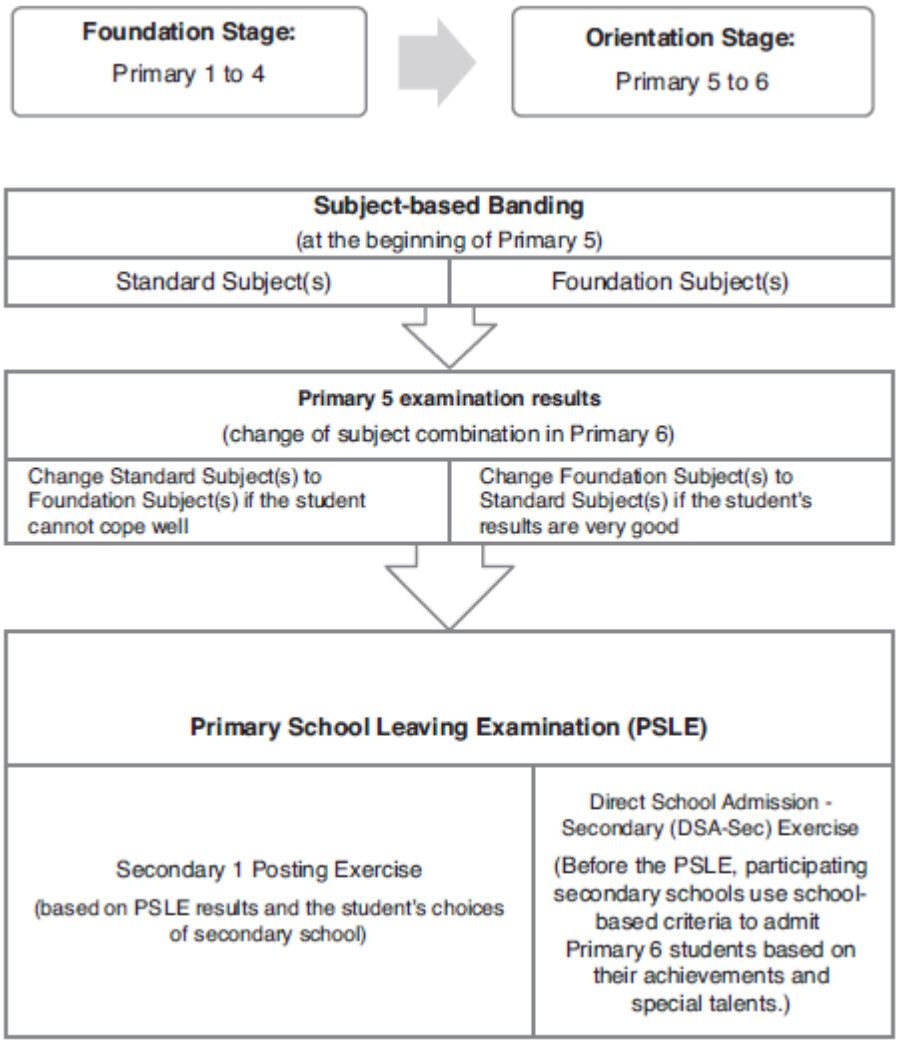

Figure 2.1 Primary education in Singapore (Ng, 2017, p. 27)

2.6 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS

There are two different types of primary schools in Singapore: government and government-aided. Government primary schools are fully funded by the government. Government-aided primary schools receive significant government funding (95%) and also receive support from their sponsoring organisations, usually a religious organisation (typically a church) or a Chinese clan association. Government-aided schools are managed by their respective school management board and have a greater level of autonomy of how they operate. Both types of schools are regarded as public schools.

When compared to primary schools in 'Western' systems, primary schools in Singapore have large enrolments (Dimmock & Tan, 2013). Based on the latest MOE statistics, a typical primary

school has around 1500 pupils with an average class size of 33.5 (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2017). Furthermore, it is not uncommon for a group of designated primary schools known as 'mega' schools to have up to 3000 pupils. Many primary schools have until recently operated dual sessions but most of them have since transitioned to operating a single session, as a consequence of the PERI recommendations.

The Principal is the head of the school and is assisted by one or two vice-principals. The principal is also supported by a team of MLs, teachers formally appointed to leadership positions situated in the middle of the school hierarchy, who supervise the work of teachers and executive and administrative staff (EAS). They hold the titles of Head of Department (HOD), Subject Head (SH) and Level Head (LH). MLs are a fairly recent addition to Singapore schools. The post of HOD was first introduced to secondary schools in the 1980s (Kings, Dixit, & Zhang, 1994; Singapore Educator, 1989) and the middle leadership positions of SH and LH were introduced in 1997 (Chew, 2001).

Most if not all primary schools in Singapore are organised along subject department lines, much like secondary schools around the world. MLs are responsible for a subject, a group of subjects or a non-subject area like Information and Communication Technology or Pupil Welfare. The role and responsibilities of MLs are outlined in the Principals' Handbook and these included whole school responsibility for their subject area and day to day leadership and management of their department or area of responsibility. Researchers described the role of MLs as:

> *… lead their departments in the planning and implementation of programs, to help schools realise their goals … support their principal in cascading the education initiatives to the entire school … providing effective departmental leadership in managing change in areas of curriculum and pedagogy. (Ng, Ng, & Ng, 2006, pp. 34-35)*

> *Middle leaders in school play a critical role in supporting their principal in a school-based reform and leading various aspects of it. Middle leaders help the school principals manage the work of colleagues or teams of colleagues (Gunter and Rutherford, 2000). They serve as co-leaders in their schools. They are expected to be champions of change and innovators in their own areas of work*. *(Ng, 2015b, p. 174)*

Unlike the SLs, MLs have an allocated teaching load that is normally set at two thirds of a typical classroom teacher's teaching load. They are line managers with formal performance management responsibilities over classroom teachers in their department or under their 'span

of control'. MLs are appointed following a formal interview process with the cluster superintendent and in many schools, MLs are part of the school leadership team or 'Executive Committee' (Exco) which is led by the SLs (principal and vice-principal). In 2011, MOE announced a pledge to create "1,500 more leadership positions in schools" in order to "to support teachers' aspirations" by providing teachers with "more opportunities to assume middle-level leadership positions" (Singapore Ministry of Education, 2011).

2.7 CAREER DEVELOPMENT TRACKS IN THE SINGAPORE EDUCATION SERVICE

In Singapore, teachers are centrally hired by the MOE and recruited from the top one-third of each cohort, either for a one-year graduate or, a four-year undergraduate pre-service teacher training programme at the NIE. The course fees are fully borne by the MOE and teacher trainees undergoing the one-year graduate programme receive a monthly salary comparable to the pay of entry-level officers at other government ministries while undergraduates receive a generous stipend. Teachers are offered three career tracks or fields of excellence within the school system. This three-track system comprises 1. Teaching track; 2. Leadership track; and 3. Senior specialist track, as shown in Figure 2.2. Each track brings recognition and salary increments. Teachers are appraised annually by their school leaders (SLs and MLs, as appropriate) using the competency-based performance appraisal system known as Enhanced Performance Management System (EPMS) that spells out the knowledge and skills requirements as well as professional characteristics appropriate for each of the three tracks and their substantive salary grade. The annual overall performance rating has a direct impact on salary increment, bonus payment and career advancement prospects. Teachers are entitled to 100 paid hours of continuing professional learning each year to support their career and personal development.

As leadership is seen as a key enabler for effective schools in Singapore (Goodwin, Low, & Darling-Hammond, 2017), it is not surprising that much attention and resources have been devoted to identifying early teachers with potential to take on school leadership roles and grooming them for leadership positions (Ng et al., 2015b; Ng, 2015b; Tan & Darling-Hammond, 2011). However, the system of identification and promotion within the education service is complex and influenced by the interplay of several factors, the key ones being the performance and potential ratings of promising teachers (Chew, 2001; Chew, Stott, & Boon, 2003). Teachers who show potential for school leadership are identified by SLs and encouraged to go on the leadership track, where they will be provided with opportunities for leadership responsibilities at the school level, such as in working groups, project teams and committees. If they passed the 'test', a 'promotion' to a ML position usually follows, typically

within the same school. In the quote below, Ng et al. (2015b) describe a typical progression through the leadership levels in Singapore schools.

> *The process of selecting a school leader is not a self-initiated one, but one that is managed by senior leaders in the school system. All education officers are regularly monitored and appraised and those who show potential are encouraged to take the leadership track, where they will be given many and diverse opportunities to test their leadership abilities. In the course of their structured progression from middle managers (level heads, heads of department) to vice-principal and then to principal, these officers are provided with extensive training. (pp. 514-515)*

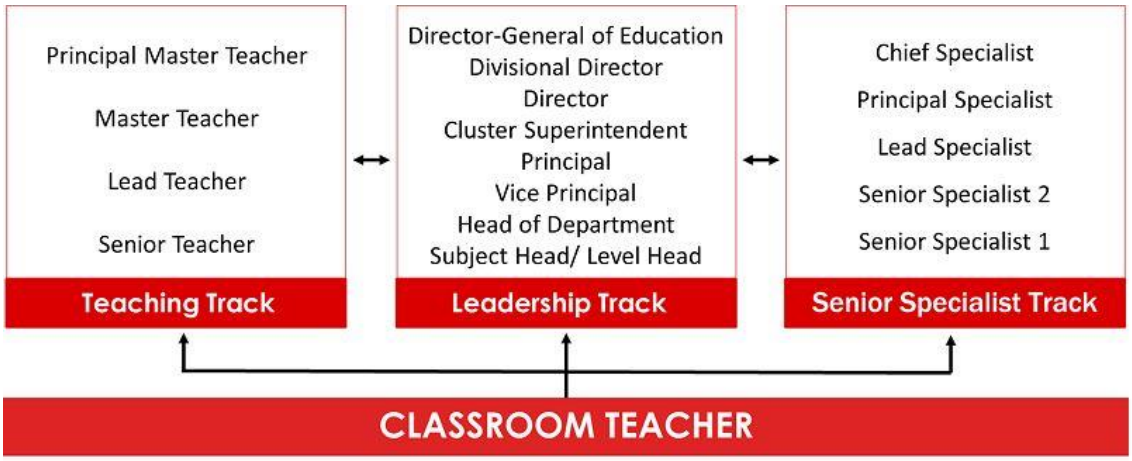

Figure 2.2 Career tracks for teachers in Singapore (https://www.moe.gov.sg/images/default-source/album/careers/teach/images/career-track.jpg)

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the review of literature and research in relation to this study. As this study does not employ a theoretical framework, an exhaustive coverage of one or two areas (for example, instructional leadership or transformational leadership) was inappropriate as there is no *a priori* reason for limiting the scope of the review. Rather, a review of a wide-ranging literature is undertaken, discussing information from a variety of areas (for example, school leadership models, subject departments, middle leadership) that may then be developed in the discussion of the research findings.

This chapter begins with an examination of the differences between leadership and management. The second section discusses school leadership and student outcomes which is followed by those pertaining to successful school leadership. The fourth section examines the roles and responsibilities of MLs. A review of ML literature in Singapore will conclude this chapter. This literature review chapter serves to establish a platform for the discussion of findings.

3.2 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

In the literature on leadership, there is often a distinction drawn between leadership and management. This study involved an investigation of the leadership role of individuals who, by their position in the middle of the school hierarchy, may expect to assume both leadership and management responsibilities. Indeed, aspects of their role identified both in the literature and by participants in this study could be identified as leadership or management. Therefore, a short discussion in regard to this distinction will be undertaken. The concept of leadership "overlaps" with two similar terms, management which is widely used in United Kingdom, Europe and Africa and administration in the United States, Canada and Australia (Bush, 2008a). The concept of leadership is "still highly contested" (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017b, p. 170), in part due to a lack of agreed definition of leadership (Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach, 1999). Yukl (2013, p. 7) argues that "the definition of leadership is arbitrary and subjective" and "there is no single 'correct' definition". However, leadership can be described by reference to two core functions: providing direction and exercising influence (Leithwood & Louis, 2012). As Yukl (2013, p. 7) explains, leadership involves "influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives".

Several researchers have argued that leadership and management are not synonymous terms. For example, Terrell (1997a, p. 95) sees “management as being more concerned with the maintenance of routine activities and tasks, of organising, planning, scheduling and communicating information” while “leadership concerns that capacity to influence a group of individuals to achieve specific goals”. For Fitzgerald (2009, p. 61), management and leadership are “located in a dichotomous relationship. Management is seen as a range of functional activities whereas leadership is viewed as having a more strategic purpose; team work and working with others”. Adopting a British interpretation, Dimmock and Walker (2000, p. 304) refer to “‘leadership’ as a higher set of abilities such as goal setting, visioning and motivating, while ‘management’ is viewed as lower order maintenance of performance through supervision, co-ordination and control”.

Bush and Middlewood (2013, p. 5) opine Cuban (1988) provides one of the clearest distinctions between leadership and management. In the definition described below, Cuban (1988) argues that leadership is focussed on change while management is seen as a maintenance activity.

> *By leadership, I mean influencing others’ actions in achieving desirable ends. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others. Frequently they initiate change to reach existing and new goals… Leadership… takes… much ingenuity, energy and skill. Managing is maintaining efficiently and effectively current organisational arrangements. While managing well often exhibits leadership skills, the overall function is toward maintenance rather than change. I prize both managing and leading and attach no special value to either since different settings and times call for varied responses. (p. xx)*

In contemporary school leadership literature, the dominant discourse is focused on leadership and not management (Earley & Weindling, 2004). However, Leithwood and Duke (1999, p. 53) argue, “in school contexts at least, justifying a conceptual distinction between management and leadership is difficult”. Dimmock and Walker (2000) agree that distinctions between leadership and management can be difficult to make since they are not entirely exclusive in terms of study and practice. Field (2002, p. 460) concludes that “it is spurious to separate the two concepts of leadership and management” as school leaders (including MLs) both lead and manage, the aspects of their role can be considered as part of the “leadership-management continuum” (Gurr, 1996, p. 19). Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999, p. 14) urge school leaders to adopt a “bifocal” perspective in carrying out their role while Bush and Middlewood (2013) believe that both leadership and management need to be given equal prominence if schools are to be successful.

> *While a clear vision may be essential to establish the nature and direction of change, it is equally important to ensure that innovations are implemented efficiently and that the school's residual functions are carried out effectively while certain elements are undergoing change. (Bush & Middlewood, 2013, p. 5)*

As Bolman and Deal (2013) put it:

> *Leading and managing are different, but they're equally important. … If an organization is overmanaged but underled, it eventually loses any sense of spirit or purpose. A poorly managed organization with a strong, charismatic leader may soar briefly - only to crash shortly thereafter. … The challenges of today's organizations require the objective perspective of managers as well as the brilliant flashes of creativity that wise leadership provides. We need more people in managerial roles who can find simplicity and order amid organizational confusion and chaos. We need versatile and flexible leaders who are artists as well as analysts, who can reframe experience to discover new issues and possibilities. We need managers who love their work, their organizations, and the people whose lives they affect. We need leaders and managers who appreciate management as a moral and ethical undertaking. We need leaders who combine hard-headed realism with passionate commitment to larger values and purposes. (p. viii)*

3.3 SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

It is widely accepted in the literature that school leadership has an important influence on student learning and outcomes (for example, Bush, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2004; Wahlstrom et al., 2010). School leadership is defined as "the work of mobilising and influencing others to articulate and achieve the school's shared intentions and goals" (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005, p. 14). Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010) explain that the importance ascribed to school leadership is based on the international trend towards the devolution of school management. As the knowledge and skills which children require in the 21st century are becoming more complex and the range of issues which schools are expected to help address is growing, these made decisions at school level progressively more important to the success of the education system.

In one of the earliest reviews of the empirical literature on school leadership effects on school effectiveness and student achievement, Hallinger and Heck (1998, p. 186) found that "principals exercise a measurable, though indirect effect on school effectiveness and student achievement". They (Hallinger & Heck, 1998, p. 186) described this indirect effect "as relatively small, it is statistically significant and we assert, meaningful". The review also revealed the

ways school leadership influenced student learning outcomes. These included school goals, school structure and social networks, people, and organisational culture. In particular, Hallinger and Heck (1998, p. 187) found the primary avenue of influence was “in shaping the school's direction through vision, mission and goals”.

In a review of research about how leadership influences student learning, Leithwood et al. (2004, p. 8) claimed that school leadership has “a significant – and frequently underestimated – role in improving student learning”. They found that:

- Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. The total (direct and indirect) effects of leadership on student learning account for about a quarter of total school effects.
- Leadership is usually largest where and when it is needed most. There is a small but significant effect of leadership actions on student learning across the spectrum of schools, yet the demonstrated effects of leadership are considerable greater in schools that are in more difficult circumstances.

Barber and Morshed (2007) assert that school leaders must have an intense focus on improving the quality of instruction in the classrooms to be able to influence student learning. This means school leaders will need to ensure that:

- Teachers are aware of their specific weaknesses in their own practices (emphasising the need for effective and frequent monitoring, evaluation and feedback);
- Individual teachers gain understanding of specific effective teaching practices (through academic codified research evidence plus tacit knowledge of what work in situ);
- Individual teachers are motivated to translate and effectively implement these practices in their classrooms.

From a meta-analysis of published research about the links between school leadership and student outcomes, Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) are able to identify five school leadership practices that have a significant impact on student outcomes:

1. Establishing goals and expectations (p.659). This involves leadership practices such as setting, communication and monitoring of learning goals, standards and expectations and the involvement of staff and others in the process so that there is clarity and consensus about goals.
2. Resourcing strategically (p. 661). This involves leadership practices like aligning resource selection and allocation to priority teaching goals; it also includes e.g. the provision of appropriate expertise through staff recruitment.

3. Planning, co-ordinating and evaluating teaching and curriculum (pp. 661-663). This is shown as direct involvement in the support and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom visits and provision of formative and summative feedback to teachers. It includes direct oversight of curriculum through school-wide coordination across classes and year levels and alignment to school goals.
4. Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development (pp. 663-664). This dimension describes leadership that both promotes and directly participates with teachers in formal and informal professional learning.
5. Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment (p. 664). This includes protecting time for teaching and learning by reducing external pressures and interruptions and establishing an orderly and supportive environment both inside and outside classrooms.

According to Robinson et al. (2008, p. 664), "The closer educational leaders get to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to have a positive impact on student outcomes". Dimmock (2012) came to a similar conclusion after a synthesis of published research about the links between school leadership and student learning outcomes. He (Dimmock, 2012, p. 84) found that:

- School leaders who focus their time, energy and expertise on improving teaching and learning are likely to exert the greatest influence on student learning and school improvement.
- School leadership influences student outcomes mostly through indirect means and these effects are at three levels – teacher, classroom and school.
- School context and the leader's individual dispositions and beliefs also play important roles in influencing student outcomes.
- Research is beginning to unravel those practices and behaviours that school leaders adopt that have the greatest impact on teaching and learning and school improvement..

Dimmock (2012, p. 85) went on to identify ten leadership practices most frequently used by school leaders to influence student learning.

1. Promoting and actively participating in teacher training and development.
2. Encouraging the use of data and research evidence – especially analysing student progress and achievement data – to inform teaching and teacher development.
3. Planning and co-ordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum.
4. Expanding the curriculum to secure wider student engagement and improving assessment procedures.
5. Establishing goals and expectations.

6. Sharing leadership.
7. Encouraging collaborative inquiry among leaders and teachers.
8. Providing and strategizing the allocation of resources, including deployment of personnel.
9. Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment.
10. Developing a learning-centred school culture.

Dimmock (2012, p. 85) explains that “it is their combined effect that leads to improvement in student outcomes” as “these practices are interconnected and complement each other” and “no one practice seems to work on its own”. As the research of Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu, and Brown (2010, p. 10) has shown: “Our research shows that successful leaders contribute to improved pupil learning and achievement through a combination of strategies”.

In the ‘Investigating the links to improved student learning’ final report to The Wallace Foundation, Wahlstrom et al. (2010, p. 6) assert that they are more confident of the claim made in 2004 that “leadership is second in importance only to classroom instruction”. Their analyses have demonstrated direct effects of school leadership on a range of important dimensions of school and classroom processes and these changes in school conditions in turn lead to improvements in students’ academic outcomes at the school level. Sammons, Gu, Day, and Ko (2011, p. 97) confirm that “the effects of leadership on improvements in pupils’ academic outcomes … seem to operate indirectly” and “school leadership influence changes in students’ academic outcomes through their effects on teachers, and teaching quality and on promoting a favourable school climate and culture that emphasises high expectations and academic outcomes”. In summary, recent international studies (for example, Day et al., 2010; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood, et al. 2004; Robinson et al., 2008; Sammons et al., 2011; Wahlstrom et al., 2010) have provided compelling empirical evidence to substantiate the widely accepted claim that “school leadership is second to classroom teaching” in its impact on student learning outcomes.

3.4 MODELS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The broad literature on leadership includes many models and approaches and the school leadership literature has its own models and approaches purpose-built for the school context. One of the most comprehensive reviews of school leadership models was conducted by Leithwood and Duke (1999). After reviewing articles on school leadership which appeared in four prominent contemporary journals on educational leadership over a ten year period (1985-1995), Leithwood and Duke (1999, p. 46) identified 20 different leadership models and concepts and grouped them into six distinct categories. These six categories (in order of the

number of articles appearing) are instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial and contingent forms of school leadership. Leithwood and Duke (1999, p. 55) believed that these six categories of school leadership were differentiated by the basic assumptions that underpin them, even though they could be quite similar in some aspects. Of these six categories of school leadership, all except for instructional leadership "have well developed counterparts in the non-school literature" (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 55). Very few new models or concepts have appeared in the school leadership literature since Leithwood and Duke's (1999) review over two decades ago (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). But in the past decade or so, a distributive model of leadership has gained prominence in the school leadership literature. For this review, and as a comparison point for the findings, the six categories identified by Leithwood and Duke (1999) with the addition of distributed leadership, serve as a useful summary of the key leadership ideas in education at this time.

3.4.1 Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership was the dominant model of leadership in education in the 1980s and is "the most frequently studied model of school leadership over the past twenty-five years" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 7). The term 'instructional leadership' derives from North America and is seldom used in Australia, where the preferred term is "educational leadership" (Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2007, 2010). Leithwood and Duke (1999, p. 47) describe instructional leadership as "typically focuses on the behaviours of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students". Instructional leaders deal mostly with teachers and provide both teachers and students with necessary support and conditions for the quality of instructional program and learning environment of the school (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). The quality of curriculum and instruction is one of the important factors contributing to student achievement.

There have been a number of models of instructional leadership proposed by researchers (Hallinger, 2005) and these models typically assume that school leaders, usually principals, are "strong, directive leaders" (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) and have both the expert knowledge and the formal authority to exert influence on teachers (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). The most frequently used conceptualisation of instructional leadership is the one put forward by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). Leithwood and Duke (1999, p. 48) describe the Hallinger and Murphy (1985) instructional leadership model as "the most fully tested" as "it is the model that has been used most frequently in empirical investigations" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 4).

Hallinger and Murphy (1985) proposed an instructional leadership model with three dimensions: *Defining the school mission*, *Managing the instructional programme* and

*Promoting a positive school learning climat*e. These dimensions are further delineated into ten leadership functions.

- Dimension 1 - Defining the school's mission, comprising of the two functions of framing the school's goals and communicating the school's goals.
- Dimension 2 - Managing the instructional programme, comprising of the three functions of supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating curriculum and monitoring student progress.
- Dimension 3 - Promoting a positive school learning culture, comprising the five functions of protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers and developing high expectations and standards, and providing incentives for learning.

Instructional leadership can be "direct" or "indirect" (Bendikson, Robinson, & Hattie, 2012; Gurr et al., 2007, 2010). Direct instructional leadership is focussed on the quality of teacher practice and this includes: setting goals, professional development, ensuring quality teaching and developing collective responsibility. Indirect instructional leadership, on the other hand, is focused on creating the conditions for good teaching and teacher learning and this includes: ensuring an orderly environment; resourcing strategically, and solving complex problems. Gurr et al. (2010, p. 304) found principals in their Australian case studies to "largely exert a strong but indirect influence on instruction" and also "highlight the possibility of direct instructional leadership". A study of 102 secondary schools in New Zealand led Bendikson et al. (2012, p. 7) to conclude "the nature of effective principal instructional leadership is dependent on the developmental stage of the school" (p. 7). They found that while both direct and indirect instructional leadership are essential for school performance and improvement, "principals in a secondary school environment were most likely to use indirect instructional leadership behaviours as they are the facilitators of the direct instructional leadership of others (for example, heads of department" (p. 5).

The knowledge base about instructional leadership has undergone significant developments over the past decades and the contemporary view of instructional leadership is "as an influence process through which leaders identify direction for the school, motivate staff, and coordinate school and classroom-based strategies aimed at improvements in teaching and learning" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013, p. 7). Hallinger and Murphy (2013, pp. 7-8) describe the "state of the art" instructional leadership to i. affect conditions that create positive learning environments for students; ii. create an academic press and mediates expectations embedded in curriculum standards, structures, and processes; iii. employ improvement strategies that

are matched to the changing state of school over time, and iv. support ongoing professional development of staff, which, in turn, facilitates efforts of schools to undertake, implement, and sustain change.

Recently, Hallinger (2011) has updated his view of instructional leadership and argues that the term “leadership for learning” or “learning-centred leadership” (Dimmock, 2012) is to be preferred nowadays to “instructional leadership”. The term “leadership for learning” suggests “a broader conceptualisation that incorporates both a wider range of leadership sources as well as additional foci for action” and “subsume features of instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and shared leadership” (Hallinger, 2011, p. 126). The model used to synthesise conceptualisations of leadership for learning, Hallinger (2011, pp. 126-127) asserts, “provides a wide-angle lens for viewing the contribution that leadership makes to school improvement and student learning”.

Hallinger (2005, p. 229) found the effect size of instructional leadership on student outcomes “though statistically significant is also quite small”. While the overall effect size of instructional leadership on student outcomes may be small, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) found the impact to be three to four times the impact of transformational leadership and more than other leadership models. Robinson et al. (2008, p. 665) explain that:

> *The reason is that transformational leadership is more focused on the relationship between leaders and followers than on the educational work of school leadership, and the quality of these relationships is not predictive of the quality of student outcomes. Educational leadership involves not only building collegial teams, a loyal and cohesive staff, and sharing an inspirational vision. It also involves focusing such relationships on some very specific pedagogical work, and the leadership practices involved are better captured by measures of instructional leadership than of transformational leadership. (p. 665)*

3.4.2 Transformational leadership

The focus of transformational leadership is on “the commitments and capacities of organizational members” (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 48). The development of the concept of transformational leadership is often attributed to Burns’s (1978) seminal work that drew distinction between transactional and transformative leadership. In the quote below, Sergiovanni (1990) offers a definition of the concept of transactional leadership:

> *In transactional leadership, leaders and followers exchange needs and services in order to accomplish independent objectives. Leaders and followers assume they do not share a common stake in the enterprise and thus must arrive at some kind of*

agreement. The wants and needs of followers are traded against the wants and needs of the leader are traded a bargain is struck. Positive reinforcement is exchanged for good work, merit pay for increased performance, promotion for increased persistence, a feeling of belonging for cooperation and so on. (p. 23)

3.4.2.1 What is transformative leadership?

Transformative leadership developed into transformational leadership which is based on "motivating followers to work toward transcendental goals instead of immediate self-interest, and also towards achievement and self-actualisation rather than simply safety and security" (Sun & Leithwood, 2012, p. 419). The most prominent contributions to transformational leadership in school contexts have been made by Leithwood and his colleagues (for example, Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood, Aitken, & Jantzi, 2001; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). Building on the work of Bass (1985), Leithwood (1994) conceptualised an initial model of transformational leadership for school contexts with eight dimensions:

1. Building school vision;
2. Establishing school goals;
3. Providing intellectual stimulation;
4. Offering individualised support;
5. Modelling best practices and important organisational values;
6. Demonstrating high performance expectations;
7. Creating a productive school culture; and
8. Developing structures to foster participation in school decisions.

Drawing on data from a four-year study of National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in England, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) developed a more contemporary model of transformational leadership, with nine specific dimensions in three broad categories of leadership practices.

1. Setting directions, comprising three dimensions of building school vision, developing specific goals and priorities and holding high performance expectations.
2. Developing people, comprising three dimensions of providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualised support and modelling desirable professional practices and values.
3. Redesigning the organisation, comprising the three dimensions of developing a collaborative school structure, creating a structure to foster participation in school decisions and creating productive community relationships.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2006, p. 205) claimed that this transformational leadership model addressed three key conceptual weaknesses of earlier models:

- The model has specificity of leadership practices.
- The leadership behaviours described in the model has been demonstrated to be important by research and included behaviours not found in Bass's (1996) model.
- The model focuses on individual, group and organisation-wide processes.

Later, Leithwood and Sun (Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Sun & Leithwood, 2012) expanded the transformational leadership model to include one additional dimension (*Improving the instructional program*) and two sets of related practices (*Contingent reward* and *Management by exception*). The latest model of transformational leadership comprised of four dimensions of eleven leadership practices (Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

1. Setting directions, comprising two leadership practices of developing a shared vision and building goal consensus, and holding high performance expectations.
2. Developing people, comprising three leadership practices of providing individualised support, providing intellectual stimulation and modelling valued behaviours, beliefs and values.
3. Redesigning the organisation, comprising the three leadership practices of strengthening school culture, building structures to enable collaboration and engaging parents and the wider community.
4. Improving the instructional program, comprising one leadership practice of focusing on instructional development. This dimension has considerable overlap with instructional leadership.
5. Related practices, comprising two leadership practices of contingent reward and management by exception (active, passive, total). These two practices in this dimension reflects traditional approaches to leadership. Contingent reward reflects a key feature of what Bass (1985) called 'transactional leadership' and the management by exception is seen as non-leadership.

The models of transformational leadership developed by Leithwood and his colleagues over decades have attempted to absorb and integrate elements of other leadership models such as instructional, managerial, moral and participative leadership (Sun & Leithwood, 2012). The inclusion of these elements, particularly instructional leadership dimensions, has made transformational leadership model a more comprehensive leadership model in educational contexts (Sun & Leithwood, 2012). Other researchers have since drawn on and extended the core leadership practices of the transformational leadership model. For example, Drysdale and Gurr (2017a) combined these well-known transformational leadership practices of Leithwood and colleagues with their own research on successful school leadership and

middle-level leadership to develop a “Seven Domains of Educational Leadership”. The seven-part framework comprised of the following:

1. Understanding the context
2. Setting directions
3. Developing the organisation
4. Developing people
5. Improving teaching and learning
6. Influencing
7. Leading self

To assess the effects of transformational leadership on academic achievements, Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) examined transformational school leadership research from 1996-2005 and found a majority of the studies reviewed (six out of nine) reported significant relationships between transformational leadership and a number of measures of achievement. Transformational leadership effects on academic achievement were found to be “mixed but trending towards positive” with evidence “promising though limited in amount” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005, pp. 192-193). “The evidence about transformational leadership effects on students’ engagement in school, while still modest in amount, is uniformly positive” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005, p. 193). These led Leithwood and Jantzi (2005, p. 126) to “lean toward the conclusion that transformational school leadership has significant effects on student achievement”. This was confirmed by results of two meta-analyses of published (Sun & Leithwood, 2012) and unpublished (Sun & Leithwood, 2012) literature examining the effects of transformational leadership on student achievement. The results from both meta-analyses confirm that transformational leadership has a “small but significant, positive direct effects on student achievement” (Leithwood & Sun, 2012, p. 407; Sun & Leithwood, 2012, p. 435).

3.4.3 Moral leadership

Moral leadership, according to Leithwood and Duke (1999, p. 50), is focussed on “*the values and ethics of the leaders*”. Duignan and Macpherson (1993, p. 8) believe school leadership should be “value-driven” as “values are key to all leadership and administrative practices” (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 11). In fact, values guide decision making and approaches to problem solving (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). As a category, moral leadership includes normative, political/democratic and symbolic concepts of leadership (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 51).

“Educative leadership”, a leadership approach developed by Duignan and Macpherson (1993, p. 10), is focussed on morality and being “concerned with right and wrong, justice and injustice,

truth, aesthetics, and the negotiation of practical ideas in education". They proposed that educative leadership has three realms; the realm of ideas, the realm of culture and the realm of people. The realm of people includes managerial and evaluative activities that are concerned with the notions of efficiency, effectiveness, and achievability. The realm of culture consists of cultural and political activities incorporating knowledge of the effects of shared meanings on identity, practice and the dominant theory of social reality. The realm of ideas involves reflective practice and engaging in philosophical and strategic activities that appraise 'what is right' and 'what is significant' questions in the education of children. Duignan and Macpherson (1993) argue that this third component is required of school leaders, in addition to management and leadership. School leaders, Hodgkinson (1991, p. 43) argues, "is caught in a field of values in which he is forced to act".

The need for moral leadership in schools is justified by a rapidly changing society, which has a great impact on morality. Davies (2002, p. 201) notes the increasing secularisation of society and the increase in materialism. Values have changed and some values, which previously existed, may disappear or not be compatible in the current context. Material-oriented forces may also cause school leaders to forget ethical aspects of leadership. There has been a lack of "credibility, believability, trustworthiness, ethics and morality in the behaviour of leaders, managers and their followers" (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997, p. 196). In the context of a rapidly changing society, moral leadership has become even more important (Davies, 2002).

Moral leadership is based heavily on the professional and personal values and integrity of the leaders, which are reflected in their leadership practices (Bush & Glover, 2014). Moral school leaders lead their schools towards a vision or goal confident that they are grounded on sound educational and moral values. After studying twelve 'effective' schools in England and Wales, Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001b, p. 53) found effective leaders are "although … surrounded by a matrix of expectations and demands they are clear about their core values and these permeate their thinking and actions" and they concluded that "good leaders are informed by and communicate clear sets of personal and educational values which represent their moral purposes for the school". In another major study in England entitled 'The impact of school leadership on pupil outcomes' almost a decade later, Day et al. (2009, pp. 194-195) found that "the moral purpose" in school leadership is pivotal to improving student outcomes and advocated for a "more morally centred approach to leadership". The kind of moral leadership emerging from Day et al. (2009, p. 194) research suggests that moral leaders:

- are fundamentally committed to the improvement of teaching and learning. They engage deeply with the organisation of teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment in order to

ensure that learning is increasingly personalised for students and that expectations for achievement are high.

- develop schools as personal and professional learning communities, with relationships built across and beyond each school to provide a range of learning experiences and professional development opportunities.
- strive for equity and inclusion through acting on context and culture. This is not just about eradicating poverty but also about giving pupils and communities a sense of worth and empowerment.
- realise in a deep way that the classroom, school, system levels all impact on each other and upon the emotional identities and well-being of pupils and teachers. They understand that in order to change the larger system you have to engage with it in a meaningful way.
- engage in capacity building through the timely diagnosis and management of individual, organisational needs and external policy initiatives and the implementation and management of contextually sensitive layered leadership strategies over time which are selected, prioritized, combined, sequenced, continued or augmented.
- develop individual, relational and organizational capacity and trust, which lead to the progressive distribution of leadership and growth of confidence and achievement.

3.4.4 Participative leadership

The central focus of participative leadership is on "*the decision-making processes of the group* and includes "group," "shared," and "teacher" leadership (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 51). Leithwood and Duke (1999, p. 51) offer three reasons in support of participative leadership. Firstly, participative leadership will enhance organisational effectiveness. Secondly, participative leadership in schools is justified by democratic ideals. Thirdly, in the context of site-based management, legitimate stakeholders within the school can potentially exercise leadership.

The move towards forms of participative leadership is based on a growing realisation that there are too many issues for one school leader (principal) to handle in order to achieve quality outcomes. According to Leithwood and Duke (1999), participative leadership will be able to increase the capacity of schools to respond productively to internal and external demands for change and to achieve quality outcomes. Participative leadership is also "likely to be effective in increasing the commitment of participants and the development of teamwork" (Bush & Middlewood, 2013, p. 27). It is important to note, however, that participative decision-making processes may be difficult to adopt in schools considering the current policy environment:

> *"… there is also a growing tension between collegial and top-down management strategies at the whole-school level … Pollard et al. (1994) in their findings from the PACE project report between 1990 and 1992 'schools shifted from an approach to managing change that placed strong emphasis on collegial and participatory approaches' (p. 75). The evidence reported here suggests that, in all but the smallest primary schools, the impact of more recent government initiatives … is taking schools further down that path [towards more managerial and directive approaches]". (Webb & Vulliamy, 1996, p. 313)*

It is the ability and responsibility of school leaders to obtain advantages from these potential conflicts (Henkin, Cistone, & Dee, 2000). Thus, ideally, participative leaders are able to involve more people (school stakeholders) in the processes of decision-making, and to manage conflicts occurring in such processes. The research evidence on the impact of participative leadership is "not sufficiently strong and consistent to draw any firm conclusions" and probably reflects "each type of participative decision procedure is effective in some situations but not in others" (Yukl, 2013, p. 111).

3.4.5 Managerial leadership

The notion of 'managerial leadership' may appear to be a contradiction, particularly in the light of the distinctions outlined earlier in this chapter. Managerial leadership focuses on "the functions, tasks, or behaviors of the leader" and involves ten sets of managerial tasks or functions (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, pp. 53-54).

1. Providing adequate financial and material resources.
2. Distributing financial resources so they are most useful.
3. Anticipating predictable problems and developing effective and efficient means for responding to them.
4. Managing the school facilities.
5. Managing the student body.
6. Maintaining effective communication patterns with staff, students, community members, and district office staff.
7. Accommodating policies and initiatives undertaken by the district office in ways that assist with school improvement goals.
8. Buffering staff so as to reduce disruptions to the instruction program.
9. Mediating conflict and differences in expectations.
10. Attending to the political demands of school functioning.

Most approaches to managerial leadership, according to Leithwood and Duke (1999, p. 53), assume following:

- The work of others in the organisation will be facilitated when managerial tasks or functions are done well.
- Members in the organisation behave rationally.
- Formal authority and influence commensurate with the status and positions in the organisational hierarchy.

It is argued that managerial leadership is critical for "policy implementation, maintaining organizational stability, and ensuring that routine organizational tasks are 'done right'" (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 53) and portrays "an orientation of school leadership similar to the orientation found in the classical leadership literature" (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 54). It is significant to note that managerial leadership does not include the concept of vision, a defining feature of most leadership models. Bush and Middlewood (2013, p. 17) note that "managerial leadership is focussed on managing existing activities successfully rather than visioning a better future for the school".

The dominant discourse in recent times is weighted towards leadership and managerial leadership behaviours have been dismissed as relatively unimportant (Bendikson et al., 2012; Bush & Glover, 2014). Despite this trend, schools like other organisations do need leaders who possess managerial skills, besides other leadership dimensions. Sergiovanni (1984b, p. 6) describes these managerial functions as the technical force of leadership and explains that these managerial functions provide order and reliability in the schools where the people can feel secure and focus wholeheartedly on major purposes and central work activities. Thus, managerial leadership is "an essential component of successful schools" and "effective management is essential" (Bush & Glover, 2014, p. 557) for school success and as a complement to whole school leadership dimensions.

3.4.6 Contingent leadership

Contingent leadership is focused on "how leaders respond to the unique organisational circumstances or problems that they face" and assumes "there are wide variations in the contexts for leadership and that to be effective these contexts require different leadership response" and "… that individuals providing leadership, typically those in formal positions of authority, are capable of mastering a large repertoire of leadership practices" (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 54). Contingent leadership recognises the diverse nature of school contexts

and the advantages of adapting leadership styles to the particular situation (Bush, 2008b; Bush & Glover, 2014).

Contingent leadership is concerned with school leaders whose leadership styles match the contexts where they exercise the leadership. There is no 'one size fits all' style of leadership that is effective in all school contexts. Rather than working with a single set of "commandments" about "effective leadership", school leaders have to adapt their styles to the context of their schools (Hallinger, 2011, p. 135). The school context is seen as a source of constraints, resources, and opportunities that school leaders must understand and address in order to lead. Contextual variables of interest to school leaders include the student background, community type, organisational structure, school culture, teacher experience and competence, fiscal resources, school size, and bureaucratic and labour organisation (Hallinger & Heck, 1996). Effective school leaders respond to the changing needs of their context and should have a set of leadership strategies that are finely tuned to and grounded in the context of their schools. As Yukl (2013, p. 180) puts it, "Effective leaders are continuously reading the situation and determining how to adapt their behaviour to it. They seek to understand the task requirements, situational constraints, and interpersonal processes that determine which course of action is most likely to succeed".

3.4.7 Distributed leadership

Distributed leadership "is without question one of the most prominent ideas to emerge in the educational leadership field in recent years" and "has become the normatively preferred leadership model in the twenty-first century" (Bush & Glover, 2014, pp. 559-560). Distributed leaadership grew out of a dissatisfaction with what the critics of transformational leadership believed was an over-reliance on the heroic leader, usually the principal. Dissatisfaction with the emphasis on one person leading led to a different way of explaining the reality of leadership in schools. At the heart of this is, there needs to be the development of leadership capacity in more than just the one leader for schools to improve.

While many researchers use the term 'distributed leadership' reverentially, there is substantial overlap with well-developed and longstanding conceptions of leadership such as 'participative' leadership (Harris, 2013). Some researchers have described distributed leadership as "collaborative, collective, democratic, participative, shared and distributed instructional leadership" (Klar, Huggins, Hammonds & Buskey, 2016, p. 114) and in its essence, "leadership that is exercised by the principal along with other key staff" (Hallinger & Heck, 2009a, p. 102).

There is no agreed definition of distributed leadership (Turner, 2011) and “there have been competing and sometimes conflicing interpretations of the term” (Harris, 2013, p. 33). There are, however, certain core elements of distributed leadership that differentiate it from other leadership models (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016, p. 141). The first of these core elements is the emphasis on leadership as practice rather than as a role or responsibility. The second of these core elements is the emphasis on leadership as interactions rather actions. This means leadership is not just confined to those holding formal leadership roles but the influence and agency are widely shared (Harris, 2014).

Copland (2003, pp. 377-379) provides a useful summary of three common understandings within the concept of distributed leadership:

1. Distributed leadership is a collective activity, focused on collective goals, which comprises a quality or energy that is greater than the sum of individual actions (i.e. it creates a dynamism that extends beyond simply identifying task responsibility);
2. Distributed leadership involves the spanning of task, responsibility, and power boundaries between traditionally defined organisational roles (i.e. boundary spanning activities should be cultivated by distributed leadership systems, rather than simple definitions of roles and responsibilities of principals and teachers); and
3. Distributed leadership rests on a base of expert rather than hierarchical authority (i.e. power and authority should be re-distributed towards those who hold expertise, such as teachers, rather than privileging those who hold formal titles).

According to Day et al. (2009, p. 190), how leadership is effectively distributed is dependent upon four factors:

1. Values and attitudes. It is believed that (most) people cared for their students and would work hard for their benefit if allowed to pursue objectives to which they were committed.
2. Disposition to trust. A history of received and observed benefits derived from previous trusting relationships.
3. Repeated acts of trust. These enable the increasing distribution of leadership roles, responsibilities and accountabilities and broadening of stakeholder participation.
4. Building and reinforcing relational and organisation trust. Through interactions, structures and strategies which demonstrate consistency with values and vision and result in observable and felt successes.

The interest in, and support for, distributed leadership is based on an assumption that there is a beneficial impact and effect on student learning and achievement (Bush & Middlewood, 2013). Leithwood et al. (2008) have shown that school leadership has a greater impact on

schools and students when it is widely distributed. They (Leithwood et al., 2008) found that "Total leadership accounted for a quite significant 27% of the variation in student achievement across schools. This is a much higher proportion of explained variation (two to three times higher) than is typically reported in studies of individual headteacher effects" (p. 34). Two of the ten strong claims about school leadership put forward by Day et al. (2010) relate to the importance of distributed leadership. Other studies (for example, Camburn & Han, 2009; Day et al., 2009; Hallinger & Heck, 2009b, 2010; Harris, 2008, 2009; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008) have also pointed towards a positive relationship between distributed leadership and certain student learning outcomes plus a positive impact on teachers' level of self-efficacy and motivation. For example, Leithwood and Mascall (2008, p. 546) found that certain forms of distributed leadership "have a modest but a signficant indirect effect on student achievement" while research by Day et al. (2009, p. 17) showed school leadership when distributed substantially contributed to a school's success in improving pupil outcomes. Bush and Glover (2014) while acknowledging the importance of these studies in providing the empirical evidence about the relationship between distributed leadership and student learning outcomes, cautioned against establishing a causal relationship with confidence, arguing that more research is required.

3.5 SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The seven models of school leadership described above "provide distinctive but unidimensional perspectives of school leadership" (Bush & Middlewood, 2013, p. 26) and they do not indicate which leadership style is demonstrably successful in making a difference to student learning outcomes. This section reviews the literature on successful school leadership. Successful school leadership refers to "leadership orientations and practices that have been demonstrated to have a positive impact on student learning, whether directly or indirectly through school conditions or the actions of others" (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005, pp. 14-15).

3.5.1 Ten strong claims of successful school leadership

The ten strong claims of successful school leadership were based on empirical data from a three-year national project on the impact of leadership on student learning outcomes in England. This research project investigated a national sample of schools which had improved student learning outcomes over at least three consecutive years under the leadership of the same principal. Day et al. (2010) found that leaders of successful schools define success not only in terms of test and examination results, but also in terms of personal and social outcomes, pupil and staff motivation, engagement and wellbeing, the quality of teaching and learning and the school's contribution to the community. This study confirms, qualifies, builds

on and expands the number of original strong claims about successful school leadership from seven to ten [see Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008)]. The ten strong claims are:

- Claim 1: Head teachers are the main source of leadership in their schools.
- Claim 2: There are eight key dimensions of successful leadership.
- Claim 3: Head teachers' values are key components in their success.
- Claim 4: Successful heads use the same basic leadership practices, but there is no single model for achieving success.
- Claim 5: Differences in context affect the nature, direction and pace of leadership actions.
- Claim 6: Heads contribute to student learning and achievement through a combination and accumulation of strategies and actions.
- Claim 7: There are three broad phases of leadership success.
- Claim 8: Heads grow and secure success by layering leadership strategies and actions.
- Claim 9: Successful heads distribute leadership progressively.
- Claim 10: The successful distribution of leadership depends on the establishment of trust.

Day et al. (2010, p. 19) concluded that "there is no single, best-fit leadership approach" as their research has demonstrated conclusively that "successful leadership is context sensitive". Successful school leaders improve pupil outcomes through their values, virtues, dispositions, attributes and competency, as well as what they do in terms of the strategies they select and the ways in which they adapt their leadership practices to their particular context.

3.5.2 International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP)

The ISSPP has been described as "most likely the largest international educational leadership project ever undertaken" (Gurr & Drysdale, 2016, p. 141). The research has produced over 100 multiple perspective case studies of the leadership of successful schools and numerous publications including four project books, seven special journal issues and more than 100 chapters or journal articles (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017b). Caldwell (2014, p. xvii) describe the ISSPP as "the most comprehensive and coherent international study of principalship ever taken".

The ISSPP found that successful school leaders work with different contexts and cultures and they fine tune their responses to suit the context and culture in which they lead to ensure school success. There is a range of core leadership practices that are common across a variety of contexts and cultures (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017b; Gurr, 2017; Gurr & Day, 2014). In summary, ISSPP found that successful school leaders:

- have high expectations of all.

- employ multiple conceptions of leadership (they are not wedded to the use of narrow concepts like instructional or transformational leadership) and utilise a core set of practices focused on setting direction, developing people, leading change and improving.
- teaching and learning.
- model leadership that is both heroic and inclusive.
- foster collaboration and collective endeavour.
- acknowledge and embrace their symbolic role.
- display integrity, trust and transparency.
- are people centred.
- focus their efforts on the development of others.
- are able to lead in challenging contexts and view challenges as obstacles to overcome.
- rather than problems that are insurmountable.
- develop a range of appropriate personal qualities, with appropriate core values and beliefs.
- articulated and lived (such as a belief that all can learn).

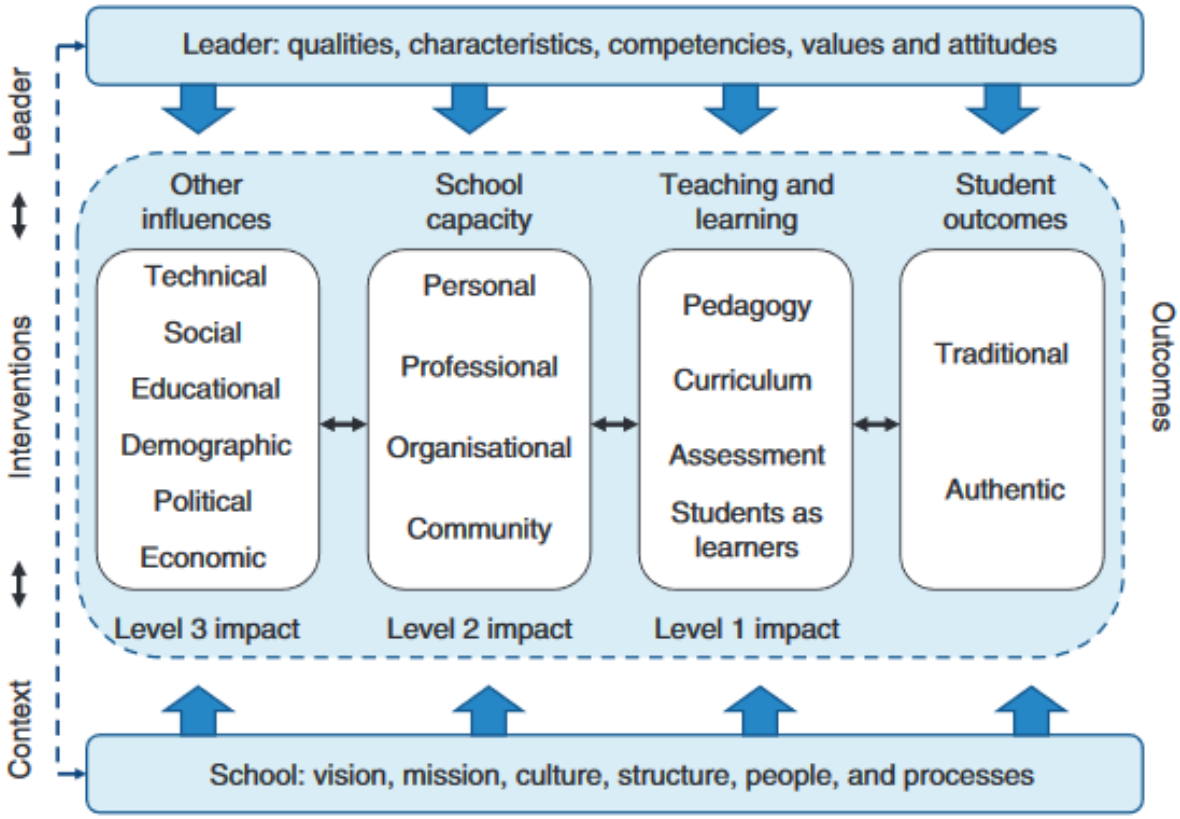

Figure 3.1 Successful school leadership model (Drysdale & Gurr, 2011)

As part of their research in the ISSPP, Gurr and Drysdale (for example, Drysdale & Gurr, 2011; Gurr et al., 2003; Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2006) have been developing a series of models

of successful school leadership, culminating in the model shown in Figure 3.1. (Drysdale & Gurr, 2011). In the model, the school leader (principal) interacts within the particular school context to deliver a series of interventions aimed at improving student learning outcomes. The areas that can influence student learning outcomes are teaching and learning (Level 1), school capacity building (Level 2) and other influences (Level 3). Level 1 has the most impact on student outcomes followed by Level 2 and Level 3. The school leader can make interventions at any level in the model, including student outcomes.

While the model is developed primarily for principal leadership, Gurr and Drysdale (Gurr, 2015, 2017; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013) contend the model is applicable to all school leaders (SLs, MLs and teacher leaders). They (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013, p. 172) found that MLs "tend to operate between Levels 1 and 2, with a close relationship to directly influencing teacher practice to improve student learning". Gurr and Drysdale's (2013) decade long middle leadership research in Australia spanning over a decade has provided empirical evidence to support the applicability of the model. A study of MLs in Singapore primary schools conducted by Koh, Gurr, Drysdale, and Ang (2011) found elements contained in an earlier iteration of the Australian model of educational leadership (Gurr et al., 2006), particularly at level 1 impact (teaching and learning) and level 2 impact (school capacity) levels.

3.6 SCHOOL MIDDLE LEADERS AND THEIR LEADERSHIP

School leadership literature has traditionally been focussed on the leadership of the principal but there is recognition now that there can be many leaders in a school (Dinham, 2007a). In a rapidly changing educational landscape, Harris (2000, p. 82) argues that "issues of leadership and management can no longer be seen as the exclusive preserve of senior school leaders". And given the pressures on SLs, much of the day to day leadership and management activities of the school have been delegated to other levels of leadership within the school. For example, Busher (2007) opines that MLs may well be the de facto instructional leaders in schools as SLs have little time to spend in classrooms working with teachers.

> *Especially in larger schools, it is they who lead the implementation of subject-related and pastoral policies as well as transformation of the policies of senior management and those required by central government into practices that can be implemented successfully in the 'classroom' … Middle leaders co-ordinate the work of staff and students in various pastoral and academic departments (organisational sub-units) in secondary schools in England and Wales. (p. 134)*

There is also increasing recognition that MLs are critical to school improvement (Bush, 2005) and they are seen as "uniquely placed to have a major impact on a school and the quality of

its teaching and learning" (Earley & Weindling, 2004, p. 111). It appears ironical that despite its perceived importance, "middle level leadership has not captured the research interest it deserves" (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013, p. 57). MLs are under-researched when compared to SLs (Cranston, 2006; Dinham, 2007b) and "the literature on middle leaders and middle leadership in primary and secondary schools is still relatively sparse, if growing …" (Busher et al., 2007, p. 405). There is an emerging body of empirical research in recent years to contribute to a better understanding of the key role MLs play in effective and improving schools. The literature relating to MLs and their leadership is reviewed in this section.

Before proceeding further, three important points needed to be made.

1. This section examines literature relating to MLs in primary, secondary and high schools.
2. This section examines literature relating to MLs in charge of subject and non-subject areas.
3. The terminology used in this section is the contemporary term 'middle leader' (ML). It is acknowledged the terminology used to describe this group of teachers with leadership and management responsibilities has evolved over time. They are also known as teachers in charge, heads of department, heads of faculties, middle managers and subject leaders.

3.6.1 Definition of school middle leaders

The definition of MLs is not unambiguous (Earley, 1998; Earley & Weindling, 2004). MLs are not a clearly defined cohort of people working in a school (Turner, 2007) and the line between SLs and MLs is often blurred, as is the line between that of classroom teacher and MLs.

> *In schools, organisational hierarchical distinctions are not neatly delineated. Many staff are involved in a complex switching of roles and lines of accountability between different aspects of their work. (Busher et al., 2000, p. 105)*

Fleming and Amesbury (2012, p. 2) see MLs as '"those individuals who have additional responsibilities to those of the classroom teachers". To Busher and Harris (1999, p. 306), a ML is someone who "is not part of the senior management team, responsible for the overall strategic development of a school, but someone responsible for the operational work of others, namely classroom teachers". Gurr and Drysdale (2013, p. 57) define MLs as "those people who have formal responsibilities and duties of leadership and management and sit between senior leadership and teachers". Bennett, Newton, Wise, Woods, and Economou (2003) refer to subject leaders, middle managers, heads of department, pastoral units and curriculum co-ordinators as MLs and excluded what Cranston (2009, p. 218) and Fluckiger et al. (2015, p. 60) have labelled as ML roles in schools such as "deputy principal, assistant principal, heads of school, deans of study and so on". These roles were excluded because they would normally be classified in a SL category (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013).

It is generally accepted that MLs are defined by the dual nature of their role – being a classroom teacher and a leader. Depending on the school system and organisational structure of the school, MLs have formal responsibilities and accountabilities for the school and their own departments alongside a significant teaching load (Dinham, 2007b). The older, more well-known term is “middle management” (De Nobile & Ridden, 2014, p. 22) as “the prime concern has been with the successful implementation of the organisation’s strategy rather than with its creation” (Earley, 1998, p. 149). However, they are now seen as having a key leadership role (Earley & Weindling, 2004, p. 113) and the change in the nomenclature appears to reflect the shift of emphasis of the roles ML perform in school “from mundane administrative duties to increasingly more strategic leadership activities” (De Nobile & Ridden, 2014, p. 22).

3.6.2 Importance of school middle leaders

MLs are recognised as “key figures” (Busher & Harris, 1999), “engine room of the school” (Toop, 2013) and “occupy key linking positions between principals and classroom teachers” (Dinham, 2007b). MLs have been described as “conduits” (Feist, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2009; Glover, Gleeson, Gough, & Johnson, 1998; Jarvis, 2008), “archetypal ‘piggy in the middle’ of school leadership” (Kerry, 2005) and “meat in the sandwich” (Fitzgerald, 2000). Occupying the unique position in the middle of the school hierarchy has allowed MLs to have both a school-wide overview and an understanding of the needs of those on the “chalk-face” in classrooms (Brown, Rutherford, & Boyle, 2000; Fitzgerald, 2009; Harris, Busher, & Wise, 2000; Kirkham, 2005). In fact, Hannay and Denby (1994, p. 2) argue that MLs are better placed than SLs to implement the change process in schools:

- MLs have responsibility for smaller groups of people than do SLs. This leads to stronger and more effective pressure and support that is required for change to be possible.
- MLs are likely to benefit from a pre-existing sense of community and unity of purpose that exists within the department; and
- It is often within departments that attempts to influence instructional practices are brought to bear on secondary schools.

MLs occupy a crucial position to influencing the factors that contributed to school improvement and can play an important part in influencing the quality of teaching and learning within their subject area (Bell, 1996; Brown & Rutherford, 1996; Collier, Dinham, Brennan, Deece, & Mulford, 2002; Dinham, 2007b; Dinham, 2000; Earley & Fletcher-Campbell, 1989; Fitzgerald, Gunter, & Eaton, 2006; Harris et al., 1995; Sammons et al., 1997; Thorpe & Bennett-Powell,

2014). The following descriptions highlight the critical role MLs play in both primary and secondary schools:

> *Effective leadership at all levels was important but, for many respondents, departments and faculty heads were seen as the driving force behind any school and, it was argued, the key to improving the quality of learning process. (Earley & Fletcher-Campbell, 1989, p. 215)*

> *Middle leaders…have the institutional knowledge, and usually the experience, to be innovative and to propose, plan and lead change in the school. (Kedian, 2006, p. 19)*

> *They play vital roles in planning for moving a school towards its goals, ensuring the smooth day-to-day operation of school business and monitoring the progress of others. (Fleming & Amesbury, 2012, p. 2)*

3.6.3 Role(s) of school middle leaders

The ML role is difficult to define with any sense of specificity. Hannay and Ross (1999, p. 346) characterise the role as being "ill-defined and highly variable" while Weller (2001, p. 73) describes the role as "largely undefined, open to interpretation, and multifaceted in nature". In the excerpt below, Terrell (1997b) highlights the complexity of the ML role in secondary schools:

> *The middle manager may feel they are in a sandwich between classroom practitioners and senior managers. There are demands for change and improvement from teachers themselves, from outside the school, from governments, local education authorities, parents and community. There is a pressure to reach higher standards of achievement. Different and higher expectations develop over time, such as enduring the use of IT and the Internet for learning.*
>
> *Classroom teachers place a special pressure on middle managers. Some practitioners believe that children are not getting any cleverer or easier to work with. Indeed, some believe that they are getting more difficult, for a variety of reasons, including the influence of media, distractions of leisure pursuits, a shift in the perceived value of education and so on. Innovative and enthusiastic classroom teachers will have their own solutions to these problems, and perhaps these are not always shared by senior management.*
>
> *At the centre of the management sandwich is the middle manager, working with the practical difficulties and pressures from below, and the higher aspirations and*

pressures from above. While the logic, aspirations and value judgements of senior management may be clear, practitioners living with the daily reality of classroom life may have a different view. Handling this tension and creating a strategy for dealing with it is a central task for middle managers. (pp. 9-10)

According to Fleming (2014) and Fleming and Amesbury (2012), the ML role in both primary and secondary schools involved four components:

1. Leadership. This involves having a clear vision of the importance of the area of responsibility and being able to galvanise others with this vision.

2. Good practitioner. This involves being clear about what constitutes good practice, having the specialist knowledge or know-how and using it.

3. Management. These involves being an effective manager of people and resources and being able to plan, motivate, encourage good practices, challenge bad practices, solve problems and see tasks through to achieve agreed targets.

4. Administration. This involves putting in place procedures to ensure administration is efficient and effective.

Harris (2000), drawing upon the work of Glover, Gleeson, Gough and Johnson (1998) and Busher and Harris (1999) in English schools, placed the ML role into four key dimensions:

1. Bridging or brokering. The way the ML translates the perspectives and policies of senior school leaders into the practices of individual classrooms. This implies a transactional leadership role for ML. The ML makes use of “power over” others (Blasé and Anderson, 1995) to get members of the department to achieve school and departmental goals and practices. One key aspect of this role is the managing and allocating of resources.

2. Creating social cohesion. The way the ML encourages teachers to cohere and develop a group identity, by shaping and developing a shared vision. This implies a leadership style that empowers others, making use of “power with” or “power through” others. This leadership style is power oriented and pays attention to people’s feelings, attitudes and beliefs. Transformational leaders not only manage structure but purposefully impact upon the culture in order to change it. A key facet of the ML’s work is to shape and manage departmental culture.

3. Improvement of staff and student performances. This involves both the transactional leadership role for the ML in monitoring the attainment of school goals and meeting certain prescribed levels of curriculum performance. On the other hand, it includes a mentoring or supervisory leadership role in supporting colleagues' development and the development of students academically and socially. This mode of leadership draws on the expert knowledge of the ML and their referent power to make improvements in practice.
4. A liaison or representative role. This requires the ML to be in touch with a variety of actors and sources of information in the external environment of the school and, where necessary, to negotiate on behalf of the other members in the department.

3.6.4 Duties and responsibilities of school middle leaders

The sheer complexity of the SL role means that much of the day to day business of the school is now distributed or delegated to MLs (Adey, 2000; Bennett, Woods, Wise, & Newton, 2007; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006). A study by Brown, Rutherford and Boyle (2000, p. 249) in England confirmed that MLs were asked to take on additional responsibilities that were in the past considered in the domain of SLs. As a consequence, the scope of duties and responsibilities that the MLs are expected to carry out are wide and vary from school to school (Weller, 2001). Numerous researchers have attempted to identify, organise and categorise MLs' duties and responsibilities in primary and secondary schools (for example, Adey, 2000; Bennett, 1995; Busher et al., 2007; Fletcher & Bell, 1999; Hammersley-Fletcher, 2002).

In a study of MLs in English primary and secondary schools, Bennett (1995, pp. 78-79) identifies forty-four characteristics under seven headings:

1. Subject-related.
2. Cross-curricular / Whole school duties.
3. External relations and relations with parents.
4. Team leadership / Interpersonal skills.
5. Staff development.
6. Assessment and records of achievement.
7. Teaching duties.

Fletcher and Bell (1999) organised the tasks that primary MLs felt they should do and considered to be effective into eight categories:

1. Resources.
2. Paperwork.
3. Influencing practice.
4. Monitoring.

5. Staff INSET.
6. Subject knowledge.
7. Supporting staff.
8. Others.

Adey (2000) identified a list of thirty discrete roles for secondary MLs and grouped them under six categories:

1. Teaching and curriculum.
2. Monitoring.
3. Evaluating and improving.
4. People and relationships.
5. Managing resources.
6. Accountability.

For Hammersley-Fletcher (2002), the four key task areas for primary MLs in charge of a subject are:

1. Strategic direction and development of the subject.
2. Teaching and learning.
3. Leading and managing staff.
4. Efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources.

Busher (2007, pp. 137-139) listed the tasks and functions that SLs and teachers expect MLs to carry out as part of their role. These included tasks and functions formally and informally ascribed by SLs and colleagues.

1. Working with recalcitrant students.
2. Supporting subject colleagues.
3. Supervising the work of subject colleagues.
4. Managing the subject area and providing material resources.
5. Providing expert knowledge.
6. Mediating senior staff policy to departmental colleagues.
7. Having a vision for the subject area.
8. Effective planning.
9. Helping subject area colleagues understand the school system.
10. Advocacy – promoting the interests of the subject area.
11. Creating a collaborative culture.

From the lists above, it is evident that MLs perform tasks that are both diverse and complex. After a synthesis of the literature that contains many lists of duties and responsibilities of MLs, five core tasks can be identified. These tasks are i. Planning and organising delivery of a subject curriculum; ii. Managing staff and students; iii. Monitoring student achievement; iv. Developing staff; and v. Reviewing and developing programmes. MLs are expected to carry these five core tasks on top of a significant teaching load.

Wise (1999) developed a model to categorise activities that secondary MLs are expected to undertake into four quadrants and is illustrated in Figure 3.2. This classification model is based on "the idea that all middle management responsibilities fall somewhere on a continuum according to whether they are principally concerned with the management of people or tasks. Responsibilities can also be classified according to whether they are principally concerned with the management of institutional issues or individual issues" (Wise, 1997, p. 2).

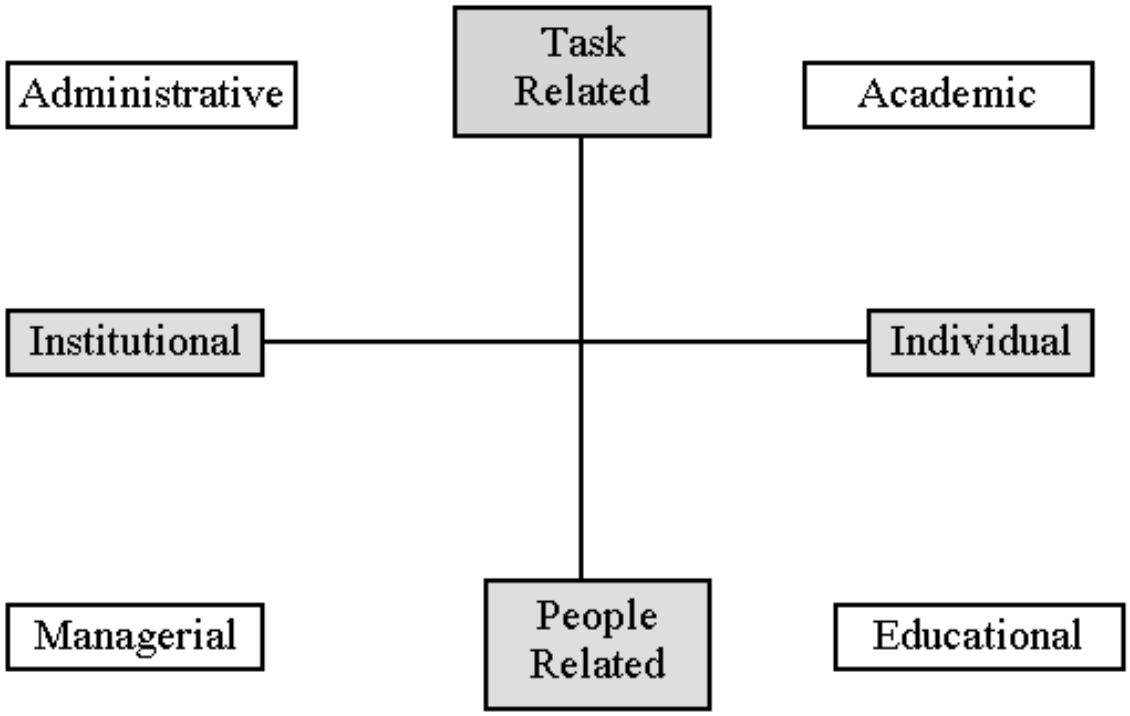

Figure 3.2 Classification of tasks (Wise, 1999)

Wise (1999) argues that there are two perspectives to the tasks of the academic ML in secondary schools: instrumental and expressive. Instrumental area tasks consisted of areas: academic and administrative in nature. Academic tasks are directly supportive of the learning of the pupils within the subject area. The following are examples of academic tasks:

- maintaining knowledge of the subject area
- ensuring that courses cater for the range of abilities

- checking teaching methods are in line with department and school policies
- formulating curriculum aims, objectives and content
- ensuring continuity of education between schools and phases

Administrative tasks are concerned with the whole school aspects of the role and deal with the issue of resourcing, record-keeping and may include paperwork that is not directly related to the learning process. Some of the tasks in the administrative quadrant are:

- making decisions about what resources to buy.
- maintaining departmental records of schemes of work and minutes of meetings.
- maintaining records of classroom observations.
- organising the storage of departmental resources.
- ensuring teaching rooms are suitable and offer adequate resources.

There are two expressive areas: managerial and educational. Managerial tasks are people centred tasks to do with the staff. Managerial tasks include:

- keeping staff within the department informed of whole school matters and encouraging debate.
- monitoring the teaching of staff whilst working in the department.
- inducting new staff.
- leading and/or promoting the development of departmental staff's professional abilities.
- providing support for departmental staff facing disciplinary problems in their teaching.

Educational tasks cover aspects of the role that are to do with the individual students and these include the following tasks:

- organising the testing of pupil attainment
- providing support to pupils facing personal difficulties that affect their school work and behaviour
- monitoring classes' progress through syllabuses or schemes of work
- deployment of pupils into teaching groups
- implementing homework policy

Wise (1997) claims the model can be readily adapted to changes within the education system and can be applied to cross-curricular co-ordinators as well as to subject departments. The utility of the model was demonstrated in a large scale survey of MLs in secondary schools in England commissioned by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) in England (Wise & Bennett, 2003).

3.7 SUBJECT DEPARTMENTS IN SCHOOLS

The subject department is an ubiquitous organisational feature in schools, particularly in secondary schools (Melville, Campbell, & Bartley, 2012; Melville, Campbell, & Jones, 2016). The division of the secondary school into subject departments has remained the preferred model for organising teaching and teaching (Brown & Rutherford, 1999), "despite significant changes in the manner of governance, student outcomes and teacher practice" (Deece, 2003, p. 39).

Siskin and Little (1995, p. 1) found that subject departments are fundamental to gaining an appreciation of how secondary schools work, "defining in crucial ways who teachers are, what they do, where and with whom they work, and how that work is perceived by others". As teachers in secondary schools in America strongly identified themselves as subject specialists, the subject department becomes "the primary point of reference, or professional home, for most teachers" (Siskin & Little, 1995, p. 7). The work of subject department can have a direct impact on what teachers do and as a consequence, has a direct bearing on students' learning.

> *The power of taken for granted middle management department structure cannot be underestimated as it has defined teachers' roles, interaction patterns, knowledge considered of worth, and learning opportunities offered to students. (Hannay & Ross, 1999, p. 346)*

Therefore, any study of MLs must necessarily look at the departments they lead as "it is extremely difficult to disaggregate the subject leader from the subject department in which he/she works" (Turner, 2003, p. 215).

3.7.1 Types of subject departments in schools

Subject departments are "at the coalface of the work of the school" and "directly responsible for the core business of the schools – teaching and learning" (Kotzur, 2005, p. 18). But the term 'subject department' can be misleading as it is not always composed of a single subject. There are different types of departments operating in schools and as Harris (2000) observes, not all subject departments are the same.

> *The realm of the academic department in secondary schools presents a considerable variation of organisational differentiation. Departments in secondary schools in England range from multidisciplinary departments (e.g. Design and Technology) to departments with many staff in them (e.g. English) to departments staffed by one or two and several part-time staff (e.g. Music department or History department).* (p. 83)

Sergiovanni (1984a, pp. 118-119), in one of the earliest attempts to differentiate between subject departments, suggests that there are eight different types of department in secondary schools.

1. Problem-solving department.
2. Productive department. The immediate task is the primary concern. The chairperson usually functions as one who is dedicated to task accomplishment.
3. Creative department. Focuses primarily on developing its members and their ideas. The chairperson usually functions as a developer.
4. Procedural department. Follows procedures and established patterns. The chairperson usually functions as a bureaucrat.
5. Mixed department. Tries to compromise between getting the task done and sparing people's feelings. When a department operates this way, the chairperson usually functions as a compromiser.
6. Fight department. Characterised by conflict and argument. The chairperson usually functions as an autocrat.
7. Dependent department. Here the by-word is harmony. More attention is paid to avoiding conflict than to discussing the problem. When a department functions this way, the chairperson usually functions as a missionary.
8. Department in flight. Displays little interest in getting the job done. Conflict is minimal because of the effort it requires. The chairperson usually functions as a deserter.

In another attempt to classify the types of department, Siskin (1994, p. 134) considers the micro-political factors that departments manipulate in schools and found that departments "exhibit quite distinctive social norms along lines of commitment and inclusion, and … these social styles of interaction translate directly into political modes of governance". The interactions within the group have a direct bearing on how the group functions. Based on the degree to which individuals feel bound to the group, Siskin (1994, p. 134) postulates the existence of four types of departments as illustrated in Table 3.1.

- Bonded departments. These are departments with high commitment to professional issues and high inclusion norms. The leadership style is consensus based and operates by shared decision making.
- Bundled departments. These are departments with low commitment to professional issues but have high inclusion norms. The leadership style is competence based and operates by shared decision making.

- Split departments. These are departments with high commitment to professional issues but have low inclusion norms. There is a power struggle for leadership and the leader makes the important decisions.
- Fragmented departments. These departments have low commitment to professional and low inclusion norms. There is unclear decision making.

Table 3.1

Classification of departments (Siskin, 1994)

Bonded Departments	Bundled Departments
High commitment, high inclusion	Low commitment, high inclusion
Leadership consensus-based	Leadership competence-based
Decision-making shared	Decision-making by department head
Collaborative leader	Administrative leader
Split Departments	**Fragmented Departments**
High commitment, low inclusion	Low commitment, low inclusion
Leadership in power struggle	Leadership by default, burden
Decision-making by department head	Decision-making unclear
Dictatorial leader	Non- leader

Busher and Harris (1999, pp. 309-310), using the defining features of size, configuration, staff membership and subject expertise, suggest that there are five categories of departments in secondary schools.

- Federal departments. These departments contain and support the teaching of several subject areas. They work closely together because their subjects and pedagogies are perceived as cognate and their cultures are substantially homogeneous. Science faculties or humanities departments are examples of federal departments.
- Confederate departments. These departments contain a number of subject areas that share little in common and are seen as primarily an administrative convenience. Confederate cultures are heterogeneous with individual subject areas creating their own identities that may be in conflict. An example of this type of department is design and technology departments.
- Unitary departments. Only one area of subject knowledge would be taught, and this is likely to have strong influence on its culture. English or Mathematics is an example of unitary departments.
- Impacted departments. These departments also teach only a single subject area but smaller than unitary departments. These have very few staff, some of whom are part-time and/or teach other subjects too. They have a few rooms in which to teach and have relatively small budgets. Impacted departments can be freestanding within a school's

organisational structure or they can be part of a larger federal department, for example, a biology department in a science faculty. Other examples of impacted departments include music, history and geography.

- Diffuse departments. These departments have no identifiable base in a school. It may be difficult to create a sense of subject identity as it is taught by a wide variety of staff under the guidance of a school co-ordinator. An example of a diffuse department is information and communications technology (ICT).

The work of Sergiovanni (1984a) and Siskin (1994) have demonstrated the importance of understanding the different types of department and the ways (how) they are organised. Sergiovanni (1984a) asserts that problem-solving, productive, creative and procedural departments are effective while mixed, fight, dependent and department in flight are not. Whether the subject department is effective or ineffective, it is not specifically dependant on the nature of the subject itself. For example, in Siskin's (1994) study, there are English departments in both the bonded and fragmented groups. Both Sergiovanni (1984a) and Siskin (1994) came to a conclusion that departmental effectiveness depended more on the nature and quality of the leadership than on the nature of the departments. However, Busher and Harris (1999, p. 310) argue that different departmental structures can influence the leadership approaches of the ML, with different structures demanding different types of leadership.

3.7.2 Differences between departments: Effective, under-achieving and ineffective

3.7.2.1 Characteristics of effective departments

Harris et al. (1995) and Sammons et al. (1997) have attempted to identify the characteristics of effective subject departments in UK secondary schools using value-added analysis of GCSE scores as an indicator of departmental effectiveness. Harris et al. (1995) examined six secondary school departments across a range of subjects which have been shown to be effective in producing better than expected student results. Harris et al. (1995) identified the key characteristics of 'effective' departments as having:

- A collegiate management style.
- A strong vision of the subject effectively translated down to the classroom level.
- Good organisation in terms of assessment, record keeping, homework, etc.
- Good resource management.
- An effective system for monitoring and evaluating.
- Structured lessons and regular feedback.
- Clear routines and practices within lessons.
- A syllabus matching the needs and abilities of pupils.

- A strong pupil-centred ethos that systematically rewards pupils.
- Opportunities for autonomous pupil learning.
- A central focus on teaching and learning.

Sammons et al. (1997) used value-added GCSE results with adjustments made for factors related to prior attainment of students before entering secondary school, as well as the student background factors gender, age, ethnicity and low income status as measured by entitlement to free school meals to determine if a department is considered effective. Sammons et al. (1997) noticed that while school differences in terms of total GCSE scores existed in their sample, marked subject differences also existed, giving an indication of departmental effects. Sammons et al. (1997, p. 55) remarked that the "significant differences" in terms of department effectiveness in schools "may be masked by a reliance on a single measure of total GCSE score" to indicate school effectiveness.

Sammons et al. (1997) observed that effective secondary schools and effective departments appeared to share the following characteristics:

- High expectations of student performance.
- Strong academic emphasis with clear educational goals, homework policy and practice (setting and checking, etc) and focus on assessment.
- Shared vision/goals with staff unity at school and department level.
- Clear leadership to set school/departmental culture.
- Effective senior management team.
- Consistency in approach towards behaviour, discipline, homework and marking policies etc.
- High quality of teaching.
- Student-focussed approach.
- Parental support/involvement.

The studies of Harris et al. (1995) and Sammons et al. (1997) have highlighted numerous common characteristics such a student centred approach and a central focus on teaching and learning. But there are a number of differences and one of the most important relates to the role of senior management team's leadership on departmental effectiveness. Harris et al. (1995, p. 297) assert that the departments "were largely successful because of their own efforts" and suggest that individual department could operate effectively independent of the quality of senior management team's leadership. Fleming and Amesbury (2012, pp. 23-24) agree with Harris et al.'s view that "middle managers can make a significant difference, even

in schools lacking strong senior management direction and support". Sammons et al. (1997), however, disagreed with Harris et al. (1995) and Fleming and Amesbury (2012):

> *… in some schools it was apparently 'easier' for all departments to function effectively … Conversely, in other schools it was 'harder' for departments to be effective due to a lack of overall leadership, shared goals and vision, poor expectations and inconsistent approaches.* (Sammons et al., 1997, p. 153)

The literature relating to MLs in English primary schools (for example, Bell, 1996; Hammersley-Fletcher, 2002; Hammersley-Fletcher & Brundrett, 2008; Hammersley-Fletcher & Kirkham, 2005; Hammersley-Fletcher & Strain, 2011) appears to support Sammons et al.'s (1997) view that the SL's leadership is an important factor in determining the ML role as 'the head is still ultimately responsible for the school and thus maintains some degree of authority over the rest of the staff" (Hammersley-Fletcher & Kirkham, 2005, p. 60). The (importance of) SL role will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.7.2.2 Characteristics of ineffective departments

Harris (1998) uses qualitative data obtained from eight "underperforming" departments to investigate whether these ineffective departments in secondary schools suffered from an absence of the characteristics of effective departments as identified in the two studies outlined in the previous section (Harris et al., 1995; Sammons et al., 1997). Harris (1998, p. 274) found that ineffective departments shared certain characteristics, such as:

- Inappropriate leadership and management styles.
- Lack of vision for the department and the departmental subject(s).
- Poor communication within the department.
- Poor organisation.
- Inadequate systems for monitoring and evaluation.
- Non-collegial departmental climate.
- No leading professional within the department.
- An absence of professional development and learning.
- Insufficient focus upon teaching and learning.

While some of the characteristics are the opposite of those found in effective departments, Harris (1998, p. 274) concludes that the ineffective departments also possessed "other additional failure factors which compounded the problem of departmental ineffectiveness" and these factors were related to quality of teaching, quality relationships and professional development.

Leadership is a key element implicated in the underperformance of the departments studied. The leadership of the ML in each of these departments was considered inappropriate, characterised broadly as either too laissez-faire or authoritarian. The laissez faire leader is characterised by a belief that they were sharing responsibility and facilitating the operation of the department rather than running it. The result of this kind of leadership, "was a clear absence of departmental planning, direction and cohesiveness" (Harris, 1998, p. 271). Conversely, while the authoritarian leader believed that they were leading from the front, the reality was that such leaders failed to gain support from colleagues which, in turn, meant that communication and interaction between members of the department was poor (Harris, 1998). The continued maintenance of these styles of leadership operating in the departments involved in the study will make it hard to turnaround the departments (Harris, 2000). This suggests that ML responsible for the department is unable to provide the leadership and management which the department needs (Turner, 2005). The issue of leadership will be discussed later in this chapter.

3.7.3 Subject departments and "Balkanisation"

A few researchers have drawn attention to the challenges when schools are organised around subject departments. In an investigation of attempts to restructure subject departments in three American high schools, Little (1995) found that the subject department is resistant to change. The strength of the subject department is formidable as this is partly because for the teachers, "the subject pull remains strong and constant" (Little, 1995, p. 198).

Hargreaves and MacMillan (1995) investigated what they described as the 'balkanisation' of secondary school teaching. "Balkanisation", as defined by Hargreaves and MacMillan (1995, p. 164), is "characterised by strong and enduring boundaries between different parts of the organisation, by personal identification with the domains these boundaries define and by the differences of power between one domain and another". Dinham et al. (2000) found "The structure of the modern secondary school militates against effective communication, with vertical barriers between departments and horizontal barriers between teaching staff, Heads of Department and Senior school executive". Hargreaves and MacMillan (1995) concluded that:

> *What is becoming disturbing clear in our secondary schools is the inability of the present subject system and organisational structure to meet the needs of students and indeed the longer term needs of their staffs in a complex and rapidly changing postmodern society. (p. 168)*

Despite these criticisms, subject departments have remained the preferred model for organising teaching and learning (Brown & Rutherford, 1999) and many schools around the world including those in Singapore are still predominantly organised around subject departments.

3.7.4 Subject department as professional learning communities

Subject departments "provide structures and channels for managing the teaching and learning of students and staff" (Busher & Harris, 1999, p. 313). Subject departments can be "the key focus for change within the school" (Brown et al., 2000, p. 242) and "may become powerful agents in influencing workplace conditions as well as educational quality and teacher development" (Visscher & Witziers, 2004, p. 787). Brown et al. (2000, p. 238) claim that "the department is the most appropriate and important 'unit of change', rather than the whole-school or even the individual classroom". One of the ways is for subject departments to develop into professional learning communities (PLCs).

Drawing on the earlier work of researchers of PLC, Sigurðardóttir (2010, p. 397) defines a PLC as "a group of professionals sharing common goals and purposes, constantly gaining new knowledge through interaction with one another, and aiming to improve practices". Harris and Jones (2010, p. 173) describe PLCs as "a potent strategy for school and system improvement" and "a powerful staff development approach" to "build the necessary capacity of change". In Singapore, PLCs are seen as "a vehicle for curricular and pedagogical change to achieve desired student learning outcomes" (Hairon & Dimmock, 2012, p. 408). Evidence cited by Harris and Jones (2010, pp. 173-174) suggests that PLCs offer a very powerful way of engaging teachers in reflecting upon and refining their professional practice, have the potential to improve achievement and raise performance and are a powerful vehicle for changing teachers' behaviour and improving student learning and outcomes. Harris and Jones (2010, p. 175) also found that teachers who are part of a PLC are more satisfied, have higher morale, with lower rates of absenteeism, tend to be more effective classroom, achieve better student outcomes and have a greater commitment to making significant and lasting changes in their classroom.

An Icelandic study confirmed the positive effects of PLCs on student outcomes. Sigurðardóttir (2010, p. 406) found "a group of teachers engaged in a learning community when discussing different teaching methods in mathematics and at the same time the student outcomes improved dramatically". This 'collaborative learning' needs to be embedded into daily work, "teachers gain new knowledge, try it out in practice, and from the experience, gain yet more knowledge. They do this in interaction with each other, by collaboratively" (Sigurðardóttir,

2010, p. 397). This led Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas (2006, p. 247) to conclude that while building PLCs is "by no means easy", it is "worth the considerable effort put in to creating and developing them". Drawing on the findings of their pilot study, Harris and Jones (2010, p. 179) identified the features of effective PLCs and these included:

- Respect and trust among colleagues at the school and network level.
- Possession of an appropriate cognitive and skill base that enables effective pedagogy and leads to effective learning.
- Supportive leadership from those in key roles and shared leadership practices.
- The norms of continuous critical inquiry and continuous improvement.
- A widely shared vision or sense of purpose.
- A norm of involvement in decision-making.
- Collegial relationships among teachers.
- A focus upon impact and outcomes for learners.

From a sophisticated statistical analysis of the influence of secondary principals and department heads on maths and science teachers' formation of communities of practice, Printy (2008) found that the ML leadership practices have greater influence than that of the principal. She (Printy, 2008) concluded that:

> *Department leadership [practices] is the most influential factor in determining the quality of teachers' participation in communities of practice. … This is an important finding, one that highlights the important role the chairs play in shaping the agenda for learning, brokering knowledge and learning opportunities, and motivating teachers for learning work. (pp. 214-215)*

3.7.5 The importance of department leadership

The key features of effective and ineffective departments were summarised in Table 3.2. The work of Harris et al. (1995), Sammons et al. (1997) and Harris (1998) have demonstrated that leadership was central to whether departments were judged to be effective or not. Turner (2005, p. 23) opines that the features denoted with an asterix (*) could be directly linked to the leadership of the department. Out of eleven characteristics of effective departments identified, seven could be directly attributed to the leadership of ML. The other two features, Harris et al. (1995) argue, could be indirectly attributed to the leadership of the ML. Out of eight characteristics of ineffective departments which were identified, seven could be directly attributed to the leadership of the ML. In other words, the absence of *good* leadership in ineffective departments is as important in explaining ineffectiveness as the presence of *good* leadership is in explaining the effective department. In short, "the one central reason for

departmental ineffectiveness is that the person responsible for the curriculum area is unable to provide the management and leadership skills the departmental team needs" (Turner, 2003, p. 222).

Table 3.2

Key features of ineffective and effective departments (Turner, 2005)

Features of effective departments	Features of ineffective departments
A collegiate management style*	Inappropriate leadership and management styles*
A strong vision of the subject translated at classroom level*	A lack of vision for the department and the subject*
Well organised in terms of assessment, record keeping and homework	Poor organisation*
Good resource management*	
Effective monitoring and evaluation*	Inadequate systems for monitoring and evaluation*
Structured lessons and regular feedback	Poor communication within the department*
Clear routines and practices in classrooms	Non-collegial climate*
Syllabus (now referred to as a specification) matching the needs and abilities of pupils*	
Strong pupil-centred ethos that systematically rewards pupils	
Opportunities for autonomous pupil learning*	
Central focus on teaching and learning	Absence of professional development and learning*
	No leading professional within the department*

A large-scale study in New South Wales entitled 'An Exceptional Schooling Outcomes Project' (AESOP) explored the impact on student learning of the leadership of fifty subject departments across thirty-eight secondary schools in Australia. The investigation found the leadership of Principal (Dinham, 2005) and MLs (Dinham, 2007b) were both important to student success. Dinham (2007b, p. 67) found that the leadership of MLs was a significant factor in explaining the high performance of these schools and that MLs promote student success through:

- A focus of student and their learning.
- High level interpersonal skills, and generally being well-liked and trusted.
- High level professional capacity and strategic resource allocation.
- Influencing department planning and organisation.
- Developing common purpose, collaboration and sense of team within their department.
- Fostering teacher learning and developing a culture of shared responsibility and trust.
- Clear vision, high expectations of themselves and others, and developing a culture of success.

Dinham's (2007b) research resonates with other studies (for example, Harris, 1998; Harris et al., 1995; Sammons et al., 1997) that suggest that MLs can make a difference to departmental performance in much the same way as principals contribute to overall performance of schools.

3.8 MODELS OF MIDDLE LEADERSHIP

The six school leadership models proposed by Leithwood and Duke (1999) and a distributive model of leadership were reviewed earlier in this chapter. In spite of the fact that all six models of school leadership models are initially developed for principal leadership, Turner (2003, p. 214) opines that these leadership models are relevant to MLs, provided they are re-interpreted in the context of department work.

- Instructional leadership. For MLs to lead effectively, they need to establish their credibility as an expert in subject pedagogy. This is related to the variety and length of experience in the post.
- Transformational leadership. MLs can inspire more commitment and ownership of departmental goals if they can articulate a clear vision for their department.
- Moral leadership. It is not clear how moral imperatives are transmitted by MLs to teachers in the department. There is presupposition of department democracy.
- Participative leadership. This is a very important aspect of leadership, which is directly related to decision making.
- Managerial leadership. The focus here is on functions, tasks and behaviours. These may include tasks and skills in leadership, decision-making, communication and self-management.
- Contingent leadership. MLs need to recognise effective leadership is associated with the use of strategies for problem solving which can be either task-centred or people-oriented or both, depending on the situation.

Drawing upon the work of Murphy (1992) and their study of MLs in the UK, Brown and Rutherford (1998) developed a leadership typology to characterise the leadership styles of MLs.

- Servant leader. MLs use their professional expertise than their line authority.
- Organisational architect. MLs create new structures to facilitate sharing of leadership.
- Moral educator. MLs are motivated by a set of deep personal values and beliefs that demonstrates their care and valuing of staff and students.
- Social architect. MLs addressed the needs of pupils through social networks
- Leading professional. MLs are focussed on improving teaching, learning and achievement and leadership by example.

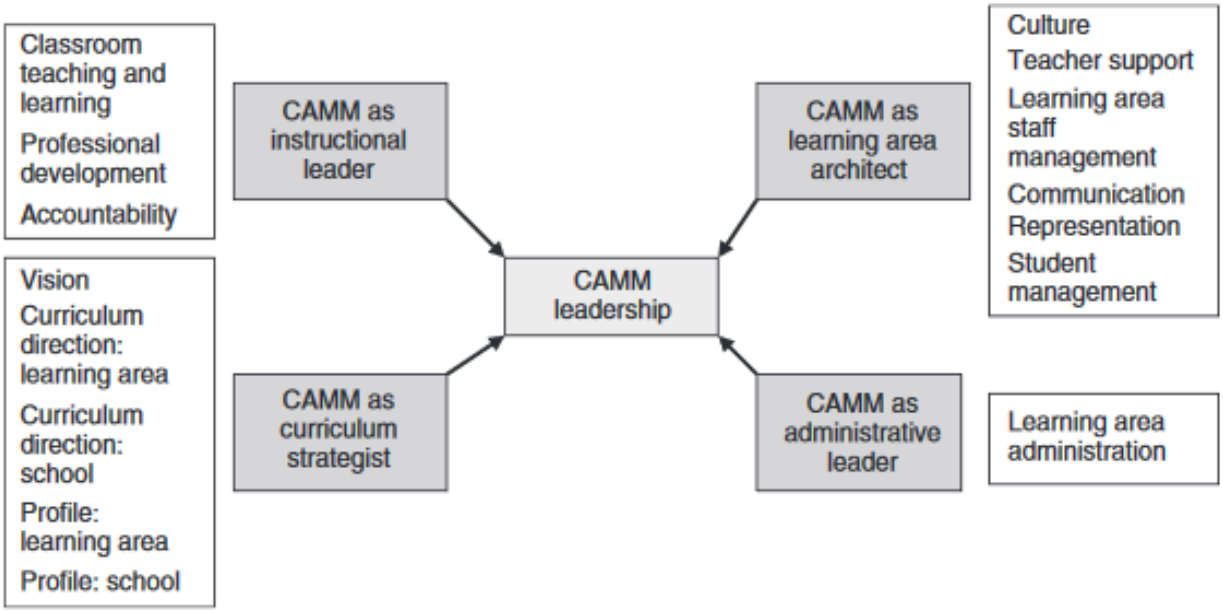

Figure 3.3 Curriculum area middle manager leadership model (White, 2000)

White (2000) developed a model of middle leadership from his study of the MLs in secondary schools in Victoria, Australia, which consists of four roles (Figure 3.3):

- Instructional leader. This reflects aspects of the ML role that are directly involved in improving the teaching and learning process in the learning area.
- Curriculum strategist. This reflects aspects of the ML role that are involved in direction setting for the curriculum area and the school in curriculum matters. This includes aspects to do with ML role in raising learning area and school profiles when appropriate opportunities arise.
- Learning area architect. This reflects aspects of ML's role that are involved in changing learning area culture and building human capital in the learning area.

- Administrative leader. This reflects aspects of the ML's role that involves what is traditionally considered "management".

White's model of middle leadership has been influenced by earlier research on contingency and situational leadership. His model is an extension of the model first proposed by Turner and Bolam (1998) and facilitated the understanding of the role of MLs of subject areas and how they influence educational outcomes. The utility of White's model was confirmed by Keane's (2010) research of learning area leaders in catholic schools in Victoria, Australia a decade later.

3.9 CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL MIDDLE LEADER

MLs faced a number of challenges in their role. Early research of MLs (see for example, Earley & Fletcher-Campbell, 1989) identified a number of challenges faced by MLs in carrying out their role. The list is a fairly extensive one and covers twelve factors in all:

1. Time.
2. Departmental staff with other commitments.
3. Role overload.
4. Staff discipline and interpersonal relationships.
5. The definition of responsibilities.
6. Inadequate preparation.
7. Ancillary help.
8. Management of physical resources.
9. The timetable.
10. Conflict of styles.
11. Parental pressure.
12. Accommodation.

A decade later, White and Rosenfeld (1999) in Australia listed seven most frequently reported barriers to MLs carrying out their roles effectively. They are:

1. A sense of role ambiguity resulting from a lack of clear expectations from school senior management team (SMTs);
2. A sense of role conflict in carrying out certain aspects of their position requirements;
3. A lack of training to adequately carry out the requirements of their role, particularly in the areas of leadership and management;
4. A lack of systematic professional development, including that which generates an understanding of organisational change;
5. A lack of time to adequately carry out the requirements of their role

6. An absence of formal authority; and
7. A feeling of being given tasks to relieve the workload of SMT members rather than being empowered through genuine delegation

Comparing the two lists, a number of recurring themes can be identified in terms of the challenges that MLs face in carrying out their role. A few of these challenges have been consistently reported over two decades and they are:

1. (Lack of) Preparation and training;
2. (Lack of) Time; and
3. Issues relating to the nature of the role itself, for example, role ambiguity and role conflict.

3.9.1 Preparation and training (or lack thereof)

The lack of preparation and training of MLs before being appointed to their post has been widely reported (for example, Adey, 2000; Adey & Jones, 1998; Bassett, 2016; Brown & Rutherford, 1999; Brown et al., 2000; Cardno & Bassett, 2015; Earley & Fletcher-Campbell, 1989; Fleming, 2014; Fleming & Amesbury, 2012; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013; Harris et al., 2000; Weller, 2001). These studies found that many MLs felt inadequately prepared or trained for their role. Nearly six in ten MLs surveyed by Adey (2000, p. 422) and more than 70% of MLs in Weller's (2001, p. 77) study reported receiving no formal training before being appointed. Nearly half of MLs surveyed in a recent New Zealand study held the view that they were inadequately trained to carry out their leadership role (Cardno & Bassett, 2015). Gurr and Drysdale (2013, p. 65) reporting on their ML research in Victoria, confirm a "paucity in training and leadership development for middle-level leadership". Kedian (2006) attributes this tendency to a commonly held assumption that MLs will somehow develop the leadership capacity themselves as they have been "appointed on the basis of proven classroom competence" (Turner, 2005, p. 124). But, as Bush (2016, p. 18) explains, "School leadership is a different role from teaching and requires separate and specialised preparation" and "the skills needed for middle leadership are not the same as those required for classroom teaching" (Irvine & Brundrett, 2016, p. 88). What Gurr and Drysdale (2013, p. 65) have found particularly troubling was that "a number of middle-level leaders also failed to see the necessity of prior development". Research by Glover et al. (1998, p. 290) found that while a large number of MLs "have grown into their roles", "this type of preparation may not be adequate for the changing demands being placed upon subject leaders".

> *Given the growing number and increasing complexity of the responsibilities being shouldered by middle managers, the dangers of appointing to HoD posts and then expecting them to learn (quickly) on the job are self-evident. (Adey, 2000, p. 423)*

In a study of the professional development co-ordinators, Adey (2000, p. 423) found that the training for MLs can be categorised into three groups:

- The first group consisted of MLs whose 'training' for the ML role was "learning by watching others perform the role".
- The second group included those who have been "'watching' others perform the role and taking on relevant delegated responsibility".
- The third group consisted of those who have been "'learning on the job' while in the post.

Turner (2006) argues that these three forms of informal learning are useful and have enabled MLs to lead and manage without any or little formal professional training. This could be described as the apprenticeship model and the middle leadership research reported by Gurr and Drysdale (2013, p. 65) confirmed it is the "dominant" form of leadership preparation and development. Turner (2006) goes on to suggest that informal learning comprised of three components: implicit learning, learning through experience and deliberative learning and that all three components of informal learning play an important part in helping MLs decide how best to carry out their role in different circumstances and situations.

However, given the multiplicity and increasing complexity of the responsibilities being shouldered by MLs, such ad-hoc preparation and training would not suffice going forward. If MLs are to lead their departments effectively, they would need to "acquire knowledge, gain an understanding of new issues and develop new skills" (Adey, 2000, p. 420). According to Fitzgerald et al. (2006, p. 32), "the professional development of teachers as leaders is critical to continued innovation and change". Evidence suggests that MLs' impact would be enhanced if they have access to adequate opportunities to acquire the needed leadership capacities (Leithwood, 2016).

MLs have diverse training needs (Adey, 2000). Brown, Boyle and Boyle (2002, p. 38) surveyed MLs in England and found that MLs had a diverse range of training needs and the following training needs were highlighted:

- Training in techniques and concepts of forward planning, costing, and evaluation by performance criteria; in particular, budgeting and financial management skills including an understanding of and ability to operate within the constraints of whole-school budgets.
- Grounding in the ability to think and plan short, medium and long term and to be able to relate to subject/department aims to wider aims.
- Development of corporate planning at subject level.
- Training in the prioritisation of objectives.

Underlying the management training needs listed above is “the need for heads of department to develop the ability to work from a whole school perspective” (Brown et al., 2002, p. 39). Adey and Jones (1998, p. 138) argue that it is important for MLs to acquire “the ability to view departmental developments within the context of whole-school development planning, and, indeed make an effective contribution to that whole-school development planning process”. Whilst there is evidence MLs are “beginning to accept the need to plan departmental developments within the context of whole school priorities” (Adey, 2000, p. 428), there is a general reluctance to contribute to whole-school policy making (Adey, 2000; Glover et al., 1998).

In recent years, there has been an increase in the provision of formal preparation programmes for MLs around the world. These training programmes for MLs were either school-based or in partnership with a local education authority and/or higher education institute. One of such middle leadership development programme was the ‘Leading from the Middle’ (LftM) Programme (now replaced by the National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership). NCSL developed and delivered the LftM programme to improve the leadership effectiveness of MLs in UK schools. There have been evaluations of the programme (for example, Naylor, Gkolia, & Brundrett, 2006; Simkins, Coldwell, Close, & Morgan, 2009) and the results suggest there have been significant and positive “changes in leadership practices, changes that affect school outcomes and changes in teaching and learning processes and in pupil outcomes” (Thorpe & Bennett-Powell, 2014, p. 52). Naylor, Gkolia and Brundrett (2006, p. 16) found “middle leaders perceived that their confidence as leaders had grown considerably as a result of undertaking the LftM programme”.

However, not all formal training programmes for MLs are well designed and effective. Harris, Busher & Wise (2001, p. 87) found a majority of courses offered by local education authority and/or higher education institute “focussed upon topics of a broad and general nature … rather than to be tailored to the professional needs of a particular group”. MLs are not a “homogenous” group and a ‘one size fits all’ approach would not be appropriate as they do not necessarily have the same set of needs (Thorpe & Bennett-Powell, 2014, p. 56). This lead Harris et al. (2001, p. 86) to conclude that an effective training programme for MLs will need to have the following characteristics:

- Involve an action research component where participants focused upon a particular problem or issue.
- Encourage participants to analyse data and to scrutinise evidence.
- Ask participants to identify areas of action/development on returning to school.

- Be integrated into school improvement programmes.
- Stimulate debate about pedagogy and the quality of teaching and learning within the subject area.
- Assist subject leaders to change their practice and the practice others within the subject area.
- Provide advisory support throughout the course and school visits.
- Develop good rapport and trust between teachers.
- Establish supportive networks for teachers and coordinators.
- Provide support to participants to help them follow up work schools.

Despite the importance ascribed to formal ML preparation programmes, Turner (2000, p. 312) found that many formal preparation programmes while helping to "contribute to a better understanding of the HoD role", do not have a "direct impact on the work of HoDs to improve teaching and learning in their departments". Studies in England (Glover et al., 1998) and Australia (Deece, 2003) have supported Turner's (2000) view that 'learning on the job' (e.g. working with and observing people) appear to be more valued than formal preparation programmes.

3.9.2 Time (or lack thereof)

Numerous studies (for example, Bassett, 2016; Brown & Rutherford, 1998; Collier et al., 2002; Connors, 1999; Deece, 2003; Fletcher-Campbell, 2003; Glover & Miller, 1999; Irvine & Brundrett, 2016; Wise & Bennett, 2003) have reported that there is a lack of time to fully carry out all aspects of the ML role effectively. This issue of time was already evident since Earley and Fletcher-Campbell (1989) published the results of their comprehensive study into the work of MLs nearly thirty years ago. Findings from a recent New Zealand study confirmed that lack of time is one of the most difficult challenges facing MLs (Bassett, 2016). Collier et al. (2002) describe (lack of) time as "the enemy" of MLs. While MLs are usually allocated extra 'non-contact' time to undertake their role, there is a large variation in the amount of additional non-contact time they were allowed (Wise & Bennett, 2003). For example, a majority of MLs in Deece's (2003, p. 49) study had "almost a full teaching load" and "of the five or six classes taken by teachers, HoDs taught only one fewer class".

Indeed, time is a crucial issue in determining the extent to which a ML is able to perform their role effectively. With a significant teaching load, MLs must spend considerable time preparing, conducting assessment tasks and marking work. One implication is that there is little time left in the school day for actually carrying out the work of a ML. Deece (2003, pp. 49-50) opines

that if they “spend what little time they have after completing their classroom responsibilities carrying out routine but minor administrative tasks, their effectiveness as an educational leader of their subject is lessened”. With too little time available to deal with the multiplicity of demands of the role, compromises would need to be made. This was echoed in Bassett’s (2016) study in New Zealand where MLs conceded “they were not performing either their leadership role or their teaching role to a satisfactory level”. Researchers (for example, Fitzgerald, 2009; Irvine & Brundrett, 2016; Wise & Bennett, 2003) have argued that workload pressures are adversely affecting the work performance of MLs with negative implications on their MLs’ leadership authority of the department (James & Aubrey-Hopkins, 2003). Half of MLs interviewed in Collier et al.’s (2002, p. 24) study suggested reducing the teaching load and administrative aspects of the role to free up time “so that they will be able to better perform their other responsibilities”.

3.9.3 Issues relating to the nature of the role itself

3.9.3.1 Role conflict

In a study of high school department chairs, Mayers and Zepeda (2002, p. 54) found that MLs experienced role conflict on two different levels:

- Instructional versus clerical roles. There is a difference between the espoused nature of the job (the job description) and the reality of the job (the faculty handbook).
- Department chair or teacher. There is insufficient time to complete both departmental and teaching responsibilities. Participants are split between “what to do when” as “teacher and as a department chair”.

3.9.3.1.1 Instructional versus clerical roles

Research evidence suggests much of this workload pressure is taken up by tasks which could be considered to be managerial, things which are not likely to relate to the leadership aspects of the role such as improving teaching and learning and have an administrative focus (Fitzgerald, 2009). In the UK, Brown and Rutherford (1998, p. 76) found MLs are preoccupied with “routine administration and crisis management and have little time for strategic thinking”. Feeney (2009, p. 215) found MLs in the US describing their role in terms of “managerial responsibilities” and they appear to be preoccupied with housekeeping activities and projects most of the time. In New Zealand, Jarvis (2008, p. 24) found that “the purely managerial tasks of middle leaders have often been seen to constitute the bulk of the role” and MLs themselves “give primacy to the more straightforwardly administrative side of their job”. This finding was confirmed by Fitzgerald (2009, p. 51) when she found “management tasks and activities dominate teachers’ work and that there is, consequently, little or no time for leadership”. A recent New Zealand study found that “whilst most MLs in this research emphasised the

leadership aspect of their role, in practice their time was dominated with managerial compliance tasks" (Bassett, 2016). In Australia, Cranston (2006, p. 9) found that MLs are extremely busy people who work "long hours" but were pre-occupied with administrative and operational matters and had minimal time for strategic matters such as curriculum and instructional leadership. This state of affairs may represent "something of a 'missed opportunity' for leadership" (Jarvis, 2008, p. 29) and suggests that the ML's leadership potential is "unrealised" (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013, p. 67) and "underutilized" (Cranston, 2006, p. 104; Leithwood, 2016, p. 134).

3.9.3.1.2 Department chair or teacher

MLs occupy the middle of the school hierarchy, reporting upwards to SLs and seeking to lead a department of staff (Dinham, 2007b). MLs are expected to be "both subject and curriculum experts and leaders in their fields, as well as administrative leaders in linking their teachers with whole-school goals and policies" (Dimmock, 2012, p. 92). MLs are caught in between two sides. On the one hand, teachers expect the MLs to act as an advocate for the specific needs of the department or area of responsibility (Bennett et al., 2007; Busher et al., 2000; Kirkham, 2005). On the other hand, SLs expect MLs to maintain a whole school perspective and implement the school's strategy and goals at the department level. There is a growing tension between "expectations that the ML role had a whole school focus and their loyalty to their department" (Bennett et al., 2007, p. 453) and the transition from a narrow, classroom perspective to that of the wider school can be difficult (Harris et al., 2000).

> *Middle leadership is not easy. In some schools responsibility allowance holders can feel trapped between members of their team and the SLT as a result of conflicting expectations from these two groups of people. When teachers gain promotion internally to a middle leadership position, they take with them 'baggage' from their earlier roles and can find it quite stressful to settle into new relationships with colleagues, especially holding people to account. (Fleming, 2014, p. 39)*

As part of the accountability regime, MLs are now accountable to SLs (their line managers) for the quality of work in their department or responsibility area and are asked to undertake monitoring, supervising and evaluating the work of teachers. In a large primary or secondary school, the reality is that it is impossible for the SLs alone to monitor and evaluate the work of all teachers in the school and this task has been largely delegated to MLs (Bennett et al., 2007; Fitzgerald, 2009). Bennett (1995, p. 75) found that MLs are often reluctant to observe the teaching of colleagues and other studies (for example, Fletcher-Campbell, 2003; O'Neill, 2000; Turner, 1996) confirmed that MLs are generally reluctant to monitor, judge, instruct, direct or criticise their colleagues for the fear of upsetting collegiality.

> *What is clear is that the HoD now has a very extensive set of responsibilities placed upon him/her. The major constraint is clearly the amount of time available to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning undertaken within the department. …… Constraints of time only serve to reduce the direct influence of a HoD over what might be judged to be their major concern, i.e. the quality of teaching and learning in the department. Nevertheless, as Torrington & Weightman found, even if time were made available, it is extremely doubtful whether HoDs would be willing to formally work in this way. (Turner, 1996, p. 216)*

MLs in primary schools, in particular, have often doubted their professional expertise to monitor their colleagues (Hammersley-Fletcher & Kirkham, 2007; Lunn & Bishop, 2002) and "held reservations about entering a colleague's classroom on such an (evaluation) exercise" (McGarvey, Marriott, Morgan, & Abbott, 1997, p. 384). MLs in primary schools are not necessarily the subject expert in the way a ML in a secondary school would be typically. Many MLs in primary schools 'leading' subjects have no formal qualification in the subject, or knowledge of teaching it. Ritchie (1997) found that more than half of the surveyed primary subject co-ordinators did not have any specific subject 'qualifications' for the role. Thus it did not come as a surprise when many MLs in primary schools prefer not to conduct lesson observations and instead check exercise books, lesson plans and assessments (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002; Bennett, 1995; Hammersley-Fletcher, 2002).

Furthermore, a significant number of teachers did not accept that the MLs should be observing their teaching (Wise, 2001). This lack of acceptance of "top-down model of monitoring" is "possibly because the concept of monitoring work is equated with accountability and surveillance … rather than issues of equity and quality" (Wise, 2001, p. 338). As a consequence, the MLs in Wise's (2001, p. 338) study did not institute formal monitoring procedures to avoid damaging good relations with their teachers. Turner (2003, p. 223) describes this as the "micropolitical context" in which MLs have to work in. The key point here is that there is significant role conflict with respect to the supervision and monitoring role of the ML.

> *For example, the messages conveyed with regard to monitoring and supervision produce considerable conflict for the middle manager, particularly when one group, the team members, is viewed as having greater legitimate influence but is resistant to monitoring and the other, the senior managers, expect monitoring to take place and have greater positional authority. (Wise, 2001, p. 340)*

The dilemma for MLs in this regard is that while they “like to be collaborative, democratic and collegial, they are also supervisors” (Deece, 2003, p. 49). The only way out of this conflict was to provide greater role clarity and to allocate more time to the task of monitoring. However, a number of recent studies (for example, Adey, 2000; Wise, 2001; Wise & Bush, 1999) suggest that the attitude to managing staff may be changing. MLs in these studies have indicated “their acceptance of the need for monitoring and supervising their team members” (Wise, 2001, p. 340) and “gave ‘supervising/monitoring colleagues’ work’ a high ranking in their priorities” (Wise, 2001, p. 338).

> *In particular, their acceptance of responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning within their subject area is leading to an acceptance of the need to monitor and evaluate the work of teaching staff within their department or faculty, and an acceptance of the need to take action to deal with identified problems. (Adey, 2000, p. 428)*
>
> *Whereas previously, heads of department and other academic middle managers were not accepting their staff management role, there is evidence that this has changed. (Wise, 2001, p. 340).*

3.9.3.2 Role ambiguity

Role ambiguity covers a range of issues in the middle leadership literature and included, for example, the absence of formal role descriptions (Earley & Fletcher-Campbell, 1989; Irvine & Brundrett, 2016; White, 2000). Even when formal role descriptions actually existed, there seems to be significant differences in how these role descriptions have been interpreted by MLs (Adey, 2000; Glover & Miller, 1999). A number of these studies (for example, Collier et al., 2002; Cranston, 2006) have shown that MLs often have a complex and conflicting set of duties that include teaching, staff supervision and development, curriculum leadership, pupils discipline and welfare, school administration, professional development and other duties. Other studies (for example, Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002; Weller, 2001) have reinforced the perception that the ML role is extremely challenging as “the role of middle leader is often reactive and unpredictable” (Irvine & Brundrett, 2016, p. 89). In response to the complaint that the ML role has often expanded beyond what was actually stated in the job description (Weller, 2001), White (2002) recommended a publication of a document akin to the ‘National Standards for Subject Leaders’ that could help ML to focus on their role as drivers of curriculum and pedagogical change. White (2002) opined the role effectiveness can only be enhanced with greater role clarity. Cardno and Bassett (2015, p. 36) requested SLs to “communicate clearly what it expects” and provide “absolute clarity about the scope, functions and expectations of middle leadership within each institutional context". This role ambiguity has persisted in spite

of the development of standards for MLs in a number of jurisdictions (Teacher Training Agency, 1998) and the increasing understanding of the role as enacted in practice which was the subject of research in the decade from 1990 (for example, Siskin, 1994; Turner & Bolam, 1998; White, 1999; White, 2001, 2002).

Another aspect of this role ambiguity is the way that MLs are often not involved in the overall school strategic planning. Abolghasemi, McCormick and Connors (1999) have drawn attention to this lack of involvement of MLs as creating difficulty when it comes to enacting the vision for the whole school. Others have reported a fair degree of satisfaction on the part of MLs in terms of their inclusion in whole school strategic planning while at the same time noting that there can be problems with communication because, "The structure of the modern secondary school militates against effective communication, with vertical barriers between departments and horizontal barriers between teaching staff, Heads of Department and Senior school executive" (Dinham, et al., 2000). A consequence of this problem of communication and lack of involvement in whole school strategic planning is the possibility that the aims and goals of the whole school might be at odds with the interests of the individual department (Abolghasemi et al., 1999; Bennett, 1999). MLs have a "sandwiched" role as "on the one hand they are the leader of their department and its spokesperson to the senior leadership; on the other hand, however, they are also called on to be the voice of the senior leadership to the department" (Irvine & Brundrett, 2016, p. 89). This has remained a central issue for MLs given the way secondary schools operate.

> *Senior staff expect middle leaders to become involved in the wider whole-school context, but many are reluctant to do so, preferring to see themselves as departmental advocates. This is exacerbated by the tendency of secondary schools, in particular, to operate within hierarchical structures, which also act as a constraint on the degree to which subject leaders can act collegially. (Bennett et al., 2003, p. 1)*

MLs appeared to be faring badly in the face of the pressures and challenges. A recent Post Primary Teachers' Association report (New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association, 2015) concluded that "there is a perception that the pressures on curriculum middle leaders have increased over recent years" and "many teachers, including principals, do not regard curriculum middle leadership as attractive." In an international study of teachers and school executives, Dinham and Scott (2002) found MLs in schools reported the highest levels of stress and had the lowest overall satisfaction across samples from Australia, New Zealand, the USA and England. Collier et al. (2002) citing published empirical data, agree that the negative experiences could be attributed to role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload.

Ingvarson et al. (2005) found that 84% of secondary MLs in their New Zealand study felt that their workload was heavy and 47% felt that it was adversely affecting their health. In fact, these tensions and ambiguities are seen by some as inherent in the role itself, “The department head’s role will always be a challenging one” (Weller, 2001, p. 80).

3.10 THE ROLE OF SCHOOL SENIOR LEADERS

The shift to distributed perspectives of leadership does not imply that “principals are redundant” (Harris, 2011, p. 8). In fact, research evidence to date suggests the contrary. The SL remains the central source of leadership in schools (Anderson, 2012; Day et al., 2009; Wahlstrom et al., 2010) and in primary schools, “The headteacher is the ultimate school leader and is accountable for what happens in the school” (Hammersley-Fletcher & Brundrett, 2008, p. 13). In a review of evidence from empirical studies of leadership for learning, Hallinger (2011) found that the role of the SLs is important as they typically determine the allocation of leadership responsibilities within the school or just to “co-ordinate or link others’ leadership efforts” (Anderson, 2012, p. 55). Gurr and Drysdale (2013, p. 62) opine that “the work of these leaders is heavily dependent on how their roles are constructed” as “school-level leaders who have considerable discretion in determining how much authority to award their department heads” (Leithwood, 2016, p. 131). Anderson (2012, p. 55) suggests that “the productive distribution of leadership in schools depends more on the principal’s disposition toward collective influence and shared leadership”.

A study in English primary schools by Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham (2007, p. 427) confirmed that the primary SL “still exercises an enormous power even if this is simply to ‘allow’ others to take responsibility”. SLs in English primary schools appear to “wield enormous powers either to delegate to staff or to retain elements of responsibility” (Hammersley-Fletcher & Kirkham, 2007, p. 428) and the roles and responsibilities of MLs are largely determined by how the SL choose to structure the school (Fletcher-Campbell, 2003). A recent comparative study of MLs in Swedish and Australian primary schools found that the support of SLs is critical as these “leaders created hospitable conditions under which the middle leaders could act to effect change in their particular schools” (Grootenboer, Edwards-Groves, & Ronnerman, 2015, p. 519). Leithwood (2016, p. 126) found a similar situation in secondary schools after reviewing empirical evidence about the work of departments and department heads in secondary schools.

> *Some principals hold a shared or distributed view of school leadership, a view that creates opportunities and expectations for department heads to lead improvements in their own departments and contribute to school-wide leadership. In other cases,*

however, principals view department heads merely as conduits for their own initiatives and leave little room for department-head initiative. (p. 126)

The behaviour of the SL has remained "a key factor in the extent to which middle leaders are enabled to act as leaders" (Hammersley-Fletcher & Kirkham, 2007, p. 427) and this probably explained why it is easier for MLs to function effectively in some schools than in other schools (Fletcher-Campbell, 2003). For example, Moos (2010, p. 119) found that many MLs "asked for the principal's advice or acceptance of their ideas … wanted a "father's or mother's nod" … for ideas or actions that they themselves were authorised to act". In schools where leadership is more distributed, the scope of the ML role is found to be more varied and extensive (Hammersley-Fletcher & Kirkham, 2007).

The literature reviewed highlighted the critical role of SLs in the determination as well as development of the ML role (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013; Hammersley-Fletcher & Kirkham, 2007; Leithwood, 2016; Peacock, 2014). If SLs want to capitalise and realise the benefits of the ML role, they will need to take responsibility for developing the capacity of MLs (Cardno & Bassett, 2015; Dimmock, 2012; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013). SLs can build up MLs' leadership capacity by providing MLs with "quality professional learning, building a productive and collaborative school culture, and enhancing organisational policies, structures and processes" and these would typically include "induction, coaching, mentoring, teaming, learning communities, formal and informal training, short and long term professional learning opportunities and a supportive performance management program" (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013, p. 66).

Klar (2012, pp. 185-190) described five main strategies that SLs can use to foster development of MLs' instructional leadership capacities within their unique school contexts:

1. Cultivate a shared understanding of distributed instructional leadership (pp. 185-186)
2. Provide opportunities to develop instructional leadership (pp. 186-187)
3. Provide opportunities to be instructional leaders (pp. 187-188)
4. Monitor needs and adjust required level of support (pp. 188-189)
5. Demonstrate a long-term commitment to distributed instructional leadership (pp. 189-190)

3.11 COMMENTARY

From the review of literature, several propositions of successful MLs can be drawn. The propositions are that successful MLs:

- Have strong personal and professional values and respect others' values.
- Analyse situations or contexts both internal and external to the department.

- Develop the department vision, formulate mission statements, foster the acceptance of group goals, create high expectations, and set directions and strategies. All of this process is underpinned by beliefs and values, and dynamically and continuously consulting the contexts and situations.
- Develop strong teaching-learning characteristics including a focus on curriculum and instruction.
- Foster professional development of themselves and staff through ways such as intellectual stimulation, providing individualised support, carefully planned programs, and modelling.
- Redesign the organisation, including identifying and creating and/or changing the departmental cultures, and modifying organisational structures.
- Build collaborative cultures which encourage high involvement by the department's stakeholders in the decision-making processes, and establish broader collaboration with a wider community.

3.12 RESEARCH ON SCHOOL MIDDLE LEADERS IN SINGAPORE

There is a paucity of school leadership literature in Singapore (Dimmock, 2011b; Dimmock & Tan, 2013). The literature base on middle leadership in Singapore is limited to a relatively small number of unpublished dissertations, book chapters and articles in international journals. Within this small but growing corpus, there were several studies that had a focus on middle leadership development programmes (e.g. MLS, DDM and FPDE). The literature related to MLs and their leadership in Singapore is reviewed in this section.

3.12.1 Importance of school middle leaders

The middle leadership literature coming out of Singapore is clear who MLs are. MLs are teachers formally appointed to the leadership positions of HOD, SH and LH and "often called the middle management or middle leadership and is set against the context of distributed leadership in school" (Heng, Ratnam-Lim, & Tan, 2017, p. 15). MLs have been described as "the human link between national educational policy as manifested in school-level strategic planning, on one hand, and the teaching staff whose 'field tactics' are used to implement such strategies, on the other hand" (Chew, 2008, p. 135). According to Ng (2009), MLs are "co-school leaders in their schools" (p. 33) and "key members who also exercise school leadership" (p. 31). For example, MLs are "pedagogical leaders since school leaders cannot be curriculum leaders in every discipline area" and "they are the ones who influence and guide teachers under their charge" (Lim-Teo, Chua, & Yeo, 2011, p. 224). As such, MLs in Singapore schools are seen as "a significant source in ensuring that quality education reaches out to the pupils" (Low & Lim, 1997, p. 77). Chew (2008, p. 148) reiterates the importance of MLs by

asserting that “principals (and their vice-principals) would never be able to handle the increasingly complex world of education without these officers”.

3.12.2 Role(s) of school middle leaders

Chong, Stott, and Low (2003) describes the ML role as “multifaceted”:

> *They teach; they undertake administrative duties; they set the direction for their respective departments; they plan, implement and evaluate; and they deal with professional development of their teachers. (p. 171)*

From a questionnaire survey of 160 MLs in twenty secondary schools and interviews with ten randomly selected HODs, Chan (1990) found that MLs played four key roles in the management of secondary schools. These roles were 1. General school administration; 2. Co-ordinating the curriculum; 3. Classroom management; and 4. Managing the instructional programme. MLs in Chan’s (1990) study felt that the focus of their role should be on ‘co-ordinating the curriculum’ and ‘managing the instructional programme’ as they “viewed themselves as instructional and professional leaders of their departments” (p. 126). They also believed as instructional leaders, they should be focussing on “implementing, monitoring and evaluating the instructional programme as well as planning and conceptualising the instructional programme to meet students’ needs” (Chan, 1990, p. 126). These duties would include “sharing their expertise and professional views with their staff and co-ordinating the work of the department to ensure optimal utilisation of resources and learning materials” (Chan, 1990, p. 130).

In another study of MLs, Kings, Dixit and Zhang (1994) surveyed 125 MLs undertaking the FPDE course to understand the ML role in schools. They found the ML role consisted of the following duties and responsibilities:

- Planning of a comprehensive teaching programme.
- Monitoring the teaching programme.
- Implementing the teaching programme.
- Evaluating the teaching programme.
- Developing and adapting effective teaching strategies.
- Co-ordination of resources.
- Professional development of teachers.

While MLs in Kings et al.’s (1994) study thought of all the roles listed above as all being important, they considered their priorities to be on planning, implementing, monitoring and

evaluating the instructional programme. Professional development was perceived as one of the least important roles. Kings et al. (1994, p. 13) argued that “if real changes are to be effected in schools it will be more necessary for professional development to be perceived and realised as more central to the Head of Department role”. Kings et al. (1994, p. 13) opined that “this more pivotal role of professional development will provide the basis of continuous improvement in all other activities that Heads of Department will undertake” and suggested MLs undertake the following tasks in order to foster change and achieve continuous improvement in schools:

- Encouraging dissemination of information;
- Encouraging a high level of communication;
- Sponsoring the development of teaching and assessment planning groups;
- Delegating responsibilities and roles;
- Modelling good practice;
- Encouraging reflective practice; and
- Providing a supportive and positive climate.

Two out of three MLs in Kings et al.’s (1994) study perceived their role as “more reactive than proactive” (p. 13) and involved “responding to others’ expectations” (p. 4) and “did their jobs as described by the Ministry or told by the principal” (p. 7). Most MLs complained about having “no power or authority in this role” (Kings et al., 1994, p. 7). This reinforced the traditional view of MLs “as mere implementers and quality managers, setting a specific direction, constructing programmes to fulfil the requirements of senior management, and developing staff and resources” (Chew, 2008, p. 139).

Kaur, Ferrucci and Carter (2004) surveyed twelve MLs in charge of mathematics department in secondary schools to assess the MLs’ influence and impact on students’ achievement. The study found “the potentially powerful role played by HoDs and other subject leaders in enhancing student achievement” (Kaur et al., 2004, p. 98). Kaur et al. (2004, p. 95) found MLs were able to influence the quality of achievement in mathematics through:

- Putting in place action plans (e.g. selecting suitable textbooks and better tracking of pupil performance);
- Setting departmental targets and goals;
- Preparing schemes of work (e.g. to include IT and thinking skills into lessons);
- Monitoring of departmental programmes;
- Supervision of departmental staff;
- Setting examples; and

- Encouraging sharing sessions during department meetings.

Looking through the list above, a number of the strategies used to enhance student achievement concerned the professional development of teachers in the department. The strategies used by MLs in Kaur et al.'s (2004) study to enhance the quality of professional learning in their department include being a/an:

- Role model;
- Expert in the field;
- Mentor and coach to capitalise on teachers' potential and to nurture and maximise teachers' potential;
- Catalyst for transforming the department into a professional learning community through the implementation of professional sharing sessions for professional sharing of lessons and resources (e.g. learning circle) and peer coaching e.g. mentoring of weaker teachers by experienced teachers.

Kaur et al. (2004, p. 96) concluded that the key role of MLs was to "ensure that teachers are comfortable with embracing changes in the educational system" and "when teachers were better prepared and equipped to implement change by the departmental culture, there was enhanced achievement at the school level". This concurred with King et al.'s (1994) call for MLs to focus on the professional development of teachers.

Chew (2008) found that the ML role has changed and became more complex with the introduction of TSLN policy initiative in 1997. Chew (2008, p. 145) pointed out that the ML role has evolved to "a manager of material resources and a motivator of human resources to achieve specific goals set by superior officers". In fact, Ng (2009, p. 32) opined that "in the current education context, one critical role that MLs play is to support their principal in school-based reform and leading various aspects of it".

> *Before the early 1980s, departments had senior teachers (teachers with long experience and proven ability) who led by example and did administrative duties by default. From the time heads of department were introduced, they were seen in somewhat similar light, but perhaps a greater load of administrative responsibility. After 1997, the role was made altogether more complex; in fact, it was quite possible that the range of roles encompassed by people who were labelled middle management could never be subsumed within a single person unless that person was able to be operationally successful in many dimensions. (Chew, 2008, p. 148)*

Under EPMS, MLs are placed on the same 'leadership' track as SLs and are no longer appraised along the same lines as teachers. Chew (2008, p. 136) described MLs as "principal-minus" i.e. a person somewhat short of principalhood, but with almost all the necessary skills. And like SLs, MLs are primarily evaluated on leadership competencies such as:

- As facilitators e.g. sources of feedback, support, resources and encouragement.
- Able to work under ever-changing and ambigious conditions without negative feelings.
- Creative adpators of theoretical concepts and data.
- Decisive, proactive officers who understood the rationale behind educational policies and were prepare to persuade others to understand and execute such policies.

In order to be successful in their role, Chew (2008, p. 147) believed that MLs should be able to balance the following three dimensions:

1. Professional practice and development. This concerns the work in developing the department and its teachers in support of school goals.
2. Political and cultural environment of the school. This involves competing against other MLs within the same school for performance bonus.
3. Societal expectations and the values promulgated by the state. This means the school's success is measured and compared with other schools at national level.

3.12.3 Leadership qualities and dimensions

Au (1999) investigated the teachers' perceptions of the leadership qualities of MLs in one secondary school through a mixed method study consisting of observations, interviews and survey questionnaire. Fifty teachers completed the survey questionnaire of fifty-one leadership qualities and eight teachers were interviewed. Nineteen essential and important leadership qualities of effective secondary MLs were identified, as selected by at least thirty percent of teachers. The leadership qualities are listed in Table 3.3. These qualities reflected the teachers' preference to have MLs "behaving as leaders with those essential qualities to lead the departments toward excellence in teaching and learning, and the school to becoming an effective organisation" (Au, 1999, p. 59).

Au (1999) found a number of the nineteen essential and important leadership qualities were also used by Teschke (1996) to characterise effective SLs. This led Au (1999) to conclude that SLs and MLs possessed similar leadership qualities to perform essential leadership roles in effective secondary schools. Au (1999, p. 55) went on to argue that "principals are not the only leader in schools and heads of department are expected to fulfil leadership functions and influence the cultures of both their departments, as well as the school".

Table 3.3

Leadership qualities (Au, 1999)

No	Leadership Qualities	% of Teachers
1	Realistic	66
2	Encouraging	56
3	Fair	54
4	Knowledgeable, Organised, Communicating, Decisive	52
5	Visionary	38
6	Competent, Open-minded	36
7	Flexible, Confident, Innovative	34
8	Supportive, Creative	32
9	Caring, Consistent, Honest, Inspirational	30

Jayaram (2003) investigated teachers' perceptions of effective leadership behaviours of MLs in one primary school. Sixty-six teachers completed the questionnaire. Five distinct dimensions of leadership behaviours that teachers perceived to be vital components of an effective ML were identified. The leadership dimensions and behaviours are listed in Table 3.4. The Friendliness, Achievement and Authenticity dimensions were identified in the literature while two new dimensions Dynamism and Authoritative surfaced from the promax factor analysis.

Friendliness was found to be the most important effective leadership dimension. This manifested in three aspects: 1. Valuing the contributions and efforts of co-workers; 2. Relating effectively with others; and 3. Fostering collaboration (Jayaram, 2003, p. 78). This particular finding corroborated with the published literature that collegiality was particularly important for primary teachers. This view that effective MLs are also collaborative and consultative recurs through Jayaram (2003) study. The study also found that teachers expect SLS to consult and involve them in decision-making and at the same time, they also expect clear instructions to be set out by their SLs after the issues have been discussed and decided. Jayaram (2003, p. 86) attributed this phenomenon to "cultural value of respect and acknowledging hierarchical relationships".

3.12.4 Perceptions of work performance

Sharifah (2001) surveyed eighteen SLs and twenty-seven MLs in nine primary school of one school cluster to identify the role competencies of MLs. The competencies in the questionnaire were drawn from Sergiovanni's Self Evaluation Check List and the job descriptions of MLs. The role competencies identified were related to what can be described as "curriculum and instructional improvement" and "master teacher and subject specialist". Sharifah (2001) found no significant difference between SLs and MLs' perceptions of the competencies essential to

the ML role. Both SLs and MLs considered competencies relating to curriculum and instructional improvement as important. SLs expected their MLs to demonstrate the competencies of a master teacher and a subject specialist and viewed MLs as serving as a link between SLs and teachers.

Table 3.4

Leadership dimensions and associated behaviours (Jayaram, 2003)

Dimensions	Behaviours
Friendliness	Sincere Caring Approachable Fairness
Dynamism	Efficient Recognition
Achievement	Perseverance Initiative Supportive
Authoritative	Decisive Ambitious
Authenticity	Genuine Sincere

Lee (2001) surveyed eighty-nine participants across three respondent groups, namely SLs, MLs and teachers from twelve secondary schools to explore the perceptions of MLs' work performance. Lee (2001) used a questionnaire consisting of fifty-eight items adapted from Managerial Practices Survey, Leadership Characteristics Questionnaire and Time Management Behavioural Scale. The items in the questionnaire covered four components of the ML role relating to the management of 1. Learning; 2. People, 3. Resources; and 4. Administrative tasks. All three respondent groups unanimously agreed that MLs in the study were performing to or exceeding expectations. However, Lee (2001, p. 90) found "there are differing perceptions between principals/vice principals, HODs and teachers regarding the extent to which heads of department meet the demands of the appointment in secondary schools". Lee (2001, pp. 87-90) attributed this disparity in perceptions to:

- A lack of communication of between principals / vice principals and MLs.
- The job description of MLs was not explicit enough to achieve a common understanding on the expectations of the role.
- Teachers' unfamiliarity with the MLs' role.

To help “reduce the difference in expectations on the performance”, Lee (2001, pp. 93-94) suggested schools provide an appropriate programme to induct MLs when they were first appointed or posted to another another school. The duties and responsibilities of MLs should be spelt out more explicitly and this, according to Lee (2001, p. 93), “could help to communicate the principals’/vice principals’ and even the ministry’s expectations of the role of HOD to them” and “lead to the narrowing of the gap between the principals’/vice principals’ expectations and the HODs’ actual performance”.

3.12.5 Preparation and training

The training and development of school leaders (both SLs and MLs) in the Singapore school system can be described as “systemic and thorough” (Ng, Ng, & Ng, 2006, p. 35). Since the ML roles were introduced to the school system in the early eighties, MLs have access to one of the longest established ML development programme (Bush, 2005). The first customised course for ML was the one-year full time FPDE. FPDE was replaced by a five-month full time Diploma in Departmental Management (DDM) course in 1999. The DDM was revamped in 2002 and this was later replaced by the Management and Leadership in Schools (MLS) programme in 2007. The name change from FPDE to DDM, according to Chew (2008), signaled a change in the ML role.

> *The name-changes themselves seem to tell a story or convey a message: the official view of departmental headship changed from that of further professional development (teacher-plus) to a management role (principal-minus); the view of principalship changed from a primarily administrative/executive one (principal as bureaucrat) to an executive/leadership role (principal as visionary). (Chew, , p. 140)*

MLs attend these programmes on full pay and the course fees are fully paid for by the MOE (Low & Lim, 1997; Ng et al., 2006). The primary goal of these training programmes is to prepare MLs to carry out their roles effectively (Chong et al., 2003; Lee & Stott, 2002; Ng, 2009; Ng et al., 2006). The primary focus of these programmes was on departmental management and to equip the participants with “the competence to deal with the here and now” (Chong et al., 2003, p. 173). As a consequence, the emphasis is on developing managerial skills such as managing the departmental team, staff development and appraisal, resource management and financial management. There was also some emphasis on leadership development (such as leadership theories and behaviours) and on curriculum design, development and evaluation. However, as many participants were already appointed MLs when they attend these programmes, “it is more of a question of enhancing their capability” (Chong et al., 2003, p. 171).

DDM was revamped in 2001 and relaunched as the 'new' DDM in 2002. The remit of the new DDM was to "equip … Heads of Department (HODs) with the skills, values, dispositions and knowledge to transform schools into learning organisations for both staff and students" (Ng, et al., 2003, p. 252). The new DDM was designed to help MLs "serve as co-leaders in their schools … model the capability and willingness to be lifelong learners … be innovative in conceptualising and implementing appropriate learning programmes for students who are destined to move into new types of work in the post-industrial and global economy" (Ng et al., 2003, p. 253). MLs would have to "extend their capability" and "become more innovative in their spheres of responsibility, more autonomous, more accountable for results and success in defined areas, more professionally expert in their areas, and they must develop more capability to take on complex assignments as opposed to machine-like chores" (DDM Handbook, 2006).

In order to achieve these objectives, the new DDM "moved away from skills and competencies training into an exciting world of knowledge creation" (Lee & Stott, 2002, p. 8). The new DDM consisted of the five main components; School visits; Core modules; Elective modules; Forums; and Industrial visits. Chew (2008, p. 141) believed the social constructivism approach has helped to "engage the participants as active members of a community of continuous learning, rather than as individuals who were being 'upgraded' one by one before being released to do their own thing".

An longitudinal evaluation study on the new DDM undertaken by Lee and Stott (2004) found that participants were "very positive about the course" (p. 18) and the course has "strong, significant, and lasting impact on the participants" (p. 28). Lee and Stott (2004) opined that the positive perceptions were due to the course's usefulness in preparing them for their current role as well as any roles they may be asked to take on in the future. This confirmed the findings of an earlier study conducted by the same authors that "DDM participants have been well served by the new programme" (Ng et al., 2003, p. 260).

The MLS programme replaced the DDM in July 2007. According to Ng (2009, p. 33), the key underlying philosophies and design principles of MLS are social constructivism and authentic learning and application. MLS consisted of the following main components: Core courses; Elective courses; Facilitation groups; Learning journal; Curriculum project; School visits; and Overseas and Industrial visits. There have been at least two evaluations of the MLS programme (Heng & Marsh, 2009; Ng, 2009). Heng and Marsh (2009) interviewed twelve MLs from twelve primary schools undertaking the MLS to find out what they think about leadership and learning. They (Heng & Marsh, 2009) found that MLs in the study learnt by developing

personal capacity in knowledge, skills and values, understanding people, context and change, participating in shared decision making and having the courage to learn. MLs in Heng and Marsh's (2009, p. 533) study saw themselves as "adapting to and shaping change" in schools by becoming "inspirational leaders and learners". Ng (2009) analysed the journal entries of a cohort of MLs undertaking MLS to understand how the leadership development programme has benefited the participants. Ng (2009, pp. 38-42) were able to conclude from the analysis of the journal entries that MLS participants have found attending the MLS beneficial and in the following ways.

1. The MLS programme gave MLs time and space to reflect on their personal direction and growth.
2. The MLS programme triggered MLs to examine what they do in school.
3. The MLS programme facilitated MLs in their understanding and interpreting of education policies.
4. The MLS programme encouraged MLs to be active learners again.
5. The MLS programme facilitated the formation of a collegial community for networking and support.

3.12.6 Challenges associated with the role of school middle leader

There were three MEd dissertations that are focused on the challenges associated with the ML role. Ong (1996) surveyed 316 MLs across 151 secondary schools to examine the nature and extent of stress experienced by secondary MLs. A majority (84.8%) of MLs surveyed reported experiencing stress and nearly six in ten MLs reported their stress level as 'high' or 'somewhat high'. Six school-situated factors were identified and the main sources of stress identified were: 'Role conflict', 'Role ambiguity', 'Collegiality', 'Time pressures', 'Leadership', 'Nature of job', 'Family relationships' and 'Family commitments'. Ong (1996) found MLs experienced high levels of stress from 'Time pressures' and 'Collegiality'. 'Time pressures' relate to insufficient time to complete work because of having too many areas of responsibilities, particularly from excessive administrative load. Collegiality refers to teacher-related problems such as having to work with irresponsible and uncooperative teachers. The lowest ranked stressor was 'Role ambiguity' and one plausible explanation was MLs were provided with "fairly clear and adequate information about the scope and responsibilities of their jobs" and SLs "managed to spell out their expectations of department head" (Ong, 1996, p. 95). A number of strategies to help reduce the stress levels experienced by MLs and these include:

- A careful and comprehensive planning of school programmes to reduce wastage of time and effort on redundant work;
- Deployment of adequate resources;

- A clear job description for MLs; and
- Better communications within the school community (Ong, 1996).

Tay (1996) surveyed 156 MLs in charge of English and Mathematics departments across 103 secondary schools to understand the extent of role conflict experienced by MLs. Surveyed MLs reported experiencing a 'moderate' level of role conflict and attributed their experience of role conflict to role overload conflict, person-role conflict and inter-role conflict. MLs felt overwhelmed by their duties, particularly administrative duties not related to their departments and this was, according to Tay (1996), an indication of role overload. Tay (1996) identified seven key task areas within the ML role. They were 1. Leadership; 2. Curriculum Planning; 3. Curriculum Implementation; 4. Curriculum Monitoring; 5. Curriculum Evaluation; 6. Supervision and 7. Middle Management. MLs were found to spend a disproportionate amount of time on responsibilities in the 'Middle Management' task area, for example, carrying out administrative duties and school responsibilities assigned by SLs. MLs also reported experiencing role conflict as they were not able to devote more time than they ideally like to on planning and co-ordinating the instructional programme under their charge, such as establishing a long-term vision for their departments, and planning alternative programmes and implementing new strategies to improve learning. MLs also appeared to have difficulties in accepting and coping with management tasks not associated with the instructional programme. Tay (1996) found that MLs who experienced higher levels of role conflict were less satisfied with their performance and were less keen to continue with the role.

Sharifah (2001) also explored role overload and role ambiguity through quantitative methods. More than half of the MLs in Sharifah's (2001) study acknowledged experiencing role overload. These MLs indicated "they have too much work for one to do" and did not feel "they are given ample time for the task given to them" (Sharifah, 2001, p. 90). In addition, half of them lamented "they just do not have the time to take an occasional break" (Sharifah, 2001, p. 90). According to Hairon, Goh and Gopinathan (2015, p. 2), "This is a result of the growing demands placed on schools so much so that administrative decisions have to be passed on from senior to middle leaders". The finding of role overload resonated with earlier studies (Ong, 1996; Tay, 1996). Sharifah (2001) also found that more than half of the MLs surveyed did not experience role ambiguity. These MLs indicated they were "clear what is expected of them on their job" and "know the performance standards expected of them" (Sharifah, 2001, p. 91). This finding was identical to the earlier Ong (1996) study. Put it simply, MLs in Ong (1996) and Sharifah (2001) study knew what their role were but felt that they were overworked.

As a likely consequence of experiencing role overload, Sharifah (2001, p. 93) found four in ten MLs in her study were “not too satisfied with their job” and if they were offered the opportunity to decide again, more than half “would not take the same job”. To address the issue of role overload, Sharifah (2001) put forth a suggestion for MOE and SLs to review the position description of MLs to ensure careful delineation of work for MLs. She also proposed that MLs be provided with targeted professional learning and development to help them better deal with the increasing administrative and supervisory demands of the ML role.

Wang (2015) investigated the role of a HOD ICT in a primary school in Singapore using a case study approach. He (Wang, 2015) found the ML role to be both complex and demanding. The ML in his case study played the roles of planner, curriculum leader and manager and the duties included teaching, managing resources and non-ICT related administrative work. Wang (2015) concluded that the ML was facing workload issues and the heavy workload had adversely affected the ML’s ability to carry out her leadership role effectively. Like Sharifah (2001), Wang (2015, p. 22) suggested that the school should “provide more support to the HOD ICT and develop a more clearly defined role for it”.

3.12.7 Commentary

From the review of relevant middle leadership literature from Singapore, a number of inferences could be drawn.

- The reviewed studies focused only partially on some aspects of ML role. None of the studies appears to look at the ML leadership role which gives rise to the interest of this study.
- The approach used in conducting the research was mainly quantitative. The notable exception was Heng & Marsh (2009) while Au (1999) and Jayaram (2003) supplemented their surveys with a small number of interviews.
- The reviewed studies were mainly concerned with secondary schools. Only four studies were conducted in primary schools.
- Most of the reviewed studies were completed before the introduction of the TLLM policy initiative in 2004. Numerous MOE policies and initiatives have been introduced to the school system since. MLs in Singapore schools have been faced with new challenges and as Dimmock and Tan (2013, p. 336) have noted, “functions and forms of schools constantly evolve, so do leaders and leadership”. This study is an attempt to develop a contemporary understanding of the ML leadership role in Singapore primary schools.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the methodology used in the study is explained. Hermeneutic phenomenology is defined and its use in the study justified. The selection of research sites, the sampling process, the methods of data collection and the processes of data analysis are also described. The trustworthiness of this study, along the lines described for investigations in the naturalistic paradigm, are discussed and the limitations and delimitations of the study are explored. Finally, the profile of the schools and participants involved are reported.

4.2 NATURALISTIC INQUIRY

The research design for the study was in a qualitative research tradition using a naturalistic inquiry approach. The assumptions used in the naturalistic inquiry paradigm tend to lead to a different type of research process to that found in the positivist paradigm. In Table 4.1, Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline the contrasting axioms of the naturalist and positivist paradigms. These axioms have important implications for planning and conducting research in the naturalist paradigm.

1. Research is carried out in a natural setting.
2. Humans are used as the primary data-gathering instruments.
3. Tacit knowledge (intuitive, felt) is used in addition to propositional knowledge (expressible in language form) to appreciate the nuances of the multiple realities.
4. Qualitative methods are preferred over quantitative methods to deal with the multiple and less aggregable realities.
5. Purposive sampling is favoured over random or representative sampling to increase the range of data collected and the likelihood that the full array of multiple realities will be uncovered.
6. Inductive data analysis is preferred to deductive data analysis to identify multiple realities to be found in the data.
7. Guiding substantive theory that emerged from (be grounded in) the data is preferred over a priori theory.
8. Emergent research design is preferred to a priori research design.
9. Meanings and interpretations of data preferred to be negotiated with those from whom it has been drawn.
10. Case study reporting mode is preferred over the scientific or technical report.
11. Data are interpreted idiographically rather than nomothetically.
12. Broad application of research findings likely to be tentative because realities are multiple and different.

13. Boundaries to the inquiry are set on the basis of an emergent focus.
14. Trustworthiness criteria are constructed differently to “conventional” criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity.

Table 4.1

Contrasting positivist and naturalistic axioms (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37)

Axioms about	Positivist paradigm	Naturalist paradigm
The nature of reality	Reality is single, tangible, and fragmentable	Realities are multiple, constructed and holistic
The relationship of knower to the known	Knower and known are independent, a dualism	Knower and known are interactive, inseparable
The possibility of generalisation	Time- and context-free generalisations (nomothetic statements) are possible	Only time- and context-bound working hypotheses (idiographic statements) are possible
The possibility of causal linkages	There are real causes, temporally precedent to or simultaneous with their effects	All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects
The role of values	Inquiry is value-free	Inquiry is value-bound

4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research, broadly defined, means “any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp. 10-11). Merriam (2014), however, believed there is no “simple” definition of qualitative research as “the field of qualitative research is complex, changing and contested” (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 144). Qualitative research is seen as “an umbrella term that encompasses enormous variety of methodological traditions, strategies and designs, approaches to data, and methods for the analysis of data” (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 144). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) offer a definition that reflects the complexity of the method:

> *Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their naturalistic settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)*

Merriam (2014, pp. 14-16) highlights four characteristics common to all types of qualitative research:

1. The interest is in understanding how people make sense of the world.
2. The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis compared with using other data collection instruments.
3. It primarily employs an inductive research process by building towards concepts, hypotheses or theories rather than testing them. It builds towards theory from observations and intuitive understandings acquired from the field.
4. The product of qualitative inquiry is richly descriptive. Words and pictures, rather than numbers, are used to convey what has been learned about the phenomenon.

She also points out other characteristics common to most forms of qualitative research:

- the design is often emergent and flexible responding to changing circumstances;
- sample selection is usually non-random, purposeful and small; and
- researchers spend significant amounts of time in the natural settings of the study and often in intense contact with participants.

In the quote below, Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014, p. 4) state the usefulness of qualitative research data:

> *Qualitative data are a source of well grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of human processes. With qualitative data, one can preserve chronological flow, see which events led to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations. Then, too, good qualitative data are more likely to lead to serendipitous findings and to new integrations; they help researchers get beyond initial conceptions and generate or revise conceptual frameworks. Finally, the findings from well-analysed qualitative studies have a quality of 'undeniability'. Words, especially organised into incidents or stories, have a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavour that often proves far more convincing to a reader – another researcher, policy maker, a practitioner – than pages of summarised numbers. (p. 4)*

4.4 HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Naturalistic inquiry can be conducted in many different forms - ethnography, phenomenology, histories, conversational analyses, or symbolic interactionism. Hermeneutic phenomenology, explicated by the work of van Manen (1997), was chosen as the method of inquiry to gather and analyse the perceptions of the leadership role of MLs in Singapore primary schools. Hermeneutic phenomenology is made up of two words: hermeneutic and phenomenology. This method of inquiry is both descriptive (phenomenological) and interpretive (hermeneutic).

Hermeneutic phenomenology “wants to be attentive to how things appear, it wants to let things speak for themselves … it claims that there are no such things as uninterpreted phenomena”, an “implied contradiction” that can be resolved “if one acknowledges that the (phenomenological) ‘facts’ of lived experience are always already meaningfully (hermeneutically) experienced” (van Manen, 1997, p. 180). Hermeneutic phenomenology, from an epistemological perspective, asserts that objectivity is illogical, and emphasises the inevitability of subjectivity in the inquiry process. That is, it is unavoidable that the researcher does influence the researched as much as the researched influences the researcher. In hermeneutic phenomenology, the findings may not represent true states of affairs. Rather, they represent constructions of a phenomenon as it appears most meaningful to both the researcher and the participants (Connor, 1999).

The hermeneutic phenomenological methodology used in this study is based on that employed by Gurr (1996) in his study relating to the leadership role of principals in Victorian Schools of the Future and that of White’s (2000) research on curriculum area middle managers in Victorian secondary schools. Both studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the hermeneutic phenomenology methodology in researching the phenomenon of leadership in schools. Gurr (1996, pp. 85-86) offered a rationale for the use of hermeneutic phenomenology in research of the type involved in this study and his rationale is based around three points and adapted for the specifics of this study is as follows:

1. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach first seeks to understand the data before ascribing meaning to them. It does not presuppose a meaning to the data. This means that an a priori theoretical framework is not necessary and is a significant benefit of using this method of inquiry. It can be used to test out different theoretical frameworks of leadership as the data generated will not be constrained by any one theoretical position.

2. Hermeneutic phenomenology lends itself to gathering data from a number of different sites because it is inexpensive of time, at least for the initial collecting of information. This is important for this study so that a sufficient number of participants from all three groups (SLs, MLs and teachers) were interviewed to allow the phenomenon to be explored fully and to allow the required comparisons between the groups’ perceptions to be made.

3. The methodology employed is a useful technique for gaining perceptual data. This study was concerned with self-perceptions and the perceptions of others. Perceptual data are important sources of information concerning what people do because the way they see themselves and others influences how they think and act.

4.4.1 Method

In hermeneutic phenomenological research, there are a number of different data collection methods such as personal experience, protocol writing, interviewing, observing and the use of biography, diaries, journals, logs, art and phenomenological literature (van Manen, 1997, pp. 53-76). This study used interviewing to collect data. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 3), an interview is described as "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experience, to uncover their lived world" while Minichiello, Aroni and Hays (2008, p. 47) citing Green and Thorogood (2004, p. 87) define interview as "a conversation that is directed more or less towards the researcher's needs for data … and can be seen as a specific kind of interaction, in which the researcher and the interviewee produce language data about beliefs, behaviour, ways of classifying the world, or about how knowledge is categorised". Interviewing in hermeneutic phenomenological research serves two specific purposes:

1. a means for exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon; or

2. a vehicle to develop a conversational relation with a partner (interview) about the meaning of an experience (van Manen, 1997, p. 66).

For the first purpose, the researcher would need to interview a number of people once and interpret the interviews. For the second purpose, the researcher would have to conduct a number of interviews with each participant and the interpretations of previous interviews would be used to guide subsequent interviews. This study adopted the first purpose as the aim of the research was to gather information about the leadership role of MLs from a number of participants in the schools involved and then use the perceptions to gain insights into the phenomenon under investigation. After taking into account the resource limitations of a doctoral research project, it was decided that it would be too demanding in terms of time, resources and accessibility for the study to adopt the second purpose.

Interviewing could be broadly classified into three forms; fully structured interviews, focussed or semi-structured interviews and loosely structured or unstructured interviews (Minichiello et al., 2008, p. 47). Structured interviewing involves the asking of a predetermined set of standardised questions in a predetermined order and the interviewer has little freedom to make modifications. Focussed or semi-structured interviewing involves the use of a broad topic to guide an interview that is developed within a flexible interview schedule without fixed wording or ordering of questions. Unstructured interviewing relies on the social interaction between the researcher and the interview participants to elicit information and involves no

formal interview schedules or ordering of questions. Focussed or semi-structured interviewing was used to gather the participants' responses in this study. The major advantage of using a focussed or semi-structured interviewing method is that "the data are somewhat more systematic and comprehensive than in the informal conversational interview, while the tone of the interview still remains fairly conversational and informal" (Minichiello et al., 2008, pp. 51-52). All fifty-six interviews conducted for the study are face to face, between the researcher and one participant.

For each participant, the following question is used to initiate discussion:

- For SLs and teachers: With particular regard to leadership, how do you see the role of middle leaders like Heads of Departments, Subject Heads and Level Heads in primary schools?
- For MLs: With particular regard to leadership, how do you see the role of middle leaders like yourselves in primary schools?

The questions were slightly different as the perspectives sought from each group of participants were different. The MLs were asked to reflect on the experience of being a ML whilst the SLs and teachers were asked to reflect on their experience of the leadership role of MLs. The questions were designed to be broad so that participants could raise and focus on the phenomenon that they thought were important. The researcher used an interview guide to ensure the interview remained focussed on the topic at hand. The broad topics and questions contained in the interview guide were guided by the materials contained within the literature review and act as the basis upon which the findings were compared with the conventional views of the phenomenon under investigation.

Each interview was recorded on a digital voice recorder and transcribed. Minichiello et al. (2008, pp. 117-118) highlighted the benefits and problems associated with audio recording of interviews. The major advantages are that it offers a means of obtaining a full and accurate record of the interview. In addition, the interviewer is free to be an attentive and thoughtful listener, together with a more natural conversational style, can help to enhance rapport between the interviewer and participant. On the other hand, some participants may feel inhibited while others may feel excited by the presence of the digital voice recorder. These feelings may alter the information the participants may provide. Furthermore, there is little or no recording of non-verbal data such as body language.

In this study, the potential problem of participant inhibition and excitement was minimised through the use of a small, unobtrusive digital voice recorder. The guarantee of school and

participant anonymity, as well as the fact that participants had control of what was included in the final interview transcript that was used for analysis also further helped to alleviate this problem. Non-verbal communication was not recorded during the interviews and as a result, not used in this study.

A detailed account of the interviewing process is provided in the section “Administration of the Data Collection”.

4.4.2 Sample

The study employed purposeful sampling (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to identify the sites and the participants within each site. Purposive sampling means the researcher “selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 158). In this study, SLs, MLs and teachers are regarded as those who have directly experienced or were experiencing the leadership of MLs and could provide the required information.

The objectives of the study were to gather the perspectives from these participants and to determine the similarity of these perspectives with regard to the leadership role of MLs. For this purpose, it was decided to do this on a school by school basis and across six school sites. There was a need to keep the number of participants low so that the data collection process was manageable. But to be able to make meaningful comparisons, there was a need to interview a sufficient number of participants in each of the three participant groups at each school site. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 235) believe that a dozen interviews of participants of each participant group would exhaust the available information of that group. It was then decided that the selection of ten participants across three participant groups consisting of one to two SLs, two to three MLs and five to six teachers in each school site would allow the data collection and analysis to be manageable but would still enable the research question to be answered. The identification and recruitment of participants were done with the support and co-operation of the co-ordinator at each school site. The final list of participants was made up of those who were approached and agreed to participate.

As in the study by Gurr (1996, p. 108) and White (2000, p. 115), this method of recruiting participants could be criticised on the grounds that the co-ordinator at each school site might only select participants who were sympathetic to the leadership of MLs or some other aspect of the school. However, this study was not concerned in evaluating the leadership of the MLs in the school, or anything else about the school, it did not matter whether the participants were supportive of the leadership of a specific ML or groups of MLs. What was important is that

they were able to comment on the leadership role of the MLs and/or their perceptions of middle leadership generally. If the study had an evaluative focus, then it would have been important to attempt to obtain participants who could have provided a variety of views. Nevertheless, it should be noted many participants spoke freely and were candid with their views.

In total, fifty-six interviews were conducted (twelve SLs, sixteen MLs and twenty-eight teachers) with at least twelve interviews in each participant group. This is a large number of participants describing the leadership role of MLs and the use of six schools allowed the perspectives of the three participant groups to be compared.

4.4.3 Administration of data collection

After receiving approval from the Humanities & Applied Sciences Human Ethics Research Committee (HESC) at The University of Melbourne and Singapore MOE, one school cluster in the western part of Singapore with eight primary schools were identified. The cluster superintendent in charge of the school cluster was approached for his permission to contact the schools in the cluster. The cluster superintendent agreed and appointed a vice-principal in one of the schools to liaise with the researcher on the requirements of the data collection. An introductory email from the cluster superintendent was sent to all eight primary schools in the cluster. The researcher followed up with emails containing more details of the study including documents like the plain language statement and MOE's approval letter. Five schools accepted the invitation while the other three schools declined their school's participation in this study citing existing school commitments and involvement in other research projects. As the planned number of schools for this study is six, another primary school from a neighbouring school cluster was invited through a personal contact of the researcher. The school agreed to participate in the study.

The data collection at each school site was co-ordinated by a SL (usually a vice-principal) or a ML. The researcher provided the co-ordinators with the criteria for selecting the participants and requested their help in securing ten participants, consisting of SLs, MLs and teachers. The only criterion placed by the researcher was that participants must be willing to express their views with regard to the leadership role of MLs. The co-ordinators' efforts produced varying results. Four of the schools managed to secure the consent of ten participants while the other two schools (School B and School C) were only able to secure eight participants, two less than the requested number of ten participants. All schools managed to secure the minimum suggested number of participants across the three participant groups.

Once the participants were identified, they were provided with a plain language statement explaining the purpose and methodology of the study, steps to maintain confidentiality, the voluntary nature of participation and the complaint procedures and contact persons. The consent form and a questionnaire requesting for biographical data were also forwarded to the participants for completion prior to the interview appointment. The school co-ordinators and participants were informed that the researcher was flexible in terms of the time that the interviews could be conducted. The cluster co-ordinator worked out a schedule with her colleagues at the five schools involved to ensure that there were no date clashes. Once the dates were finalised, the co-ordinator at each school site drew up an interview schedule and made arrangements for the participants to be available during the allotted time so that the interviews could be conducted with minimum disruption to the school's routine. The co-ordinators even organised rooms for the interviews. The rooms were conducive as they were air-conditioned with comfortable furniture and more importantly, quiet and private. The interviews with MLs and teachers were conducted in these designated rooms while the interviews with SLs were conducted in their offices. The interviews were conducted over a period of ten months.

The researcher opened each interview by thanking the participant for his or her participation and going over the purpose of the study, guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity of responses, reiterating the voluntary nature of participation and asking participants if they had any questions or clarifications. The initial questions used to start the discussion were:

1. For the SLs and teachers: With particular regard to leadership, how do you see the role of middle leaders like Heads of Departments, Subject Heads and Level Heads in primary schools?
2. For the ML: With particular regard to leadership, how do you see the role of middle leaders like yourself in primary schools?

Once the initial interview question has been asked, an active listening technique was employed. The researcher used an interview guide and check questions were used to ensure that full exploration of the phenomenon under investigation was encompassed by each of the interviews. These questions helped ensure that the focus of the interviews remained on the phenomenon of the leadership role of ML and that areas related to the research questions that needed to be investigated were investigated. These check questions were not necessarily asked of all the participants and were as follow:

1. During discussion of the leadership role of MLs, were there concrete examples used?

2. Was there discussion relating to the perceived effects of MLs on student learning outcomes?

3. Has the participant been given an opportunity to relate to materials they feel is relevant to the leadership role of the ML?

When the conversation between the researcher and the participant came to a natural conclusion, the researcher reminded the participant of the purpose of the interview and the aims of the study. The researcher then enquired whether there were any aspects of the leadership role of MLs that were pertinent to the study that had not been discussed during the interview. The researcher closed the interview by thanking the participant for his or her contributions to the study.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The interviews were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were later edited to render them into a more fluent written style by removing “uhs” and “ers” and to remove any identifying information. The transcripts were checked again for accuracy before sending to the participants for their verification. Participants were reminded that they could alter, add or delete any information in the transcript before returning it to the researcher for analysis. Of the fifty-six participants who participated in the study, thirty returned the interview transcripts to the researcher. Out of these, ten transcripts were altered in some way but the changes were more editorial than of substance.

4.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOLS AND PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN THIS STUDY

4.5.1 Schools

The six primary schools involved in this study were drawn from two school clusters in Singapore. Three were government schools and the other three were government-aided schools. Government schools obtained all of their funding from the government while government-aided schools also received support from their sponsoring organisations such as a religious body or Chinese clan association on top of substantial government funding. Unlike government schools, government-aided schools have greater autonomy in how they operate and were supervised by their respective school management board. Two government-aided schools were affiliated with religious organisations and the third was affiliated with a Chinese clan association. All schools offer the standard national curriculum. Five schools were mixed (co-educational) schools and one is a school for girls only. Two schools were classified as Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools where English and Chinese were taught at the first language level and one of them also offered the Gifted Education Programme (GEP). All three government-aided schools were popular with parents in their localities. Places in these schools

were highly sought after and were almost always over-subscribed. Admission often had to be resolved through balloting. The other three schools were regarded as typical government schools.

Table 4.2

Characteristics of participating schools

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F
Type	Govt	Govt-aided	Govt-aided	Govt	Govt-aided	Govt
Affiliation	-	Religious	Religious	-	Clan	-
Nature	Mixed	Mixed	Girls	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
Session	Double	Double	Single	Double	Single	Single
Programmes		SAP			SAP GEP	
Leadership	1P, 2 VPs	1P, 2VPs	1P, 1VP	1P, 1VP	1P, 2VPs	1P, 1 VP
Teachers	74	108	51	78	168	52
Students	2210	2190	900	2230	2660	300

The average number of teachers in each school was 89, with a range from 51 to 168. The school enrolment ranged from 300 to 2660, with an average of 1750 student. The school that has 300 students was a new school and in its second year of operation at the time of the interviews. All schools had a mix of pupils from different ethnic and socio-economic groups apart from the two SAP schools. The two SAP schools had mainly ethnic Chinese students because the only mother tongue language offered was Chinese. All schools were single campus. Three of the schools were operating dual sessions and the other three were single session. For schools with dual sessions, Primary Three to Primary Six classes were held in the morning (typically from 7.30am to 1.00pm) and Primary One to Primary Two classes were conducted in the afternoon (typically from 1.00pm to 6.30pm).

4.5.2 Participants

Table 4.3

Number of participants from each participating school

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	Total
Principal	1	0	1	1	0	1	4
Vice-Principal	1	2	1	1	2	1	8
Middle leader	3	2	2	3	4	2	16
Teacher	5	4	4	5	4	6	28
Total	10	8	8	10	10	10	56

The number of participants from each school is outlined in Table 4.3. There was a total of fifty-six participants interviewed, consisting of four Ps, eight VPs, sixteen MLs and twenty-eight teachers. There were ten participants from four schools and eight participants from two schools.

Table 4.4

Gender of participants from each participating school

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	Total
Male	1	2	0	1	2	4	10
Female	9	6	8	9	8	6	46
Total	10	8	8	10	10	10	56

As shown in Table 4.4, there were ten male and forty-six female participants interviewed, consisting of one male and three female Ps, one male and seven female VPs, five male and eleven female MLs and three male and twenty-five female teachers. The gender characteristics were similar to those of the teaching workforce in Singapore primary schools.

Table 4.5

Length of service of participants from each participating school

Years	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	Total
5 or <	2	2	1	3	1	1	10
6 – 10	3	2	1	1	5	4	16
11 – 15	2	2	1	3	2	2	12
16 – 20	0	1	2	3	1	1	8
20 or >	3	1	3	0	1	2	10
Total	10	8	8	10	10	10	56

Table 4.5 shows the length of service of participants interviewed. Most participants were experienced educators, with more than four fifths of the participants having more than six years of service and about one fifth with more than twenty years of service. Among the participants, there were two beginning teachers with less than one-year experience and a senior teacher who had been teaching for over thirty years.

Table 4.6

Average number of years of experience in school senior leader / school middle leader role

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E	School F	AVG
P	10	-	7	3	-	7	6.75
VP	2	7.5	1	1	2	1	3
ML	4.3	10.5	7.5	8.7	2.5	5.3	5.9

Table 4.6 shows the years in role of SLs and MLs interviewed. SLs and MLs in this study were generally well experienced in their role. Ps had an average of 6.75 years of experience in the role; VPs were slightly less experienced with three years while MLs had 5.9 years of experience working in their role. Among the VPs interviewed, three were newly promoted and were MLs a short time before.

Table 4.7

Profile of school middle leaders

Apha-numeric code	Gender	Position Held	Area of Responsibility	Years in teaching	Years in role	Attended FPDE/DDM/MLS
SAML1	Female	HOD	MTL	15	6	Yes
SAML2	Female	HOD	Science	16	8	Yes
SAML3	Female	LH	Mathematics	7	2	No
SBML1	Female	HOD	EL	17	10	Yes
SBML2	Male	HOD	MTL	14	11	Yes
SCML1	Female	HOD	EL	18	8	Yes
SCML2	Female	HOD	Science	21	7	Yes
SDML1	Male	HOD	PE, CCA & Aesthetics	13	11	Yes
SDML2	Female	HOD	EL	19	10	Yes
SDML3	Female	SH	Aesthetics	11	5	No
SEML1	Female	HOD	Discipline	10	5	No
SEML2	Female	HOD	Humanities	9	1	No
SEML3	Male	SH	PE	9	4	Yes
SEML4	Female	SH	Science	8	2	No
SFML1	Male	HOD	EL	10	1	No
SFML2	Male	HOD	Student Welfare	7	3	Yes

Table 4.7 provides a summary of the profiles of MLs interviewed, consisting of twelve HODs, three SHs and one LH. MLs in this study were in charge of a number of subject and non-subject areas, ranging from English language to student welfare. MLs had a range of experience, ranging from almost a year to eleven years in the role. Ten out of sixteen (62.5%) MLs interviewed had attended the milestone leadership training for MLs at NIE.

4.6 INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Creswell & Poth (2018, p. 181) described the process of data analysis as "organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding and organising themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them". The technique used to analyse the interview data is based on Gurr (1996, pp. 90-97) adaptation of Tesch (1990, pp. 92-96) interpretational analysis system. There are two key characteristics in interpretational analysis: "data are segmented" and "the segments are categorised according to an organising system"

(Tesch, 1990, p. 113) that is primarily derived from the data. The interpretational analysis system used in the study involved the following five steps:

1. Reading and rereading the data to become familiar with it;
2. Delineating all meaning units pertaining to the phenomenon;
3. Grouping meaning units into common themes;
4. Reading the themes in relation to the whole interview transcript and another searching of the transcript to see if new categories needed to be made; and
5. Using any contextual material pertaining to the text to reinterpret the categories.

1. **Reading and re-reading the data to become familiar with it.**

The transcripts were read and re-read to get "a sense of the whole" (Tesch, 1990, p. 93).

2. **Delineation of all meaning units pertaining to the phenomenon.**

The selective or highlighting approach was used to look out for meaning units that are "particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described" (van Manen, 1997, p. 93). Tesch defines (1990, p. 116) meaning units as "a segment of text that is comprehensible by itself and contains one idea, episode, or piece of information" and these could be words, phrases or sentences. The other two approaches described by van Manen (1997, pp. 92-95) were holistic or sententious approach and the detailed or line-by-line approach. For Gurr (1996, p. 90), the selective or highlighting approach "is efficient time-wise, but may lose some detail". The two other approaches were considered unsuitable for this study. The holistic or sententious approach which attends to the text as a whole and attempts to find "the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole" (van Manen, 1997, p. 93) was considered too general. Furthermore, it is also difficult to describe how the description was arrived at. Conversely, the detailed approach looks at every sentence or sentence cluster for clues to "reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described" (van Manen, 1997, p. 93) was not used because it may generate too much irrelevant data.

3. **Grouping of the meaning units into common themes.**

Similar meaning units were grouped into themes. After a thematic analysis of all the interview transcripts, common themes were found. The common themes were defined by the researcher after careful reading and rereading of the transcript. This was to ensure that the themes accurately reflected the intent of the participant. The grouping of meaning units to form common themes was performed on a school basis. For example, a set of common themes was produced after analysing all the teacher interviews in one school. Similarly, after analysing all the interviews in the SL group and the ML group in one school, a set of common themes for each participant group was produced. As with Gurr (1996, p. 92), this process emphasises

the combined views of the groups of participants at the expense of individual views but it produced a manageable number of thematic descriptions. For example, the following passage is taken from the transcript of one ML:

> *First of all, we have to make policies and set directions for the school and that is done at the Exco level. Also, in the department the most important thing, I think, is we have to set visions and goals for the department. And in the department, we have our own teachers. We have to take care of the teachers' well-being as well as their aspirations so that we will all move together as a group. There's no point in moving forward alone, when you turn behind, no one is behind you. That's something that we need to take care of. Also, in the recent years, there are a lot of initiatives by MOE, so we also need to spearhead some of these initiatives. Spearheading is not good enough, we have also to cascade some of the information of these initiatives down to the teachers' level. The school leaders understand the rationale but the teachers don't see it. So sometimes it's very frustrating at their end. They are working and working and they don't know where they are heading towards.*

There are a number of meaning units in this extract. The first three sentences suggest that an important role of the ML is to build a vision and set the directions; in sentence 1 in regard to the school and in sentence 2, in regard to the department **(B*uilding a shared vision and Setting directions*)**. The responsibility to look after the well-being of teachers is apparent in the fourth sentence **(*Representing and advocating*)**. It is also clear the ML has the duty to assist teachers in achieving their aspirations, both professional and personal **(D*eveloping people, and self*)**. Sentence 11 and 12 indicate a need for the ML to provide information relating to MOE initiatives to the teachers and explain the reasons for doing certain things in a particular way to them **(*Communication*)**. The last five sentences indicate there are too many changes happening within the school system and teachers are frustrated. Consequently, it becomes apparent that managing change had become one of the challenges facing the ML **(*Leading people*)**.

When combined with other meaning units from this and other interviews, all of the meaning units outlined above were incorporated into themes that ultimately emerged to form the overall description of the leadership role of MLs obtained from this study. The themes involved were as follows.

1. Building a shared vision
2. Setting directions
3. Representing and advocating
4. Developing people, and self
5. Communication

6. Leading people

4. **Reading of the themes in relation to the whole interview transcript and another searching of the transcript to see if new categories needed to be made.**

This process of interchanging between a whole and part is called the hermeneutic cycle (Tesch, 1990, p. 94) or hermeneutical cycle (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 210).

5. **Use of any contextual material pertaining to the text to reinterpret the categories.**

The amount of contextual material that could be used was limited to the happenings in the education system in general and to the material that was raised in the course of the interview. This is to protect the confidentiality of responses provided by the participants.

The three descriptions generated in each school were compared to determine the extent of agreement between the three participant groups. The descriptions from all three participant groups across schools were then analysed for commonalities. As a result, an aggregate description of the leadership role of MLs was produced. It is important to note that the aggregate description used information from a number of interviews and did not represent any one participant's view. Rather, the description represented the various views of the participants involved.

The final stage in the data analysis was to connect the interpretations with both the middle leadership and the broader school and middle leadership literature. For Minichiello et al. (2008, pp. 28-29), this practice allows connections to be made with past knowledge, place the findings of the study in the context of current research and broaden the knowledge. Furthermore, it helps the researcher to make sense of the data.

The report of the analysis was then written thematically, one of the six ways outlined by van Manen (1997, pp. 168-170) for writing reports employing a phenomenological approach. Gurr (1996, p. 89) describes this process as "systematic and comprehensive, although it was not rigid as the themes changes as they emerged during the analysis".

4.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS

For Burns (1990, p. 11), "the problem of adequate validity and reliability is a major criticism placed by quantitative researchers on qualitative methods." Responding to this criticism, Lincoln and Guba (1986, p. 18) argue that the conventional tests for rigor (internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity) "may be quite inappropriate and even irrelevant to naturalistic studies (and vice versa)". Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 289-330) suggest an

alternative trustworthiness criteria that they feel is more appropriate to the naturalistic paradigm. The trustworthiness criteria has four components (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 294-301).

1. **Credibility (Truth value) (in preference to internal validity).**

This refers to the extent to which a study is credible to the participants involved in the study and with the context in which the study was conducted.

2. **Transferability (Applicability) (in preference to external validity).**

This refers to the provision of sufficient information for readers to reach a conclusion whether the findings of a particular study can be transferred to another context.

3. **Dependability (Consistency) (in preference to reliability).**

This refers to the judgment of the extent to which the findings are grounded in the data and would be replicated under similar conditions with similar participants in similar contexts.

4. **Confirmability (Neutrality) (in preference to objectivity).**

This refers to the extent to which findings are grounded in the data derived from the participants and the context rather than the personal constructions of the researcher.

To Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 300), "the four terms 'credibility,' transferability,' 'dependability,' and 'confirmability' are, then, the naturalist's equivalents for the conventional terms 'internal validity,' 'external validity,' 'reliability' and 'objectivity'". Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 301-328) suggest a number of specific techniques and activities to increase the probability that the criteria of trustworthiness can be met or actually test the extent to which they have been met.

1. **Credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 301-316)**
    a. Prolonged engagement. This involves being involved for a sufficient period of time to learn the context of the phenomenon and to build a relationship of trust with the participants (Provide scope).

    b. Persistent observation. This involves being able to identify, focus on and study the most salient factors of the phenomenon (Provide depth).

    c. Triangulation. This involves the use of multiple and different sources of data, methods and investigators. However, the use of multiple theories as a triangulation technique is rejected by Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 307) as being "both epistemologically unsound and empirically empty".

d. Peer debriefing. This involves the use of a disinterested peer to review the research process in order to test honesty of the researcher, working hypothesis and to identify the next steps in the study.

e. Negative case analysis. This involves refining the hypothesis retrospectively until it accounts for all known, or "reasonable number of cases" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 312).

f. Referential adequacy. This involves using a portion of the data as archival data for testing of findings as "a kind of benchmark against which later data analysis and interpretations … could be tested for accuracy"(Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 313).

g. Member checking. This involves the use of participants to check data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 314) consider this as "most crucial technique for establishing credibility".

2. **Transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316).**

Transferability can be established through the provision of thick description (time and context of the study) so that others could decide the extent to which the findings from one study can be generalisable to another context. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 316) argue that the researcher does not make the judgement of transferability. Rather, the onus is on the readers to judge if the findings in a qualitative study are applicable to their circumstances. The responsibility of qualitative researchers is to provide "the thick description to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316).

4.7.1 Trustworthiness procedures used in this study

The hermeneutic phenomenology methodology is based on the axioms of the naturalistic paradigm. Thus, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of trustworthiness is applicable to this study. The following techniques and activities were used to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

4.7.1.1 Credibility

- **Triangulation**. The data were collected from three groups of participants (SLs, MLs and teachers) across different sites (six schools). In addition, the participants were asked a number of similar questions, this might provide for participant triangulation.

- **Peer debriefing**. There were regular debriefing sessions between the researcher and a fellow doctoral candidate at the same university where ideas and experiences were exchanged and discussed. This was in addition to regular meetings with the researcher's academic supervisors throughout the course of the study.

- **Member checking**. The transcripts were checked for accuracy and verified by the participants. Member checking of analytic categories and interpretations was not used due to the large number of participants involved.

As with Gurr (1996) and White (2000), the remaining techniques and activities used to establish credibility outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were considered as being either not applicable (prolonged engagement, persistent observation, negative case analysis), or too expensive of data (referential adequacy).

4.7.1.2 Transferability

The transferability of the study was enhanced by the provision of a thick description of the methodology, methods procedures used as well as a discussion of the profile of the schools and characteristics of the participants involved, so that readers could make an informed judgement regarding the transferability of the findings in the study.

4.7.1.3 Dependability and Confirmability

The audit procedure that was suggested for the assessment of dependability and confirmability was used to establish the trustworthiness of the study. An audit trail was constructed comprising of documentation with regard to how the data were collected and coded, how the categories and propositions were derived and how the methodological decisions were made. The trail provided the researcher's academic supervisors and other readers, particularly those who may not be familiar with the naturalistic research paradigm, with adequate information to evaluate the trustworthiness of the study. Some of these materials were listed below:

- **Raw data**. This includes audio recordings of interviews, and their transcripts.
- **Data reduction and analysis**. This includes summaries of interview transcripts and interview themes.
- **Data reconstruction and synthesis products**. This includes the thesis and other publications, comprising the literature survey and methodology outline.
- **Material relating to intentions and dispositions**. This includes the research proposal.

The researcher's academic supervisors ensured that all the audit requirements were complied with, as part of the thesis supervision process.

4.7.1.4 Reflexive journal

This thesis served as a 'reflexive' journal that provided details of the study, for example, how participants were selected, how the data were collected and coded, how the categories and propositions were derived, how the methodological decisions were made and any researcher bias or central assumptions.

Considering the constraints of time, resources and accessibility, every effort had been taken to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. It is felt that the study can be considered trustworthy despite not adopting all the techniques and activities as advocated by Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 301-328). Furthermore, the criteria of trustworthiness, in the words of Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 329), "can never be satisfied to such an extent that the trustworthiness of the inquiry could be labelled as unassailable".

4.7.1.5 Limitations and Delimitations

With any research, there are delimitations and limitations. Delimitation is concerned with the assigning of boundaries, whilst limitation is concerned with the restrictions and qualifications that are placed on the findings of the study. With this study, much of the discussion of these arises through the use of a qualitative methodology and the freedom and constraints this imposes. In this section, the benefits and problems associated with the use of qualitative research methods in general and related to this study are discussed. Through these discussions, the delimitations and limitations of the study are examined.

As previously mentioned, one of the characteristics of naturalistic enquiry is the "focus-determined nature of its boundaries" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 42). The major delimitations of this study are that it is concerned with the phenomenon of middle leadership in the six primary schools involved in the study and that the boundaries of the study is determined by the perceptions that the SLs, MLs and teachers participating in the study bring. The study is further delimited in that the focus is on MLs in the six primary schools in Singapore. Although the findings may have applicability outside of these boundaries, no such applicability is automatically implied or assumed. Furthermore, it should be noted that the study only interviewed SLs, MLs and teachers. The inclusion of members of the school communities such as EAS, parents and students could have provided for a greater variety of perspectives. But this was beyond the scope of this study, which is specifically focussed on the perspectives of SLs, MLs and teachers only. Also, as Gurr (1996, p. 98) describes, the study is further

delimited by its being descriptive and interpretive, rather than experimental and theory building. As he explains, it is therefore “not designed to be able to substantiate causal relationships between the perceived leadership role of MLs and individual or organisational behaviour, nor is it designed to test a particular theoretical position”.

The major limitations of the study are those associated with research employing qualitative methodologies. Miles et al. (2014) point out the four problems associated with qualitative research methodologies:

1. The collection, processing and coding of data are resource intensive (p. 4).
2. There is distinct possibility of researcher bias as the findings depended heavily on the researcher’s interpretation of the data (p. 4).
3. The small sample means that generalisability of findings is often limited (p. 4).
4. The methods of qualitative data analysis are not always well formulated. This may make it difficult to draw credible and dependable conclusions from the research (pp. 4-5).

The first of Miles et al. (2014) problems concerns resources. The resource demands on data collection and analysis were manageable. The researcher made himself available at times convenient to the schools and participants involved. The participant was interviewed once and with the assistance of the co-ordinators in the schools involved, all the interviews at each school site were completed in two to four visits. The data analysis process, particularly the transcription of fifty-six interviews, was labour intensive and took a significant amount of time. For example, each one-hour interview took the researcher more than eight hours to transcribe and a further two hours to check for accuracy of the transcription. One particular interview took more than five hours to transcribe as the participant had used many Chinese words and phrases during the interview and these had to be translated into English. After the transcription was completed, the transcripts were emailed to individual participants for verification. The changes made by the participants (if any) were incorporated into the final version of the interview transcripts used for analysis. Transcribing fifty-six interviews resulted in over 500 pages of single-spaced interview transcripts. The data were analysed following the procedures as previously described.

The second of Miles et al. (2014) problems concerns a key aspect of “confirmability” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 299-301). According to Patton (2015), the credibility of the researcher is important as he or she is the main instrument in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Patton (2015, p. 700) suggests that the researcher provide a statement containing “personal and professional information that may have affected data collection, analysis and interpretation” was provided to enable readers to understand how the data might have been

collected, analysed and interpreted in the manner they were. This statement has been included in the introduction chapter of the thesis.

The third of Miles et al. (2014) problems concerns generalisability. As discussed previously, generalisability is not part of the assumptions that underline naturalistic inquiry. Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 158), citing Pinnegar and Davis (2007), states “the intent in qualitative research is not to generalize the information (except in some forms of case study research) but to elucidate the particular, the specific”.

The last of Miles et al. (2014) problems concerns replication. Like the concept of generalisability, it is not part of the assumptions that underline naturalistic inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 316) argue that the researcher does not make the judgement of transferability. Rather, the onus is on the readers to judge if the findings in a qualitative study are applicable to their circumstances. Qualitative researchers have the responsibility to provide sufficient ‘thick description’ (time and context of the study) “to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316).

Despite these limitations, Miles et al. (2014, p. 2) describe three benefits of using qualitative research methodologies.

1. It provides rich descriptions and explanations of social phenomena that are well grounded in local contexts;
2. It can lead to serendipitous findings and to new theoretical integrations because the research does not have to be constrained by initial conceptions and conceptual frameworks; and
3. The findings, presented in words and not in numbers, often are more convincing to many readers.

All three benefits are present in this study. The hermeneutic phenomenology methodology was chosen to provide rich descriptions of the leadership of MLs as experienced by the participants involved. The findings were presented in words so that it could be easily accessibility to readers who do not possess the requisite statistical knowledge and understanding.

4.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study had ethics approval from the Humanities & Applied Sciences Human Ethics Research Committee (HESC) at The University of Melbourne and the written permission from

the Singapore MOE to conduct the study in the schools involved. The study adhered to the fields of ethical guidelines for researchers as discussed in Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, pp. 83-102) and the guidelines on informed consent, confidentiality, consequences were judged to be applicable to this study.

4.8.1 Informed consent

Informed consent, according to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 93), “entails informing the research participants about the overall purpose of the investigation and the main features of the design, as well as any possible risks and benefits from participation in the research project. Informed consent further involves obtaining the voluntary participation of the people involved and informing them of their right to withdraw from the study at any time”. All participants involved were provided with a plain language statement explaining the purpose and methodology of the study, steps to maintain confidentiality, the voluntary nature of participation and the complaint procedures and contact persons. Participants were informed prior to the commencement of the interview that the interview would be audio-taped and transcribed, and that the sections of the transcripts may be reported in this thesis and other publications.

Participants were also notified that they have the opportunity to correct any errors of fact, or to alter the transcript through the addition or deletion of material before analysis, and that they could withdraw totally from the study at any time should they choose to do so. Also, participants were informed that the data used in the thesis or other publications would be done through the changing of identifying information and the use of codes or pseudonyms so that attribution to any school and participant is impossible. Before the start of each interview session, the researcher went over the plain language statement, and reminded the participant of the voluntary nature of participation and that they could withdraw totally from the study at any time should they choose to do so.

4.8.2 Confidentiality

For Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), confidentiality in research "implies that private data identifying the participants will not be disclosed” (p. 94) and "precautions need to be taken to protect the participants' privacy” (p. 95). The data presented in this thesis and other publications were done through the changing of identifying information and the use of codes so that attribution to any school or participant is impossible. The sound files, transcripts and particulars of participants were kept in The University of Melbourne and the access limited to the researcher and his academic supervisors. In accordance with current university regulations, these materials would be kept at the university for five years from the date of submission of the thesis before being destroyed.

4.8.3 Consequences

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 95) emphasise that “the consequences of a qualitative study need to be addressed with respect to possible harm to the participants as well as to the benefits expected from their participation in the study”. The phenomenon under investigation in this study was not controversial and there were no known or anticipated risks to the schools or to the participants involved. All participants were informed that if they regret disclosing certain information, they could ask to delete the ‘objectionable’ material from the transcript and the deleted material would not be used for analysis. The participants were also notified that they can withdraw totally from the study at any time should they choose to do so. No participant had asked to withdraw from the study or asked to delete any material from the interview transcript.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents results of the study that are derived from the analysis of the interview transcripts. The results of this study are presented in the following order.

1. A summary of similarity in SL, ML and teacher perceptions.
2. The leadership role description from SL, ML and teacher interviews.

The above constitute the main findings of the study with further discussion provided in Chapter Six where these findings are connected with the extant school leadership and middle leadership literature.

5.2 SUMMARY OF SIMILIARITY IN SCHOOL SENIOR LEADER, SCHOOL MIDDLE LEADER AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

This section presents findings that are a summary of the analysis in Appendix F. It shows that SLs, MLs and teachers involved in this study have similar perceptions of the leadership role of MLs. Tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 show the degree of agreement between the SL, ML and teacher interviews for the six schools involved in the study. Each of the Tables 5.1 to 5.3 contains three types of analysis:

1. The extent of agreement between two participant groups being compared (SLs, MLs and teachers) for common themes identified;
2. The number of additional themes that was identified by one of the two groups under comparison; and,
3. An overall judgment of the similarity in SL, ML and teacher perception for each school.

The criterion used to judge the degree of agreement in perception between two participant groups as high, moderate or low is based on that used by Gurr (1996, pp. 111-115) in his study of the leadership role of principals in Victorian secondary schools and White (2000, pp. 120-127) in his study of the leadership role of curriculum area middle managers in Victorian secondary schools. High agreement meant that the two participant groups were identifying the same features for the theme. Moderate agreement meant that there was incongruity in the views of the two groups. For example, some MLs may have supported the SL perceptions whilst others did not, or MLs as a group indicated both support and non-support. Low agreement meant that the two participant groups held differing views.

As with Gurr (1996, p. 112), two criteria were used to ascertain whether the descriptions of the two participant groups were similar or not within each school.

1. The ratio of common themes to additional themes. To be labelled as similar, there should be more common themes than additional themes.
2. The degree of agreement within the common themes. To be labelled as similar, the majority of common themes should have at least moderate agreement for similar descriptions.

Table 5.1

Summary of the comparisons between school senior leader and school middle leader interviews

School	No. of	Common themes			Additional themes		Summary
	themes	High	Moderate	Low	SL	ML	
A	14	5	7	0	1	1	Similar
B	14	5	7	1	0	1	Similar
C	14	6	4	1	1	2	Similar
D	14	7	5	0	1	1	Similar
E	14	4	8	0	0	2	Similar
F	14	5	7	0	1	1	Similar
Total	84	32	38	2	4	8	Similar

Table 5.2

Summary of the comparisons between school senior leader and teacher interviews

School	No. of	Common themes			Additional themes		Summary
	themes	High	Moderate	Low	SL	Teacher	
A	14	7	5	0	1	1	Similar
B	13	4	5	1	3	0	Similar
C	14	6	4	2	0	2	Similar
D	14	6	4	2	1	1	Similar
E	14	6	5	1	0	2	Similar
F	14	7	5	0	1	1	Similar
Total	83	36	28	6	6	7	Similar

Table 5.3

Summary of the comparisons between school middle leader and teacher interviews

School	No. of	Common themes			Additional themes		Summary
	themes	High	Moderate	Low	ML	Teacher	
A	14	7	5	0	1	1	Similar
B	14	3	7	0	4	0	Similar
C	14	7	5	1	0	1	Similar
D	14	7	7	0	0	0	Similar
E	14	5	9	0	0	0	Similar
F	13	6	6	0	1	0	Similar
Total	83	35	39	1	6	2	Similar

Table 5.4

Extent of support for common and additional themes

Theme	No. of comparisons made				Additional themes identified		
	Total	High	Moderate	Low	SLs	MLs	Teachers
Leading teaching and learning	18	16	2	0	0	0	0
Setting directions	18	14	4	0	0	0	0
Leading people	18	14	3	1	0	0	0
Communication	18	11	7	0	0	0	0
Developing people, and self	18	9	2	1	2	2	2
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	18	8	10	0	0	0	0
Building a collaborative culture	18	6	12	0	0	0	0
Administration	18	6	10	0	1	1	0
Building a shared vision	18	5	13	0	0	0	0
Accountability	18	4	13	1	0	0	0
Role of SL	18	0	13	3	1	1	0
Time pressures	16	4	6	0	0	4	2
Role change	15	3	5	3	4	0	0
Representing and advocating	15	3	5	0	0	4	3

Overall, comparisons of the perceptions of the leadership role of MLs found them to be similar for the three participant groups across all six schools. A total of fourteen (14) different themes were labelled as aspects of the leadership role of MLs as identified by all three groups of interviews across the six schools. Table 5.4 lists all fourteen themes that were identified from the interviews, along with an indication of the occurrence of that theme, according to the total number of comparisons that could be made, and the number of those comparisons that were judged to have high, moderate or low agreement. All schools had more common themes than additional themes. The small number of low agreement themes and the presence of additional themes indicates that, although there is substantial agreement, there remains some differences. The result, shown by the order in which the themes are listed in Table 5.4, is an indication of the perceived importance of each of the themes according to the number of times they occurred in the interviews and the degree of agreement observed when they occurred.

Tables 5.1 to 5.3 indicate a total of 217 common themes across the six schools. Of these, 91.7% per cent were categorised as having either high or moderate agreement (45.4% and 46.3% respectively). **Reference to the data contained in Appendix F makes it possible to calculate that 86.4% and 81.9% respectively of these high and moderate agreement**

common themes contained descriptions constructed from contributions of at least two-thirds of the participants that were contained in the groups involved in the comparisons, with at least 50% of both comparison groups represented. Take for example, if a comparison was made between theme descriptions from a SL group of two participants and a ML group of four participants, then contributions to theme descriptions would have been received from at least three of the six participants, including at least one SL participant and two teacher participants. The findings in the section suggest there is strong support for the descriptions generated from the interviews and the three participant groups have a similar understanding of the core elements of the ML leadership role in the schools investigated. Consequently, it would appear there is little benefit in presenting a separate description of the ML leadership role for each of the three participant groups. Thus, in the next section, the description of ML leadership role is based on the perceptions of all three participant groups.

5.3 LEADERSHIP THEMES

Interviews with fifty-six participants contributed to the aggregate description of leadership role of ML described hereinafter. The leadership role of MLs that emerged from the analysis of the interviews is both complex and rich and could not be described by referring to only a few features. It should be noted that all the areas of middle leadership highlighted in this chapter are either explicitly mentioned or could be reasonably deduced from the interviews. The purpose of this findings chapter is not to report the views of individual participants but to pool these views together to get a sense of the overall. It is a broad picture version of the ML leadership role, rather than a detailed case study analysis of each site or ML under investigation. The individual view of any one participant or any one group of participants is not reflected with total accuracy by the aggregate description. The voices of the participants are used, where appropriate, to provide rich descriptions of their responses and the participant is identified by using a reference system of alpha-numeric codes, for example, SASL1. The reference system used to refer to individual participants comprised of three parts and is explained in Table 5.6. For example, the code SASL1 refers to an interviewee from School A (SA), he or she is a senior school leader (SL) (could be principal or vice-principal) and the first interviewee in that participant group of the school. All fourteen themes and associated subthemes listed in Table 5.5 could be considered the core aspects of the leadership role of MLs. It should be noted that the subthemes within each theme in Table 5.5 are arranged in descending order according to the frequency of mention and level of agreement. That is, the first described subtheme is the most widely mentioned and has the highest number of high agreements within the theme.

Table 5.5

Themes and subthemes of the ML leadership role description

Themes	*Subthemes*
Leading teaching and learning	*Coordinating the curriculum* *Customising the curriculum and pedagogical practices* *Achieving student learning outcomes*
Setting directions	*Defining the school directions* *Charting the department directions*
Leading people	Reporting officer Deploying teachers Supporting teachers Managing change Building a team
Communication	Vertical channel of communication Horizontal channel of communication Formal and informal settings Leveraging on information and communications technology
Developing people, and self	Identifying the professional learning needs of teachers Facilitating the attendance of teachers at professional learning activities Conducting professional learning activities Facilitating the sharing of knowledge gained by teachers at professional learning activities Succession planning Developing self
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	Teaching professional Subject expertise People focussed Interpersonal skills Strategic thinking Seek innovations and improvements Sense of purpose Organisational skills
Building a collaborative culture	Creating a department culture Team building Positive attitude to change Leading by example Open communication Sharing culture
Administration	-

Themes	*Subthemes*
Building a shared vision	Developing the school vision Cascading the school vision Developing the department vision
Accountability	-
Role of SL	Leadership styles of school senior leaders Provision of targeted professional learning activities by school senior leaders Provision of mentoring and coaching by school senior leaders Provision of support by school senior leaders
Time pressures	-
Role change	Expanding role Emphasis on leading
Representing and advocating	Department Teachers

Table 5.6

Explanation of reference system

	Code	Explanation
Part 1	SA	School A
	SB	School B
	SC	School C
	SD	School D
	SE	School E
	SF	School F
Part 2	SL	Senior school leader (Principals and Vice-principals)
	ML	Middle-level school leader
	TR	Teacher
Part 3	1, 2, 3, 4, …	1, 2, 3, 4, …

What follows now is a detailed description of each of the fourteen themes and associated subthemes, in the order listed in Table 5.5

5.3.1 Leading teaching and learning

The leadership of teaching and learning was at the heart of the ML role. There was a consensus view among participants that the responsibility of leading teaching and learning did not only rest on the shoulders of MLs in charge of academic subject departments such as English, Mathematics, Science and Mother Tongue Languages. MLs in charge of non-

academic department such as Information and Communications Technology, Physical Education and Student Welfare also had an important role to play in supporting teaching and learning in the school. For example, the Student Welfare department was responsible for creating the appropriate conditions to enable teaching and learning to thrive in the school. The leadership of teaching and learning was viewed as the “bread and butter” (SESL1) of the ML role and included the following three foci:

- Co-ordinating the curriculum.
- Customising the curriculum and pedagogy.
- Achieving student learning outcomes.

5.3.1.1 Co-ordinating the curriculum

MLs undertook “nuts and bolts” (SBML1) activities to enable the successful delivery of the curriculum by teachers teaching the subject. Specific aspects of the curriculum co-ordination role included:

- Selecting, ordering, organising, distributing and managing instructional resources such as teacher’s guides, textbooks and workbooks (SDTR1, SBSL1, SETR1).
- Drawing up / updating of schemes of work for each level to reflect syllabus changes and incorporate new pedagogic approaches (SDTR3).
- Time-tabling the use of specialist facilities such as science laboratories, computer laboratories, AVA room and indoor sports hall (SFML2).
- Preparing resource packages before the start of the school year for all subject teacher such as desk copies of teacher’s guides, textbooks, workbooks, schemes of work and other teaching resources (SETR1).
- Overseeing/Organising the printing and distribution of supplementary and enrichment worksheets for each level and class (SDTR3).

Participants agreed that MLs had a major role in implementing the numerous MOE policies and initiatives that sat across the subjects and involved an entire cohort of students. MLs were expected to “know what’s happening” (SBSL1), “understand what the changes are” (SBTR3), “assess the impact on existing practices” (SCML2) and “know what needs to be done” (SEML1) if they were to successfully implement the curriculum initiatives and changes in the school. This knowledge was gained through careful (sometimes repeated) reading of MOE notifications, attending briefing sessions conducted by the relevant MOE HQ division, working with specialist colleagues in MOE HQ and in consultation with their colleagues in other schools in the school cluster or zone. MLs (SDML3, SEML1, SCML1, SFML2) remarked that they had to first quickly understand and interpret the requirements of these changes and initiatives

before they could help teachers “unpack” (SCML1) and “make sense” (SBML2) of what they had to do at the classroom level. Teachers (SFTR3, SDTR1, SATR4) acknowledged that MLs were often seen as a “driver” (SATR4) of curriculum changes and initiatives in the department and as such, teachers looked towards MLs for information and guidance in these matters.

> *… the most important thing is to know your subject well. It is only when you have the knowledge that people will respect you. I don’t think teachers would look up to someone who doesn’t know what is happening with regard to the subject as a leader. (SAML1)*

It was felt that MLs required “a good understanding of the realities of the school” (SASL1) to effectively implement the curriculum initiatives and changes, for example, “the kind of teachers and student cohort” in the school (SDSL1). In School B, ML (SBML1) was focussed on making sure teachers teaching the subject “know exactly what is it that they need to teach”.

> *We have quite a number of beginning teachers and adjunct teachers who have just joined the school this year. … They may not be familiar with our SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures). (SBML1)*

For ML (SDML2), the focus was on adapting the curriculum initiatives and changes to fit “the kind of students we have in the school” (SDSL1).

> *We are a neighbourhood school. Certain things don’t work for us. You have got to adapt, to change. TLLM, we can’t take it wholesale. Certain things we can do, other things we need to modify. (SDML2)*

It was acknowledged that this meant MLs have to implement curriculum changes and initiatives that they and/or some teachers, might not want or necessarily agree with.

> *We have to carry them out, whether we like it or not. It is government policy, we follow. We have to follow certain things, so we have to go along. Whether we are able to do it or not, whether we like to do it or not, we have to carry out these policies. (SDML2)*

MLs were accountable for the successful delivery of the subject in the department. MLs undertook monitoring of teachers’ work in the classroom to establish whether teaching and learning were taking place in a satisfactory way. Some of the monitoring strategies utilised by MLs included:

- Periodic checking of weekly lesson plans (SBTR1, SDTR5), to ensure teaching progress are in accordance with the scheme of work.
- Periodic checking of students’ work (SFTR6, SATR4, SFTR6), for example, workbooks, files and portfolios to ensure marking are up to date and done satisfactorily.

- Periodic classroom observations (SDTR1, SBTR1, SFTR6) to ensure a high standard of instructional delivery
- Analysis of examination results (SASL1, SFSL2, SBML2, SCML1) to ensure student achievement targets are being met
- Feedback from teachers teaching the subject (SBTR3, SATR3).

5.3.1.2 Customising the curriculum and pedagogical practices

Since the introduction of the TSLN and TLLM policy initiatives, MOE had been encouraging schools to design their instructional programmes "to cater to the needs and abilities of pupils and their talents" (SCSL1). Schools were asked specifically to enhance the effectiveness of the instructional programmes by matching the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment to the needs, abilities and interests of the student cohort in the school. For ML (SCML1), the fundamental guiding question for her was: "What can I do to help my students learn better?

> *… I am the English HOD. I see my role is to come up with good programmes for the pupils. Programmes that are suitable and cater to the needs of the pupils. I feel that this is important. (SCML1)*

MLs were expected to encourage their teachers to utilise student-centred pedagogical approaches and experiment with innovative teaching strategies in their classroom teaching. Some of the teaching strategies mentioned included: co-operative learning (SESL1), multiple intelligences (SESL1), data logging (SEML4) and Picture Word Inductive Model (SFML1). ML (SCML2) shared how she encouraged her department and subject teachers to incorporate more student-centred pedagogies in day-to-day teaching. She described how she role-modelled these teaching practices for her teachers and how she set up multiple platforms (for example, contact time, department and level meetings) for teachers to talk about new ideas and share successful teaching strategies and resources (what works well in the classroom) with other teachers. Another ML (SFML1) described how he implemented the Strategies for Effective Engagement and Development (SEED) which aimed to provide more appropriate learning experiences for lower primary students by doing away with the use of textbooks and workbooks.

> *The lower primary team decided not to have textbooks and workbooks for P1s and 2s. … We are now using materials that we know would arouse the interest of our children. (SFML1)*

ML (SBML1) posited that many of her ML colleagues relished the opportunity to initiate, engage and experiment in new learning designs in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

Despite the increased time demands on an already heavy workload, ML (SBML1) reported feeling a sense of empowerment.

> *… now we are given more autonomy. We are given more freedom. We can customise our own curriculum. We can really look at the needs of our children and teach and cater to their needs. Even though it does mean more work on our part but I am happy because it is professional work. It's work that we should do. (SBML1)*

It was noted that some MLs were better than others in this endeavour and the SLs (SASL1, SFSL2) wished more MLs would embrace the opportunity to undertake curricular customisation and pedagogical innovations to cater to the needs, abilities and interests of the students in the schools. There was a recognition amongst some participants that curricular customisation and pedagogical innovations in examinable subjects such as English, Mathematics, Science and Mother Tongue languages have remained limited, particularly in the final year of primary education (primary six). The interviews also revealed a deep-rooted examination mindset and exposed a level of scepticism amongst a number of participants towards student-centred pedagogies. Teachers (SDTR2, SATR3, SBTR1, SETR1, SCTR1, SETR2, SCTR2, SBTR2, SATR1) felt that the primary responsibility of teachers was in helping their students do well in the PSLE. There were numerous references to teachers' struggle (particularly teachers preparing classes to take PSLE that year) to complete the syllabus in time for the examinations as these student-centred pedagogies were taking up too much curriculum time. The teacher (SDTR2) described the emphasis and move towards student-centred pedagogies as a "fad" while teachers (SBTR1, SETR1) doubted these pedagogies would lead to an improvement in the PSLE results. The ML (SDML2) recounted one teacher telling her there was no need to change her "tried and tested methods" as her students had always done well in the PSLE.

> *There is no time in class for activities that are not important to achieving results. (SDTR2)*

5.3.1.3 Achieving student learning outcomes

While MLs were expected to engage in curriculum customisation and pedagogic innovations, they were also responsible to achieve "credible" PSLE results and held to account through the EPMS process. ML (SEML1) defined "creditable" as "achieving PSLE results in all subjects that are better than the national average and comparable schools". Another ML (SEML3) shared that in his school (School E), there was constant pressure on MLs and teachers to achieve better examination results due to the high status of the school.

100% PSLE passes is expected …… We are a SAP school and we are focussed on quality passes (A and A). …… We are also expected to increase the percentage of quality passes year on year. (SEML3)*

Despite the TSLN and TLLM initiatives, the relentless focus on excelling in the high-stakes PSLE had continued unabated. There was near universal agreement among participants that the high-stakes PSLE results remained a "non-negotiable" bottom-line and a key measure of success for schools. As SL (SBSL2) reiterated:

Of course, it is important. Don't have, the superintendent will come after you… No need to say. It is a no bargain thing. The results must be there. (SBSL2)

The SL (SFSL2) acknowledged that there was a clear tension between the emphasis and move towards student-centred learning and the preoccupation with the PSLE results. The challenge for MLs was to find a balance between engaging in new ways of teaching and learning and at the same time, meeting the expectations of an examination-driven system. The ML (SCML2) shared how she negotiated the tension in a "pragmatic" manner. She (SCML2) spoke of how she would "close both eyes" to the use of predominantly "teacher-centred" pedagogies of "chalk and talk" and "drilling" (repeated cycles of practice tests) before the PSLE. She (SCML2) described this as an act of compromise to teachers teaching graduating classes and to ensure the students are well prepared and have the best opportunity to do well in the PSLE. She would, however, "insist" on student-centred pedagogies in the other (lower) grade levels as they were seen as "not under examination pressure". The ML (SDML1) revealed he leveraged on the EPMS work review process to "encourage" his teachers to use student-centred pedagogies in their day-to-day teaching.

The SL (SCSL1) opined that the best way forward was for teachers to see for themselves how these student-centred pedagogies could benefit their students "holistically". She (SCSL1) reckoned achieving "credible" PSLE results would have to be one of those demonstrated benefits. The SL (SBSL1) accepted that it could take some time for educators (SLs, MLs and teachers) to change the way they perceived student learning vis-à-vis the PSLE and embrace student-centred pedagogies in their teaching practice. A number of participants (SEML3, SBSL1, SATR1, SFML2), however, argued that a bigger challenge would be shifting parental and societal definition of student success beyond the narrow view of examination results.

5.3.2 Setting directions

5.3.2.1 Defining the school directions

> *If I am the HOD English. I am aware of my area so I should give my contributions of what the direction for the school in that area should be. (SDTR5)*

MLs contributed to the direction setting process of the school by providing their views through discussions in formal forums such as Exco meetings and through informal interactions with SLs. Through their involvement in helping to set the school vision and directions, MLs developed a clear understanding of the intent of the school vision and directions. They then assumed a key role to translate that intent into actionable items at the department level, "we have to be very clear in what we are trying to do" (SAML1). As SL (SDSL2) put it, "if they are unclear about the school's directions, then it is very difficult for them to set clear directions for their teachers".

5.3.2.2 Charting the department directions

Participants (SATR2, SEML2, SDML1, SEML1, SDML2, SASL1, SDML3, SATR1, SFTR1, SETR3, SASL1, SESL2, SCSL1) spoke of the ML role in charting the direction for the department, acting as a "direction provider" (SBTR3). As ML (SDML1) put it, it was about "What do you want for the department?" while the teacher (SETR3) said it was more about "knowing where you are leading us to". For ML (SDML2), it was about "what we need to do in order to get there" and this involved "translating an abstract vision into a concrete work plan consisting of strategies, programmes, activities and events with clear checkpoints for teachers to understand what they are expected to do" (SEML1). This 'work' plan contained a set of "clear" and "realistic" goals for the department and would serve as roadmap for MLs and department teachers, "knowing where they are now and what else needs to be done" (SAML1). When charting the direction for the department, MLs had to take into account the capability and capacity of individual teachers in the department for change (SEML1). It was noted that this direction could be the result of policies and initiatives introduced elsewhere (in and out of the school) and the department directions would have to be broadly aligned with the whole school directions.

> *One of my school's strategic focuses is achieving academic excellence, that is achieving good PSLE results. The English department in alignment with the school's focus have developed a workplan to try to achieve these goals. (SDML3)*

The charting of the department's direction was often conducted in consultation with teachers in the department. The involvement of teachers in developing the department direction encouraged teachers to take ownership of the department direction and reduced the potential

for the direction to be seen as a directive from the top. Whilst MLs often involved the department teachers in decision making, there was a sense of responsibility to make decisions, and on some matters to be very directive. In fact, a number of teachers (SDTR4, SFTR2, SCTR4, SATR5, SFTR2) indicated they preferred the MLs to "just tell us what we need to do" (SATR5).

Whilst MLs were expected to provide overall leadership to chart the directions for the department, MLs did not have absolute autonomy in setting the department direction. As with the department vision, MLs often had to refer to SLs to ascertain that the direction of the department was aligned with the broader school vision and directions (SATR4, SCML2, SDML3, SEML4, SFTR6).

> *As a leader, I can't just do what I want. You need to know what MOE want. You need to know what senior management want. (SAML1)*

The final decision over the department direction remained with the SLs. In some cases, the department direction was determined by SLs and Exco, with the major role in these cases being implementation (SAML3). ML (SDML2) lamented that her ability to set a clear direction for her department was adversely impacted by a lack of clarity of where the school was heading.

> *Every now and then, there is a change in direction. Today, we go East. Tomorrow, we go west. And suddenly, we now go North. It is very confusing. (SDML2)*

In setting the directions for the department, there was often a need to "prioritise" (SASL1, SDSL2, SFSL2) and "hard decisions" (SASL1) had to be made. Decisions like "where best to focus efforts" (SBML2) were often guided by both school and department vision. For ML (SDML1), the school vision and her personal values guided the department's decision to "invest" additional resources to support the learning of academically weaker students in her school. It was also acknowledged that on some occasions this might involve the implementation of curriculum decisions that some teachers, including the ML, may not want to, as "you can't please everyone all of the time" (SFML2).

MLs were also seen by many participants as being the person who simplify requirements for teachers by "making things clear for people" (SCTR4) and "letting people know what they need to do" (SATR5). The teachers (SBTR1, SDTR1, SATR4, SFTR6, SCTR3) expected the MLs to interpret the requirements of new policies and initiatives for implementation by the department, as well as contribute to identifying the need for and/or the implementation of specific initiatives for their school. Some participants (SFTR3, SDTR5, SCTR1, SAML3,

SCML1, SEML3) were cognisant of the need for MLs to be aware of “overlaps” across departments in the school and to collaborate with other departments “to reduce double work” (SETR2).

5.3.3 Leading people

5.3.3.1 Reporting officer

This theme is a recognition of MLs as leaders of teachers and EAS in the school and that leading people was a key role of MLs. MLs worked with and through teachers and EAS, as required to carry out school and department plans and successfully achieve the set goals. As the SL (SASL1) put it, “You can’t call yourself a leader without followers”. This is a theme whose nature leads to it having much in the way of direct links and overlaps which has many connections with other themes such as *“Developing people, and self”, “Building a collaborative culture”, “Communication” and “Representing and advocating”*.

All MLs in this study have a number of classroom teachers under their span of control. The number of teachers under a ML’s span of control varied from school to school, and was dependent on a number of factors such as school size, department size and the number of MLs available to supervise teachers. As ROs, MLs had the responsibility for the development, appraisal and ranking of their teachers under their span of control. ML (SAML1), for example, reported she had twenty teachers under her span of control as she was in charge of the Mother Tongue department comprising of teachers teaching into three mother tongue languages. ML (SEML4), on the hand, had only two teachers reporting to her as she was an SH.

All six schools in this study adhered to the prescribed EPMS process with at least three formal face-to-face work review sessions and standardised documents - planning and target setting in the beginning of the year, a formative mid-year review and a summative review at the end of the work year. During these work review sessions, MLs monitored how well the teachers had achieved their set work targets (with regard to teaching duties, co-curricular activities, other assigned duties, projects and tasks done during the year) and provided constructive feedback to the teacher on their progress and performance.

> *… they will provide feedback on my strengths and weaknesses … What are the areas that I can improve on? At the same time, let me know what some of the available opportunities are? (SCTR3)*

If there were any concerns with regard to a teacher’s performance, MLs were expected to address the issues causing the under-performance and this would include providing the teacher with the necessary guidance, support and encouragement to improve. As part of the

EPMS work review process, MLs were required to conduct lesson observations and check students' work to make sure an appropriate level of teaching quality was delivered and a satisfactory level of learning was taking place. MLs were expected to provide detailed constructive feedback to teachers after every lesson observation and check of students' work. The teacher (SDTR2) bemoaned the feedback she received from her ML after a formal lesson observation wasn't helpful. She felt that there was little guidance from the ML on how to improve her classroom practice and the ML was "just ticking the boxes". There was a view expressed that some MLs were better than others in this endeavour.

It was universally accepted that the EPMS work review process was very important. All education officers (SLs, MLs and teachers) were "ranked" by a panel comprising of all ROs in the school. The "ranking" had a direct impact on salary increment, annual performance bonus payment as well as the prospects for promotion to the next salary grade. As ROs and a member of the ranking panel, MLs were expected to have a good understanding of the performance of each individual teacher under their span of control and a clear sense of their relative standing amongst all the teachers in the school.

> *That is why I think work review sessions are important so that you have a basis to show why your teachers are good and so on. Because I think at the end of the day, teachers are being ranked in terms of performance appraisal. (SDTR5)*

> *I must report on my subordinates correctly and accurately. I cannot afford to make a mistake because it will affect their performance bonus. (SDML2)*

5.3.3.2 Deploying teachers

Participants spoke of MLs working with SLs and other MLs to make decisions on the assignment of teaching as well as co-curricular responsibilities to teachers (SBSL1, SDTR1, SFSL1, SCTR4, SDML3, SATR5, SEML3, SEML2). This was to harness the different strengths and qualities of teachers and ensure that talent was spread equitably across all the departments in the school (SDML3, SDML1, SFML1, SASL2). MLs leveraged on the different strengths and expertise of teachers to work on the school and department plans. ML (SAML1) spoke of how she "tap" the older teachers for their "experience" and the younger teachers for their "youthful energy" and "fresh perspectives" to implement curriculum initiatives and changes in the department. There was recognition that each and every teacher is good at something and could make a contribution to the success of the department and school.

5.3.3.3 Supporting teachers

Many participants viewed supporting teachers as a key aspect of the ML role. Teachers (SCTR3, SBTR3, SATR3, SETR5, SFTR5) felt that MLs should be focussed on making life easier for teachers, or providing whatever it might be that teachers need to do their work effectively. MLs (SCML2, SEML4, SBML1, SEML1) spoke of being aware of the needs, abilities and interests of teachers in the department and providing teachers with the necessary support and encouragement to carry out their work effectively. Some of the support strategies described included provision of advice, resources and professional learning opportunities. MLs had a particular role in supporting beginning teachers (SDTR4) and teachers new to the school (SDTR5). MLs provided support to beginning teachers stepping into the classroom for the first time, supplying them with, for example, information on school processes and subject syllabus and scheme of work documents. MLs also worked with Senior Teachers in the department to help these beginning teachers understand the teaching and learning philosophy of the school and department, as well as provide the necessary instructional support and teaching resources to deliver the curriculum. MLs also played an important role in encouraging and supporting teachers to change classroom teaching practices in order to improve student learning outcomes. The ML (SBML2) described this teacher support role as part of what he would term as “servant leadership”.

The ML (SCML1) felt that MLs had a “very significant” role in looking after the welfare of teachers. She (SCML1) made sure she spends time having conversations with her department teachers, including with teachers experiencing issues in their personal lives. The ML (SEML1) spoke of being the first-person teachers approach for dealing with day-to-day issues, and having to spend a significant amount of time each day helping teachers “put out fires”. A number of teachers (SBTR3, SATR3, SETR5, SFTR5, SBTR1), however, felt that they weren’t getting the support and help they need from their MLs. While ML (SAML2) would prefer to devote more time to work closely with teachers, she struggled to find time in an already busy work day.

> *Although supporting teachers is extremely important, there are times when operational tasks prohibit me from spending the quality time with teachers needed to improve their instructional practices. (SAML2)*

Interpersonal skills of MLs were considered to be critical in working with and through teachers. There was acknowledgement that it might be more difficult to lead a department composed of a group of subjects, as opposed to a single subject. MLs should be cognisant of the existence of a diverse range of teachers within their department (SCTR3, SETR1, SFTR4, SASL1, SAML3, SEML3, SCML2, SBML1). There was no “one size fits all” leadership style and there

were different ways of dealing with teachers. MLs (SCML2, SEML4, SBML1, SEML2, SAML3, SEML3, SCML2) acknowledged the need to cultivate “quality” relationships with teachers as the success of the school and department was dependent on them. The SL (SBSL1) was of the view that interpersonal skills to meld a team were more important than the technical skills of a ML.

> *If your relationship with the teachers is good, anything and everything goes. They will go with you. But if your relationship is not so good, then a little bit tough. Like a gear stuck there. You have to rewind, stop, play, and then you try again. (SBSL1)*

5.3.3.4 Managing change

Schools appeared to be under enormous pressure to change as participants recounted the number of MOE policies and initiatives they were asked to implement in the last few years. MLs were perceived to have an important role in leading and managing the change process within the department, as a “change agent” (SCSL2). For SL (SFSL2), an “effective” ML should be able to “anticipate change and prepare staff for it”. Participants described a number of strategies MLs employed to promote, sustain and embed change. (SFSL2) opined that MLs needed to communicate the rationale for change and making sure it was understood by teachers (SFSL2). There was a belief that teachers who are able to see the “big picture” were less likely to be resistant to change. The MLs (SBML1, SCML1, SDML3) believed SLs and MLs need to demonstrate the benefits of the change(s) and when teachers can see the benefits, they were more likely to accept and support the change. For example, the ML (SFML2) shared that when implementing an initiative, he often starts small by having a few group of “anchor” teachers who could champion the cause for change and demonstrate first-hand the benefits of making that change before scaling up.

A group of teachers (SETR5, SFTR5, SBTR1, SATR4) argued that MLs should always ascertain the teachers’ capacity for change before implementing any innovation, initiative or change. For example, determining whether teachers are already overwhelmed with existing school commitments or if they were lacking the required skills, knowledge or resources to implement the change(s) successfully. There was also a need for MLs to build up teachers’ capacity for change by providing them with the required skills, knowledge or resources (SDML3, SCML2, SEML1, SAML3). Participants (SAML2, SDTR5, SBML2, SDML3, SEML1) felt that MLs should be “talking the talk and walking the walk”. For example, the teacher (SBTR2) pointed out that her ML role-modelled her willingness to use a particular teaching strategy before encouraging others to use it in their classrooms. SLs (SASL2, SCSL1) felt that it is the role of MLs to promote a positive mindset towards improvement, innovations and change amongst teachers in the department.

It was acknowledged that mindsets of some teachers could be difficult to change. Despite every effort made by SLs, not every teacher will come onboard.

> *The truth is some teachers are really just difficult. (SFTR6)*

> *The close mindedness of some teachers. They are not willing to try new things. They are stuck in the old ways of doing things. … I have tried everything on my end … It takes two hands to clap. My hand is clapping, their hand is not. … No matter how hard I try, if the other party is not willing to clap, there's really nothing much I can do. Short of threatening them ... (SFML1)*

5.3.3.5 Building a team

MLs understood the value of teamwork and built a team of the teachers in the department. There was recognition that each and every teacher is good at something and could contribute to the success of the department and school. MLs worked closely with the teachers in the department and leveraged on the strengths and expertise of different teachers to work on the department's plans. This was also seen as a way to draw out the best from teachers in the department. There were numerous mentions of a need for the ML to be fair and be seen as being fair to all the teachers in the department. MLs should not be seen as favouring one individual or group of teachers over another in the department so that a "team" culture can be fostered (SDML3). One teacher (SETR3) compared a good ML to "a conductor of an orchestra who is able to harness the individual talents of its members". SL (SFSL2) agreed but opined that the focus on the team and teamwork must not detract MLs from encouraging individual achievements in the department. He considered both to be equally important.

> *We encourage individual achievements but these individuals must also value add to the team. It's like a soccer team. We need star players who can make the difference. We feed him the ball, he scores and we celebrate. He is part of the team. He cannot do it alone. We are looking for a galaxy of stars that can shine together. (SFSL2*)

5.3.4 Communication

This aspect of the ML role involved communicating and liaising with a variety of stakeholders within the school. Participants used terms "link" (SDSL1, SFSL1, SESL1, SATR5, SAML3, SDTR3), "bridge" (SBSL1, SBTR3, SAML1, SDML3, SDML2, SBTR4, SATR1, SFTR4, SEML4), "liaison" (SFTR5), "conduit" (SFTR2, SFML1) and "middleman" (SBTR4, SDTR3, SFTR1) to describe their perceptions of the communication aspect of the ML role. MLs served as a vertical channel of communication between SLs/MLs and classroom teachers, and a horizontal channel of communication within the department, or with other stakeholder groups within the school such as with other MLs, EAS and parents. Teacher (SATR4) considered the

quality of communication between MLs, SLs and their teachers as “pivotal” to the effective working of the department and the school.

> *… to know how to communicate with people is very important. In that way, people above you and people under you will like you better and they would want to do things for you. If they don’t like you, then it’s very difficult for someone to do things for you. (SATR4)*

5.3.4.1 Vertical channel of communication

MLs served as a two-way conduit of information and opinions between teachers and those higher up in the school hierarchy, acting as “bridge” (SBSL1, SBTR3, SAML1, SBML2, SDML2, SBTR4, SATR1, SFTR4, SEML4) between the groups. MLs brought information back from MOE and/or Cluster briefings and make SLs, MLs and teachers, where appropriate, aware of the latest developments in the subject or non-academic area(s). MLs also brought information back from Exco meetings to the department in order to keep teachers informed of what was happening at the school level. One ML (SBML2) considered it “very important to let everyone in the department know what is happening” and to “explain to them why we are doing what we are doing”. SL (SBSL1) pointed out that a lot of problems could be pre-empted or avoided if teachers could be kept well informed of what they have to do and why.

MLs managed the information flow to teachers acting as a “filter” for all the information that comes into the school and communicated those deemed pertinent to teachers in the department. MLs also ensured any “important” information obtained by teachers through attendance at forums or professional development activities was promptly disseminated to the other teachers, as appropriate. Once the information had been sorted and triaged, MLs were expected to either act on it, or involve teachers to do what was required. Teachers (SBTR4, SATR1, SFTR4) remarked that they saw the ML as the person who would give them the information they require and for the MLs to tell them what to do in an explicit way (for example, work requirements and due dates, etc).

It was the expectation of SL (SASL1) that MLs act as the “mouthpiece” for the school (i.e. SLs and other MLs in the Exco) and explained to teachers the rationale behind the decisions taken by the school. This could involve sharing privileged information not previously privy to teachers, for example, a decision was taken in response to a specific directive from the Cluster Superintendent or Zonal Director. MLs were seen as playing an integral role as a “feedback channel” (SBTR4), taking feedback from teachers to those higher up in the school hierarchy (SLs and other MLs in the Exco). The ML was also seen as the source of communication for department teachers’ responses to whole school initiatives.

Teachers don't attend Exco, only KPs [Key Personnel]. We tell him how we feel and maybe what the school should do. He is our messenger. He tells the Principal and the other people in Exco. (SBTR4)

HODs see their teachers every day of the week … If teachers are unhappy about certain things, they will make noise to the HOD … and the HOD will come and tell me or the VP. (SASL1)

5.3.4.2 Horizontal channel of communication

MLs strived to keep Exco informed of the department's programmes and activities to ensure they could be adequately supported and appropriately scheduled to avoid clashes or conflicts with school or other department events and activities. The ability of ML to develop a "helicopter view" (SDML3, SDML1, SBSL2) could be aided by communication from SLs to MLs and between MLs, particularly what other departments in the school were planning to do. Such communication also allowed MLs to seek out opportunities to collaborate with other departments on areas of mutual interest in an effort to harness synergies and to "reduce double work" (SATR2). This also enabled MLs to get a sense of where the limits were in terms of advancing the sectional interests of their department. Once these initiatives had been agreed to, MLs were expected to communicate with relevant stakeholder groups within the school such as EAS, parents and external vendors to ensure these programmes and activities were properly implemented.

5.3.4.3 Formal and informal settings

Communication between teachers, MLs, EAS and other stakeholder groups occurred in both formal forums and informal settings. Participants reported regular scheduled department meetings, usually after Contact Time (staff meeting). These formal meetings were either held weekly or fortnightly and were used to ensure that all teachers in the department could get to know what was happening in the school and department, with the communication focussed on teaching and learning issues such as curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as well as general administrative tasks that have to be completed (reports, proposals, due dates etc). Department meetings also provided a formal platform for teachers to provide their views with regard to what was happening in the department and the school. ML (SBML1) found that there was always insufficient time to go through all the agenda items as "there is always so much to discuss and talk about".

The time we have is so tight that we are only able to talk about what is on the agenda. Time's up, that's it. There isn't time for bonding. No time for interaction, which is sad. How can we overcome this? I don't know. (SBML1)

The gathering of teachers as a department was seen as more than just a way of communicating and sharing information, it was important to a teacher's sense of belonging to the department (SBML1, SFML1). It was noted that not all teachers, in particular adjunct and part time teachers, could attend these meetings all of the time and MLs were expected to keep these teachers "in the loop" (SDML1) through meeting agendas and minutes as well as over "quick catch ups" (SEML2).

It was acknowledged that communication within the department took place on a day-to-day basis, and in most cases, informal. There were numerous mentions of impromptu one on one interactions, with MLs meeting up with teachers, for example, "before flag raising ceremony in the morning", "during recess time", "during lunch time", "along the corridor", "at the staff lounge", "at the canteen" and "at the neighbourhood coffee shop" (SDML3, SFTR5, SCML1, SASL1, SBTR1, SCTR3, SDML1, SFML1, SDSL2). The group of MLs (SCML1, SDML1, SFML1, SAML2, SEML2) shared that they have an "open door policy" and teachers could come talk to them any time without an appointment. The ML (SFML2) mentioned that he made it a point to call out to teachers when going out for lunch. He believed that such informal interactions with teachers had helped him to "get to know what they are thinking and get to sort of influence them in a way". It was the view of ML (SAML1) that MLs built trust by having regular and flexible communication with SLs, other MLs and teachers, and it was also how MLs show they were doing their job (SDML1).

5.3.4.4 Leveraging on information and communications technology

There were comments made that schools in this study were utilising ICT platforms to improve communication amongst teachers in the department as it was often "difficult to get everybody together" (SCTR4). While emails remained an important channel of communication, schools had embraced other ICT platforms such as "electronic bulletin board" (SBML1) and "staff portal" (SEML3), "MSN Messenger" (SDML1) to communicate with their teachers. ML (SEML1) said she created a virtual group on the school's staff portal to communicate with department teachers. She also used the office communicator function on the school laptop to communicate with individual teachers. One group of teachers (SFTR3, SCTR1, SBTR3, SATR5) felt that the digital modes of communication had been useful as they now had access to a repository of information 24/7. However, a number of other teachers (SATR2, SETR1, SCTR2, SBTR3, SFTR6) reported being "inundated" with emails every day. The SL (SCSL2) emphasised a need to respect teachers' time and asked that SLs and MLs to only send teachers emails that were of relevance or interest to teachers. ML (SCML2) also warned against replacing face to face meetings with emails as it could negatively impact on the "quality relationships" within the department.

Most heads got no time to meet, they just email, which is very impersonal. Email messages, you can't hear the tone, you might get the wrong message. (SCML2)

5.3.5 Developing people, and self

MLs had a responsibility to develop their teachers, supporting them to grow professionally as well as personally, and this was considered an integral part of their role as ROs. The perceived importance of the developing teachers was indicated by numerous participants. The MLs (SFML1, SDML3, SCML1) felt that the professional learning and development for teachers in the department should be a key focus of MLs. Another group of MLs (SAML2, SDML1, SAML3, SEML3) believed they should facilitate professional learning and development for teachers in the department as this was linked to their role in implementing curriculum and pedagogical change in the department. There was an acknowledgement that a commitment to professional learning and development of teachers was needed for the development of a collaborative culture of sharing ideas and resources (SDML1) as well as to identify and develop the next generation of MLs (SASL1, SFSL2). The perceived involvement of MLs in the professional learning and development of teachers encompassed identifying the professional learning needs; having an awareness of professional learning activities available; and facilitating the attendance of teachers at professional learning activities.

5.3.5.1 Identifying the professional learning needs of teachers

The "people developer" (SASL1) role began with the identification of the professional learning needs of the department and at the individual teacher level. This involved having a good understanding of the teachers' needs, abilities and interests through, for example, EPMS work review sessions where MLs discussed with individual teachers on their strengths and areas for improvement (weaknesses) and what professional learning was required to fulfil their current or future roles (SFTR5, SCML1, SASL1, SBTR1, SCTR3). MLs worked with SLs, other MLs and the School Staff Developer (SSD) to put together a professional learning plan for the school that was aligned with the school goals as well as the interests of the teachers. A major driver of the professional learning plan was the mandated changes to the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment (such as Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading [STELLAR]). Consequently, the professional learning plan had a strong focus on improving classroom practice. The professional learning activities were selected to broaden and deepen teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical skills so that they were able to implement the curriculum and pedagogical changes and initiatives successfully (increases capacity to change). As the priorities of the school and needs of teachers evolved over the course of the year, the professional learning plan was updated to ensure its continued relevance.

MLs sourced professional learning activities (e.g. courses, workshops, professional conferences, conventions and symposiums) from a variety of sources, for example, Training Administration System on Internet (TRAISI) portal and catalogues from major training providers such as MOE's Teachers' Network (now Academy of Singapore Teachers), NIE, and Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM). Other sources included recommendations from SLs and colleagues in other schools, personal experiences and unsolicited marketing materials from external training companies.

5.3.5.2 Facilitating the attendance of teachers at professional learning activities

MLs encouraged, and in some instances, directed an individual or a group of teachers to undertake specific professional learning activities, where there was a perception that these teachers could benefit from attending such an activity (SCTR3, SETR1, SFTR4, SASL1, SAML3, SEML3, SCML2, SBML1). This could be from an improvement perspective (for example, supporting a teacher to improve skills) or from the identification of some potential in a teacher (for example, building up a teacher's capacity to take on a higher responsibility). Many of the professional learning activities were usually delivered onsite (within the school), on a weekday afternoon during the school term or school holidays (i.e. after school hours). This arrangement was put in place to minimise disruptions to student learning associated with teachers being absent from school to attend professional learning activities during school hours. MLs (SCML2, SFML1, SDML3) spoke of their responsibility for professional learning in terms of organising the logistics of professional learning activities such as communicating with teachers, liaising with the trainer, booking room, ordering catering and facilitating the release of teachers, if required. MLs (SDML2, SFML2) highlighted the importance to participate in professional learning activities alongside their teachers, to "demonstrate the importance of attending training" (SBML1).

5.3.5.3 Conducting professional learning activities

A group of MLs (SAML1, SAML2, SDML1, SEML2, SDML2) mentioned they have conducted professional learning workshops for their teachers on pedagogical approaches such as co-operative learning (SESL1), multiple intelligences (SCSL2), data logging (SEML4) and Picture Word Inductive Model (SFML1). It was also mentioned that MLs sought external experts or teachers in the department with the relevant experience, knowledge and skills to provide professional learning activities for other teachers. ML (SAML3), for example, encouraged a talented beginning teacher in her department to conduct a professional learning session on using manipulatives for teachers teaching lower primary mathematics. Another ML (SFML1) spoke of how he tapped on his professional networks and invited a professor from NIE to

conduct a series of professional learning sessions on a literature-based programme for English teachers in his school.

> *I was a Teaching Fellow in NIE and knew someone there who has the expertise and could support us on this curricular project. I got her to conduct a number of workshops on the literature based English programme for P4 teachers. She spent one term, that is, ten weeks with us. For three hours every Wednesday, she 'hand-hold' the P4 teachers to write up the scheme of work, unit plans and developed teaching materials and assessment. She even sat in a number of lessons and provided feedback to the teachers. The feedback from the P4 teachers is very positive. They really enjoyed this collaboration with NIE and with one another. (SFML1)*

5.3.5.4 Facilitating the sharing of knowledge gained by teachers at professional learning activities

There was an expectation that teachers who have attended an external professional learning activity would share what they have learnt with other teachers in the department. The ML (SCML1) said that she had set aside time during department meetings for teachers to share information or what they have learnt with other teachers in the department. ML (SEML1) pointed out that her school (School E) is piloting a new MOE initiative where teachers were given one hour of timetabled time per week (known as 'white space') to actively engage in professional learning activities such as action research and lesson study. Another ML (SBML1) mentioned she was appointed as the facilitator of a professional learning circle (PLC) where the focus was on the sharing of practical and proven pedagogical practices and resources to help one another improve instructional practices. There was an acknowledgement that the sharing of good practices amongst teachers did not only happen during formal channels and that professional learning could occur when teachers share knowledge in informal forums on a day-to-day basis, for example, "before flag raising ceremony in the morning", "during recess time", "during lunch time", "along the corridor", "at the staff lounge", "at the canteen" and "at the neighbourhood coffee shop" (SBML2, SFTR5, SCML1, SASL1, SBTR1, SCTR3, SDML1, SDML3, SDSL2).

5.3.5.5 Succession planning

The importance of continuous renewal and expansion of the leadership capacity of the department and the school was emphasised by SL (SASL1).

> *HOD should see himself or herself helming the department for just a number of years. He or she should not be seeing himself or herself helming the department till the day he or she retires. You should be thinking of your successor. (SASL1)*

The teacher (SBTR1) felt that MLs must be able to identify teachers with leadership potential and encourage them to take their initial steps in the school leadership journey. ML (SEML4) shared her own leadership development experience and a typical process seemed to be that teachers who showed leadership potential were given opportunities to participate in leadership experiences, for instance, serving on committees and working on special projects. This is so that these potential leaders could get a "taste" of what is to come and move confidently into a ML role, when they have proven themselves.

> *Growing teachers to take up positions means we will have this leadership pipeline in the school. There will be ready ones coming to replace HODs who have moved up. (SFSL2)*

The SL (SESL2) pointed out that leadership development should not be "swim or sink" for the aspirant leader as "we really want them to succeed as leaders". It was suggested that potential leaders and MLs could benefit from a "mentor system" whereby more experienced colleagues (MLs and SLs) provided support and guidance, "someone to show them the ropes" (SBSL1) and "the senior ones are helping out the junior ones in terms of having conversations on how best to do things and all that" (SFSL2).

5.3.5.6 Developing self

Recent MOE policies and initiatives had brought about significant changes to the curriculum, teaching and learning in schools. MLs were expected to be "professionally informed" (SBSL2) of changes in policy, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in the subject area. They kept up to date by attending professional learning activities, either provided within the school, or externally. SL (SBSL2) expressed the view that MLs should take greater ownership of their own professional learning agenda if they are to successfully lead their teachers to implement current and forthcoming initiatives and changes.

> *The world is changing so quickly … one cannot afford to be stagnant. (SBSL2)*

MLs (SAML1, SAML2, SDML1, SEML2, SBML2) spoke of SLs passing on professional learning information and opportunities and in number of instances, SLs had directed them to attend specific professional learning activities. MLs had adequate access to professional development opportunities and like all education officers, they were entitled to 100 hours of professional learning in a school year. Ten out of sixteen MLs interviewed for this study reported they have attended the MLS programme or its predecessor programmes, DDM and FPDE in NIE. MLs (SAML1, SAML2, SDML1, SEML2, SBML2) remarked that they found the MLS programme to be particularly beneficial. They spoke of how they had established connections with fellow MLS attendees (MLs in other schools) and NIE academics, forming a

community for networking and support. They also talked about visiting schools and observing lessons, which then led to significant conversations about teaching and learning. They also highlighted the fact that the time away from school had provided them with the time and space to reflect on their work and examine what they have been doing in school.

> *Sometimes, when we look from outside in, we tend to see a bit better. We get different perspectives. (SEML1)*

5.3.6 Personal qualities, beliefs and values

The interviews produced a list of characteristics associated with MLs in primary schools. The list consisted of personal qualities, beliefs and values and was overwhelmingly positive and associated with good, effective or credible MLs. A small number of participants described characteristics that were negative or shared disapproving observations, often in relation to SLs and MLs with whom they had worked with previously and these have been included. The description of the listed characteristics is grouped under eight headings; *Teaching professional, Subject expertise, People focussed, Interpersonal skills, Strategic thinking, Seek innovations and improvements, Sense of purpose* and *Organisational skills*.

5.3.6.1 Teaching professional

MLs were seen as "competent" (SCTR2), "proficient" (SATR3), "experienced" (SFTR4), "outstanding" (SCTR4), "excellent" (SDTR2) and "expert" (SBTR2) classroom teachers. MLs genuinely cared about the student learning experience across all academic abilities (SBSL1). They knew the needs, abilities and interests of students in the school and had an understanding of how students learnt (SCML2, SFTR1). MLs were abreast of contemporary pedagogies and how to incorporate these into the curriculum (SDTR4) and classroom to help students learn better (SETR5, SDML3, SFTR5). MLs supported teachers to improve their instructional practice and they did this by encouraging teachers to experiment with new and innovative pedagogies (SCML1, SASL1), modelling these new and innovative pedagogies across all year levels (SAML2, SEML2) and coaching teachers in the use of these approaches/practices (SDSL2). As ROs, MLs conducted lesson observations of teachers under their span of control as part of the formal performance appraisal process (SCML2, SASL1, SDML1, SFML1, SDSL2, SEML2, SFTR2). It was suggested that MLs should be at least be "competent" (SCTR2) classroom teacher to be credible in their role.

> *… they must be good classroom teachers before they can lead … This is because they would be discussing pedagogies and doing a lot of classroom observations. They have to be good classroom teachers, if not, other teachers may say that like that also can be a Head [HOD]. (SDSL2)*

5.3.6.2 Subject expertise

MLs possessed “good” and “expert” knowledge of their subject(s) (SAML1, SDML2). They possessed a passion for their subject(s) (SCTR3, SESL2, SDML1, SDSL2, SFML1) and a love of passing that knowledge on to students (SDSL2). MLs kept up to date with the latest developments in their subject area (SBSL3) such as syllabus changes (SBSL1, SCML2), new initiatives (SDML2, SFSL1) and future directions (SCML1, SASL1, SEML4) and they did this by undertaking professional learning activities (such as briefings, meetings, workshops, seminars and conferences) and professional reading (SBSL2). MLs helped teachers, especially beginning teachers (SDTR4) and teachers new to the school (SDTR5), “unpack” (SCML1) and “make sense” (SDML3) of the requirements of these curriculum changes and initiatives. They also supported teachers by providing advice (SBTR3 SATR3, SETR5), useful resources and helpful strategies (SEML2, SETR3, SFTR2). MLs kept teachers informed of relevant professional learning opportunities within the subject area(s) and encouraged (sometimes forced) teachers to attend these activities. MLs shared or facilitated the sharing of learning with other teachers on their return (SFTR2). It was pointed out that the credibility of MLs would be less if they were found to have inadequate subject knowledge.

> *If we don’t have the content knowledge, we can’t lead the team. We will lose the confidence they have in us. (SBML2)*

> *I think most important thing is to know your subject well … I don’t think teachers would look up to someone who doesn’t know what is happening in the subject as a leader. (SAML1)*

5.3.6.3 People focussed

MLs had a “heart for people” (SEML3) and possessed the capacity and willingness to serve others (SDTR3). MLs showed genuine care and concern for teachers who needed support at work and with personal matters (SEML1, SFML1, SEML3, SDTR3, SETR1, SETR3). They were good listeners (SETR5, SDML3, SFTR5, SCML1, SASL1, SBTR1, SCTR3) and were prepared to make time to sit down and talk with teachers (SFTR1, SDTR4, SETR3, SFTR2), including those with personal matters (SETR3). MLs were seen as approachable (SATR3, SETR5, SDML3), friendly (SBTR1), helpful (SCTR3) open-minded (SAML2), supportive (SAML2), trustworthy (SDML3) and discrete (SETR5). They always had empathy for people (SFSL2, SCML2, SESL1) and acted respectfully in their dealings with them (SDTR4).

MLs leveraged on the abilities and strengths of individual teachers in the department (SETR3) to improve the teaching and learning experience as well as the educational outcomes of students (SBSL1). They were prepared to listen to all teachers with ideas to contribute

(SDTR4) and made them feel as if their contributions were valuable (SDML3). They acted on and seen to take action on the feedback provided by teachers (SDTR3). MLs had the ability as well as the courage to raise “difficult” issues with teachers in the department, for example, dealing with under-performing or uncooperative teachers (SDML3, SFSL1, SCML1, SASL1). MLs provided teachers with honest and constructive feedback in relation to their professional practice (SFSL2, SCML2, SESL1). Some MLs were perceived to offer support or devote insufficient time to support teachers and other staff (SBTR3, SATR3, SETR5, SETR3, SFTR2).

5.3.6.4 Interpersonal skills

Good interpersonal skills were considered critical as MLs worked with and through teachers to ensure that school and department plans were successfully carried out and the set goals were achieved (SAML1). MLs were seen as approachable (SATR3, SETR5, SBML2), friendly (SBTR1), helpful (SCTR3) open-minded (SAML2), supportive (SAML2), trustworthy (SBML2) and discrete (SETR5). MLs possessed good communication skills as they needed to relate well with SLs, teachers, students and other stakeholders (SFML2) as well as to influence them (SASL1). They understood the dynamics of the school and knew who the “Indian Chiefs” were and who they would need to gain allegiance and support (SDSL2). MLs possessed flexibility of behaviour (SDSL1) and the leadership skills to build a team of teachers in the department (SCML2). MLs had empathy for people (SFSL2, SCML2, SESL1) and always acted respectfully in dealing with them (SDTR4). However, some MLs were considered a “dictator” and did not have the respect of the teachers in the department (SCTR3).

5.3.6.5 Strategic thinking

MLs should possess the capacity to “think strategically…to make linkages and to make sense of them, to be able to distil from complexity something that can help them to move forward” (SFSL2). Having a “helicopter view” (SDML3, SDML1, SBSL2) meant that MLs had an understanding of school direction (SASL1, SAML2, SEML2) and knew where they and the department fit into the overall scheme of things. MLs were able to see the “big picture” (SFSL1, SCML1) and possessed the ability to look beyond narrow departmental interests and placed the school interests at the forefront of their consideration. MLs sought to collaborate with other MLs and departments and harnessed the synergies generated (SFSL2, SFML2) to achieve school and department goals in a more effective and efficient manner.

5.3.6.6 Seek innovations and improvements

MLs were constantly seeking improvements and always searching for effective teaching practices to help students learn better (SDSL2). They had the ability to envisage future needs

(SFTR3, SAML3) and were aware of the changes that were coming on-stream (SEML3). MLs were open to new ideas, initiatives and approaches (SFSL2, SDTR3) and had the ability to think “out of the box” (SDSL2). They created an atmosphere of innovation in the department (SCSL1) by encouraging teachers to try out new ideas, leading by example (SASL2) and providing a supportive “no blame” (SEML3) environment for teachers to experiment where failures and mistakes were used as learning points (SBSL1). MLs had the knowledge of and the ability to translate an “abstract” idea through to reality (SFSL2). They harnessed community resources – public sector agencies, private sector companies and voluntary welfare organisations, such as temples, churches and clan associations - to support department and school programmes (SFML2, SEML4). Some MLs were seen as not proactive and only react to mandated changes (SASL1) due to a combination of being overworked and having to deal with so much change within a short time frame (SESL2).

5.3.6.7 Sense of purpose

This was about who the ML was and what she or he stood for.

> *Why do I want to hold a post? I feel that by holding a position, I’ll get the authority to make some decisions to benefit the students. That is why I want to hold a position. (SAML3)*

MLs believed in the work they were doing (SAML1) and had a “clarity of role”. They had a deep conviction of the critical importance of education to the future of the students and its centrality in nation building (SFSL2). MLs were described as someone with “the heart in the right place” (SBSL2) and “doing the right things” (SDTR3). They always had the department and school interests at heart and were constantly working to make a difference and improve the welfare of teachers and students (SAML3, SDTR5). Their decision-making inspired confidence (SCML2) as this was guided by a strong sense of moral purpose and anchored in values. MLs were, however, prepared to defend and stick by their decisions and take any criticisms for them (SFML1). MLs possessed enthusiasm (SCML1, SFTR1, SCML1, SDTR4) that was tempered by a healthy dose of pragmatism (SCSL2). They also had strong work ethics and were prepared to put in extra hours to get the job done (SBTR3, SDML2, SFML2, SDSL2, SAML2).

5.3.6.8 Organisational skills

MLs possessed good organisational skills (SDTR4, SBTR3, SATR3, SETR5, SBML2, SFTR5, SCML1, SASL1, SBTR1, SCTR3, SDML1, SFML1, SDSL2, SAML2, SEML2, SETR3, SFTR2) and were familiar with the administrative systems and processes in the school. MLs were adept at managing the administrative tasks associated with the role (SBML2, SFTR5, SCML1,

SASL1, SBTR1), such as finance (SFML1, SDSL2), resource management (SETR5, SBML2) and planning (SCML1, SASL1). MLs were seen as “efficient” (SDSL2, SAML2, SASL2, SEML2, SDTR4, SBTR3, SATR3, SETR5, SBML2, SFTR5, SCML1, SASL1, SBTR1, SCTR3, SDML1, SFML1, SDSL2, SAML2, SETR3, SFTR2) and “hardworking” (SCTR3, SBTR3, SATR3), particularly in dealing with requests for support from teachers (SATR3, SETR5, SFTR5), and were able to respond quickly to administrative requests/needs from SLs (SCSL1). MLs were good at conducting meetings (SEML4, SBSL2, SCTR3) that were perceived to save their teachers time, rather than pre-occupied with administrative tasks and spend a disproportionate amount of time on administration (SFML2, SCSL2).

In summary, the characteristics described by the participants presented a picture of a good, effective or credible MLs in primary schools in Singapore. They were seen as accomplished classroom teachers who are passionate about and knowledgeable in their subject area(s) (content, issues and curriculum trends). They had a strong desire to improve the school experience in their subject area(s) for both students and teachers, have a good knowledge of how students learn, are up to date with professional reading, and willing to embrace new pedagogy and teaching practices. They also possessed excellent interpersonal skills that can enable a collaborative approach to be developed in their department, and good organisational skills to enable administrative tasks to be efficiently carried out, without interfering with other aspects of their role. They had an astute awareness of their role and the role of their department in the school.

5.3.7 Building a collaborative culture

5.3.7.1 Creating a department culture

MLs played a key role in shaping the culture of the department (SCML2, SFTR1, SDTR4, SBTR3, SATR3, SETR5, SBML2, SAML1, SCML3, SASL1, SBTR1, SCTR3, SDML1, SFML1, SDSL2, SAML2, SEML2, SETR3, SFTR2). MLs were perceived to be capable of bringing about changes to the department culture. It was thought that the process of effecting cultural change in the department was made more complicated by factors such as the strength of the prevailing school culture, the nature of the department itself [whether it is composed of a unitary subject such as English and Mathematics, or composite subjects such as Mother Tongue languages (Chinese, Malay and Tamil)], and the demographics and personalities of teachers within the department (SAML1, SBML2, SFTR5, SCML1, SASL1, SBTR1). It was acknowledged that a culture change would take time as “these things don’t happen overnight” (SAML1).

MLs aspired to create within their department a type of culture that participants described as “open”, “trusting”, “collegial”, “respectful”, “sharing”, “consultative”, “motivating” and “collaborative” (SBML2, SFSL1, SCML1, SASL1, SEML4, SBSL2, SCTR3, SESL2, SDML1, SDSL2, SFML1). The creation of such “collaborative” culture was desirable and could lead to better teaching and learning outcomes within the department (SDSL2, SAML2, SASL2, SEML2, SETR3, SBSL1, SFTR2, SCSL1, SFML2, SCSL2).

The MLs (SBML2, SFSL1, SCML1, SASL1) believed teamwork is a positive thing that could lead to improved teaching and learning outcomes and saw themselves as a team builder. MLs consulted with and involved teachers in the formulation of the department’s work plan (SFTR2, SCSL1, SFML2) and teaching and learning were valued and supported (SEML1, SAML3). Participants (SESL2, SDML1, SDSL2, SFML1) pointed out that teachers in the departments in their schools often worked as a team with the ML as the primary (not the only) leader (SDSL2).

MLs were seen to break down the “silos” (SASL1) of individual teachers working alone by providing platforms or forums for teachers to share good practices (SEML2, SFML2, SCSL2), and learn from one another (SBML2, SFSL1, SCML1) in order to improve teaching and learning practices. These were in groups that may be year level based (SATR3, SETR5, SFTR5, SBTR1). MLs also promoted a department culture that celebrates the successes (big and small) of teachers (SFSL1) and a “no blame” culture (SEML3) where teachers were assured of support if they were able to justify their actions and had put in their best effort.

5.3.7.2 Team Building

There was a strong belief that MLs worked with and through teachers and it was imperative for a ML to build up a team of “competent” teachers in the department. MLs supported the team building efforts by building ownership and cohesiveness of the department’s objectives and delegating responsibilities. ML created appropriate structures and develop practices to provide both time and space for teachers in the department to come together and work as a team. MLs also promoted a “trusting” culture whereby teachers felt “safe” to voice their concerns and if required, asked the ML or other teachers for support and help (SAML2, SDTR5, SBML2, SDTR3). SLs (SASL1, SFSL2) felt that “quality relationships” with department teachers were important to engender a sense of “team” within the department. While MLs respected teachers, they also strived to get the best out of them. MLs were aware that they should not be seen to favour an individual or a group of teachers over another in the department (SBML2, SETR3). One teacher (SETR3) compared a good ML to “a conductor of an orchestra who is able to harness the individual talents of its members”.

5.3.7.3 Positive attitude to change

The amount, scope and pace of change had increased in recent years and MLs were seen to play a central role in leading and managing change in the department (SCTR3, SFTR4, SAML3, SEML3, SCML2, SBML1). The SL (SASL1) asserted that MLs had the "important job" of inculcating a positive attitude towards improvement, innovations and change amongst teachers in the department. MLs built a shared commitment by getting teachers to agree on the changes to be made and supporting them to effect those changes at both department and classroom levels. It was noted that any change should be brought about within the boundaries of the school culture and the processes of change handled in a sensitive way, with teachers being supported through the entire change process.

5.3.7.4 Leading by example

Leading by example (SFSL1, SCTR4, SBML2, SATR5, SEML3, SEML4) was viewed as an important way to build the desired culture in the department. The SL (SFSL2) said that MLs should look to create an atmosphere of high expectations in whatever the department had set out to do. This meant MLs were always leading from the front and modelling the espoused values and best practices. This might involve teachers observing the conduct of MLs, for example, the way MLs organise their classroom, the types of preparation they do, and the teaching resources they use. Teacher (SBTR2) pointed out that her ML role-modelled a willingness to engage with a new teaching strategy and invited department teachers into her classroom to observe how the strategy could be incorporated into regular classroom practice. The MLs (SCML2, SEML4, SBML1, SEML1, SDML2) thought of themselves as leading by example. ML (SCML2), for example, preferred to speak to people individually, had no pretensions, and always open and honest with her teachers. ML (SAML2) was confident her department teachers were supported and felt good about themselves. She (SAML2) also believed the teaching culture in the department had improved because of the professional learning and development as well as her effort in working closely with teachers. Teacher (SBTR2) described this simply as the MLs "dirtying their hands with us".

5.3.7.5 Open communication

There was an agreement a culture of "open" communication amongst teachers in the department, irrespective of position held, seniority and age, was desirable. The teacher (SETR3) spoke of what she considered was an "open" culture in her department.

> *"Everyone can air their views without fear that they will be unfairly judged. But obviously when people air their views, they have to be constructive views. There must be a certain discipline and expectations. Give constructive ideas. Don't just air views for the sake of doing so." (SETR3)*

The ML (SEML1) reiterated the importance of fostering a trusting relationship to enable teachers to dialogue with one another about ideas and concerns in a constructive way. ML (SAML1) said she fostered trust with her teachers by openly sharing, often being the first to contribute to discussions about issues, ranging from those related to teaching and learning or problems teachers experienced. She (SAML1) hoped the teachers would be encouraged to act in the same manner, if teachers observed their MLs communicating openly. The ML (SBML1) highlighted the importance of sharing successful experiences but also failures. When commenting failures and communicating critical feedback, there was a need for tact and sensitivity (SFTR4).

5.3.7.6 Sharing culture

A group of teachers (SBTR3, SETR1, SCTR3, SETR2) spoke of a "sharing" culture that existed in the departments they were a member of. There were numerous mentions of sharing of ideas, strategies and resources amongst teachers in the department. While a number of these were referring to MLs sharing what they know and have with teachers, many more spoke about teachers in the department sharing good practices amongst themselves and learning from one another. The ML (SDML3) believed this was a recognition of the diverse abilities and expertise that existed in the department. ML (SBML2) was of the view that the promotion of a "sharing" culture in the department would reduce teachers' dependency on MLs to provide "all the answers". Another ML (SBML1) said this would help steer teachers away from working in "silos" (SASL1) and harness the synergy of working with one another in a team.

> *You are doing this and I am doing something similar. We can actually tap on each other's expertise. It is a case of one plus one equals three. (SASL1)*

Such culture would provide teachers with "the opportunity and platform to contribute more" (SDML3).

5.3.8 Administration

There were numerous comments made of "administration" and "administrative tasks", especially those concerned with the day-to-day operations of the department and school. Administration was seen as a fundamental aspect of the ML role and there was an expectation that MLs were familiar with the administrative systems and processes of the school so that they could "get things done" (SEML4). MLs were also expected to carry out administrative tasks in an "organised" and "efficient" manner (SETR1, SBTR1, SATR5, SBML2). The SL (SCSL1) referred to "administration" as the "management" side of the ML role. Specific aspects of the Administration theme described included:

- Preparing a budget for the department and monitoring the expenditure (SDML1, SDSL2, SFML1).
- Selecting textbooks (SDTR1) and other instructional resources.
- Ordering of teacher guides, textbooks and workbooks (SBSL1).
- Ordering, management and evaluation of teaching resources (SDTR3).
- Preparing and distributing teaching resource packages to teachers teaching the subject before the start of the school year (including syllabus document, scheme of work, teacher guides, textbooks and workbooks and worksheets) (SETR1).
- Overseeing the preparation of/Preparation of scheme of work to reflect current requirements of the subject for every level (SDTR3).
- Setting and/or vetting examination papers for the subject every term/semester (SEML4, SETR1).
- Overseeing the printing and packing of /Printing and packing examination papers for the subject for every level (SCML2).
- Organising school and department's activities such as English Week (SDTR3).
- Filling in risk assessment forms for learning activities conducted outside the school premise (SEML4).
- Overseeing the collection of /Collecting consent forms for activities in and outside of school (SETR5).
- Overseeing the booking of /Booking of venues, buses, coaches for activities such as excursions and school trips (SDSL2).
- Vetting/Drafting Invitation to Quote (ITQ) documents for procurement of goods and services from external vendors through GeBiz (Singapore Government's public e-procurement portal) (SBML2).
- Liaising with external vendors for the organisation of events, programmes and activities (SEML3, SDTR3).
- Collecting Edusave forms/money from pupils and parents (SFTR2).
- Verifying invoices from external vendors for payment (SAML1).
- Entering data into School Cockpit System (Online portal linking MOE and schools) (SEML2).
- Preparing and running meetings at the department (SFML2), subject or level (SDML1), and preparing/vetting minutes of meeting (SBML2).
- Preparing reports for the department (SFML1, SEML2).
- Preparing applications / reports for MOE Masterplan of Awards for schools (Sustained Achievement Awards) and external accreditation (People Developer Standard, Singapore Quality Class) (SEML3, SEML2).

- Reading and dealing with emails and other correspondence (SEML3).

These administrative tasks were considered time consuming with a number of MLs (SDML2, SFML2, SFML1, SEML2, SBML2) reporting spending in excess of ten hours per week on administrative work. The MLs (SDML2, SFML2) expressed frustration as they found administrative tasks took away time from more important work such as lesson planning and working with department teachers. Another ML (SAML3) admitted she was spending too much time on administrative tasks and that had prevented her from spending time working with teachers to improve teaching and learning practice in the school.

One teacher (SETR1), however, believed that administrative work was a “necessary” aspect of the ML’s role, as “some things just need to get done” and “someone has to do them”. MLs (SFML2, SFML1, SEML2) accepted that some administrative work were considered “part and parcel of the job” and should be expected. However, ML (SFML1) opined that much of the administrative work (writing reports) he was doing had “no great value … or of any great worth to teachers and students”. SLs (SDSL2, SFSL2, SCSL1) acknowledged that administrative workload could be further “streamlined” and described what schools had been doing to reduce the administrative burdens on MLs. They pointed out that schools had in recent years increased the number of EAS (such as Administration Manager (AM), Operations Manager (OM), Co-Curricular Programme Executive (CCPE) and Technology Assistant (TA)) to help relieve some of the ML’s administrative workload. The teacher (SDTR5) agreed that there had been more administrative support for school leaders (SLs and MLs).

> *In the past, there isn’t much support. We used to have only one clerk and one printing lady in the school. Now we have AM, we have OM, we have the receptionist, so there are many other forms of administrative support. (SDTR5)*

MLs (SAML3, SCML1, SDML3, SFML1) acknowledged the increase in administrative support but admitted they continued doing some of these administrative tasks themselves. As ML (SDML3) put it, “it is sometimes quicker to do it myself” as “it's still take time to give instructions to someone else to do the work." SL (SASL1) felt that these MLs should learn to let go and delegate more, “you can’t possibly do everything yourself”. Administrative support provided by EAS had freed up time for MLs to focus on more strategic tasks, such as supporting teachers.

5.3.9 Building a shared vision

5.3.9.1 Developing the school vision

The school vision was important as it provided SLs, MLs, teachers and other stakeholders “a clear picture of what the school wants to achieve” (SETR1) and that sense of “knowing where

to go" (SFTR1). A clearly articulated school vision served as an important reference point to understand and act on the strategies to achieve the vision, thereby helping SLs, MLs and teachers to make sense of their work. SLs (principal) were rotated periodically and a primary school in Singapore can expect to have a new SL (principal) typically every five to seven years. A common practice amongst newly appointed SL was to conduct a review of the existing school vision when they commenced their principalship term at the school. It was believed a school vision would need refreshing or a new vision required in view of the slew of new MOE policies and initiatives introduced into the school system during the tenure of the previous SL. All six schools in this study appeared to use an identical methodology of envisioning: from developing, cascading and articulating the vision to entrenching specific goals and setting expectations.

While SLs were perceived to play a central role in developing the school vision, SLs involved MLs, teachers and other stakeholders in the envisioning exercise and sought their inputs to develop the school vision. MLs contributed to the development of the school vision by providing their views to the SLs during the envisioning exercise and at formal forums such as Exco meetings.

> *We do have an avenue to give feedback and also to have an impact on the kind of policies and on the directions that the school may want to take, especially with regards to our own department. (SBML1)*

To facilitate the envisioning process, SLs and MLs work together as an Exco team to frame the school's vision before presenting to teachers and other stakeholders in the school. Whilst the school vision is not the SLs alone and MLs, teachers and other stakeholders co-owned the vision, the final decision rest with SLs and the Exco. There was acknowledgement of the requirement for the school vision to be in broad alignment with the MOE vision, it also had to be appropriately grounded in the specific context of the school.

5.3.9.2 Cascading the school vision

There was strong consensus among participants that after the school vision has been agreed to, MLs played a key role in cascading the school vision to the teachers and other stakeholders within the school. MLs went about this work by explicitly communicating and explaining the school vision to teachers and other stakeholders. This helped to ensure that the school vision is widely known by teachers and other stakeholders, thereby creating a shared understanding of what the school is aspiring to achieve. At the same time, MLs collected feedback from teachers and other stakeholders and fed these back to the SLs and Exco. MLs utilised both formal and informal channels to communicate and explain the school vision to teachers and

other stakeholders, formally at department and level meetings and informally such as over coffee during recess. The ML (SFML1) mentioned he helped to foster the acceptance of the school's vision by simplifying the message(s) so that teachers could understand and relate to the school vision.

> *Sometimes, the school's vision can be very big. At the teachers' level, they cannot see the vision. …… So it is down to us, the middle managers, to make sense of it and cascade it down to the teacher's level. We need to break down this big vision into small little chunks so that the teachers can see and understand. (SFML3)*

Participants acknowledged that teacher buy-in is critical to the successful achievement of any school vision.

> *… if I try to shove my vision down someone's throat, if they don't share that vision, it is going to be very difficult to get them to implement it when they don't believe in it at all. (SFML2)*

5.3.9.3 Developing the department vision

Similar to what the school vision does for the school, the department vision provided department teachers with a clear picture of what the department is trying to achieve, that sense of "knowing where to go" (SFTR1). A clearly articulated department vision served as an important reference point to understand and act on the strategies to achieve the vision, thereby helping MLs and department teachers to make sense of their work.

> *I think I expect them [MLs] to have a clear vision and purpose of their department. So that they can give meaning to the existence of their department and to the teachers. When they set goals or targets, the teachers have a picture as to where they are going and that would be easier in terms of creating an easier sense of buy-in. People can then work together as a team to achieve what they have set out to achieve. (SDML1)*

There was an expectation amongst some participants (SBTR2, SASL2, SDML1) that as education officers on the leadership track, MLs should be able to articulate a clear and compelling vision for the department they were leading.

> *Before I became a VP, I was heading the EL department. I felt strongly that all my pupils must be able to speak English well. This is my vision and somehow, I will make that happen. …… That means every student in the school, they will be speaking good English. That is my intention, my dream. In that sense, every middle leader should have that kind of an objective, the end product in mind. (SASL2)*

The envisioning methodology used by MLs to develop the department vision was similar to the one used by SLs to develop the school vision. The involvement of department teachers in crafting the department vision helped promote teachers' buy-in and ownership of the vision they were party to. There was an expectation for the department vision to be in close alignment with the school and MOE vision to ensure congruence.

> *Alignment to the school vision is key. If there is no alignment, there will be a lot of activities but there will be no concerted move in the direction that the school wants. (SFSL2)*

Whilst MLs were expected to provide overall leadership to have a clear vision for the department, MLs did not have carte blanche in setting the department vision. A group of participants (SATR4, SCML2, SDML3, SEML4, SFTR6) revealed that it was a common practice for MLs to consult with SLs to ascertain that the department vision was in alignment with the school vision. The final decision over the department vision remained with the SLs. The ML (SFML1) acknowledged that this meant MLs have to accept a version of the department vision that he and/or department teachers might not fully agree with but "they still have to implement whatever decisions that has been made by the Principal. (SETR1)" Once the department vision had been agreed to, MLs have the primary responsibility to communicate it to teachers in the department and the school and to work with department teachers to devise ways to achieve the vision.

In summary, the envisioning aspect of the ML role appeared to be more about the ways MLs can contribute to the fulfilment of the school vision, rather than the development and articulation of personal visions that might run counter to the school direction.

5.3.10 Accountability

MLs were held to account for the overall performance and quality of the work of the department he/she had been appointed to lead. There was an acknowledgement that all involved in education had become more accountable in recent years even as MOE devolved greater levels of autonomy to the schools.

> *You make the decision, you are answerable for them. That means if anything goes wrong, your head rolls. (SCML2)*

The accountability of MLs was seen as bi-directional. MLs were accountable to SLs (superiors) and to teachers (subordinates) and other stakeholders in the school (for example, students and their parents) as well as holding teachers to account for the quality of their work. In spite of the introduction of the TSLN and TLLM initiatives, there were obvious pressure on schools

to raise the performance of students on measures such as PSLE results (SDML2), winning competitions (SCML1) and national awards (SFSL1). MLs were expected to lead and manage their department in ways that facilitate the attainment of these outcomes. Some examples mentioned included the role of the ML in allocating teaching and co-curricular duties, independently or in consultation with others such as SLs and/or other MLs, and the review of such decisions at the end of the school year (SATR5, SEML3, SEML2, SBSL1, SDTR1); identifying, providing and facilitating professional learning of department and subject teachers (SCTR3, SETR1, SCML2, SBML1); providing appropriate information to department and subject teachers (SBML2, SDML2, SBTR4, SATR1); and introducing/encouraging innovative curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices (SFTR4, SAML3, SEML3).

MLs were reviewed and evaluated on their performance annually by SLs as part of EPMS. Depending on the structure of the school, the EPMS work review sessions were usually conducted by the VP, and might be undertaken by the P if the ML had the same substantive grade as the VP. Reviews were often in relation to specific set goals for the ML and the targets for the department "as agreed" with the RO. MLs as a group were ranked by a panel comprising of the Cluster Superintendent and the SLs on their annual performance rating and potential for higher appointments. The teacher (SDTR4) believed that the current ranking system had inadvertently generated some rivalry amongst MLs (and teachers) in the school.

> *The Heads should just work together. I feel that it is like a competition, like which department is doing more. (SDTR4)*

ML (SAML3) concurred with the teacher (SDTR4) and she admitted to feeling the pressures for her to "outperform" her ML colleagues by achieving better PSLE results, winning awards and competitions and introducing innovative programmes in order to achieve a "higher" ranking. SL (SFSL2), however, felt that the ranking system also encouraged MLs to collaborate with other MLs and teachers through the conferring of 'team' awards. MLs (SAML2, SDML1, SCML2) agreed that no one could achieve all their targets without working collaboratively with other departments, MLs and teachers.

Under EPMS, MLs had a formal role in evaluating the performance of teachers under their span of control. This role required MLs to monitor and evaluate the work of teachers to arrive at a performance rating. Some of the methods used were checks on weekly lesson plans and students' work (books and files), lesson observations, analysis of examination results and feedback from those who work with the individual teacher. Should there be concerns with regard to the performance of a teacher, the ML who, as the RO, was expected to work with the individual teacher(s) concerned and address the issues causing the underperformance.

Teacher (SFTR3) felt that the RO role has distanced MLs from the teachers in the department and this had made the ML role even more challenging. MLs (SAML1, SFML2) agreed that monitoring and reporting on teachers' performance had been a difficult aspect of the ML role, particularly where the teacher(s) involved was more experienced (in terms of years of service) than the ML. However, they (SAML1, SFML2) said this had not deterred them from holding teachers to account for the quality of work in the classroom. According to SL (SASL1), MLs should leverage on this EPMS responsibility to drive change at the department and individual teacher levels.

Teachers in this study appeared to understand the accountability demands on MLs for their performance. In return, teachers had an expectation that MLs were "earning their keep" (SFTR6) and there were accountability pressures on MLs from teachers to ensure that MLs perform their tasks to a level perceived as satisfactory by them. Some of the tasks cited included having a clear vision for the department (SASL2, SDSL1), charting a clear direction of where the department heading (SDML2, SEML1), being organised (SETR1), doing things effectively and efficiently (SATR5, SBML2, SBTR1), knowing the "ins and outs" of the school's systems and processes (SDTR1, SETR1), supporting teachers in their work (SETR1), justifying their decisions relating to curriculum, pedagogy and deployment of teachers (SDML1, SFML2) and representing and advocating for teachers in the department (SBTR1, SCTR3, SDML1, SFML1).

If a ML couldn't perform their tasks to a level perceived as satisfactory by their teachers, it was the view of teacher (SDTR5) that the ML should first seek support to improve his/her performance and failing which, the next option for the ML would be to "make way for others" (SASL1) and hand over the role to someone who is able to do a better job (SCML2).

> *And if you feel you have come to a point that you can't manage, I think it is best that you go and talk to the Principal or Vice Principal and say that 'I have problems'. If you are not making it and you can't garner support from the teachers, maybe you should step down. (SDTR5)*

> *If not, then why don't you vacate your seat and let somebody else who is more capable take over. (SCML2)*

5.3.11 Role of school senior leaders

5.3.11.1 Leadership style of school senior leaders

This theme emerged in the responses although, interestingly, the interview questions did not specifically ask the participants about the SL role. It was evident from the interviews that SLs,

particularly the Principal, were located at the apex of the school hierarchy as they were described as the "head of the school" (SFTR1), "higher management" (SEML3), "upper management" (SDTR3) and "senior management" (SEML2). There was a recognition of the "significant" power of SLs in the schools and their leadership style and behaviours could facilitate or hinder the enactment of the ML role.

SLs were perceived to have a "significant" influence in enacting the ML role in the schools investigated. There was an acknowledgement that the leadership style of SLs can have a positive or negative impact on the ML role (SBTR3). ML (SEML2), for example, shared how the leadership style of a SL could positively impact on the ML role.

> *If they have a very open and welcoming style managing the school, they would allow middle managers to try out new ideas, just have a go. They would give middle managers the power and autonomy. That really help a manager to grow. (SEML2)*

A number of participants (SCML1, SBML2, SATR4), however, recounted negative experiences with SLs in the schools they have previously worked at. The leadership styles of these SLs were described as "stifling", "closed" and "domineering" and had adversely affected their ability to carry out their role effectively.

> *It was a stifling environment in my second school. I have to see the Principal for every decision that I make, even it is a small matter. If it is a major thing, I understand. … I felt like a kid in that sense. The third school I went to was exactly the same. I felt that I wasn't growing in such an environment. (SCML1)*

> *When I was undergoing training at another school, the Principal is a very 'closed door' type. She even went to the classroom to scold the teachers in front of so many students. This resulted in a high turnover of staff in that school. (SBML2)*

> *If you have a Principal who is very domineering, just want things their way, then the middle management will find it very difficult to come up with their own ideas or speak up for the teachers. Because it will be very difficult to influence the Principal, once the decision has been made. (SATR4)*

Notwithstanding these negative experiences, participants described their SLs in their current school as "supportive" (SFML1), "empowering" (SBML2) and "developmental" (SEML2). There was a general perception that SLs in this study were providing MLs with an appropriate level of autonomy to carry out their role. A number of MLs (SAML1, SBML1, SEML4) reported they were given full autonomy in running their department and "have the free hand to do things"

(SAML1). They (SAML1, SBML1, SEML4) believed such autonomy had motivated them to take on more tasks and responsibilities in the school. However, the ML (SCML2) remarked that “I have never come across any HOD that can make decisions without consulting the P or the VP”. There was a recognition that SLs served as role model for MLs and teachers and as such, SLs would need to exhibit exemplary leadership behaviours and practices.

> *The way the Principal handles certain matters will also affect how middle managers handle certain matters. This is because the middle managers learn and model after the Principal. (SETR3)*

5.3.11.2 Provision of targeted professional learning activities by school senior leaders

SL (SBSL2) believed every ML mattered and she felt it was her responsibility to draw out the best in each and every one of her MLs. SLs encouraged or in some instances, directed individual ML or a group of MLs to undertake specific professional learning activities, where it was perceived that these ML could benefit from their attendance This could be from an improvement perspective (for example, supporting a ML to acquire a certain skill) or from the identification of some potential in a ML (for example, preparing a ML to take up a higher appointment). These professional learning activities were not limited to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment areas and included leadership and management development. This required SLs to have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of individual ML and sources of this information included work review sessions, formal and informal observations and teachers’ feedback.

5.3.11.3 Provision of mentoring and coaching by school senior leaders

Participants shared numerous examples of SLs providing mentoring and coaching to MLs during Exco meetings and in other settings. SL (SASL1), for example, set aside dedicated time during the weekly Exco meeting for coaching and mentoring, “where we actually share with them [MLs] tips on managing change, enhancing leadership capabilities and pitfalls to avoid”. Another SL (SCSL1) also used Exco meetings as a platform to explain and clarify the intent of MOE policies, initiatives and programmes so that MLs could understand the rationale and were able to see things in perspective. SL (SBSL2) also shared her school leadership journey with her MLs so that they could learn from her experiences. It was acknowledged that SLs were very generous in spending time to mentor and coach MLs, especially those who are new to the role.

> *When I was first appointed, I was very ‘green’ so I went to my VP for a lot of things. She showed me how to do certain things. Like vetting of exam papers. She sat down with me and showed me how to do it. So, coaching is very important. (SCML1)*

5.3.11.4 Provision of support by school senior leaders

The MLs (SAML1, SEML1, SAML3, SDML2, SEML4) concluded that they couldn't play carry out their role without adequate support and backing from SLs. The ML (SEML2) recounted how she was supported by her SL when a small group of disgruntled department teachers made unreasonable complaints against her. ML (SEML2) said she was grateful to her SLs and opined that all MLs should be able to count on the SLs for support on these matters. ML (SAML1) described the feeling of "high morale" when her SL complimented the department in front of the school staff during contact time. The ML (SAML3) felt that all her hard work was affirmed when her SL nominated her for Outstanding Youth in Education and President's Teachers Award (national pinnacle teaching awards) two years in a row. The MLs (SCML1, SAML2, SAML1, SEML2) acknowledged the support provided by SLs but they believed it would even more helpful if SLs could make their expectations clear and explicit.

> *They [SLs] are not making things clear for us. After we do certain things, we are faulted. They shouldn't have done it this way. In the first place, it was not made clear to us. (SEML2)*

SL (SASL1) highlighted that one of her priorities as a SL was to support the career development of promising MLs in the school. She (SASL1) had promoted two outstanding MLs who had the ability and aspirations to vice principals in her five years as Principal of her previous school and she was looking to do the same in the current school. The ML (SEML3) commended the SLs in his current school (School E) for being supportive of the career advancement of MLs and teachers. He (SEML3) said anyone who wished to leave the school to work in MOE HQ or to take up a higher position in other schools had the support of the SLs. ML (SFML2) observed that MLs in his school (School F) were offered many opportunities to lead in different kind of projects to give them exposure to different experiences. ML (SAML2) agreed she gained invaluable experience by taking on "bigger projects at the school level" and added that "things like these will help in your growth".

5.3.12 Time pressures

The ML role was a busy one incorporating a range of functions and purposes. There were perceptions of time pressures and these were seen as a challenge to their role and were as follows:

- Teacher (SCTR3) thought MLs are "busy people" and didn't think they had enough time to do all aspects of their job properly.
- Teacher (SFTR6) thought that his ML had "too much on his plate".

- Teacher (SETR3) believed having a large department with many teachers made the role more time consuming.
- ML (SDML2) pointed out she often didn't take recess or lunch breaks. There was just too much work to do.
- MLs (SCML2, SFML1, SBML2, SCML1) found it "impossible" to complete all of their work in school. Many things had to be done after school hours and they had to bring work home to do in the evenings, over the weekends and during the school holidays.
- MLs (SDML2, SFML2, SAML2) didn't spend as much time as they would like on planning and preparing their lessons.
- SL (SASL1) suggested that MLs should learn to delegate some of their duties and responsibilities to other leaders and teachers in the department, and acknowledged that some MLs are better at that than others.
- Teachers (SBTR1, SATR4) rejected the suggestion that ML should delegate more work to teachers in the department.

The time pressures had been attributed to the "dual" nature of the role. It was recognised that MLs had a substantial teaching load (albeit reduced when compared to a typical classroom teacher) on top of the responsibilities relating to leading and managing a department. MLs were also increasingly delegated school-wide responsibilities and often tasked by SLs to organise school events and to lead school-level projects, such as applying for external accreditation, for example, the People Developer Standard (PDS) or the Singapore Quality Award (SQA).

> *They are not just department heads, they are teachers, and they are a coach and all that. And then they not only manage their departments, they also a member of another department … You also have to run that department's projects… And they also got to manage events, they also got to manage auditors coming in and doing reports. (SBSL2)*

The MLs (SCML2, SFML1, SBML2, SDML2) remarked that they rarely ever had any time to do any marking or do any lesson planning and preparations during school hours. A lot of the "normal" teacher work is done at home in the evenings, over the weekends and during the school holidays.

> *We bring back all the workbooks and compositions home to mark. When we are in school, we have to solve problems and help the staff. (SBML2)*

For many weeks, I slept for four to four and a half hours just trying to do my department work. And that's not including marking. There is a lot to do and not enough time. (SFML1)

The ML (SDML1) commented that one of the most time-consuming aspects of the role was attending meetings. He (SDML1) felt that MLs were asked to attend too many meetings and many of these meetings were not productive use of his time. Teachers (SFTR3, SCTR1) noticed that their MLs seemed to be spending a lot time attending meetings or doing administrative work at their desk. A number of teachers (SFTR3, SCTR1, SBTR3, SATR5) mentioned they weren't getting the help and support they need from their MLs. ML (SBML1) said that she would prefer to devote more time to work closely with teachers but struggled to find time in an already crammed school day.

MLs in this study already had a lower teaching load when compared to classroom teachers. Off-loading (time release) figures for MLs quoted by the participants ranged from one quarter to one half of a standard teaching load, with an average of one third as required under MOE guidelines. Off-loading figures were also similar across both subject and non-subject areas. MLs (SCML2, SDML2, SBML2) admitted the time pressures had an adverse impact on the way they carry out their role. They (SCML2, SDML2, SBML2) were unable to carry out their role in the way they desire.

As a Head, you know you have a role to play. You can only play your role well if you have enough time to do the job. I cannot say I am giving my 100%. Because I need to juggle so many things, I have to divide up my time into so many parts that I give little importance to everything. (SDML2)

There were suggestions that MLs be allocated additional off-loading. SLs (SFSL2, SESL1) confirmed that additional off-loading might be feasible in the future as MOE had started to deploy more teachers to schools. This proposal was also supported, at least in principle, by a group of teachers (SATR2, SETR1, SCTR2, SBTR3, SFTR6, SCTR4, SDTR5). It was suggested that the extra off-loading could be utilised on lesson observations and providing post-observation feedback to individual teachers (SCTR2), co-teaching with teachers (SATR2), giving lesson demonstrations (SFTR6) and undertaking planning sessions with teachers (SBTR3). However, MLs (SAML3, SFML2, SDML1, SEML4) were concerned about "how teachers would view this change" and "we will need to be able to account for this extra off-loading". SLs (SASL2, SFSL1) also felt that additional off-loading might not be appropriate as MLs already had a substantially reduced teaching load. They (SASL2, SFSL1) opined that

MLs need to “get their hands dirty with the teachers” (SBTR2) to know what it was like for teachers working in the classrooms.

It was postulated that the time pressures experienced by some MLs were self-inflicted as a number of MLs were seen trying to do more than they could. The SLs (SDSL2, SFSL2) advised these MLs to not try to do everything, learn to set priorities, focus on key things that would make a difference.

> *I know they have the best intentions and want to do everything for their students … The school’s resources are limited … I wish we could do everything at once but it is not possible … We have to prioritise and in a way, pick our battles … In this instance, less is more and more is less. (SFSL2)*

> *Maybe it is time for us to re-prioritise. Just do what matters. Sometimes we do a lot of things that don’t matter. Just because these things come along in our inbox, we just tackle everything doggedly. Actually, we need to develop the ability to say these don’t matter so pay less attention. There are other things that matter more. We need to have the clarity of what to let go and what to focus on. (SDSL2)*

There were suggestions that MLs should delegate some aspects of their role to other leaders and teachers in the department and not try to do everything themselves.

> *I always tell my HODs. You are the head. But that doesn’t mean you have to do everything yourself. You have LH, SH and ST. They are there to help to share your load. (SASL1)*
>
> *Let’s say Children’s Day. Maybe they could get parent volunteers to help pack the gifts for the students instead of getting the teachers to do the packing. These small little things you can get parent volunteers to do. (SETR3)*

> *Small things they can give it to other people to do. (SCTR3)*

A number of MLs (SDML3, SEML2, SCML2, SFML2) agreed with SL (SASL1), noting that with experience, they learnt to pace themselves and prioritise their work. They (SDML3, SEML2, SCML2, SFML2) also learnt to balance daily tasks that required immediate attention with activities needed to achieve long term goals.

> *Time is a challenge. You can’t do everything. You don’t do everything. You have to be selective, you have to make good choices. (SDML3)*

I have a few areas under my charge. Honestly, I find it very hard to put equal importance on all actually. I can only focus on one area at a time. So I suppose, prioritising is what I need to think about. (SEML2)

The nature of the ML role involved responding to ad hoc requests from SLs and teachers and this exacerbated the time pressures on the role. Participants (SEML1, SCML1, SFTR2), expressed the opinion that the issue might be that ML's role needs clearer definition, "we don't really have a clear line where to stop" (SEML1). It was noted that most MLs were aware of an official position description in the Principal's Handbook but not every ML was given a copy or had referred to it. There was a perception that MLs "just do what the Principal tells them to do" (SFTR2). The SL (SESL2) disagreed with this view and confirmed that SLs discussed the job scope and expectations with MLs when they were first appointed and during the EPMS work review session in the beginning of each work year. As such, SL (SFSL2) believed there was "clarity" to the ML's role in terms of "what is required of them in terms of expectations and targets".

Because of the role being operated under time pressures, there was little time and space for MLs to take a step back and reflect on what they had been doing and to plan ahead.

They have so many things taking their attention. Where is the time for reflections? As leaders, I feel they would need even more time off, to step aside and reflect. Because they will have to think back. Is it effective? How is it effective? What has gone well? What has gone wrong? What is it they want to keep? (SBTR1)

In summary, there were perceptions of time pressures and these were seen as a challenge to the ML role. There were calls for MLs to be allocated additional off-loading and there were also comments made that MLs need to be more strategic and prioritise their work better.

5.3.13 Role change

5.3.13.1 Expanding role

MLs were found to have many duties and responsibilities at both department and school levels. Participants in the study noticed that the role of MLs had "changed" (SAML2) or "expanded" (SDML1, SDSL1, SETR1, SFSL2, SBSL1) or "evolved" (SEML2) in recent years. The ML (SAML2) who had been a ML for a number of years reflected on the change:

When I first started as a HOD many years ago, things were quite different. Today, we are carrying bigger and bigger portfolios. It is not just managing the department. You are looking into things at the cluster level. You are looking into projects which will bring

about changes to the school. You are getting more and more involved in bigger projects. (SAML2)

While a ML was typically assigned a subject or a group of subjects as their specific leadership responsibility, all have the added responsibility of whole-school duties. It was not uncommon for MLs to be appointed to lead at least one school level committee or projects. The ML (SBML2), for example, said that he was asked to take on a greater responsibility for the day-to-day running of the school and was recently appointed a session head. As the session head, he (SBML2) was "in charge of the school" when both his SLs were absent from the school campus. Another ML (SCML2) said her school level responsibility for that year was relief rostering. As the ML in charge of relief rostering, she (SCML2) had to organise relief teachers for teachers who were absent from school. Another ML (SAML2) mentioned she was tasked to co-ordinate the annual SEM report writing which involved working with SLs and other MLs who were quality criterion owners to put together the self-assessment report with the required supporting evidence. Other school level responsibilities mentioned included organising major school events (such as Prize Giving Day) and preparing applications for Masterplan of Awards for schools and other external validations (such as People Developer Standard and Singapore Quality Class). MLs were also asked to work with planning tools [such as Balanced Score Card in School E] and organisational excellence systems (Singapore Quality Class) that are typically associated with organisations in the private sector.

5.3.13.2 Emphasis on leading

The SL (SDSL2) thought the ML role was probably more "complex" now when compared to twenty years ago. She (SDSL2) attributed the increased complexity to the rapid pace of change and there were more changes to keep up to date with and more issues to be aware of. Indeed, the numerous MOE policies and initiatives introduced to the school system in recent years as well as the consequent responses from schools have meant a great deal of change in the ML role. SL (SDSL2) who was recently appointed vice principal agreed that "the modus operandi" of the ML role has changed. The ML (SEML1) noticed a shift away from MLs acting as mere implementers of MOE and school policies and initiatives to becoming leaders of curriculum customisation and pedagogical innovations.

I think it [the role] has changed much over the past few years. My personal take on this is previously we tend to just receive directions from the top and go out to implement the programmes. But now we are very much involved in planning the directions for the school. We are also given the opportunities to look at things from different perspectives. (SEML1)

ML (SFML1), who had recently re-joined the school after a period of secondment to NIE, felt that MLs were now expected to "do a lot more" (SDTR3). MLs had been asked to take the initiative to look for things to improve teaching and learning in the department. Participants (SDSL2, SEML1, SFML1) attributed this change in expectations to the TSLN and TLLM initiatives that "encourage" schools to embark on school-based curriculum customisation and pedagogic innovations to suit the specific needs, abilities and interests of students in the school. ML (SAML3) who was recently appointed to a ML role agreed:

> *At my appointment interview last year, Supt [Cluster Superintendent] and my P told me my job as LH Maths is to lookout for better ways to help lower primary students learn better … bring in things like differentiated teaching, more use of manipulatives … and other innovative pedagogical practices. (SAML3)*

The SL (SFSL2) agreed that the ML role had "expanded" as expectations rose in tandem with the increase of ML's remuneration over time.

> *… the establishment grade for HODs is at SEO 1 [Senior Education Officer] previously. But now, they can be promoted to SEO 1A1, which is the grade for VP. I think there is a clear correlation with that. With more things coming onboard, the role has expanded slightly. (SFSL2)*

5.3.14 Representing and advocating

At the core of this theme was the ML acting as chief advocate for their department and their teachers and as sources of professional and personal support (SCML2, SFTR1, SDTR4, SBTR3, SATR3, SETR5, SBML2, SFTR5, SCML3, SASL1, SBTR1, SCTR3, SDML1, SFML1, SDSL2, SAML2, SEML2, SETR3, SFTR2).

5.3.14.1 Department

MLs acted as the chief advocate for the department (SDTR4, SBTR3 SATR3, SETR5, SBML2, SFTR5, SCML1, SASL1, SBTR1, SCTR3, SDML1, SFML1, SDSL2, SAML2, SEML2, SETR3, SFTR2). This involved among other things, MLs promoting and publicising the department's programmes, initiatives and achievements within the school and in the wider community. A good ML sought out opportunities to maintain a positive profile within the school. As a general spokesperson for the department, MLs raised issues, put forward the department's case and made representations in relation to things such as deployment of teachers and funding for programmes and initiatives. It was mentioned that these actions, when done well, helped to bolster the credibility of ML and the department in the minds of SLs, teachers, students and parents (SDML2).

Teachers don't attend Exco, only KPs [Key Personnel]. We tell him how we feel and maybe what the school should do. He is our messenger. He tells the Principal and the other people in Exco. (SBTR4)

HODs see their teachers every day of the week … If teachers are unhappy about certain things, they will make noise to the HOD … and the HOD will come and tell me or the VP. (SASL1)

In some departments that have a number of subject areas (such as Chinese, Malay and Tamil within Mother Tongue languages department), MLs worked with colleagues for representation in matters related to a specific subject area. While some teachers (SCTR3, SBTR3, SATR3, SETR5, SFTR5) considered the ML role as just looking after the needs of their department first and foremost, others (SETR3, SBTR1, SFTR2) believed MLs needed to have a whole school perspective, keeping in mind the school vision and direction, and how their department would fit within that framework (SFSL2, SCML2, SESL1, SBML2, SFSL1, SCML1, SASL1, SEML4, SBSL2, SCTR3, SESL2, SDML1, SDSL2, SFML1, SAML2, SASL2, SEML2, SETR3, SBSL1, SFTR2, SCSL1, SFML2, SCSL2). The SL (SFSL2) argued that there was a need for MLs to expand their perspective beyond the boundaries of the department to the school and he advocated greater collaboration between departments in the school.

HODs must not work in silos … They are working together to help the school achieves its strategic plan. They have to see the inter-connectedness with other members of Exco. It is not just about growing the department but how your growth brings about the growth of other departments. How you can impact one another? They have got to see how they can impact one another. They have got to see how they can work hand in hand together, working synergistically where one plus one equals three. (SFSL2)

It was important that teachers understood the constraints placed on what the department could obtain, for example, access to funding and other resources. MLs should be able to present the balance between the department's needs and the overall school needs to the teachers (SBML2). This could be a difficult balancing act for a ML (SCSL1), and was handled differently by different MLs (SESL1). As participants (SCML2, SASL1, SEML4) had acknowledged, the 'realpolitik' would compel MLs to take on board the needs of other departments in order to maintain a collegial school environment. SL (SFSL2) equated a ML who couldn't see beyond the narrow interests of their department to the exclusion of others only as a manager, but one who can also take a whole school perspective as a "leader". The SL (SDSL2), however, considered both "leadership" and "management" aspects of the ML role to be important.

5.3.14.2 Teachers

One group of teachers (SFTR1, SDTR3, SBTR3, SATR3, SETR5, SFTR5, SBTR1, SCTR3, SETR3, SFTR2) expressed the view that representing and advocating for teachers either individually or as a group was a fundamental aspect of the ML role. These teachers spoke of the ML being focused on what they could do to make life better or easier for their teachers, or provide whatever the teachers might need to be able to do their job well. Some MLs (SBML2, SCML2, SEML1, SAML3) saw this aspect of the ML role as that of knowing the needs of teachers in the department and providing the encouragement and support to teachers to carry out their work effectively. MLs sought inputs from teachers in relation to whole school proposals and took their responses back to SLs and other MLs, as appropriate. Teachers (SETR5, SFTR5, SBTR1, SATR4) portrayed MLs as their "spokesperson" and reiterated the importance of conveying the teachers' views to SLs and other MLs "without fear or favour" (SETR5). The ML (SFML1) described having the "moral courage" to advise SLs, for example, the teachers were not ready to implement a particular initiative and requested for it to be pushed back to a later date. Teachers (SETR3, SFTR2, SFTR4) also argued that MLs should "protect the interests of their own teachers" (SETR3) and "fight for our ranking" (SFTR2) during the annual ranking exercise.

MLs (SCML2, SEML4) found it difficult to take a decision that could be seen as detrimental to teachers, even if they knew that the students would benefit. They attributed this to the length of time they had been working in the school and many teachers were also their friends. The ML (SCML2) described this as being "caught in between" and saw the challenge for MLs as "how to help teachers and how to satisfy the stakeholders".

> *I see that the leaders are constantly struggling to balance these two: the welfare of the teachers and achieving the goals of the school. (SEML4)*

SL (SESL1), however, insisted that the needs of the school should always take precedence. He (SESL1) would expect all his MLs to adopt this practice of putting the school and students first. Given these constraints, ML (SBML2) commented on the need for teachers to understand the limitations placed on MLs in terms of what they could and couldn't do, and what could and couldn't be achieved for teachers and the department.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings described in Chapter Five are further analysed in this chapter and compared to relevant school and middle leadership literature. This chapter has four main sections. The first section answers the two research questions of this study. The second section examines the substantive themes in the ML leadership role with contemporary and middle leadership literature. The third section compares the ML leadership role described in Chapter Four to dominant models of school leadership (instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership, contingency leadership and distributed leadership). The fourth section explores the applicability of a middle leadership model based on one previously conceived for MLs in Victorian secondary schools in Australia (White, 2000) as well as the successful school leadership model (Drysdale & Gurr, 2011).

6.2 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study investigated the phenomenon of ML leadership role in six primary schools in Singapore. Specifically, the research questions addressed by the study were:

1. What is the leadership role of a ML in a primary school in Singapore as perceived by the holders of the position themselves, those to whom they are responsible to (SLs) and those for whom they have responsibility for (teachers)?

2. Are the perceptions of the leadership roles of MLs as described by the three groups consistent or different?

6.2.1 Similarity in perceptions across the three participant groups

Research Question 2: Are the perceptions of the leadership roles of MLs as described by the three groups consistent or different?

One of the main findings of this study is the high degree of similarity in the perceptions of SLs, MLs and teachers. Across the six schools involved in this study, the SLs, MLs and teachers at each school produced similar descriptions. In all, there were 217 common themes across all six schools, and 208 of these or over 95% had high or moderate agreement between the groups under comparison. Of these, over 91% featured contributions from what was considered a significant number of individual participants that made up the groups being compared (see Chapter Five, page 107-110 for criteria). Of the nine themes that recorded low agreement, six were concerned with Role change (three) and Role of SL (three). There might be minor differences in the perceptions, but the similarities were greater than their differences.

The high degree of similarity in the perceptions of SLs, MLs and teachers might not be surprising given that the Singapore education system is considered by many researchers (for example, Goodwin et al., 2017; Nguyen & Ng, 2014) as "coherently managed such that there is alignment among different stakeholders that make up the system" (Goodwin et al., 2017, p. 106). First, all teachers and school leaders (MLs and SLs) attended the same pre-service teacher training and in-service leadership training programmes and "The content of the programmes reflects the current educational reforms, initiatives and practice concerns" (Ng, 2015b, p. 178). Second, the 'leadership' career track is "a well-defined track that has clear leadership role based on the level of leadership" (Nguyen & Ng, 2014, p. 23). All teachers and school leaders were regularly appraised (annually) and they had become familiar with the attributes of each role. These, in combination, could explain why SLs, MLs and teachers have had similar perceptions of the ML leadership role.

The agreement between the perceptions of the three participant groups provides strong support for the description of leadership reflecting what is actually occurring. If this study had only relied on SL or ML or teacher perceptions, there would have been no confirmation of whether the perceptions reflected actual practice. With SLs and teachers also commenting on the ML role and largely agreeing with the ML's perceptions, there was independent confirmation that MLs are enacting the leadership role they perceive. Through this process of triangulation (obtaining more than one perspective on a phenomenon) the findings reported in this thesis have increased credibility and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 290-327).

6.2.2 The perceived leadership role of the school middle leader

Research Question 1: What is the leadership role of a ML in a primary school as perceived by the holders of the position themselves, those to whom they are responsible to (SLs) and those for whom they have responsibility for (teachers)?

The leadership role of MLs that emerged from this study and was described in Chapter Five is both complex and rich. The findings confirmed Gurr and Drysdale's (2008, p. 25) assertion that "when people are allowed to define the scope of the leadership role, a rich description of this phenomenon eventuates". A total of fourteen themes were derived from the participant interviews and the main features of each theme are summarised below.

6.2.2.1 Leading teaching and learning

MLs have overall responsibility for the delivery of the curriculum in the department. MLs are responsible for the interpretation of the requirements of MOE policies and initiatives as applicable to the department for their teachers, ensuring that teachers are teaching what they

are supposed to teach. MLs have to develop an awareness of changes and trends in their subject area(s) and communicate the information to their teachers. MLs lead the teaching and learning process in their department through modelling best practices and being willing to experiment with innovative pedagogical approaches, encouraging department teachers to do the same and to share proven strategies. Maximising student learning outcomes was viewed as the overall aim of teaching and learning in the department.

6.2.2.2 Setting directions

MLs contribute to charting the school direction through providing their own and/or their department's response at forums such as Exco, as well as raising individual or departmental initiatives for consideration. MLs were expected to develop a clear direction in which to achieve the department and school visions, communicating with teachers and ensuring they know what they have to do. The department direction should be in alignment with overall school direction, even if that means having to accept a department direction MLs or their teachers may not fully agree with.

6.2.2.3 Leading people

MLs have a formal performance management role under EPMS. The ML had the role of leading department teachers in order to maximise the effectiveness of the department. MLs should seek to form a team where decision making is collaborative and all teachers feel valued, motivated, and keen to contribute. Good interpersonal and communication skills were considered critical if MLs were to be effective in this aspect of their role.

6.2.2.4 Communication

MLs act as a conduit for channelling relevant information from groups within and outside the school to their department teachers, and for conveying the department responses if required. Communication involving MLs can be both vertical and horizontal within the school, and formal and informal in nature.

6.2.2.5 Developing people, and self

MLs have a role in the identification of professional learning needs for the department, either on an individual or a group basis. MLs should have an awareness of the professional learning available for their subject area(s) and communicate suitable professional learning opportunities to appropriate teachers. MLs have a role in encouraging individual or a group of teachers to attend targeted professional learning and in facilitating the attendance of teachers at professional learning activities. MLs should set up processes to enable the sharing of information gained at external professional learning activities by individuals to other teachers

as appropriate. MLs should attend professional learning activities in order to keep themselves abreast of developments in their subject area(s). MLs also had a role in the provision of professional learning activities for their department.

6.2.2.6 Personal qualities, beliefs and values

A number of characteristics were reported for MLs. Mostly the characteristics were positive, related to MLs who were considered to be good/effective/credible in the role. A small number of participants mentioned characteristics that were negative. The characteristics were both professionally-related and personality traits, and were listed under eight headings; *Teaching professional, Subject expertise, People focussed, Communication skills, Strategic thinking, Seek innovations and improvements, Organisational skills, Sense of purpose and Organisational skills*.

6.2.2.7 Building a collaborative culture

MLs are considered to be capable of shaping and changing the culture in the department. This process of enculturation may take a period of time and can be made more difficult by factors which the ML had little or no control over. MLs should work to build cultures in their department that embrace collegiality, teamwork, sharing and a desire for improvement. Leading from the front and modelling appropriate behaviours could facilitate this.

6.2.2.8 Administration

MLs have a significant administrative workload. MLs are expected to be familiar with the administrative systems and processes in the school and to carry out their administrative tasks in an efficient manner. An increase in the number of EAS positions in schools has helped to relieve much of the administrative tasks from the MLs, and enabled them to focus their attention on other aspects of their role.

6.2.2.9 Building a shared vision

MLs contribute to the school vision through providing their own and/or their department's views during the envisioning exercise. MLs have a clear vision of what they want their department to become and the department vision was set in consultation with department teachers. The department version has to be closely aligned with overall school vision, even if that means having to accept a department vision MLs or their teachers may not fully agree with. Once the vision had been agreed to, MLs played an important role in cascading the vision to department teachers and other stakeholders in the school.

6.2.2.10 Accountability

MLs are accountable for the overall performance and quality of the work of their department. The primary accountability mechanism for MLs in the school is through EPMS. MLs have a formal role in appraising the performance of department teachers and were accountable for their performance. There are accountability pressures on MLs from department teachers to lead the department in a way that is perceived as satisfactory by them.

6.2.2.11 Role of school senior leaders

The leadership style and behaviours of SLs could facilitate or hinder the enactment of the ML role. SLs are seen to support MLs through the provision of professional learning opportunities, mentoring and coaching, and support.

6.2.2.12 Time pressures

The ML role in schools is one that operates under constraints of time. Time constraints mean that MLs must prioritise what they do in their role. MLs need to learn to delegate some aspects of their role to other leaders and teachers in the department.

6.2.2.13 Role change

As the focus of education has shifted, and the pace of change increased, the ML role has become more difficult and wide-ranging. MLs have been delegated leadership responsibilities outside of their department where they contribute to school-wide initiatives and sit on school and cluster level committees. The focus of the ML role has also shifted from implementing MOE and school policies and initiatives to leading innovations and improvement. A more proactive form of leadership, as opposed to management, is expected

6.2.2.14 Representing and advocating

MLs act as the chief advocate as well as spokesperson for the department and department teachers. MLs need to have an appreciation of the overall school vision and directions, and the way in which the interests of their department aligned with these. MLs have to find a delicate balance between achieving the goals of the school and the well-being of the department teachers. MLs also act as sources of personal and professional support for department teachers, particularly those new to the profession and school.

6.3 COMPARISONS OF THE MIDDLE LEADERSHIP ROLE WITH THE LITERATURE

In this section, the substantive themes contained in the ML leadership role described in Chapter Five will be examined with contemporary school and middle leadership literature.

6.3.1 Leading teaching and learning

One of the notable findings in this study is an acknowledgment of the important role MLs play in leading the curriculum, instruction and student achievement. Bennett et al. (2003, p. 15) describe this as "the heart of the middle leaders' work". Much of the *Leading teaching and learning* theme related to curriculum and instruction will be discussed in later sections in this chapter. The discussion here forth is focussed on the ML role in improving student learning outcomes. There was an unrelenting focus on improving and sustaining teaching standards and student learning outcomes across all six schools involved in this study. MLs (and their teachers) in this study were under constant pressure to improve student learning outcomes especially with respect to the PSLE results. This pressure was evident in both 'neighbourhood' schools but also in schools that already achieved what could be considered excellent PSLE results. This pre-occupation with test and examination results is consistent with studies emerging from Singapore (for example, Hairon & Dimmock, 2012; Hogan et al., 2013).

What is also clear across all six schools in this study was the push for teachers to use more student-centred pedagogies in their classroom teaching, moving away from teacher-centred teaching practices. Despite this emphasis, the analysis from the interviews in this study suggests that "classroom and teacher practices remain predominantly traditional, resistant to change" (Dimmock & Goh, 2011, p. 218). This resonates with the research of Hogan et al. (2013) that showed the continued dominance of traditional forms of pedagogy in Singapore classrooms at the expense of the introduction of new strategies. The classroom observation data from Hogan et al. (2013) showed teachers in Singapore relied on whole class forms of lesson instruction, with whole class lectures and question and answer sequences characterising 60% of all lessons in both primary five and secondary three. The findings from this study also revealed subtle as well as overt resistance to change from "tried and tested" forms of pedagogy as evidence from Hattie (2009) confirmed that didactic teaching, role memorising and testing are closely aligned with high performance on international achievement tests when compared to student-centred teaching and learning methods.

Turner (2003) reported that in Wales, the pressures to achieve acceptable examinations results far outweigh any other considerations. Hairon et al. (2015, p. 6) argued that in Singapore, "teachers are compelled to focus on student learning outcomes" as this pursuit of academic achievements is consistent with the societal value and that of the parents'. There is a recognition that "the *status quo* with its traditional transmission model, although useful in achieving narrow academic high-stakes outcomes, is no longer tenable for educating and preparing students for the 21st century" (Dimmock et al., 2013). As recent research in Singapore (Ng, 2008a; Ng, 2013) suggests, the tide might be changing as SLs in these studies

respond to MOE's call to embrace holistic development of students and a broader notion of success. Holistic development and definition of success would "of course could include examination results" (Ng, 2015a).

6.3.2 Setting directions

MLs were expected to set a clear direction for teachers in the department to follow, in terms of working towards the implementation of the school and/or department vision. MLs were responsible for the interpretation and implementation of MOE initiatives and changes, as well as the implementation of specific school initiatives that were introduced. In this era of "increased emphasis on accountability and performativity demands" (Gu & Johansson, 2013, p. 301), there was an expectation that "MLs will implement policy directives faithfully and monitor their translation into practice (*an implementing role*)" (Bennett et al., 2003, p. 14). This was consistent with the work of Glover et al. (1998, p. 286) that "the 'bridging' role of the middle manager is seen as translating the school objectives into the plans and programmes to be delivered".

6.3.3 Leading people

MLs in this study had a formal role in the appraisal of teachers in the department and where a department has EAS for whom the ML is the RO, they were the ones to conduct the performance appraisal of these staff. Nguyen and Ng (2014) revealed that "a distribution of accountability" is well-suited to the school organisation due to the large size of Singapore schools. This finding is in contrast to the work done by White (2000) and Keane (2010) who noted the "limited" involvement of MLs in formal appraisal processes of teachers. Many of the literature sources in Chapter Three had recognised the problematic nature of monitoring the work of teachers (for example, Bennett, 1995; Earley & Fletcher-Campbell, 1989; Fletcher-Campbell, 2003; Hammersley-Fletcher & Kirkham, 2007; Siskin, 1991, 1994). This findings from this study did not show this aspect of the ML leadership role to be nearly as problematic as portrayed in the existing literature. Unlike MLs in the studies of Wise (2001) and Glover et al. (1998), MLs in this study used both formal (for example, lesson observations) and informal (for example, test and examination results and students' work) strategies to monitor and evaluate the work of their teachers. Contrary to MLs in English primary schools (Hammersley-Fletcher & Kirkham, 2007; Lunn & Bishop, 2002), there was little or no evidence to suggest that MLs in this study doubted their professional expertise to monitor and evaluate their colleagues. In fact, MLs leveraged on their EPMS responsibilities as RO in an attempt to drive change in their department.

6.3.4 Developing people, and self

This aspect of the ML leadership role involved building up the capacity of teachers in the department. MLs in this study were seen to take a 'proactive' role in professional learning of teachers. This is in contrast to the research carried out by Adey (2000) and Brown et al (2000) that professional learning of teachers was 'reactive' and the opportunities for professional learning were limited by a lack of funds and/or time.

Training and preparation before taking on a ML role was not cited as a major area of concern for the MLs involved in this study and there was little or no evidence to suggest that MLs felt inadequately trained or prepared for their role. This is in stark contrast to what had emerged from the international literature that MLs in many countries felt they were inadequately trained or prepared for their role. (for example, Adey, 2000; Adey & Jones, 1998; Bassett, 2016; Brown & Rutherford, 1999; Brown et al., 2000; Cardno & Bassett, 2015; Earley & Fletcher-Campbell, 1989; Fleming, 2014; Fleming & Amesbury, 2012; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013; Harris et al., 2000; Weller, 2001). Earley and Fletcher-Campbell (1989, p. 88) found that "many new heads of Department seemed to be ill-prepared for the role and interviewees spoke of being 'thrown in at the deep end' and 'not being confident in terms of my past experience'".

Adey (2000, p. 422) reported that nearly six in ten of MLs surveyed reported receiving "no training to prepare them for their middle management post before taking up their role" while ten out of sixteen MLs in this study reported they have attended the milestone leadership training programme for MLs (MLS, DDM or FPDE) in NIE. Furthermore, MLs were particularly complimentary of their experience undertaking the MLS programme, in contrary to what had been reported in international studies that a majority of the formal training programmes had little real effect on the quality of middle leadership (for example, Glover et al., 1998; Harris et al., 2001). MLs found the MLS programme to be highly beneficial and had prepared them to carry out their roles effectively, even though a number of them were already appointed MLs when they attend the programme. They highlighted three benefits of the MLS programme: i. forming a collegial community for networking and support spoke; ii. providing time and space to reflect on their work and examine what they have been doing in school and iii: having significant conversations about teaching and learning.

The experience of MLs in this study confirmed the findings of Lee and Stott (2004) longitudinal evaluation study on the new DDM and echoed the findings of recent studies of ML preparation programmes in England (Naylor et al., 2006; Simkins et al., 2009; Thorpe & Bennett-Powell, 2014). They (Lee & Stott, 2004) found DDM participants were "very positive about the course" (p. 18) and the course has "strong, significant, and lasting impact on the participants" (p. 28).

A recent study of the MLS programme by Ng (2009) also reported similar conclusions. This did not come as a surprise as Singapore is “the first country to make structured provisions for middle managers” (Bush, 2008b, p. 70) and “seems to make the greatest commitment to middle leader development” (Bush & Jackson, 2002, p. 423).

There was a view expressed that MLs in this study should take greater ownership of their own professional learning agenda if they were to successfully lead their teachers to implement current and forthcoming initiatives and changes. One SL (SBSL2) went on to say that the most effective MLs she had worked with tended to be the ones that had taken it on themselves to be “professionally informed” of changes in policy, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in the subject area by attending professional learning activities, either provided within the school, or externally. This is consistent with Gurr and Drysdale’s (2015) conclusion after a review of school leadership preparation and development in Australia. They (Gurr & Drysdale, 2015, p. 389) argue that “a self-identified and self-managed process is more appropriate for a time of considerable change” and there needs to be “greater individual responsibility for leadership development” as “a part of a professional responsibility to improve as an educator”. Indeed, research evidence suggests that if “the responsibility for learning and learners has shifted from the apex of the educational organisations to the middle tier” (Fitzgerald et al., 2006, p. 29), MLs would need to acquire the needed leadership capacities (Adey, 2000; Leithwood, 2016).

> *Middle-level leadership can be enhanced by focussing on opportunities for quality professional learning and leadership development in building professional knowledge and practice in teaching, curriculum, assessment and student learning, and also in helping with developing strategies for building school capacity. (Gurr & Drysdale, 2016, pp. 151-152)*

6.3.5 Administration

MLs in this study were seen to spend a significant amount of time on administration tasks. It was acknowledged that these administrative tasks were taking up time that could have been spent on things were considered more important, such as undertaking lesson observations or engaging in curriculum planning with teachers. This finding is consistent with international research that administration was a significant aspect of the ML leadership role (Bassett, 2016; Cranston, 2006; Feeney, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2009; Jarvis, 2008). These researchers have found that MLs were preoccupied with or overwhelmed by administrative tasks that they had “little or no time for leadership” (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006, p. 51). This state of affairs may represent “something of a ‘missed opportunity’ for leadership” (Jarvis, 2008, p. 29) and suggests that the ML’s leadership potential is “underutilized” (Cranston, 2006, p. 104; Leithwood, 2016, p. 134) or “unrealised” (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013, p. 67).

6.3.6 Building a shared vision

MLs in this study were expected to have a clear vision of what the department is trying to achieve. It was expected that the department vision is in alignment with overall school vision. The development of a vision is a defining feature of most leadership models and a shared vision is seen as a characteristics of effective secondary schools and departments (Harris et al., 1995; Sammons et al., 1997). The absence of an appropriate vision is one of the key indicators of an ineffective department (Harris, 1998, 2000; Harris et al., 1995; Turner, 2005). This is in contrasts with the study of Glover et al. (1998) who reported that few MLs actually develop a vision for their department and the MLs in Fletcher and Bell's (1999) study felt that setting a vision for the department was beyond their expertise. However, it should be recognised that the ML's envisioning role was more about the ways they could contribute to the fulfilment of the school vision, rather than the development and articulation of personal visions that might run counter to the vision of the school. This meant having to accept a department vision MLs or their teachers might not fully agree with. Abolghasemi et al. (1999) found that when SLs were found to share the vision of the school, teachers were more likely to align to that vision. Despite not having full autonomy in developing a vision for the department, MLs in this study were not just "interpreters, rather than originators, of vision" (Glover et al., 1998, p. 286).

6.3.7 Accountability

MLs in this study were accountable for the overall performance and quality of the work of the department he/she had been appointed to lead. This is in line with what Gu and Johansson (2013, p. 301) have characterised as a policy context of "increased emphasis on accountability and performativity demands". As MLs were accountable to SLs for the performance of their department or responsibility area, this had created a managerial expectation that they would be monitoring the work of their teachers (Glover et al., 1998; Wise, 2001; Wise & Bush, 1999). This was seen as a tension in the role of MLs (Bennett et al., 2007). Unlike many subject leaders in Glover et al. (1999) who were reluctant to hold teachers in the department accountable for the quality of their work, there was little or no evidence to suggest that MLs in this study have any difficulties in holding teachers to account. MLs held teachers to account through the EPMS. The accountability of MLs was seen as bi-directional. This is consistent with other studies (Keane, 2010; White, 2000) that described accountability as being felt from above (SLs) in terms of improving student learning outcomes and from below in terms of what teachers in the department expect from the MLs.

6.3.8 Role of school senior leaders

Participants in this study acknowledged SLs, especially the principal, as "the ultimate school leader" (Hammersley-Fletcher & Brundrett, 2008, p. 13) as "this is ultimately where formal responsibility lies and ultimately where the majority of the decisions are made" (Harris, 2014, p. 55). This is consistent with Nguyen et al. (2017, p. 162) study of instructional leadership in the context of Singapore primary schools reaffirming "the centripetal role of principals". As reported by participants in this study, SLs' approach to leadership and behaviour could facilitate and hinder the enactment of the ML role. This corroborates with the finding from a review of research by Leithwood (2016).

> *"Some principals hold a shared or distributed view of school leadership, a view that creates opportunities and expectations for department heads to lead improvements in their own departments and contribute to school-wide leadership. In other cases, however, principals view department heads merely as conduits for their own initiatives and leave little room for department-head initiative." (Leithwood, 2016, p. 126)*

Participants described SLs in this study as "supportive", "empowering" and "developmental" and they were seen to provide MLs with targeted professional learning activities, mentoring and coaching and, support. These supported Harris's (2011, p. 15) view that within a distributed leadership model, the role of SL "will be chiefly concerned with creating the conditions for others to lead" and "orchestrate the talent and leadership capability of others to move the school forward". This is also consistent with the findings from a study of ICT reform in a government school in Singapore where Ng and Ho (2012a, p. 248) found that "Leadership by senior management was critical in enabling and empowering instructional leadership by middle management". This provided further support to the argument that SLs' support and encouragement were important for the success of the leadership of MLs (Dinham, Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016; 2007b; Gurr & Drysdale, 2012, 2013) and "Such leadership needs to be enacted with the full support of – and in collaboration with – school-level leaders" (Leithwood, 2016, p. 135).

6.3.9 Time pressures

Time (or lack thereof) is frequently reported in the literature as a barrier to MLs effectively carrying out teaching and other aspects of the ML leadership role effectively (for example, Brown & Rutherford, 1998; Collier et al., 2002; Connors, 1999; Deece, 2003; Fletcher-Campbell, 2003; Glover & Miller, 1999; Irvine & Brundrett, 2016; Melville et al., 2016; Thorpe & Bennett-Powell, 2014; Turner, 1996). As Leithwood (2016, p. 134) puts it, "Evidence suggests that significant department-head leadership depends on having adequate time within the school day to provide significant leadership, as well as to carry out their teaching duties".

Time is also required “to develop the personal relationships on which professional relationships are built and sustained” (Melville et al., 2012, p. 132). Time pressures certainly arose as an issue for MLs in this study, and this issue had been discussed in Chapter Four. These time pressures were attributed to the ‘dual’ nature of the role. MLs had responsibilities relating to leading and managing a department on top of a substantial teaching load (albeit reduced when compared to a typical classroom teacher). One key implication was that there was little time remaining in the school day for actually carrying out the work of a ML (for example, developing teacher capabilities) because if they “spend what little time they have after completing their classroom responsibilities carrying out routine but minor administrative tasks, their effectiveness as an educational leader of their subject is lessened” (Deece, 2003, pp. 49-50). This is consistent with Wise and Bush’s (1999) evidence about the very limited time allocations for MLs.

Many MLs in this study found it challenging to complete all of their work in school and many things had to be done after school hours, for example, in the evenings, over the weekends and during the school holidays. MLs were also unable to spend as much time as they would like on planning and preparing their lessons or to work with teachers on improving teaching and learning. There was also little time and space for ML to take a step back and reflect on what they were doing and to plan ahead. This aspect of the ML leadership role confirmed the findings of earlier studies of MLs in Singapore by Tay (1996), Ong (1996), Sharifah (2001) and Wang (2015). MLs in Sharifah’s (2001, p. 90) study indicated “they have too much work for one to do” while MLs in Tay’s (1996) study felt overwhelmed by their duties. MLs in Ong’s (1996) study also reported experiencing high levels of stress arising from ‘Time pressures’. As a response, MLs in this study had to make compromises and adjust their expectations of what could be achieved accordingly. This approach was also reported in Bassett’s (2016) study where MLs in New Zealand conceded “they were not performing either their leadership role or their teaching role to a satisfactory level”. Although this issue was raised by participants in this study, it did not seem to have the same kind of significance as reported by Deece (2003).

There was an appreciation of MLs having too little offloading to carry out their role in the way they desire and for their role to be optimally effective. The offloading figures for MLs in this study was found to be broadly in accordance with the MOE guidelines that MLs were allocated up to two third of a standard teaching load of a classroom teacher. There was also little differentiation between the different departments (both academic subject and non-academic areas) and the offloading was essentially the same for each ML. The offloading at each school was in accord with the findings in other international studies in that MLs typically had a smaller but still significant teaching component in their workload. The offloading provisions for MLs in

this study appeared to be higher than their Australian counterparts who tend to teach one class less than a classroom teacher (Deece, 2003; Dinham, 2007b; Keane, 2010).

There were calls from a number of participants in this study to reconsider the typical offloading for MLs. A similar suggestion was made by half of the MLs interviewed in Collier's (2002, p. 24) study to reduce the teaching load and administrative aspects of the role to free up time "so that they will be able to better perform their other responsibilities". They argued that given the increasing demands made on MLs, there should be an increase in release time for MLs. However, there was also a realisation that there was only so much time available for schools to give as offloading to MLs and everyone in schools were currently under pressure. MLs could only expect so much and should adjust their expectations of what could be achieved accordingly. This was consistent with what was generally acknowledged in the extant literature that MLs facing time pressures were negatively affecting the performance of their roles (Fitzgerald, 2009; Irvine & Brundrett, 2016; Wise & Bennett, 2003) and the leadership authority of the department (James & Aubrey-Hopkins, 2003).

6.3.10 Role change

Earley and Fletcher-Campbell (1989) found most MLs in their study undertook responsibilities that extended to the whole school. Other studies conducted in the England (Glover et al., 1998; Wise & Bennett, 2003), US (Weller, 2001) and New Zealand (Fitzgerald, 2009) also reported a similar trend. The evidence from this study seem to support this as many MLs in this study had additional and roles and responsibilities that extended beyond the department. In addition, there had been a simultaneous qualitative change in the role as MLs were asked to perform, from mainly mundane managerial tasks to increasing strategic leadership activities (Bennett et al., 2007; De Nobile & Ridden, 2014; Fleming, 2014).

6.3.11 Representing and advocating

MLs in this study acted as the primary representative and spokesperson for their department and they were also recognised as the chief advocate for the interests of department and their teachers. As a general spokesperson for the department, MLs raised issues, put forward the department's case and made representations in relation to things such as deployment of teachers and funding for programmes and initiatives. This coheres with the findings from studies conducted by Abolghasemi et al. (1999) and Glover at al. (1998). Both found the advocacy aspect of the ML role as a fundamental task and MLs who actively championed the interests of their department were more highly regarded by their colleagues. However, there seemed to be more alignment between MLs and SLs than between MLs and teachers, unlike findings of Wise and Bush (1999). One possible explanation for this may be that SLs were the

ROs and they had significant power to determine the performance rating of MLs which in turn had a direct impact on salary increment, annual performance bonus payment as well as the prospects for promotion to the next salary grade.

In this capacity, however, MLs needed to have a whole school perspective and not to just look after the narrow needs of their department. They had to strike a balance between the needs and priorities of their department and those of the school. This was seen as a tension in the role of MLs (Bennett et al., 2007). Adey (2000) and Brown et al. (2002) have identified this as a professional learning priority to enable MLs to develop a whole school perspective in their work.

6.3.12 Context

'Context' is not a theme within the ML role description but it was mentioned across numerous themes in Chapter 5. It is evident that context matters as each school context is unique to the extent that "Some would go so far as to say that 'context is everything'" (Leithwood et al., 2008, p. 8). In fact, Claim Six of the ten strong claims (Day et al., 2010) reiterates the importance of contextual influences on leaders and leadership. A notable finding from this study was that context (department and school) matters and that "it is extremely difficult to disaggregate the subject leader from the subject department in which he/she works" (Turner, 2003, p. 215).

This study is placed in the context of a rapidly changing Singapore education system. Six schools participated in this study and the characteristics of these schools and fifty-six participants were described in Chapter Four. Using Dimmock's (2012) definition, there were differences between these schools in terms of "the socio-economic status of the community and parent group … maturity and expertise of teachers, the resource and financial status of the school and its previous history and track record" (p. 198). MLs in this study understood the nature of the department's (and the school's) internal and external context and were able to respond to these appropriately. This resonates with Mourshed et al.'s (2010) report that found that school systems that improved and continued to do so all appeared to "adopt a similar set of interventions, one that is appropriate to their stage of the journey … but it is secondary to getting the fundamentals right" (p. 11). What this meant for MLs was that they had to be able to identify where the department (and school) was currently at and what interventions were needed to move to the next stage and adapting the interventions to the context.

The findings of this study also support the findings from Gurr and Drysdale's ongoing ISSPP research (for example, Drysdale & Gurr, 2011; Drysdale & Gurr, 2017b; Gurr, 2014). They

found that while successful school leaders were contextually sensitive, they were able to work within and across contextual constraints. These school leaders had a knowledge of different models of leading and were able to adapt to changing contextual conditions. The ways in which these leaders apply leadership practices, not the practices themselves, and how they demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work are the factors that enable them to be successful (Leithwood et al., 2006). In short, "to be successful, leaders must master the context" (Drysdale & Gurr, 2017a, p. 139).

6.3.13 Commentary

This study had served to highlight the rich and complex nature of the ML role in the schools involved, as well as the situation-specific nature of the role. The ML leadership role description reflected much of what had been written about MLs and their roles in the literature presented in Chapter Three. In summary, MLs in this study had to lead as well as manage teaching and learning, people, resources and change, with the role being carried out under time pressures. It was apparent that there was a stronger focus on the leadership aspects of the role, with MLs expected to take on and play a bigger role at the school level and beyond. MLs in this study were line managers and had performance management responsibilities over teachers under their span of control. MLs' involvement in the formal appraisal of teachers included both developmental and evaluative aspects and they were proactive in the professional development of teachers. MLs in this study felt that they were adequately prepared and trained for the job and were supported in their role by their SLs.

In the next section, the leadership themes are compared to contemporary leadership conceptions in school and middle leadership literature.

6.4 COMPARISONS OF THE MIDDLE LEADERSHIP ROLE WITH LEADERSHIP CONCEPTIONS IN SCHOOL AND MIDDLE LEADERSHIP LITERATURE

In this section, discussion turns to an examination of the ML leadership role described in Chapter Five with the seven contemporary leadership conceptions found in school and middle leadership literature in Chapter Three. These are the six leadership conceptions described by Leithwood and Duke (1999) (instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, contingent) plus distributed leadership.

Before proceeding further, three points needed to be made.

1. The leadership conceptions with the largest prominence in the review conducted by Leithwood and Duke (1999) were instructional leadership and transformational leadership. This is supported by recent empirical studies confirming instructional leadership and

transformational leadership are the two dominant leadership models in education (for example, Day et al., 2009; Gurr, 2015; Hallinger, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008).

2. Due to the relative importance of instructional leadership and transformational leadership, an expansive view is used to frame the discussion. However, briefer analyses are provided for moral, participative, managerial, contingent and distributed leadership due to their lesser importance in Leithwood and Duke's (1999) review as well as to contain the thesis for other areas.

3. The extent to which the presence of a dimension or function of a leadership conception is found in the leadership description developed from the study is indicated using a three-scale scheme - 'strong', 'moderate' or 'weak'. A 'strong' level of evidence meant all or most of features of a dimension or function of a leadership conception were present in the ML leadership role description. A 'moderate' level of evidence meant there were around half the number of features of a dimension or function of a leadership conception were present in the ML leadership role description. A 'weak' level of evidence meant that there were few, if any, features of a dimension or function of a leadership conception that could be found in the ML leadership role description.

6.4.1 Instructional leadership

Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) model with three dimensions and ten functions of instructional leadership are outlined briefly below. These dimensions and functions are used to test for the existence of instructional leadership in the ML leadership role developed from this study.

6.4.1.1 Dimension 1: Defining the school mission

This dimension concerns the ML's role in determining the central purposes of the school and is comprised of two functions: *Framing school goals* and *Communicating school goals*.

- **Framing school goals.** This function is concerned with the ways in which the ML are involved in the development of school goals and priorities. While SLs were the key persons who frame the school goals (Ng et al., 2015a), MLs in this study were involved in the development of the school goals and priorities. MLs did so by providing their (and their department teachers and EAS) views to the SLs formally at forums such as Exco meetings as well as through informal interactions (for example, impromptu conversations). SLs in this study appeared to value MLs' contributions in this area. At the department level, MLs worked with department teachers to develop the vision, goals and priorities for the department. They, however, did not have complete authority to either implement an overall vision of their own, or guide their department in a direction that is contrary to that of school.

The focus of the ML role was seen more as implementing the department vision, goals and priorities that were in line with that of the school. As described above, it could be said that there was moderate level of evidence of this function in the ML leadership role and the themes *Building a shared vision* and *Setting directions* include aspects related to this function.

- **Communicating school goals.** This function is concerned with the ways in which the ML are involved in communicating of the school vision, goals and priorities to department teachers, EAS and other stakeholders in the school. MLs in this study communicated and explained the school vision, goals and priorities through a variety of formal and informal channels so that they were widely known and supported by all stakeholder groups in the school. MLs also discussed with teachers in the department the implications of school goals and priorities for the department, at formal and informal forums. In summary, there was strong level of evidence of this function in the ML leadership role and the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Setting directions*, *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values*, *Communication*, *Building a collaborative culture* and *Building a shared vision* include aspects related to this function.

6.4.1.2 Dimension 2: Managing the instructional programme

This dimension concerns te ML's role in coordination and control of instruction and the curriculum and incorporates three leadership functions: *Supervising and evaluating instruction, Co-ordinating curriculum* and *Monitoring student progress*.

- **Supervising and evaluating instruction**. This function is concerned with the ways in which the MLs are involved in the promotion of quality instruction in the classroom. MLs in this study ensured department teachers know what they need to teach and actively monitor the teaching and learning activities in their department. MLs ensured classroom instruction was carried out effectively and in accordance with the scheme of work and this involved monitoring department teachers' weekly lesson plans, conducting lesson observations, checking student's work such as workbooks and files and analysing student achievement data such as test and examination results. MLs were expected to provide constructive feedback to their teachers after every book check, lesson observation and EPMS work review session. MLs provided teachers with the necessary support and encouragement to improve their instructional practices. MLs were involved in the formal review and appraisal of department teachers and used the teaching competencies specified in the EPMS documentation. MLs were also expected to keep up to date with the latest developments in curriculum and pedagogy in their subject area(s). In summary, there was strong level of evidence of this function in the ML leadership role and the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Setting directions*, *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal*

qualities, beliefs and values, *Communication*, *Building a collaborative culture*, *Administration* and *Accountability* include aspects related to this function.

- **Coordinating curriculum**. This function is concerned with the ways in which the MLs are involved in the implementation of the curriculum. MLs in this study had a major role in implementing the numerous MOE mandated curriculum initiatives and changes. MLs were expected to quickly understand and interpret the requirements of these curriculum initiatives and changes. They then combined this understanding and their knowledge of the curriculum and instruction into the specification, alignment and coordination of curricular programs in their department. They ensured the curriculum initiatives and changes were implemented with fidelity and there was a high level of consistency across year levels. This was achieved through regular monitoring of weekly lesson plans, checking of students work and conducting lesson observations. MLs ensured the successful delivery of the curriculum by teachers teaching the subject area by looking after the "nuts and bolts" (SBML1) activities such as selecting and ordering of instructional resources. It must be noted that while the curriculum is centrally prescribed and the main focus is on implementation, there was some flexibility to adapt and customise the curriculum to the needs, abilities and interests of the students in the school. In summary, there was strong level of evidence of this function in the ML leadership role and the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Setting directions*, *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values*, *Communication*, *Building a collaborative culture*, *Administration* and *Accountability* include aspects related to this function.

- **Monitoring student progress**. This function is concerned with the ways in which the MLs are involved in the monitoring of student progress. Student achievement as measured by test and examination results had remained a 'non-negotiable' bottom-line and a key measure of success for schools in this study. Test and examination results had been used by SLs and MLs for target setting as part of the annual EPMS work review process. MLs supported teachers in the analysis and interpretation of test and examination results to track the progress towards these set student achievement targets and to identify areas for improvement at both the class and department level. For example, an external vendor was engaged to provide teachers and students with specialist support in comprehension skills in a bid to improve the performance in this area. In summary, there was strong level of evidence of this function in the ML leadership role and the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Setting directions*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values*, *Administration* and *Accountability* include aspects related to this function.

6.4.1.3 Dimension 3: Promoting a positive school learning climate

This dimension concerns the ML role in developing an "academic press" and is comprised of five leadership functions: *Protecting instructional time*, *Promoting professional development*, *Maintaining high visibility*, *Providing incentives for teachers* and *Providing incentives for learning.*

- **Protecting instructional time**. This function is concerned with the ways in which the MLs are involved in the allocation and protection of classroom learning time. The instructional time allocated to each and every subject in the curriculum was centrally prescribed by MOE and schools typically did not deviate from these guidelines. MLs in this study appeared to have little or no formal authority to influence other aspects of this function, for example, to minimise the disruptions to teaching and learning time by reducing the ad hoc announcements over the public-address system and school events such as weekly assemblies. As such, there was little or no evidence for the existence of this function as described by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) in the ML leadership role.

- **Promoting professional development.** This function is concerned with the ways in which the MLs are involved in the promotion of professional learning and development of teachers. MLs in this study were involved in all aspects of the professional learning and development of teachers and this is inextricably linked to their role as ROs. MLs identified the professional learning and development needs of teachers at both individual and department level and work with the SSD to put together a professional learning plan for the school. The school professional learning plan ensured alignment of professional learning activities to school goals and priorities. MLs informed teachers of relevant professional learning and development opportunities and in some cases, direct specific individual or group of teachers to undertake specific professional learning and development activities to build up their skills or develop their capacity for higher responsibility. MLs attended the professional learning and development activities alongside their teachers and in some instances, MLs personally conducted professional development activities for their teachers. MLs also provided appropriate forums for teachers to feedback information and share with other teachers what they have learnt from professional learning and development activities they had attended. And more importantly, MLs encouraged and supported teachers to implement what they had learnt in their classroom practice. In summary, there was strong level of evidence of this function in the ML leadership role described in this study and the theme Leading teaching and learning, *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values*, *Building a collaborative culture*, *Administration* and *Accountability* includes aspects related to this function.

- **Maintaining high visibility.** This function is concerned with the ways in which the MLs are involved in the maintenance of the high visibility of the ML in the school. MLs in this study had high visibility at the department level but the perception of the ML's profile at the school level varied. The level of visibility in the school level was seen as contributing to the MLs' credibility with both SLs and teachers. This visibility also increased the opportunities for MLs to interact with SLs and teachers and to communicate the goals and priorities of the department. However, the ranking system was seen to have generated some rivalry amongst MLs in one of the schools and there had been pressures to "outperform" (SAML3) other MLs by achieving better PSLE results, winning awards and competitions and introducing innovative programmes. In summary, there was moderate level of evidence of this function in the ML leadership role described in this study and the theme *Leading teaching and learning*, *Leading people*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values*, *Communication*, *Administration* and *Accountability* include aspects related to this function.

- **Providing incentives for teachers**. This function is concerned with the ways in which the MLs are involved in the provision of a system to recognise and reward teachers for their efforts and achievements. MLs in this study utilised a number of strategies to recognise the work of department teachers. Apart from private and public acknowledgement, recognition and praise, MLs were able to, albeit indirectly, provide (monetary) incentives for teachers through the EPMS process. As ROs, MLs were members of the school ranking panel that determined the annual performance ranking of teachers with direct implications on salary increment, bonus payment and career advancement prospects. It was acknowledged that individual ML had limited influence over the final performance rating of individual teachers as such decision was taken collectively by the school ranking panel chaired by the SLs and moderated by the cluster superintendent. In summary, there was moderate level of evidence of this function in the ML leadership role described in this study and the themes *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values* and *Accountability* include aspects related to this function.

- **Providing incentives for learning**. This function is concerned with the ways in which the MLs are involved in the provision of a system to recognise and reward student achievements and improvement in academic areas. There appeared to be little or no evidence for the existence of this function as described by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) in the ML leadership role. However, the role of MLs in ensuring the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment matched the needs, abilities and interests of students in their schools had been described as part of the ML leadership role. For example, the role of MLs in leading

and encouraging curriculum customisation and experimentation with student-centred pedagogical approaches had been described.

The above discussion indicated the presence of the three dimensions of instructional leadership as outlined by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) to varying degrees in the ML leadership role. The levels of evidence for every function and dimension of instructional leadership found in the ML leadership description developed from the study are summarised in Table 6.1. There was strong level of evidence for the existence of one of the three dimensions of instructional leadership; *Managing the instructional programme*. There was, however, only moderate level of support for the existence of two dimensions of instructional leadership; *Defining the school's mission* and *Promoting a positive school learning culture*. The ML leadership role could not therefore be seen as one that could be fully described by the model of instructional leadership as conceived by Hallinger and Murphy (1985). It was evident from this study that the involvement of MLs in instructional leadership were focused on certain functions at the department level, particularly in *Communicating school goals*, *Supervising and evaluating instruction*, *Coordinating curriculum, Monitoring student progress* and *Promoting professional development*. Monitoring is an important component of instructional leadership and is seen as a managerial responsibility (Wise & Bush, 1999). In a study of MLs in Queensland, more than two-thirds of MLs saw themselves as leaders of teaching and learning (Anderson & Curtin, 2014). This is consistent with extant studies in Singapore that the key focus of the ML role is on *Managing the instructional programme* (Chan, 1990; Kaur et al., 2004; Kings et al., 1994; Lim-Teo et al., 2011; Ng & Ho, 2012a; Wang, 2015) and "the leadership performed by MM primarily resembled instructional leadership" (Ng & Ho, 2012b, p. 543).

> *In the Singapore context, delegation or sharing of leadership decisions to middle leaders such as department heads or subject heads has been commonplace for at least the last two decades, especially that pertaining to curricular matters ... Middle leaders' central role as curriculum leaders is therefore apparent. (Hairon, Tan, Lin, & Lee, 2017, p. 24)*

It was also reflective of a role that involves the implementation of major decisions taken elsewhere and could be seen as aspects of managerial leadership. In spite of this, MLs are "potentially in the best position to provide the kind of instructional oriented leadership that is likely to improve the quality of students' classroom experiences" (Leithwood, 2016, p. 122).

The ML leadership role will now be examined for indications of transformational leadership.

Table 6.1

Level of evidence of instructional leadership functions in ML leadership role

Functions of Instructional Leadership	Strong	Moderate	Weak
Defining the school mission			
Framing school goals		√	
Communicating school goals	√		
Managing the instructional programme			
Supervising and evaluating instruction	√		
Coordinating curriculum	√		
Monitoring student progress	√		
Promoting a positive school learning climate			
Protecting instructional time			√
Promoting professional development	√		
Maintaining high visibility		√	
Providing incentives for teachers		√	
Providing incentives for learning			√

6.4.2 Transformational leadership

Sun and Leithwood's (2012) conceptualisation of transformational leadership with eleven leadership practices are outlined briefly below. These leadership practices will be used to test for the existence of transformational leadership in the ML leadership role developed from this study.

6.4.2.1 Category 1: Setting directions

This category comprised of two leadership practices: *Developing a shared vision and building goal consensus*, and *Holding high performance expectations*.

- **Developing a shared vision and building goal consensus**. This set of leadership practice involves the ML engaging in behaviours aimed at identifying, developing and articulating a shared vision for his or her school and building consensus amongst staff about the importance of common purpose and goals. As discussed above (*Defining the school mission*), MLs in this study were involved in the building of the school vision and contributed to this process by providing their (and their teachers and EAS) inputs to the SLs formally as well as informally. In addition, MLs were also expected to have a clear vision of what they want their department to become and this vision had to be closely aligned with overall school vision. It was acknowledged that MLs did not have the authority to either develop or articulate a separate vision of their own and this meant MLs and the department teachers would have to accept a school and department vision that they might not fully agree with. A key focus of this leadership practice is for MLs to implement a department vision that is in line with that of the school.

MLs in this study were also involved in the development of school and department goals and priorities. MLs contributed to this goal-setting process by providing their own and/or their department's response at forums such as Exco, as well as raising individual or departmental initiatives for consideration. Once the school and department goals and priorities had been decided and agreed to, MLs played an important role in building consensus amongst staff and getting them to work together towards them. They did this by cascading these goals and priorities to department teachers and other stakeholders in the school by communicating explicitly and explaining the goals and priorities through a variety of formal and informal channels to ensure that they were widely understood and accepted. The ML leadership role developed from this study involved MLs more in direction setting for their department to facilitate the implementation of a vision originating elsewhere (MOE and school). MLs were expected to develop the means and commitment by which the department will contribute to that vision becoming an actual reality. There was strong level of evidence of this dimension of leadership practice as outlined by Sun and Leithwood (2012) in the ML leadership role and the themes *Leading teaching and learning, Setting directions, Leading people, Communication*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values*, *Building a shared vision*, *Administration* and *Accountability* encompassed behaviours that demonstrate the existence of this leadership practice.

- **Holding high performance expectations.** This set of leadership practice involves the ML engaging in behaviours aimed at demonstrating expectations for excellence, high performance and professionalism on the part of teachers. High performance expectations were evident across all schools in this study. MLs held teachers to account for their overall performance and quality of work through EPMS. This was apparent, for example, in the way in which student achievement targets as measured by test and examination results were used by SLs and MLs for target setting as part of EPMS. MLs also encouraged the professional learning of subject teachers and the experimentation of innovative pedagogical practices to maximise the learning outcomes for students. There was strong level of evidence of this set of leadership practice in the ML leadership role described in this study and the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values*, *Building a collaborative culture*, *Building a shared vision* and *Accountability* demonstrated the existence of this leadership practice in the ML leadership role.

6.4.2.2 Category 2: Developing people

This category of practice comprised of three leadership practices: *Providing individualised support, Providing intellectual stimulation and Modelling behaviours*.

- **Providing individualised support.** This set of leadership practice involves MLs engaging in behaviours aimed at showing respect for individual teachers and concern about their personal feelings and professional needs. This leadership practice was evident in the way in which MLs in this study were expected to provide professional, and when required, personal support for their teachers. In particular, MLs were expected to assist with the induction of teachers who were new to the school, and to support the development of beginning or inexperienced teachers in the department. Overall, most MLs were perceived to provide strong individual support to teachers through the provision of advice, resources, professional learning and development opportunities, advocacy, representation and simply being available. There was strong level of evidence of this set of leadership practice in the ML leadership role described in this study and the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Leading people*, *Communication*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values*, *Developing people and self* and *Representing and advocating* served as testament to the existence of this leadership practice in the ML leadership role.

- **Providing intellectual stimulation.** This set of leadership practice involves the ML engaging in behaviours aimed at challenging teachers to re-examine some of the assumptions about their work and rethink how they carry out their work more effectively. MLs provided intellectual stimulation by challenging department teachers educationally. This involved MLs encouraging teachers to (re)examine their classroom teaching practices in light of new educational initiatives through professional dialogue and professional learning activities. MLs were expected to initiate and/or encourage curriculum customisation and pedagogical innovation along lines consistent with MOE initiatives and school goals and priorities. It was noted that some MLs were better at this endeavour than others and a number of participants also spoke of inertia and apparent resistance to change of some SLs, MLs and teachers in some schools. There was strong level of evidence of this set of leadership practice in the ML leadership role described in this study and the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Leading people*, *Communication*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values*, *Developing people and self*, *Building a collaborative culture* and *Accountability* testified to the existence of this leadership practice in the ML leadership role.

- **Modelling behaviour.** This set of leadership practice involves the ML engaging in behaviours aimed at setting examples for teachers to follow that is consistent with the espoused beliefs and values. This dimension was clearly evident in the description of ML leadership role obtained from participants in the study, with MLs generally expected to exhibit behaviours that could have them described as role models, leading professionals and exemplary practitioners. Participants in this study noted the need for MLs to lead by example and model the espoused values and best practices they want in others and this was seen as an important strategy for the ML to gain credibility with teachers in department. However, it was noted that the effectiveness of modelling might be reduced through the lack of time MLs have to interact with department teachers. There was strong level of evidence of this dimension of leadership practice in the ML leadership role described in this study and the themes *Leading teaching and learning, Leading people*, *Communication*, *Developing people and self, Communication, Personal qualities, beliefs and values*, *Building a collaborative culture* and *Role change* demonstrated the existence of this leadership practice in the ML leadership role.

6.4.2.3 Category 3: Redesigning the organisation

This category of practice comprised of three leadership practices: *Strengthening school culture, Building collaborative structures* and *Engaging communities*.

- **Strengthening school culture**. This set of leadership practice involves the ML engaging in behaviours aimed at developing a cohesive school culture that is based around a common set of values and promoting an atmosphere of care and trust among teachers. This study indicated that this dimension of leadership practice is expected of the ML by all three groups involved in the study. While the school culture was often seen as the domain of SLs, MLs were seen to be building cultures in their department that embrace collegiality, teamwork, sharing and a desire for improvement. MLs helped foster the desired culture by leading from the front and modelling the espoused values and beliefs they want in others. There is strong level of evidence of this dimension of leadership practice in the ML leadership role described in this study and the themes *Leading people, Communication*, and *Building a collaborative culture* serve as testament to the existence of this dimension in the ML leadership role.

- **Building collaborative structures**. This set of leadership practice involves the ML engaging in behaviours aimed at building structures to promote and facilitate collaboration amongst teachers and to encourage teamwork. MLs were seen to be promoting an atmosphere that can be described as collegial, sharing, consultative and collaborative.

Most major decisions in the department were made in consultation with department teachers. MLs also created appropriate structures and develop practices to provide the time and space for teachers in the department to come together to share good practices and resources and to work as a team. There is strong level of evidence of this dimension of leadership practice in the ML leadership role described in this study and the themes *Leading teaching and learning, Setting directions, Leading people*, *Communication*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal qualities*, *beliefs and values*, *Building a shared vision* and *Building a collaborative culture* serve as testament to the existence of this leadership practice in the ML leadership role.

- **Engaging communities**. This set of leadership practice involves the ML engaging in behaviours aimed at cultivating productive relationships with parents and the wider community. MLs were seen to build community networks and alliances and parent-school partnerships and to harness community resources (for example, public sector agencies, private sector companies and voluntary welfare organisations, such as temples, churches and clan associations) to support department and school programmes. MLs also tap on their professional networks to bring in external expertise into the school to provide professional learning and development activities for teachers and to involve parents and other volunteers to support the department programmes. MLs are also conscious of the expectations of an examination-driven system and that achieving PSLE results remained a key measure of success of schools. There is moderate level of evidence of this set of leadership practice in the ML leadership role described in this study and the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values* and *Time pressures* contain examples of this leadership practice.

6.4.2.4 Category 4: Improving the instructional program

- **Improving the instructional programme**. This category/leadership practice is identical to the *Managing the instructional programme* dimension of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) model of instructional leadership. This category/leadership practice involves the ML planning and supervising instruction, providing instructional support, monitoring student progress and buffering teachers from potential distractions. There were numerous mentions of MLs encouraging and leading curriculum customisation and experimentation with student-centred pedagogical approaches. While the curriculum and assessment is centrally prescribed, there is some degree of flexibility to adapt and customise the curriculum to better suit the needs, abilities and interests of the students in the school. As with *Managing the instructional programme* dimension of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) model of instructional leadership, there is strong level of evidence of this set of leadership

practice in the ML leadership role described in this study and the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Setting directions*, *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values*, *Communication*, *Building a collaborative culture*, *Administration* and *Accountability* contain examples of this category/leadership practice.

6.4.2.5 Related Practices

- **Contingent reward**. This leadership practice involves the ML engaging in behaviours aimed at rewarding teachers for completing agreed tasks and achieving set targets. This leadership practice is similar to the 'exchange' aspect in the concept of transactional leadership. As discussed above (Providing incentives for teachers dimension of instructional leadership), MLs in this study utilise a number of strategies to recognise the work of their department teachers. Apart from private and public acknowledgement, recognition and praise, MLs are able to, albeit indirectly, provide (monetary) rewards for teachers through the EPMS process. MLs helped to determine the annual performance ranking of teachers with direct implications on salary increment, bonus payment and career advancement prospects. It is acknowledged that individual ML has limited influence over the final performance rating of individual teachers as this is a decision taken collectively by the ranking panel. In summary, there is moderate level of evidence of this dimension of leadership practice in the ML leadership role described in this study and the themes *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values* and *Accountability* include aspects related to this function.

- **Management by exception**. This dimension involves the ML engaging in behaviours aimed at monitoring the performance of teachers and taking remedial actions when it fell below expectations. As ROs, MLs in this study actively monitor the performance of teachers under their span of control through the regular EPMS work review sessions. They also monitor teachers' work through checking of weekly lesson plans and student's work such as workbooks, conducting lesson observations and analysing student achievement data such as test and examination results. Whenever a teacher's performance is judged to be at risk of falling below expectations, MLs would alert the teacher and apply some kind of corrective action. For example, MLs would provide the necessary support and encouragement to assist the teacher to improve their performance to an acceptable level. They could also direct individual teacher to undertake specific professional learning and development activities to build up their skills. There is strong level of evidence of this dimension of leadership practice in the ML leadership role described in this study and the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Administration* and *Accountability* include aspects related to this function.

Table 6.2

Level of evidence of dimensions of transformational leadership in ML leadership role

Dimensions of Transformational Leadership	Strong	Moderate	Weak
Developing a shared vision and building goal consensus	√		
Holding high performance expectations	√		
Providing individualised support	√		
Providing intellectual stimulation	√		
Modelling valued behaviours, beliefs and values	√		
Strengthening school culture	√		
Building structures to enable collaboration	√		
Engaging parents and the wider community		√	
Focusing on instructional development	√		
Contingent reward		√	
Management by exception	√		

The discussion above leads to the conclusion that there is strong level of evidence for the presence of nine of the eleven dimensions of transformational leadership as outlined by Leithwood and Sun (2012) in the ML leadership role. The levels of evidence for every leadership practice and dimension of transformational leadership found in the ML leadership description developed from the study are summarised in Table 6.2. There is moderate level of evidence for the presence of the remaining two dimensions: *Engaging parents and the wider community* and *Contingent reward*. This finding is consistent with the studies of Gurr (1996) and White (2000). In his study of the leadership role of principals in Victorian secondary schools, Gurr (1996) found “strong evidence” for the presence of transformational leadership as described by the four dimensional model of Leithwood (1994). Likewise, White (2000) found applicability of the transformational leadership model to CAMMs in Victorian government secondary schools. He found “strong evidence” for the presence of five of the six dimensions of transformational leadership as outlined by Leithwood and Jantzi (1997) in the CAMM leadership role.

The ML leadership role will now be examined for indications of moral leadership.

6.4.3 Moral leadership

Moral leadership is focussed on values and moral purpose. There was moderate level of evidence of moral leadership in the description of the ML leadership role obtained from participants in the study. MLs in this study took on the role to try to make a positive difference to the lives of both students and teachers. MLs in this study had a clear sense of purpose and were described by participants as having “the heart in the right place”. MLs were focussed on core purpose of teaching and learning and the efforts of MLs in customising the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment to match the needs, abilities and interests of the students as well

as ensuring the student excel in tests and national examinations were evidence of this focus. MLs were guided in their actions by values which were important to them and these were reflected in their leadership practices. For example, one ML's decision to devote additional resources to support the learning of academically weaker students was guided by her personal value of social justice.

MLs were expected to show integrity in conflicted situations and were not afraid to defend and stick by their decisions and take any criticisms for them. For example, while MLs found it difficult to make a decision that could be seen as detrimental to their teachers, they would still go ahead with the decision if they knew that the students would benefit. This finding resonates with SLs in Ng's (2015a, p. 371) study who had to "devote a considerable amount of effort to balancing different expectations from different stakeholders while staying true to one's personal convictions". This is also consistent with the research conducted in 'effective' English schools by Day et al. (Day et al., 2001b; Day et al., 2009) that described successful leadership as values-based. From the overall leadership role description, the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Setting directions*, *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values, Building a collaborative culture*, *Building a shared vision*, *Accountability*, *Time pressures*, *Representing and advocating* demonstrate aspects of moral leadership in the overall leadership role.

The ML leadership role will now be examined for indications of participative leadership.

6.4.4 Participative leadership

Participative leadership is focused on leadership being shared with teachers and other stakeholders across the school. There was moderate level of evidence of participative leadership in the description of the ML leadership role obtained from participants in the study. It was evident that MLs create the opportunities and made the efforts to involve teachers when making important decisions at both the department and school levels, whenever appropriate. For example, MLs consulted and involved department teachers in shaping the department's vision, direction, goals and priorities, asking for teachers' ideas, opinions and suggestions, both formally and informally. However, it was acknowledged that the participative decision-making processes were not employed for all decisions. Teachers and other stakeholders were only involved where it was perceived that they could contribute meaningfully to the decision-making. Furthermore, while many teachers in this study welcomed the opportunity to be involved in decision-making at the department and school level, there were a number who did not want to get involved and expect their MLs to tell them what they had to do. This is consistent with the findings of a recent Singapore study where teachers preferred a lower level

of involvement in school change than SLs had expected (Lim, 2015). This finding also resonates with the study of Earley and Fletcher-Campbell (1989) where MLs felt duty bound to make most of the decisions and teachers felt it was the duty of MLs to make the decisions.

Through their involvement in the decision-making process, teachers in this study were seen to be more engaged in and committed to what they were doing. Teachers also became more personally invested in the success of the department and school and took more responsibility for its performance and results. This is in line with conclusion of Savery, Soutar, and Dyson (1992) that "people are more likely to accept and implement decisions in which they have participated, particularly where these decisions relate directly to the individual's own job". This resonates with the work of Earley and Fletcher-Campbell (1989) and Harris (2008) in England, Turner (2000) in Wales and Hannay and Ross (1999) in Canada who wrote about the benefits of participative leadership. From the overall leadership role description, the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Setting directions*, *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values, Building a collaborative culture*, *Building a shared vision* and *Role change* illustrate aspects of participative leadership in the overall leadership role.

The ML leadership role will now be examined for indications of managerial leadership.

6.5.5 Managerial leadership

Participants in this study considered managerial leadership as a key part of the ML leadership role. From the interviews, MLs were seen to carry out all ten managerial functions to varying degree. In fact, "in centralised contexts" like Singapore, Bush and Glover (2014, p. 565) opined that managerial leadership might be "the most appropriate way of conceptualising leadership". From the overall leadership role description, the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Setting directions*, *Leading people*, *Communication*, *Developing people and self*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values*, *Administration*, *Accountability* and *Time pressures* have aspects that are reflective of the existence of managerial leadership in the overall leadership role. For example, MLs performed managerial responsibilities in which they compile budgets, monitor spending, obtain resources, document courses, distribute information about professional development and deal with correspondence. In fact, the instructional leadership dimensions of *Supervising and evaluating instruction*, *Co-ordinating curriculum* and *Monitoring student* and the transformational leadership category of *Improving instructional program* and related practices *of Contingent reward* and *Management by exception* could be seen as managerial responsibilities. Given the accountability demands in the contemporary educational landscape, managerial practices are almost always unavoidable. For example, an unrelenting focus on achieving student outcomes has made school leaders' (SLs and MLs) attention to

managing teaching and learning a priority. However, this focus on management is “to support the leadership that promotes teacher, and student learning” (Melville et al., 2016, p. 194).

MLs in this study were seen to spend a significant amount of time on managerial tasks. This is unsurprising considering “the fact that we do, as a system, expect things to be done efficiently, effectively and fast” (Ng, 2015a, p. 371). It is acknowledged that these managerial tasks were taking up time that could have been spent on things were considered more important, such as undertaking lesson observations or engaging in curriculum planning with teachers. Unlike SLs, a key issue for MLs was that they had a significant teaching load. MLs had to spend much of their time on classroom teaching and as a result, had only a limited amount of time within the school day for leadership and management responsibilities related to the department. It is important to note that managerial responsibilities need to be seen as a means to an end, and not an end by itself. This finding is consistent with international research that managerial leadership is a significant aspect of ML leadership role (Bassett, 2016; Cranston, 2006; Feeney, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2009; Jarvis, 2008). In fact, these researchers found that MLs were preoccupied with or overwhelmed by management aspects of their role that they have “little or no time for leadership” (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006, p. 51). This state of affairs may represent “something of a ‘missed opportunity’ for leadership” (Jarvis, 2008, p. 29) and suggest that the ML’s leadership potential is “underutilized” (Cranston, 2006, p. 104; Leithwood, 2016, p. 134) or “unrealised” (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013, p. 67).

While managerial leadership behaviours are now seen as relatively unimportant (Bendikson et al., 2012), schools do need leaders who possess managerial skills as “effective implementation of initiatives, whether externally or internally generated, remains important” (Bush & Glover, 2014, p. 566).

The ML leadership role will now be examined for indications of contingent leadership.

6.5.6 Contingent leadership

Contingent leadership assumes that leadership approaches are dependent on the context and the nature of the tasks. There was moderate level of evidence of contingent leadership in the description of the ML leadership role obtained from participants in the study. MLs in this study work across six schools that represented significant contextual differences (see Chapter Four). From the overall leadership role description, the themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Administration* and *Accountability* have aspects that are reflective of the existence of contingent leadership in the overall leadership role. MLs displayed aspects of contingent leadership evidenced by the varied approaches they took

going about their work. MLs took into account the context of their department and school and were able to respond to these appropriately. For example, due to a large number of adjunct and beginning teachers in the school, the focus of ML (SBML1) was on making sure her subject teachers know what they need to teach while ML's (SDML2) focus is on customising curriculum, pedagogy and assessment to match the needs, abilities and interests of the students in the school. MLs in this study recognised that different circumstances require different leadership approaches and the appropriate approach is dependent on "the degree of extremity of situational conditions and the characteristics of the leader" (Dimmock, 2012, p. 207). This is in line with research evidence that "leaders and leadership are significantly influenced by school context, including the size and sector of the school, the socio-economic status of its intake, past history and previous leaders, and the stage of the school is at in relation to its improvement cycle" (Dimmock, 2012, p. 207).

After the discussion of the six leadership conceptions described by Leithwood and Duke (1999), the ML leadership role will now be examined for indications of distributed leadership.

6.5.7 Distributed leadership

From the overall leadership role description, there was moderate level of evidence of distributed leadership as MLs were seen to be the people to whom leadership was distributed. MLs in this study were empowered to take on greater responsibility in shaping the school and department goals and priorities and they were also seen to do the same with teachers in the department. The themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Leading people*, *Developing people and self*, *Administration* and *Accountability* have aspects that are reflective of the existence of distributed leadership in the overall leadership role. Researchers (for example, Fluckiger et al., 2015; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013; Hammersley-Fletcher & Strain, 2011; Javadi, Bush, & Ng, 2017; Larusdottir & O'Connor, 2017) considered middle leadership as a form of distributed leadership but De Nobile (2017) cautioned they are not the same thing.

The findings of this study reaffirm the view of Hairon et al. (2015, p. 2) that "distribution of leadership decisions to middle managers such as department heads (HODs) or subject heads (SHs) had been a common place in Singapore education context for more than two decades, especially that pertaining to curriculum and instruction" and that "middle management or middle leadership … is set against the context of distributed leadership in school" (Heng et al., 2017, p. 15). This is unsurprising as the average Singapore school is considered large by international standards and "it would inadvertently be expected to distribute decision-making powers especially in curricular and instructional matters" (Hairon et al., 2015, p. 6).

While MLs in this study were seen to be empowered to do carry out their role, it was evident from the interviews that SLs had retained most of the decision-making powers and "the last word tend to be with the principal" (Morriss, Low, & Coleman, 1999, p. 198). It was acknowledged that MLs did not have full power to make decisions and the authority to implement decisions without first seeking permission from SLs. This is in line with the view of Hairon and Goh (2015, p. 707) that "Singapore school leaders were generally perceived to be empowering their staff members but in a restrictive or bounded sense". They (Hairon & Goh, 2015) described this as "bounded empowerment" and opined that "this bounded empowerment may fit well with Asian cultural value for hierarchy, and the Singapore pragmatic value for efficiency and control in order to attain efficiency" (p. 707). However, the phenomenon of "bounded empowerment" was not unique to Singapore. A study of high performing leadership teams in English schools (Bush & Glover, 2012) found that SLs retained a central role because of the accountability framework within which schools operate. In a study of instructional leadership structures in Singapore, Nguyen et al. (2017, p. 162) found "The principals maintain a high level of oversight on the school's direction and vision through the hierarchical structure". This is consistent with Dimmock's (2012, p. 204) description of SLs in Singapore schools as "typically … tend to be more autocratic, more hierarchical, tend to command more respect for their authority". Other research evidence also suggests that distributed leadership is unlikely to flourish or be sustained without the support of SLs (Day et al., 2009).

The way leadership in this study were seen to be 'distributed' to MLs provided support to Hairon and Goh's (2015) view that the extent of distribution of leadership roles is dependent on leadership capacity and competency to take on these responsibilities. Distributed leadership is not about "everyone is a leader or that everyone leads" (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016, p. 4). Gurr and Drysdale (2012, p. 409) argue that "leadership should be seen as a more special quality, certainly evident in the work of principals, deputies and those responsible for curriculum and pastoral areas (the middle-level leaders)". MLs in this study were carefully identified and appointed to the role for their leadership capacity and competency and SLs in this study had expressed their great belief in the leadership of their MLs (Koh et al., 2011). This aspect of distributed leadership was evident in the ML leadership role described in this study and reiterated the view that "Distributed leadership essentially means that those best equipped or skilled or positioned to lead do so, in order to fulfil a particular goal or organisational requirement … The emphasis is on the word 'certain' rather than 'all'" (Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016, p. 4).

6.5.8 Commentary

The discussion of the six school leadership models as identified by Leithwood et al. (1999) and distributed leadership had provided a lens to better understand the practices that MLs have employed to lead their departments and teachers. The seven models of school leadership collectively suggest that the concepts and practices of school leadership are complex and diverse. From the discussion above, it was evident that the ML leadership role cannot be fully described by any one of the seven models of school leadership. Similarly, not all aspects of each of the seven school leadership models were fully contained in the ML leadership role. Bush and Middlewood (2013, p. 26) describe these school leadership models as "ideal types" and in reality, only the most successful leaders were able to embody most or all the aspects of the models in their work. Not all MLs were able to carry out all aspects of the leadership models that have been described as present in the leadership role as formulated by this study. The findings of Day, Harris and Hadfield (2001a) and Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford (2006) confirmed that the variety and number of leadership types and practices was a reflection of the diversity and complexity of the role. The findings from this study also provided further empirical support for Turner's (2003, p. 214) assertion that all six models of leadership proposed by Leithwood and Duke (1999) were relevant to MLs, provided they were re-interpreted in the context of department work.

The findings of this study also resonate with Gurr and Drysdale's ISSPP research (for example, Drysdale & Gurr, 2017b; Gurr, 2015) that found no single model of leadership dominated in the work of successful school leaders. The successful school leader is able to adapt and adopt their leadership styles and practices according to the differing contexts in which they work. In fact, Drysdale and Gurr (2011) developed a combined Australian model of successful school leadership that contained elements of all seven models of leadership discussed above and this model would be discussed in the next section. As with Gurr (2015), the ML leadership role that emerged from this study also contained elements of the two dominant leadership models in education: instructional leadership and transformational leadership (Hallinger, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008). Research in highly effective and improved English schools found that school leaders in these schools exercise leadership that was both transformational and instructional in its focus (Day et al., 2009). The findings of this study were in keeping with an important trend in recent leadership research that is the development of a "integrated" (Hallinger, 2003) and "hybrid" (Sun & Leithwood, 2015) models of leadership - ones that reflected both instructional and transformational practices. In fact, research evidence reviewed by Leithwood (2016, p. 138) suggests that SLs and MLs "acting in concert, may be especially well-situated to provide both instructional and transformational leadership practices and, as a consequence, make powerful contributions to secondary-school improvement".

6.5 APPLICABILITY OF LEADERSHIP MODELS TO THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF SCHOOL MIDDLE LEADERS

In this section, the leadership role described in Chapter Five will be interrogated to determine the applicability of White's (2000) CAMM leadership model and Drysdale and Gurr's (2011) successful school leadership model to the ML leadership role.

6.5.1 White (2000) curriculum area middle managers (CAMM) leadership model

From the discussion of contemporary leadership models presented above, there are certainly aspects of a number of models that go some way to describing the ML leadership role developed in this study. As indicated in Chapter Three, White's (2000) CAMM leadership model is an important framework for understanding the leadership role of MLs. White (2000, p. 222) claimed that "It is an ideal model that reflects the best advice from the literature and the best advice from this research." The CAMM leadership model is composed of four roles and fifteen dimensions and these are outlined briefly below and discussed in relation to the ML leadership role developed from this study.

6.5.1.1 CAMM as instructional leader

This reflects aspects of the ML leadership role that are directly involved in improving the teaching and learning process in the department. The dimensions within this role are classroom teaching and learning, professional development and accountability.

- **Classroom teaching and learning**. MLs in this study were focused on achieving the best possible teaching and learning in their department. They encouraged teachers in the department to reflect on their instructional practices and to question whether the current teaching practices could be improved. MLs role-modelled for teachers a willingness to experiment with new instructional strategies and resources. There was an expectation that MLs would be excellent, if not outstanding, practitioners in their subject area or area of responsibility (Brown & Rutherford, 1998; Dinham, 2007b; Earley & Fletcher-Campbell, 1989). MLs had to keep up to date with developments in the subject area(s) if they were to have credibility with their teachers. They had a role in overseeing the teaching in the subject area(s) and monitoring whether the agreed curriculum was actually being taught and whether student learning was being optimised. MLs had primary responsibility to ensure the department received adequate resources to effectively deliver its instructional programme. MLs were involved in the formulation of teaching allocations to teachers in the department. The themes *Leading teaching and learning*, *Leading People* and *Developing people, and self* serve as testament to the existence of this dimension in the ML leadership role.

- **Professional development**. MLs in this study were seen as the people who were responsible for the professional development of teachers in the department. This responsibility took the form of being aware of what professional learning activities were available and suitable for the teachers in the department, targeting and encouraging an individual or group of teachers within the department to attend these activities if it was felt these would be beneficial to them, facilitating the attendance of teachers at these activities, and organising in-house professional learning activities for teachers. The attendance of MLs at professional learning activities was seen as important and these activities were not confined to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment areas and included leadership and management development. MLs were also strongly committed to their own professional development. In contrast to the findings of other studies (for example, Adey, 2000; Bassett, 2016; Cardno & Bassett, 2015; Deece, 2003; Dinham et al., 2000; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013; Keane, 2010; White, 2000), the MLs in this study reported that they had received adequate professional development in preparation for the role. The themes *Leading people* and *Developing people, and self* serve as testament to the existence of this dimension in the ML leadership role.

- **Accountability**. MLs in this study were held to account for the overall performance and quality of the work of the department and the teachers he/she had been appointed to lead. The accountability of MLs was seen as bi-directional. This is consistent with other studies (Keane, 2010; White, 2000) that described accountability as being felt from above (SLs) in terms of improving student learning outcomes and from below in terms of what teachers in the department expect from the MLs. MLs had a formal role in the appraisal of teachers in the department and where a department has EAS for whom the ML is the RO, they were the ones to conduct the performance appraisal of these staff. This is a point of difference with the findings of White (2000) and Keane (2010). They described the involvement of MLs in formal appraisal processes of teachers in their studies as “limited”. If there were concerns of performance of a specific teacher or EAS, MLs were expected to approach the staff to address the issues involved. The themes *Leading people* and *Accountability* theme serve as testament to the existence of this dimension in the ML leadership role.

6.5.1.2 CAMM as curriculum strategist

This reflects aspects of the ML leadership role that are involved in direction setting for the department and the school in curriculum matters. The dimensions within this role are vision, curriculum direction: department, curriculum direction: school, profile: department and profile: school.

- **Vision**. The development of a vision is a defining feature of most leadership models and the absence of an appropriate vision is one of the key indicators of an ineffective department (Harris, 1998, 2000; Harris et al., 1995; Turner, 2005). MLs in this study were expected to have a clear vision of what the department was trying to achieve but they did not have complete autonomy in doing so. For example, the envisioning aspect of the ML leadership role appeared to be more about the ways MLs could contribute to the fulfilment of the school vision, rather than the development and articulation of personal visions that might run counter to the vision of the school. It was expected that the department vision is in alignment with overall school vision, even if that meant having to accept a department vision MLs or their teachers might not fully agree with. The *Building a shared vision* theme serves as testament to the existence of this dimension in the ML leadership role.

- **Setting direction for the department and the school**. While White (2000) distinguished between these two dimensions, it made sense to discuss them together as there were a number of strategies undertaken by the MLs to set the direction for the department and the school were similar. MLs in this study contributed to charting the school direction through providing their own and/or their department's response at forums such as Exco, as well as raising individual or departmental initiatives for consideration. MLs were expected to set a clear direction for teachers in the department to follow, in terms of working towards the implementation of the school and/or department vision. MLs were responsible for the interpretation and implementation of MOE initiatives and changes, as well as the implementation of specific school initiatives that were introduced. Some school initiatives would have originated from the department, either from the ML or a teacher, and might be cross-subject (interdisciplinary) in nature. MLs were expected to make these changes as palatable and manageable as possible for teachers. They had to develop an awareness of changes and trends in their subject area(s) as well as broader educational issues and make teachers in the department aware of these developments so that teachers know what they had to do. The *Setting directions* and *Personal qualities, beliefs and values* theme serve as testament to the existence of these two dimensions in the ML leadership role

- **Profile of the department and the school.** Like the dimension above, it makes sense to discuss them together as there were a number of strategies undertaken by the MLs to promote their department which also had appeal to the community. MLs had a role in promoting and publicising the department's programmes, initiatives and achievements within the school and in the wider community. They used a variety of strategies and sought

out opportunities to maintain a positive profile within the school. They were aware that promotional activities could be used at a department level to motivate and/or extend students. However, given budget and resource constraints, there was a limit to what a department could offer and choices would have to be made. When done well, having a positive profile could help to bolster the credibility of the ML and department in the minds of SLs, teachers, students and parents. MLs acknowledged that the building and maintenance of a department profile within a school should be done in a way that did not attract negative responses from other departments. Initiatives that were used to raise the profile of a department could also be used to promote the school to the general community. The themes *Leading teaching and learning* and *Representing and advocating* serve as testament to the existence of this dimension in the ML leadership role.

6.5.1.3 CAMM as learning area architect

This reflects aspects of the ML leadership role that are involved in changing the department culture and building the department's capacity for change. The dimensions within this role are culture, teacher support, department staff management, communication, representation and student management.

- **Culture**. MLs in this study had sought to build a department culture that embrace collegiality, teamwork, sharing and a desire for improvement at both the department and school levels. They brought about the desired department culture by leading by example and modelling the appropriate behaviours to their teachers. A key for all of the MLs was getting the teachers in the department to work together in genuinely collaborative ways such as sharing of practical and proven pedagogical practices and resources to help one another improve instructional practices. The creation of a 'collaborative' culture was seen as desirable and could lead to better teaching and learning outcomes within the department. The culture of the department is, to some extent, dependant on other factors such as the prevailing school culture, the nature of the department and the demographics of teachers within the department. The *Leading people*, *Communication* and *Building a collaborative culture* themes serve as testament to the existence of this dimension in the ML leadership role.

- **Teacher support**. An important aspect of the leadership of ML is their support for teachers in the department. The ML leadership role developed in this study contained examples of this dimension. MLs were seen to provide professional, and when required, personal support for all teachers, particularly those who were new to the school or the profession. They provided advice, guidance, resources and professional learning opportunities to teachers, both when it was asked for, and when they judged it to be necessary. They were

impartial in their dealings with teachers and were not seen to favour any individual or group of teachers. The *Leading people*, *Developing people, and self* and *Personal qualities, beliefs and values* themes serve as testament to the existence of this dimension in the ML leadership role.

- **Department staff management**. Department staff management was a fundamental role of MLs and overlapped with the '*Teacher support*' dimension above. MLs in this study supervised classroom teachers under their span of control and the number of supervisees was dependent on, for example, school size, department size and the number of MLs available to supervise teachers. As ROs, MLs had the responsibility for the development, appraisal and ranking of their teachers under their span of control. MLs were seen as a 'change agent' and had an important role in leading and managing the change process within the department. Change was managed in collaboration with the teachers in the department who were supported professionally and personally in their work. A good ML was seen as enthusiastic and led by example from within the department, rather than above it. MLs worked with the SLs and other MLs to make decisions on the assignment of teaching as well as co-curricular responsibilities to teachers. This was to leverage on the different strengths and expertise of teachers to work on the school and department plans and to ensure that talent was spread equitably across all the departments in the school. Unlike earlier studies (for example, Earley & Fletcher-Campbell, 1989; Keane, 2010; White, 2000; Wise, 2001), staff management did not emerge as a problematic issue for the MLs in this study. Like the MLs in Wise and Bush (1999), Adey (2000) and Wise (2001) studies, MLs in this study accepted "the need for monitoring and supervising their team members" (Wise, 2001, p. 340) and "gave 'supervising/monitoring colleagues' work' a high ranking in their priorities" (Wise, 2001, p. 338). The *Developing people, and self*', *Building a collaborative culture*, *Communication* and *Representing and advocating* themes serve as testament to the existence of this dimension in the ML leadership role.

- **Communication**. Communication was considered a vital part of the leadership process (Dinham, 2007b) and an important part of the ML role. MLs in this study played the role of a conduit who brought information to their teachers in the department from a variety of internal and external sources (Exco, SLs, outside agencies). They sifted through information and communicated those deemed pertinent to department teachers so that teachers were not burdened unnecessarily with irrelevant information. MLs attempted to simplify requirements of MOE and school initiatives and changes to make it easier for teachers to focus on their core business of teaching and learning. MLs also communicated information from teachers in the department to various forums within the school, as well

communicating with a range of other individuals and groups as the need arises. MLs stayed connected with their teachers, both formally through department meetings as well as informally and that had enabled them to get a sense of how teachers were feeling and what their needs and concerns were. The size and composition of the teachers in the department could aid or hinder this. While MLs preferred to have more meetings where teachers could plan and discuss their work, they had to rely on emails to communicate with their teachers. However, the preference was for face to face meeting when there was a problem to be addressed. The *Personal qualities, beliefs and values* and *Communication* themes serve as testament to the existence of this dimension in the ML leadership role.

- **Representation**. MLs in this study acted as the primary representative and spokesperson for their department and they were also recognised as the chief advocate for the interests of department and their teachers. As a general spokesperson for the department, MLs raised issues, put forward the department's case and made representations in relation to things such as deployment of teachers and funding for programmes and initiatives. In this capacity, however, MLs needed to have a whole school perspective and not to just look after the narrow needs of their department. They had to strike a balance between the needs and priorities of their department and those of the school as a whole. They were expected to be able to communicate that balance to teachers and serve as a source of information to teachers of why some decisions were made at Exco. The *Communication*, *Personal qualities, beliefs and values* and *Representing and advocating* theme serve as testament to the existence of this dimension in the ML leadership role.

- **Student management**. Student management was mentioned by a few participants in this study. The primary responsibility for the management of students rest with the form and/or subject teachers, supported by the Student Welfare department who have primary responsibility for student discipline and well-being in the school. MLs who were in charge of subject area(s) had no formal student management responsibility outside that what is normally expected of a classroom teacher, both in their classroom and elsewhere in the school. This is consistent with other studies (for example, Keane, 2010; White, 2000) that there was no formal requirement for MLs to become involved with student management, unless they have direct responsibility for student discipline and well-being.

6.5.1.4 ML as administrative leader

This reflects aspects of the ML leadership role that involves what is traditionally considered as 'management' functions.

MLs in this study carried out what would be considered the managerial aspects of the ML's responsibilities. These responsibilities included preparing budgets, monitoring spending, ordering resources, preparing reports and responding to correspondence etc. To some extent, this role is considered an integral component of the job of a ML to keep the department functioning. Nonetheless, there had been attempts to reduce the time burden these administrative tasks put on MLs by employing EAS to handle these administrative matters. This was considered to be one way of freeing up MLs to focus more on 'leadership' activities related to the other three roles described above. The themes *Leading teaching and learning* and *Administration* theme serve as testament to the existence of this dimension in the ML leadership role.

6.5.1.5 Commentary

In summary, the leadership roles of MLs that emerged from this study were consistent with those described by White (2000). Evidence was found for each of four roles and the fifteen dimensions being undertaken by the majority of the MLs in this study. As such, it was clear that White's CAMM leadership model (2000) has utility for describing the ML leadership role outlined in Chapter Five.

6.5.2 Drysdale and Gurr (2011) successful school leadership model

As part of their research in the ISSP, Gurr and Drysdale (for example, Gurr et al., 2003; Gurr et al., 2006) have been developing a series of models of successful school leadership, culminating in the model shown in Figure 3.1 (Drysdale & Gurr, 2011). In this leadership model, the school leader (SLs or MLs) interacts within a particular school context and engages in developing a series of interventions aimed at improving student learning outcomes. The areas that can influence student learning outcomes are teaching and learning (Level1), school capacity building (Level 2) and other influences (Level 3). Level 1 interventions are focused on teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment and have the most impact on student learning outcomes. Level 2 interventions are focussed on building school capacity and can be broken into four areas: personal, professional, organisational and community. These can be further divided into four elements each and are more indirect interventions. Level 3 interventions are "other influences" that can impact on student learning outcomes. Student outcomes can vary from traditional forms of achievement (standardised examination results) to more authentic forms of outcomes (for example, social competencies, community service and personal growth). The leader can make interventions at any level in the model including student outcomes, where they can determine outcomes that are desired by prioritising and emphasising those.

6.5.2.1 Teaching and learning (Level 1)

- **Curriculum**. MLs in this study had overall responsibility for the delivery of the subject curriculum in the school. MLs were responsible for the interpretation of the requirements of MOE policies and initiatives as applicable to the department for their teachers, ensuring that teachers were teaching what they were supposed to teach. MLs were expected to lead the customisation of the curriculum to suit the needs, abilities and interests of the student cohort in the school. However, there was a recognition amongst some participants that curricular customisation in examinable subjects such as English, Mathematics, Science and Mother Tongue languages remained limited. The theme *Leading teaching and learning* contains examples of this intervention.

- **Pedagogy**. Under the auspices of TSLN and TLLM policy initiatives, schools were encouraged by MOE to design their instructional programmes suit the needs, abilities and interests of the students in the school. The objectives were to provide students with meaningful learning experiences and to better engage the students in their own learning. MLs in this study encouraged their teachers to adopt student-centred pedagogical approaches and to experiment with innovative teaching strategies in their teaching practice. They did this by modelling a willingness to experiment with these innovative pedagogical approaches/practices and to coach teachers in the use of these approaches/practices across all year levels. MLs encouraged teachers in the department to do the same and share proven strategies to improve their quality of teaching practice. MLs monitored the use of these pedagogical practices through regular lesson observations. The theme *Leading teaching and learning* contains examples of this intervention.

- **Assessment**. Assessment can be broadly defined into two types - ‘summative’ and ‘formative’ forms of assessment. While there had been a shift towards what have been described as ‘formative’ forms of assessment, the predominant form of assessment mentioned by participants in this study was the ‘summative’ standardised ‘paper and pencil’ tests. MLs were expected to lead and manage teaching and learning in ways that facilitate the attainment of these outcomes. MLs had little or no influence over the forms of assessment in their subject area(s) as they were prescribed by the MOE and in the case of PSLE, the Singapore Examination and Assessment Board (SEAB). The theme *Leading teaching and learning* contains examples of this intervention.

- **Student as learners**. MLs in this study had an intimate knowledge of the needs, abilities and interests of the students in the school. This understanding had enabled MLs to customise the curriculum and adopt more suitable pedagogies to better engage students in their own learning. This required professional judgment that was grounded in a set of personal values and beliefs and involved making defensible decisions. The themes *Leading teaching and learning* and *Personal qualities, beliefs and values* contains examples of this intervention.

There was strong evidence that MLs in this study had a direct impact on teaching and learning through influencing teacher practice to improve the quality of the instruction, the design of the curriculum, the various forms of assessment and the ability to motivate and equip students to manage their own learning. Not all the interventions were the same nor were they implemented identically. They varied according to the context. The *Leading teaching and learning* and *Personal qualities, beliefs and values* themes serve as testament to the existence of this Level 1 intervention in the ML leadership role.

6.5.2.2 School capacity (Level 2)

- **Personal capacity.** This involves the four elements of self-management, individual professional pedagogy, professional networks and knowledge creation & construction. There was evidence that MLs in this study developed their own personal capacity. Recent MOE policies and initiatives had brought about significant changes to the curriculum, teaching and learning in schools. MLs attended professional learning activities in order to keep themselves abreast of developments in policy, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in the subject area as well as developing their leadership and management capacities to lead and manage teachers and change in the department. MLs established professional networks with colleagues in other schools, NIE academics and other relevant professionals that enabled the support to affect student learning to be forthcoming. The themes *Leading teaching and learning* and *Developing people, and self* contain examples of this intervention.

- **Professional capacity.** This involves the four elements of professional infrastructure, teacher leaders, team building and school-wide pedagogy. There was evidence that MLs in this study developed the professional capacity of the school. MLs in this study have been described as ‘people focussed’ and an important aspect of ML leadership role is working with teachers and EAS to help them to develop the capability and capacity to be better at what they do. MLs in this study developed the professional capacities of teachers

by encouraging, and in some instances, directing an individual or a group of teachers to undertake specific professional learning and development activities, where there was a perception that these teachers could benefit from attending such an activity. MLs believed teamwork would lead to improved teaching and learning outcomes and they supported the team building efforts by delegating responsibilities, building ownership and cohesiveness of the department's objectives. They also created appropriate structures and develop practices to provide both time and space for department teachers to come together and work as a team. The themes *Developing people, and self*, *Leading teaching and learning* and *Building a collaborative culture* contain examples of this intervention.

- **Organisational capacity.** This involves the four elements of share leadership, organisational learning, organisational structures and safe environment. There was evidence that MLs in this study developed organisational capacity. MLs in this study inculcated a positive attitude towards improvement, innovations and change amongst teachers in the department. They encouraged department teachers to improve what they have been doing and learn about best practices. MLs built a shared commitment by involving teachers in deciding and agreeing on the changes to be made and supporting them to effect those changes at the department or the classroom levels. The processes of change were handled in a sensitive way, with teachers being supported through the entire change process. MLs built up the capacity of teachers for change by encouraging, and in some instances, directing an individual or a group of teachers to undertake specific professional learning and development activities, where there was a perception that these teachers could benefit from attending such an activity. MLs also promoted a culture whereby teachers felt 'safe' to to dialogue with one another about ideas and concerns in a constructive way. ML also practised a 'no blame' culture where teachers were assured of support if they were able to justify their actions and had tried their best. The themes *Developing people, and self*, *Leading teaching and learning*, *Building a collaborative culture* contain examples of this intervention.

- **Community capacity.** This involves the four elements of social capital, community networks & alliances, parent-school partnerships and relationship marketing. There was evidence that MLs in this study build community networks and alliances and parent-school partnerships. MLs were seen to harness community resources (public sector agencies, private sector companies and voluntary welfare organisations, such as temples, churches and clan associations) to support school and department programmes. MLs also tapped on their professional networks to bring in external expertise into the school to provide professional learning and development activities for teachers and parent volunteers to

support the department programme. The themes *Leading teaching and learning* and *Time pressures* contain examples of this intervention.

6.5.2.3 Other influences (Level 3)

The 'other influences' that impact on student outcomes include a range of environmental factors such as technical, social, educational, demographic, political and economic. Drawing on the analysis of the interview data, there was little or no evidence that MLs in this study were operating at Level 3 influences. MLs were not observed to have any influence over these wider contextual influences at the cluster, zonal or system levels.

6.5.2.4 Student outcomes

- Traditional, authentic

The student learning outcomes have remained focussed on results in key milestone tests and examinations. It was noted that there had been concerted effort to broaden the definition of success beyond examination grades and there had been a shift towards a holistic education and development by increasing the focus on non-academic outcomes such as the development of 21st century skills. However, it was evident that the preoccupation with test and examination results was unlikely to change quickly in the near future. There was little or no evidence that MLs in this study were able to influence the types of student learning outcome that were valued.

6.5.2.5 Commentary

Consistent with Gurr and Drysdale (for example, Drysdale & Gurr, 2017b; Gurr, 2017; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013), MLs in this study "tend to operate between Levels 1 and 2, with a close relationship to directly influencing teacher practice to improve student learning" (2013, p. 172). The leadership role of MLs developed from this study confirmed Koh et al. (2011) initial conclusion of the applicability of Australian model of educational leadership (Gurr et al., 2006) to (middle) leadership practices that are located in the context of primary schools in Singapore. The findings from this study provided further empirical evidence to support the applicability of the Drysdale and Gurr's (2011) model to "those school personnel holding other leadership positions, especially those in co-ordinating roles" (Drysdale, Goode, & Gurr, 2009, p. 32).

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

7.1 OVERVIEW OF STUDY

This study investigated the phenomenon of ML leadership role in six primary schools in Singapore. Specifically, the research question addressed by the study was:

> *How is the leadership role of a ML in a primary school as perceived by the holders of the position themselves (MLs), those to whom they are responsible (SLs) and those for whom they have responsibility (teachers)?*

The methodology employed was based around hermeneutic phenomenology, allowing both the description and the interpretation of the phenomenon of ML leadership role, without requiring the use of an *a priori* theoretical framework. The use of the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, in conjunction with the views of fifty-six participants across three groups of participants (SLs, MLs and teachers) from six primary schools in Singapore, provided a rich description of the leadership role of MLs as perceived by the participants. Transcripts of participant-edited semi-structured interviews, where the participants co-defined the nature of what was included in the phenomena under investigation were inspected for common themes that were used to construct the leadership role description. The perceptions of the three groups were compared to ascertain whether their perceptions differed.

In all, 227 common themes across the six schools were identified, with 91.7% of these having either high or moderate agreement between the groups under comparison. Of these, a high proportion (84.1%) featured contributions from what was considered a significant number (see Chapter Five, page 107-110 for criteria) of the individuals that made up the groups being compared. All eighteen possible comparisons that could be made between the three participant groups across the six schools could be labelled as “similar” using the criteria outlined for judging similarity.

The study found a general consistency of perspectives held by the three groups of participants (SLs, MLs and teachers) across the six schools in the study. There was both strong support amongst the three groups for the common themes obtained from the interviews, as well as a strong common understanding of the core aspects of the ML role in the schools investigated. Consequently, it was argued in Chapter Five that there was little point in constructing different descriptions of the ML leadership role for each of the three groups. The leadership role of MLs that emerged from this study and described in Chapter Five is both complex and rich. The description consisted of a total of fourteen themes and reflected much of what had been written about MLs and their roles in the literature presented in Chapter Three. MLs in this study

had to lead as well as manage teaching and learning, people, resources and change, with the role being carried out under time pressures. There was an emphasis on the leadership aspects of the role, with MLs expected to take on a bigger role at the school level. MLs in this study were involved in the formal appraisal of teachers. They were line managers and had performance management responsibilities over teachers in the department. This included both evaluative and developmental aspects and they had a proactive role in the professional development of teachers. MLs in this study felt they were adequately prepared and trained for the job and were supported in their role by their SLs.

7.2 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

The research has made a number of contributions to the body of knowledge relating to school and middle leadership. Without unnecessarily repeating findings of the study in detail, this section will outline three contributions.

7.2.1 Description of the middle leadership role

Perceptions of SLs, MLs and teachers were used to describe the ML leadership role. Few studies have sought to understand the leadership role of ML through interpretative inquiry used in this study. The result was a rich description that showed the role to be complex and multi-dimensional. This suggests that the ML leadership role could not be described by one or two leadership conceptions. There was general agreement regarding the nature of the ML leadership role between the three participant groups. The provision of the leadership role description, along with the perception of participants in relation to the effect(s) of MLs on student learning outcomes, will render decision makers, at both systemic and school levels, more informed of the work of MLs in primary schools in Singapore. This study should provide a valuable set of references on practical issues ranging from such things as the role of MLs in schools, to provision of appropriate professional development activities for MLs may be guided by these findings.

7.2.2 Comparison with the school and middle leadership literature

Although the description of the ML leadership role is the main finding of this study, the description was also discussed in terms of the existing school and middle leadership literature (refer to prior discussion in Chapter Six). The analysis was divided into three parts. First, connections were made to the literature base dealing with the role of MLs in both primary and secondary schools as appropriate. Second, the ML leadership role was examined in terms of existing contemporary school leadership conceptions. Evidence was found for the existence of aspects of instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership, contingent leadership and distributed

leadership. Third, the CAMM leadership model proposed by White (2000) and successful school leadership model proposed by Drysdale and Gurr (2011) were found to be applicable to the leadership role of middle leaders described by participants in this study. This study has contributed to a growing comparative research on middle leadership and their enacted roles, particularly from a centralised school system environment where MLs are expected to both lead and manage.

7.2.3 Research directions

An important contribution of any research is the directions that are indicated for further research. This study has suggested a number of directions as arising out of this study which were described previously. Specifically, this study has provided an overview of the leadership role of ML which would help to inform future research on school leadership and middle leadership in Singapore and internationally. Important research directions include investigating of the ML role in other types of school in Singapore and the including the perceptions of other stakeholder groups in and beyond the school.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The findings and analysis of the study presented in Chapters Five and Six have enabled the formulation of a number of recommendations for practice concerning the ML leadership role in Singapore primary schools. These recommendations are addressed specifically to the MOE, SLs, current and prospective MLs as well as teachers in Singapore, who might be interested in this study. The recommendations are indications of initiatives and directions that it is felt the group(s) or individual(s) concerned should be considering. It is important to acknowledge that the power of the recommendations is constrained by the limitations of this study.

1. SLs should ensure that MLs have a clearly acknowledged and understood strategic role in the school curriculum planning and policy process. MLs should pursue this outcome. The nature of the ML leadership role and their positions in schools place them ideally to provide input and ideas that ensure the learning needs of students and the capacities of teachers inform school level decision-making in relation to changes in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

2. While ML's duties and responsibilities were spelt out in generic terms in the Principals' Handbook, MOE should consider developing and publishing a document applicable to MLs, and akin to UK's 'National Standards for Subject Leaders' or New Zealand's 'Leading from the Middle' documents. SLs (Principals) in Singapore has a similar document entitled 'Anchored in values and purpose: philosophy for educational leadership in Singapore'

(Singapore Ministry of Education, 2008) . Such a document would acknowledge the nature of the ML leadership role in Singapore schools as identified through this and other studies, particularly their role in school effectiveness and school improvement. The document would also be a step toward achieving implementation of the previous recommendation. This document is not meant to be prescriptive for all schools, or to stifle creative models of organisational structure that some schools have implemented. However, it would serve to focus SLs, as well as MLs themselves, on aspects of the role that see MLs as initiators of curricular and pedagogical change, rather than line managers who act to facilitate curricular and pedagogical directives from MOE and elsewhere.

3. MOE and schools should (re-)examine the appropriateness of the amount of 'off-loading' time allocated to MLs. Whilst appreciating the realities of staffing needs at the school level, it would appear unreasonable to expect the full potential of the ML leadership role in schools to be achieved on the level of 'off-loading' provisions currently in place. MLs would need sufficient (more) time to be able to carry out all aspects of their role effectively.

4. The leadership conceptions discussed earlier in Chapter Three - instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership, contingency leadership and distributed leadership - should be used to inform the work of MLs and those aspiring to this role in Singapore schools. Given the relevance for all seven in the leadership role of MLs, SLs, in particular, should inform themselves of these models and consider the way(s) in which each is/can be involved in the practice of MLs and aspiring MLs in their schools.

5. MLs should appreciate the complexity of the leadership role ascribed to them by participants in this study. They should be aware of the large instructional leadership role ascribed to them, as well as the role they are perceived to play in fostering a department culture that is focused on collaboration and improved teaching and learning. Specifically, they should work to achieve agreement on the direction and goals of the school and department, and to develop an understanding of the way in which their department is involved with whole-school goals and priorities. Accordingly, they should seek to keep themselves informed of the latest educational trends and research with both direct and more general relevance to their subject area(s), and seek to model appropriate behaviours and practices for teachers and EAS.

6. MLs should be aware that they are the chief representatives for teachers and EAS and the interests of the department. However, they are also leaders within their school and, as

such, have a professional obligation to act in a way that does not undermine decisions reached at Exco or directives from MOE. Issues discussed at Exco and other school forums that have ramifications at the department level should be discussed fully with teachers in the department. Responses from MLs back to the Exco should be based on that discussion, balanced by the overall needs of the school.

7. MLs need to possess effective communication, organisational and interpersonal skills. They need to be aware of the diverse range of personalities and needs that can occur in a department, and have the ability to manage these to effectively lead their department, and at the same time, being able to offer encouragement, advice and support to their teachers and EAS in the department, as appropriate.

8. MLs should lead their department in a collaborative and participatory manner, informing teachers of issues and decisions that are relevant to them at the school level, and seeking input to school and department level decisions from all teachers and EAS in the department. A clear understanding and agreement of both school and department level priorities would be important in developing a culture conducive to effective learning and teaching.

9. MLs should work to provide a vibrant and innovative culture in the department where new ideas, initiatives and strategies are encouraged and supported. The ML should not be the only source of these new ideas, initiatives and strategies. All department teachers should be expected to contribute new ideas, initiatives and strategies and participate in their prototyping. Professional learning and development, promoted, facilitated and/or provided by the ML, should also provide a source of innovative and creative ideas, initiatives and strategies.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The relatively small amount of research into aspects associated with the role of MLs in Singapore leave much scope for further enquiry. Findings from the current study and indications from the reviewed literature suggest two key recommendations for further research that could be undertaken. Firstly, it would be useful to study the ML leadership role in other schools in Singapore. The proposed study could investigate different schools in terms of school level to further explore the work of MLs in secondary schools and junior colleges. The study of MLs in secondary schools and junior colleges would enrich our understanding of ML leadership across all school levels in the Singapore school system. While it is impossible to make broad generalisation given the scope and size of this study, the insights gained from the

six schools in this study suggest a number of significant findings might have implications for transferability to other similar studies. Researchers might be able to make application of ML leadership role description to other schools on the basis of comparing the similarities and differences with the six schools investigated in this study. The inclusion of more school levels in the study would hopefully enable us to develop a more complete understanding of ML leadership in Singapore schools.

Secondly, while this study included the perceptions of SLs, MLs and teachers, the perceptions of other stakeholders in and beyond the school could be included in future research. Given the resource constraints on doctoral research in terms of scope and size, this study was intended to only focus on exploring the ML leadership role through the perceptions of SLs, MLs and teachers. It would be enlightening to include the views of other key stakeholders within the school such as students, parents, EAS as well as system leaders such as cluster superintendents and other key personnel from MOE's Educational Leadership Development Centre (ELDC) and School Appraisal Branch (SAB). This might result in further understanding of the leadership themes that emerged in this study and/or the additional of new leadership themes. The inclusion of perceptions from these stakeholders within the school and the education system could make a valued contribution to provide a much more comprehensive understanding of the ML leadership role in primary schools in Singapore.

7.5 CONCLUSION

This study, employing a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology that relied on no *a priori* theoretical framework, has demonstrated that the perceived leadership role of MLs in Singapore primary schools is complex and multi-dimensional. There were fourteen leadership themes that emerged and the list of nine recommendations for practice further attests to the complexity of the ML leadership role. In many respects, the range of roles and responsibilities MLs need to assume is overwhelming. Given the 'offloading' time currently attached to the ML leadership role, the full scope of the ML role is difficult to achieve to maximum effectiveness, with the role being shaped by the specific individual in response to their own context. The ML leadership role as described consisted of fourteen themes and the core aspects of the leadership role were found to be substantially the same for all three participant groups involved in this study. Evidence of aspects of instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership, contingent leadership and distributed leadership were found in the ML leadership role. The leadership role of MLs developed from this study confirmed the applicability of White's (2000) CAMM leadership model and Drysdale and Gurr's (2011) successful school leadership model to (middle) leadership practices that were located in the culture and context of primary schools in

Singapore. Also presented were nine recommendations for practice that involved both system and school level initiatives. Possibilities for further research, including the investigation of the ML role in other types of school in Singapore and the inclusion of other stakeholder groups in and beyond the school, were presented. This study also demonstrated the practical use of employing a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology to generate information that did not rely on having an *a prior* theoretical framework.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview Guide for: Principals and Vice-Principals

Preamble

- Introduce self as researcher
- Thank participant for taking part in study
- Outline purpose of research
- Seek informed consent
- Seek consent to use an audio recorder
- Reassurances about anonymity and confidentiality
- Say that interview will approximately 60 minutes
- Reiterate that this project is not an evaluation of middle leaders in the school

Main Question

- With particular regard to leadership, how do you see the role of middle leaders (i.e. Head of Department / Subject Head / Level Head) in primary schools?

Guiding Questions and Prompts

- What is the purpose of the middle leader's role?
- What are the characteristics of an effective middle leader?
- What are the knowledge, competencies and personal characteristics you regard as important to carry out their role effectively? Why?
- What are the factors that may affect the role of middle leaders? Why?
- In what ways do you think the characteristics of the department may affect the leadership role of the middle leader in this school?
- To what extent, does the way a school is organised help middle leaders carry out their role effectively?
- What things would assist the development of leadership role of middle leaders?
- What part do the senior school leaders play in the development of middle leaders?
- What are the observed benefits of the teachers and students from effective middle leadership?

Check Questions

No.	Question	Check
1.	During discussion of the leadership role of the middle leader, were concrete examples used?	
2.	Was there discussion relating to the perceived effects of the middle leader on student learning outcomes?	
3.	Has the interview participant(s) been given an opportunity to relate material they feel is relevant to the leadership role of the middle leader?	

To finish:

Is there anything you would like to add before we close the interview? Thank you for the interview. Your help, and the time you have given to assist my research, are appreciated.

Interview Guide for: Middle Leaders

Preamble

- Introduce self as researcher
- Thank participant for taking part in study
- Outline purpose of research
- Seek informed consent
- Seek consent to use an audio recorder
- Reassurances about anonymity and confidentiality
- Say that interview will last approximately 60 minutes
- Reiterate that this project is not an evaluation of middle leaders in the school

Main Question

- With particular regard to leadership, how do you see the role of middle leaders (i.e. Head of Department / Subject Head / Level Head) in primary schools?

Guiding Questions and Prompts

- What is the purpose of your role?
- What are the characteristics of an effective middle leader?
- What are the knowledge, competencies and personal characteristics you regard as important to carry out your role effectively? Why?
- What are the factors that may affect the effectiveness of middle leadership? Why?
- What is your preferred leadership style and how it may affect your role?
- In what ways do you think the characteristics of the department may affect your role as a middle leader?
- To what extent, does the way a school is organised help middle leaders carry out their role effectively?
- What things would assist the development of your leadership role?
- What part do the senior school leaders play in the development of middle leaders?
- What are the observed benefits of the teachers and students from effective middle leadership?

Check Questions

No.	Question	Check
1.	During discussion of the leadership role of the middle leader, were concrete examples used?	
2.	Was there discussion relating to the perceived effects of the middle leader on student learning outcomes?	
3.	Has the interview participant(s) been given an opportunity to relate material they feel is relevant to the leadership role of the middle leader?	

To finish:

Is there anything else you would like to say about being a middle leader before we close the interview? Thank you for the interview. Your help, and the time you have given to assist my research, are appreciated.

Interview Guide for: Teachers

Preamble

- Introduce self as researcher
- Thank participant for taking part in study
- Outline purpose of research
- Seek informed consent
- Seek consent to use an audio recorder
- Reassurances about anonymity and confidentiality
- Say that interview will last approximately 60 minutes
- Reiterate that this project is not an evaluation of middle leaders in the school

Main Question

- With particular regard to leadership, how do you see the role of middle leaders (i.e. Head of Department / Subject Head / Level Head) in primary schools?

Guiding Questions and Prompts

- What is the purpose of the middle leader's role?
- What are the characteristics of an effective middle leader?
- What are the knowledge, competencies and personal characteristics you regard as important to carry out their role effectively? Why?
- What are the factors that may affect the effectiveness of middle leadership? Why?
- In what ways do you think the characteristics of the department may affect the leadership of the middle leader?
- To what extent, does the way a school is organised help middle leaders carry out their role effectively?
- Whose responsibility is it to develop the leadership role of middle leaders?
- What things would assist the development of leadership role of middle leaders?
- How can you support the role of the middle leader?
- What part do the senior school leaders play in the development of middle leaders?
- What are the observed benefits of the teachers and students from effective middle leadership?

Check Questions

No.	Question	Check
1.	During discussion of the leadership role of the middle leader, were concrete examples used?	
2.	Was there discussion relating to the perceived effects of the middle leader on student learning outcomes?	
3.	Has the interview participant(s) been given an opportunity to relate material they feel is relevant to the leadership role of the middle leader?	

To finish:

Is there anything you would like to add before we close the interview? Thank you for the interview. Your help, and the time you have given to assist my research, are appreciated.

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF INVITATION

LETTER OF INVITATION

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

PROJECT TITLE: 'Effective' Middle Leaders and Their Leadership in Selected Primary Schools in Singapore

Dear Principal,

I am a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) candidate at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne. As part of my PhD studies, I am undertaking a research project to investigate participants' perceptions of 'effective' middle leaders and their leadership in six selected primary schools in Singapore. This project will form my PhD thesis and has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee as well as the Ministry of Education, Singapore.

I am writing to seek your permission to collect data for this project in your school and to involve you as a participant in the research. This project hopes to involve 8 participants (2 Principals and Vice Principals, 2 middle leaders and 4 teachers) from your school and the methods used to collect data are a questionnaire and interviews. The participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire, at their convenience, with adequate response time given and collected by the researcher. The participants will be interviewed once, in-person, one-on-one, for approximately one hour. During the interview, they will be asked to respond to a series of questions about their perceptions about 'effective' middle leaders and to discuss issues pertaining to 'effective' middle leadership. This is **not** an assessment or evaluation of your school's middle leader.

The interviews, with the participants' permission, will be audio-recorded and transcribed to provide a full and accurate verbatim record. When the interviews have been transcribed, the participants will be provided with a copy of the transcript, so that they can verify that the information is correct and to add or delete or clarify any points that they wish. The time commitment for each participant is expected to be approximately one hour.

The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants' responses will be protected to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. The names and contact details of the participants will be kept in a password-protected computer file separate from any data that they have provided. This will only be able to be linked to their responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know where to send the interview transcript for checking. In the final thesis and other publications arising from this project, anonymous quotations may be included. The school and the participants will be referred to by pseudonyms and we will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess their identity. However, as the number of schools and participants we seek to interview is very small, it is possible that someone may still be able to identify the school or individual participants. It is important that you are aware of these limits to anonymity if you agree to participate.

Once the thesis arising from this research project has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on application at the Centre for Organisational Learning and Leadership. It is also possible that the results will be

presented in the form of conference papers, journal articles or in a book. The data will be kept securely in the Centre for five years from the date of completion of thesis, before being destroyed in accordance with the University's regulations.

Participating in this research project is completely voluntary. The school and the participants can withdraw from this project at any stage or to withdraw any unprocessed data supplied without prejudice. There are no known or anticipated risks to the school or to the participants in this project.

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the self-addressed envelope provided. I will contact you or an appointed liaison officer to organise an information session for the recruitment of participants. If you have chosen not to participate, thank you for your time in reading this information.

If you require any further information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either of the principal investigators or the researcher, as indicated on this statement. If you have concerns about the conduct of this research project, you can contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on phone: +61 3 8344 2073, or fax: +61 3 9347 6739.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you for your assistance in this project.

Yours sincerely,

(Stanley) Hak Hiang Koh
PhD Candidate

Enclosures [2] 1. Approval Letter from Ministry of Education, Singapore
2. Letter of Consent

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR SCHOOLS

LETTER OF CONSENT FOR SCHOOLS

PROJECT TITLE: 'Effective' Middle Leaders and Their Leadership in Selected Primary Schools in Singapore

Name of School :

Name of Researcher: Mr. Koh Hak Hiang (Stanley)

Name of Principal Investigators : Dr. Lawrence Drysdale
Dr. David Gurr

1. I consent to allow my school and members of staff to participate in the project named above, the particulars of which - including details of questionnaire and interview have been explained to me. A written copy of the information has been given to me to keep.

2. I authorise the researcher to:
   (a) use with eight members of staff who agree to participate in the project the questionnaire and interview referred to under (1) above;
   (b) audio-record the interview sessions;
   (c) use anonymous quotations from the interviews in any publications arising from the project.

3. I acknowledge that:
   (a) the possible effects of the research project have been explained to me to my satisfaction;
   (b) I have been informed that the school and participants are free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied;
   (c) the project is for the purpose of research;
   (d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information provided by the participants will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
   (e) copies of transcripts will be returned to the participants for verification;
   (f) the school and the participants will be referred to by pseudonym in any publications arising from the project;
   (g) that there are limitations to anonymity and confidentiality of participant identity as the number of schools and participants per school is small.

Name and Signature of Principal Date

Contact Details of Liaison Officer

Name: _____ Appointment: _____

Email: _____ Phone : _____

APPENDIX D

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

PROJECT TITLE: 'Effective' Middle Leaders and Their Leadership in Selected Primary Schools in Singapore

Dear Colleague,

Your are invited to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by Dr David Gurr (Principal Investigator), Dr Lawrence Drysdale (Principal Investigator) and Mr. Koh Hak Hiang (Researcher) of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne. This project will form Mr Koh's PhD thesis and has been approved by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee and the Ministry of Education, Singapore.

The aim of this project is to investigate participants' perceptions of 'effective' middle leaders and their leadership in eight selected primary schools in Singapore. This project takes the form of a questionnaire and interview with the researcher. The total time commitment is approximately one hour. First, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire, at a time convenient to you, with adequate response time given, and collected by the researcher. Second, you will be asked to attend an interview with the researcher. During the interview, you will be asked to respond to a series of questions about your perceptions about 'effective' middle leaders and to discuss issues pertaining to 'effective' middle leadership. This is **not** an assessment or evaluation of your school's middle leader.

The interview, of approximately 45 minutes, will be conducted in a mutually convenient time and location. The interview, with your permission, will be audio-recorded so that we can ensure that we make an accurate record of what you say. When the interview has been transcribed, you would be provided with a copy of the transcript, so that you can verify that the information is correct and to add or delete or clarify any points that you wish.

We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses will be protected to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Your name and contact details will be kept in a password-protected computer file separate from any data that you supply. This will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researchers, for example, in order to know where to send your interview transcript for checking.

In the final thesis and other publications arising from this project, anonymous quotations may be included. You will be referred to by a pseudonym and we will remove any references to personal information that might allow someone to guess your identity. However, please refer to the fact that the small sample size planned may increase the chance that individual participants will be identifiable. It is important that you are aware of these limits to anonymity if you agree to participate.

Once the thesis arising from this research project has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be available to you on application at the Centre for

Organisational Learning and Leadership. It is also possible that the results will be presented in the form of conference papers, journal articles or in a book. The data will be kept securely in the Centre for five years from the date of completion of thesis, before being destroyed in accordance with the University's regulations.

Please be advised that participation in this research project is completely voluntary and you will not be penalised in any way for not participating. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice. If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the self-addressed envelope provided. The researcher will then contact you to organise a mutually convenient time and location for you to complete the questionnaire and interview. If you have chosen not to participate, thank you for your time in reading this information.

If you require any further information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact either of the principal investigators or the researcher, as indicated on this statement. If you have concerns about the conduct of this research project, you can contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on phone: +61 3 8344 2073, or fax: +61 3 9347 6739.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you for your assistance in this project.

Yours sincerely,

Koh Hak Hiang (Stanley)
PhD Candidate

Enclosures (3)
1. Approval Letter from Ministry of Education, Singapore
2. Letter of Consent from Principal
3. Consent Form for Participants

Contact Details:

Principal Investigators:
Dr David Gurr
Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne
Victoria 3010
Australia
Phone : +61 3 8344 8224
Fax : +61 3 9349 4198
Email : d.gurr@.unimelb.edu.au

Dr Lawrence Drysdale
Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne
Victoria 3010
Australia
Phone : +61 3 8344 8514
Fax : +61 3 8344 8515
Email : drysdale@.unimelb.edu.au

Researcher:
Koh Hak Hiang (Stanley)
Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne
Victoria 3010
Australia
Phone : +61 4 3968 8698 (Australia)
: +65 9791 7562 (Singapore)
Email : h.koh3@pgrad.unimelb.edu.au

APPENDIX E

LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM SINGAPORE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

1 NORTH BUONA VISTA DRIVE
SINGAPORE 138675
REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

Telephone: 6872-1110
Telefax : 6775-5826
CS-mailbox: GVT 036
e-mail: contact@moe.edu.sg

Personal e-mail address:
E-mail: Teo_Kie_Eng@moe.gov.sg
Sim_Lee_Nah@moe.gov.sg

Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

EDUN N32-07-005

Request No.: **RQ05-08(01)**

30th January 2008

Mr Koh Hak Hiang Stanley
Blk 408A Fernvale Road
#12-28
Singapore 791408

Dear Mr Koh

STUDY ON "'EFFECTIVE' MIDDLE LEADERS AND THEIR LEADERSHIP IN SELECTED PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SINGAPORE"

I refer to your application letter dated 2nd January 2008 requesting for approval to collect data from school.

2 I am pleased to inform you that the Ministry has no objection to your request to conduct research in 6 primary schools. Please use the *attached letter, including Annex A, the application form and the approved questionnaires* to seek approval from the principal and during actual study.

3 Please observe the following conditions of approval for conducting study in school(s):

a) to adhere to the approved research proposal;
b) not to publish your findings without clearance from the Ministry of Education;
c) to make sure that the participation by the school(s) is/are duly recorded in Annex A;
d) to complete the study in school(s) within 6 months from the date of this letter.

4 Please acknowledge receipt of this letter by contacting me at Tel: 68796065 or Mdm Sim at Tel: 68795833. Alternatively, we can also be reached at any of the e-mail addresses at the top right hand corner of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Teo Kie Eng (Ms)
Head, Data Administration 3
Data Administration Centre
for PERMANENT SECRETARY (EDUCATION)
N3207005/RQ05-08(01)

APPENDIX F

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF THE SIMILARITY BETWEEN INTERVIEWS FOR PARTICIPANT GROUPS ON A SCHOOL BY SCHOOL BASIS

This Appendix consists of two types of tables. The first is a series of tables (Tables F1 to F3; F5 to F7; F9 to F11; F13 to C15; F17 to C19; F21 to F23) that summarises, for each school, the themes identified in comparisons of each of the three groups (SLs, MLs, teachers). Both common and non-common themes are listed, along with information relating to the number of participants in whose interviews the themes occurred, and the degree of agreement for each theme description between groups as applicable.

The second type is a series of tables (Tables F4; F8; F12; F16; F20; F24) that summarises the number of common and non-common themes for each comparison of groups made in the schools, as well as an indication of whether the descriptions of ML leadership role obtained from each of the groups being compared is similar or dissimilar, based upon the criteria outlined in Chapter Five. A short summary relating to the overall level of similarity for the descriptions of ML leadership role obtained from the different groups under comparison in each of the schools concludes the information presented for each school.

School A

Table F1

Summary of SL and ML perceptions for School A (2 SLs / 3 MLs)

Theme	**Identified by:**	**Agreement**
Common (12):		
Accountability	2 SLs, 3 MLs	Moderate
Administration	2 SLs, 3 MLs	Moderate
Building a collaborative culture	2 SLs, 3 MLs	Moderate
Building a shared vision	2 SLs, 3 MLs	Moderate
Communication	2 SLs, 3 MLs	High
Developing people, and self	2 SLs, 1 MLs	High
Leading people	2 SLs, 3 MLs	High
Leading teaching and learning	2 SLs, 3 MLs	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 SLs; 10 characteristics, 3 MLs; 11 characteristics	Moderate
Representing and advocating	2 SLs, 3 MLs	Moderate
Role of SL	2 SLs, 3 MLs	Moderate
Setting directions	2 SLs, 3 MLs	High
Non-common (2):		
Role change	2 SLs	NA
Time pressures	3 MLs	NA

Table F2

Summary of SL and teacher perceptions for School A (2 SLs / 5 teachers)

Theme	**Identified by:**	**Agreement**
Common (12):		
Accountability	2 SLs, 5 teachers	Moderate
Administration	2 SLs, 3 teachers	Moderate
Building a collaborative culture	2 SLs, 5 teachers	Moderate
Building a shared vision	2 SLs, 5 teachers	Moderate
Communication	2 SLs, 5 teachers	High
Developing people, and self	2 SLs, 3 teachers	High
Leading people	2 SLs, 5 teachers	High
Leading teaching and learning	2 SLs, 5 teachers	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	3 SLs; 10 characteristics, 5 teachers; 13 characteristics	High
Role of SL	2 SLs, 3 teachers	Moderate
Setting directions	2 SLs, 4 teachers	High
Time pressures	2 SLs, 5 teachers	High
Non-common (2):		
Representing and advocating	3 teachers	NA
Role change	2 SLs	NA

Table F3

Summary of ML and teacher perceptions for School A (3 MLs / 5 teachers)

Theme	**Identified by:**	**Agreement**
Common (12):		
Accountability	3 MLs, 5 teachers	Moderate
Administration	3 MLs, 3 teachers	Moderate
Building a collaborative culture	3 MLs, 5 teachers	Moderate
Building a shared vision	3 MLs, 5 teachers	High
Communication	3 MLs, 5 teachers	High
Developing people, and self	2 MLs, 4 teachers	High
Leading people	3 MLs, 5 teachers	High
Leading teaching and learning	3 MLs, 5 teachers	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 MLs; 11 characteristics, 5 teachers; 13 characteristics	Moderate
Role change	3 MLs, 5 teachers	High
Role of SL	3 MLs, 3 teachers	Moderate
Setting directions	3 MLs, 4 teachers	High
Non-common (2):		
Representing and advocating	3 teachers	NA
Time pressures	2 MLs	NA

Table F4

Summary of comparisons between SL, ML and teacher perceptions for School A

Comparison	Common themes with agreement levels	Additional themes	Summary
SL - ML	14: 5 high, 7 moderate, 0 low	1 SL, 1 ML	SIMILAR
SL - Teacher	14: 7 high, 5 moderate, 0 low	1 SL, 1 Teacher	SIMILAR
ML - Teacher	14: 7 high, 5 moderate, 0 low	1 ML, 1 Teacher	SIMILAR

Given the levels of agreement shown, as well as the number of common themes compared to additional themes, it can be concluded that, overall, the three groups of participants interviewed from this school show substantial similarity in their view of the role of MLs.

School B

Table F5

Summary of SL and ML perceptions for School B (2 SLs / 2 MLs)

Theme	Identified by:	Agreement
Common (13):		
Accountability	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Administration	1 SL, 2 MLs	High
Building a collaborative culture	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Building a shared vision	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Communication	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Developing people, and self	2 SLs, 1 MLs	Moderate
Leading people	2 SL, 2 MLs	High
Leading teaching and learning	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 SLs; 14 characteristics, 2 MLs; 7 characteristics	Moderate
Role change	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Role of SL	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Low
Setting directions	2 SL, 1 MLs	High
Time pressures	2 SLs, 1 MLs	Moderate
Non-common (1):		
Representing and advocating	2 MLs	N/A

Table F6

Summary of SL and teacher perceptions for School B (2 SLs / 4 teachers)

Theme	Identified by:	Agreement
Common (10):		
Accountability	2 SLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Building a collaborative culture	2 SLs, 2 teachers	High
Building a shared vision	2 SLs, 4 teachers	Moderate
Communication	2 SLs, 3 teachers	Moderate
Leading people	2 SLs, 4 teachers	High
Leading teaching and learning	2 SLs, 2 teachers	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 SLs; 14 characteristics, 4 teachers; 8 characteristics	Moderate
Role change	2 SLs, 1 teacher	Low
Setting directions	2 SLs, 3 teachers	High
Time pressures	2 SLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Non-common (3):		
Administration	1 SL	NA
Developing people, and self	2 SLs	NA
Role of SL	2 SLs	NA

Table F7

Summary of ML and teacher perceptions for School B (2 MLs / 4 teachers)

Theme	**Identified by:**	**Agreement**
Common (10):		
Accountability	2 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Building a collaborative culture	2 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Building a shared vision	2 MLs, 4 teachers	Moderate
Communication	2 MLs, 4 teachers	Moderate
Leading people	2 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Leading teaching and learning	2 MLs, 4 teachers	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 MLs; 7 characteristics, 4 teachers; 7 characteristics	High
Role change	2 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Setting directions	1 MLs, 4 teachers	High
Time pressures	1 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Non-common (4):		
Administration	2 MLs	NA
Developing people, and self	1 MLs	NA
Representing and advocating	2 MLs	NA
Role of SL	2 MLs	NA

Table F8

Summary of comparisons between SL, ML and teacher perceptions for School B

Comparison	**Common themes with agreement levels**	**Additional themes**	**Summary**
SL - ML	14: 5 high, 7 moderate, 1 low	0 SL, 1 ML	SIMILAR
SL - Teacher	13: 4 high, 5 moderate, 1 low	3 SL, 0 Teacher	SIMILAR
ML - Teacher	14: 3 high, 7 moderate, 0 low	4 ML, 0 Teacher	SIMILAR

Given the levels of agreement shown, as well as the number of common themes compared to additional themes, it can be concluded that, overall, the three groups of participants interviewed from this school show substantial similarity in their view of the role of MLs.

School C

Table F9

Summary of SL and ML perceptions for School C (2 SLs / 2 MLs)

Theme	Identified by:	Agreement
Common (11):		
Accountability	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Administration	1 SL, 1 ML	High
Building a collaborative culture	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Building a shared vision	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Communication	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Leading people	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Learning teaching and learning	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 SLs; 13 characteristics, 2 MLs; 9 characteristics	High
Role change	2 SLs, 1 ML	Low
Role of SL	2 SLs, 1 ML	Moderate
Setting directions	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Non-common (3):		
Developing people, and self	1 SL	NA
Representing and advocating	1 ML	NA
Time pressures	2 MLs	NA

Table F10

Summary of SL and teacher perceptions for School C (2 SLs / 4 teachers)

Theme	Identified by:	Agreement
Common (12):		
Accountability	2 SLs, 4 teachers	High
Administration	1 SL, 2 teachers	High
Building a collaborative culture	2 SLs, 3 teachers	High
Building a shared vision	2 SLs, 3 teachers	Moderate
Communication	2 SLs, 4 teachers	High
Developing people, and self	1 SL, 2 teachers	Low
Leading people	2 SLs, 4 teachers	High
Leading teaching and learning	2 SLs, 4 teachers	Moderate
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 SLs; 13 characteristics, 4 teachers; 9 characteristics	High
Role change	2 SLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Role of SL	2 SLs, 2 teachers	Low
Setting directions	2 SLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Non-common (2):		
Representing and advocating	4 teachers	NA
Time pressures	2 teachers	NA

Table F11

Summary of ML and teacher perceptions for School C (2 MLs / 4 teachers)

Theme	**Identified by:**	**Agreement**
Common (13):		
Accountability	2 MLs, 4 teachers	High
Administration	1 ML, 2 teachers	High
Building a collaborative culture	2 MLs, 3 teachers	Moderate
Building a shared vision	2 MLs, 3 teachers	Moderate
Communication	2 MLs, 4 teachers	High
Leading people	2 MLs, 4 teachers	Moderate
Leading teaching and learning	2 MLs, 4 teachers	Moderate
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 MLs; 9 characteristics, 4 teachers; 9 characteristics	High
Representing and advocating	1 MLs, 4 teachers	High
Role change	1 ML, 2 Teachers	Low
Role of SL	1 ML, 2 teachers	Moderate
Setting directions	2 MLs, 2 teachers	High
Time pressures	2 MLs, 2 Teachers	High
Non-common (1):		
Developing people, and self	2 Teachers	NA

Table F12

Summary of comparisons between SL, ML and teacher perceptions for School C

Comparison	**Common themes with agreement levels**	**Additional themes**	**Summary**
SL - ML	14: 6 high, 4 moderate, 1 low	1 SL, 2 ML	SIMILAR
SL - Teacher	14: 6 high, 4 moderate, 2 low	0 SL, 2 Teacher	SIMILAR
ML - Teacher	14: 7 high, 5 moderate, 1 low	0 ML, 1 Teacher	SIMILAR

Given the levels of agreement shown, as well as the number of common themes compared to additional themes, it can be concluded that, overall, the three groups of participants interviewed from this school show substantial similarity in their view of the role of MLs.

School D

Table F13

Summary of SL and ML perceptions for School D (2 SLs / 3 MLs)

Theme	Identified by:	Agreement
Common (12):		
Accountability	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Administration	1 SL, 2 MLs	High
Building a collaborative culture	2 SLs, 3 MLs	High
Building a shared vision	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Communication	2 SLs,3 MLs	High
Developing people, and self	1 SL, 1 ML	High
Leading people	2 SLs, 3 MLs	High
Leading teaching and learning	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 SLs; 11 characteristics, 3 MLs; 8 characteristics	Moderate
Representing and advocating	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Role of SL	1 SL, 2 MLs	Moderate
Setting directions	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Non-common (2):		
Role change	2 SLs	NA
Time pressures	2 MLs	NA

Table F14

Summary of SL and teacher perceptions for School D (2 SLs / 5 teachers)

Theme	Identified by:	Agreement
Common (12):		
Accountability	2 SLs, 3 teachers	Low
Administration	1 SL, 1 teacher	Moderate
Building a collaborative culture	2 SLs, 3 teachers	High
Building a shared vision	2 SLs, 4 teachers	High
Communication	2 SLs, 4 teachers	Moderate
Developing people, and self	1 SL, 2 teachers	High
Leading people	2 SLs, 5 teachers	Low
Leading teaching and learning	2 SLs, 4 teachers	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 SLs; 11 characteristics, 5 teachers; 13 characteristics	High
Representing and advocating	2 SLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Role of SL	1 SL, 2 teachers	Moderate
Setting directions	2 SLs, 3 teachers	High
Non-common (2):		
Role change	2 SLs	NA
Time pressures	4 teachers	NA

Table F15

Summary of ML and teacher perceptions for School D (3 MLs / 5 teachers)

Theme	**Identified by:**	**Agreement**
Common (14):		
Role of SL	2 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Administration	2 MLs, 1 teacher	Moderate
Building a shared vision	2 MLs, 4 teachers	High
Building a collaborative culture	3 MLs, 3 teachers	High
Communication	2 MLs, 4 teachers	Moderate
Accountability	2 MLs, 3 teachers	High
Developing people, and self	1 ML, 2 teachers	High
Leading people	3 MLs, 5 teachers	High
Role change	2 MLs, 3 teachers	High
Time pressures	2 MLs, 4 Teachers	Moderate
Leading teaching and learning	2 MLs, 4 teachers	High
Setting directions	2 MLs, 3 teachers	Moderate
Representing and advocating	2 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	3 MLs; 8 characteristics, 5 teachers; 13 characteristics	Moderate
Non-common (0):		

Table F16

Summary of comparisons between SL, ML and teacher perceptions for School D

Comparison	**Common themes with agreement levels**	**Additional themes**	**Summary**
SL - ML	14: 7 high, 5 moderate, 0 low	1 SL, 1 ML	SIMILAR
SL - Teacher	14: 6 high, 4 moderate, 2 low	1 SL, 1 Teacher	SIMILAR
ML - Teacher	14: 7 high, 7 moderate, 0 low	0 ML, 0 Teacher	SIMILAR

Given the levels of agreement shown, as well as the number of common themes compared to additional themes, it can be concluded that, overall, the three groups of participants interviewed from this school show substantial similarity in their view of the role of MLs.

School E

Table F17

Summary of SL and ML perceptions for School E (2 SLs / 4 MLs)

Theme	**Identified by:**	**Agreement**
Common (12):		
Accountability	2 SLs, 4 MLs	Moderate
Administration	2 SLs, 3 MLs	High
Building a collaborative culture	2 SLs, 3 MLs	Moderate
Building a shared vision	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Communication	2 SLs, 4 MLs	Moderate
Leading people	2 SLs, 4 MLs	High
Leading teaching and learning	2 SLs, 3 MLs	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 SLs; 15 characteristics, 4 MLs; 14 characteristics	Moderate
Role change	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Role of SL	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Setting directions	2 SLs, 3 MLs	High
Time pressures	2 SLs, 4 MLs	Moderate
Non-common (2):		
Representing and advocating	4 MLs	N/A
Developing people, and self	2 MLs	NA

Table F18

Summary of SL and teacher perceptions for School E (2 SLs / 4 teachers)

Theme	**Identified by:**	**Agreement**
Common (12):		
Accountability	2 SLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Administration	1 SL, 2 teachers	Moderate
Building a collaborative culture	2 SLs, 2 teachers	High
Building a shared vision	2 SLs, 4 teachers	Moderate
Communication	2 SLs, 3 teachers	High
Leading people	2 SLs, 4 teachers	High
Leading teaching and learning	2 SLs, 2 teachers	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 SLs; 15 characteristics, 4 teachers; 10 characteristics	Moderate
Role change	2 SLs, 1 teacher	Moderate
Role of SL	2 SLs, 2 teachers	Low
Setting directions	2 SLs, 3 teachers	High
Time pressures	2 SLs, 2 teachers	High
Non-common (2):		
Developing people, and self	2 teachers	NA
Representing and advocating	4 teachers	NA

Table F19

Summary of ML and teacher perceptions for School E (4 MLs / 4 teachers)

Theme	**Identified by:**	**Agreement**
Common (14):		
Accountability	4 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Administration	3 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Building a collaborative culture	3 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Building a shared vision	2 MLs, 4 teachers	Moderate
Communication	4 MLs, 3 teachers	Moderate
Developing people, and self	2 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Leading people	4 MLs, 4 teachers	High
Leading teaching and learning	3 MLs, 2 teachers	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 MLs; 14 characteristics, 4 teachers; 10 characteristics	High
Representing and advocating	4 MLs, 4 teachers	High
Role change	2 MLs, 1 teacher	Moderate
Role of SL	2 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Setting directions	3 MLs, 3 teachers	High
Time pressures	4 MLs, 2 teachers	Moderate
Non-common (0):		

Table F20

Summary of comparisons between SL, ML and teacher perceptions for School E

Comparison	**Common themes with agreement levels**	**Additional themes**	**Summary**
SL - ML	14: 4 high, 8 moderate, 0 low	0 SL, 2 ML	SIMILAR
SL - Teacher	14: 6 high, 5 moderate, 1 low	0 SL, 2 Teacher	SIMILAR
ML - Teacher	14: 5 high, 9 moderate, 0 low	0 ML, 0 Teacher	SIMILAR

Given the levels of agreement shown, as well as the number of common themes compared to additional themes, it can be concluded that, overall, the three groups of participants interviewed from this school show substantial similarity in their view of the role of MLs.

School F

Table F21

Summary of SL and ML perceptions for School F (2 SLs / 2 MLs)

Theme	**Identified by:**	**Agreement**
Common (12):		
Accountability	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Administration	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Building a collaborative culture	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Building a shared vision	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Communication	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Developing people, and self	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Leading people	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Leading teaching and learning	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 SLs; 12 characteristics, 3 MLs; 10 characteristics	Moderate
Representing and advocating	2 SLs, 1 ML	Moderate
Role of SL	2 SLs, 2 MLs	Moderate
Setting directions	2 SLs, 2 MLs	High
Non-common (2):		
Role change	2 SLs	NA
Time pressures	2 MLs	NA

Table F22

Summary of SL and teacher perceptions for School F (2 SLs / 6 teachers)

Theme	**Identified by:**	**Agreement**
Common (12):		
Accountability	2 SLs, 5 teachers	Moderate
Administration	2 SLs, 4 teachers	Moderate
Building a collaborative culture	2 SLs, 5 teachers	Moderate
Building a shared vision	2 SLs, 5 teachers	Moderate
Communication	2 SLs, 6 teachers	High
Developing people, and self	2 SLs, 3 teachers	High
Leading people	2 SLs, 6 teachers	High
Leading teaching and learning	2 SLs, 5 teachers	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	3 SLs; 10 characteristics, 5 teachers; 13 characteristics	High
Role of SL	2 SLs, 3 teachers	Moderate
Setting directions	2 SLs, 5 teachers	High
Time pressures	2 SLs, 4 teachers	High
Non-common (2):		
Representing and advocating	5 teachers	NA
Role change	2 SLs	NA

Table F23

Summary of ML and teacher perceptions for School F (2 MLs / 6 teachers)

Theme	**Identified by:**	**Agreement**
Common (12):		
Accountability	2 MLs, 5 teachers	Moderate
Administration	2 MLs, 4 teachers	Moderate
Building a collaborative culture	2 MLs, 5 teachers	Moderate
Building a shared vision	2 MLs, 5 teachers	High
Communication	2 MLs, 6 teachers	High
Developing people, and self	2 MLs, 3 teachers	High
Leading people	2 MLs, 6 teachers	High
Leading teaching and learning	2 MLs, 5 teachers	High
Personal qualities, beliefs and values	2 MLs; 11 characteristics, 5 teachers; 13 characteristics	Moderate
Representing and advocating	1 ML, 5 teachers	Moderate
Role of SL	2 MLs, 3 teachers	Moderate
Setting directions	2 MLs, 5 teachers	High
Non-common (1):		
Time pressures	2 MLs	NA

Table F24

Summary of comparisons between SL, ML and teacher perceptions for School F

Comparison	**Common themes with agreement levels**	**Additional themes**	**Summary**
SL - ML	14: 5 high, 7 moderate, 0 low	1 SL, 1 ML	SIMILAR
SL - Teacher	14: 7 high, 5 moderate, 0 low	1 SL, 1 Teacher	SIMILAR
ML - Teacher	13: 6 high, 6 moderate, 0 low	1 ML, 0 Teacher	SIMILAR

Given the levels of agreement shown, as well as the number of common themes compared to additional themes, it can be concluded that, overall, the three groups of participants interviewed from this school show substantial similarity in their view of the role of MLs.