

DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP

A Case Study in a Queensland Secondary School

by

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study was to provide insights into the current conceptions and practices of distributed leadership and its contribution to change and school improvement in a large public secondary school in Queensland, Australia. It has achieved this aim in a number of ways. First, the case study has used the framework and tools of cultural-historical activity theory to map and gain insights into Southern State High School (name has been changed) as a dynamic interdependent activity system. Second, the mapping process has facilitated an analysis of the perceptions and attitudes of case study participants towards the concept and action of distributed leadership. Third, the study has identified a range of tensions and contradictions associated with the distribution of leadership and how these have influenced leadership practice at Southern State High School. Fourth, the investigation has contrasted its findings with other international research on distributed leadership and its potential for influencing change and school improvement. The study reveals why distributed school leadership has become prominent in the contemporary international context of school improvement and leadership in the past decade. The reasons include the intensification of principal's work, dramatically increased accountabilities of positional leaders, inadequate succession planning, parent participation in school decision making, and continuous reform driven by social, political and technological change.

The main thesis of the study is that in the turbulent complexity of modern schooling, effective leadership is more likely to be spread across a network of individuals rather than concentrated in the hands of one or two leaders. This reinforces dissatisfaction with the heroic overtones of charismatic leadership, the "power of one" or "super-leader" which has become increasingly challenged by those who define leadership as a collaborative and team-based activity. The core notion of distributed leadership suggests that school leadership does not just reside in the principal's office but requires multiple leaders, formal and informal, spread across the school community. Yet, the interesting paradox is that effective distributed leadership practice depends first and foremost on a strong, powerful, yet humble "head" or principal. This research project strongly reinforces that conclusion. One of the main suggestions made is for a detailed developmental framework for distributed leadership practice to be constructed and considered by those who are responsible for supporting and enhancing the leadership skills of positional leaders. If a more practical and pragmatic set of distributive leadership resource materials are available for school-based practitioners, it is conceivable that the concepts, principles and ideas will be applicable to, and give impetus to, continuing school improvement and reform.

CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by any person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed:

Date:

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Glossary of Terms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CHAT	Cultural-historical activity theory
CTQ	Construction Training Queensland
DETA	Department of Education, Training and the Arts
EQ	Education Queensland – Schooling sector of DETA
ETRF	Education and Training Reforms for the Future
HIA	Housing Industry Association
HOD	Head of Department – Mid-level promotional position
ISC	Industry Skill Council
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Board
LEA	Learning Education Alliance (pseudonym)
NCSL	National College of School Leadership (UK)
OP	Overall Position in the Year 12 Tertiary Entrance Placement System
QSA	Queensland Studies Authority
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SEA	Southern Enterprises Association Incorporated (pseudonym)
SHS	State High School
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TRC	Training Recognition Council
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Chapter One: Nature and Purpose of the Study

1.1 Introduction

This study explores the concept of distributed leadership and its contribution to sustainable change and school improvement in a large public secondary school in Queensland, Australia. In the opening chapter, I provide an overview and rationale for the research study by highlighting key reasons to focus on the concept of distributed leadership and its contemporary level of importance internationally and within the changing Queensland education system. A growing level of interest in distributed leadership has occurred within the past few years amongst both practitioners and researchers working in the field of school leadership and organizational studies. As the study reveals, this interest has been generated by new conceptualizations of leadership and an array of pragmatic issues which have impacted on the way schools operate in an increasingly complex world.

In building a rationale, I first identify the limited understanding of distributed leadership in practice and establish why there is a need for further research on this topic within the state of Queensland. This is followed by a proposal which outlines the broad aims of the study and provides an overview of the theoretical framework which guided the data gathering, analysis and interpretation phases of the research. The last part of the chapter provides a summary of the content in the remaining chapters of the dissertation.

1.2 Queensland Education Context

Leading and sustaining educational change at the school level, in a time of major social complexity and organizational ambiguity, is a daunting professional challenge. Most top-down reforms and large-scale systemic change efforts often fail to deliver on their intended aims in schools (Fullan, 2001, 2005; Grundy, 2002; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004). Many school personnel have become “change-weary” after years of successive and inadequately resourced reforms and have developed “defensive routines” to avoid or delay changes in their behaviours and practice. This makes the leadership role of principals and other leaders in initiating and leading school improvement and reform a complex and demanding responsibility.

In the past few years the Queensland State Department of Education, Training and the Arts (DETA) has been engaged in large-scale reform driven by long-term objectives outlined in *Queensland State Education 2010* (Queensland Government, 2001). These

objectives have become operational in the substantial change agenda of *Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF)* and the *Smart State* reform program of the Queensland Labor Government (Queensland Government, 2002). In the *Destination 2010 Action Plan* (Queensland Government, 2008, p. 8), a key goal identified by DETA workforce policy makers states that “leadership ... drives educational reform, supports productive relationships and promotes innovation”.

If in fact “leadership drives educational reform”, then it would appear vital for senior policy makers in DETA to ensure that school leaders have the capabilities and capacities for their leadership roles. Leadership is, of course, not the sole province of the principal. It is commonly depicted as a “shared” concept as evidenced in a recent DETA school leadership document, *Leadership Matters – Leadership Capabilities for Education Queensland Principals* which states: “Distributed, shared, and multiple leadership notions have emerged in the last decade or so as one of the most significant leadership agendas. Notions of empowerment, working with and through others are key principles here” (Queensland Government, 2006, p. 13).

The impetus for this research project has arisen from my own experiences over three decades with the Queensland State education system, including 20 years in school leadership positions. Over the past decade, I have been directly involved in an array of systems-initiated change and reform initiatives which have had various impacts on the school communities in which I have served as a principal. These include the following examples:

- major governmental reform policies associated with *Smart State* and *ETRF* which incorporate significant changes to learning structures and programs including Preparatory Year, Middle Years of Learning and Senior Phase of Learning initiatives;
- curriculum and pedagogical renewal programs including an extensive roll-out of outcomes-based Key Learning Area (KLA) syllabus documents, *New Basics*, *Productive Pedagogies*, *Literate Futures*, *Curriculum Assessment & Reporting Framework*;
- introduction of mandated systems-wide student assessment regimes at various year levels and annual surveys of student, staff and parental opinions of school outcomes;
- organizational restructuring initiatives including devolution and school-based management, the formation of district and regional administrative structures;

- workforce and staffing renewal programs linked to redesigning of career patterns for teachers and paraprofessional staff; and
- modifications to the legal, policy and operational frameworks catering for students with disabilities and specialised learning needs, child safety and abuse, anti-discrimination, behaviour management and other school accountability and risk management systems.

Whilst this is only a partial list of centralised educational policy imperatives and changes introduced by successive government and departmental administrations over the past decade, it reveals the extensive scale of the change process confronting leaders and those working in the schooling sector. Comprehensive empirical research of this change process in Queensland and its influence on leaders and leadership practice within school communities appears to be sparse.

It is my contention that *distributed leadership* has a significant role to play in ensuring that large scale *educational change* is effectively implemented and sustained over time at the school level. These are key concepts which must be understood through research and review if central policy-makers' vision and intentions are to be critically evaluated. Governmental policies such as *Smart State* and *ETRF* may set directions and provide frameworks for change, but they do not directly determine action or outcomes at the school level. Individuals, groups and networks of school leaders in both formal and informal positions are the driving forces of sustainable change at the local school level. The claims I make are as much in need of empirical research as those of the Queensland Government in its reform agenda.

1.3 Reasons for Further Research on Distributed Leadership

Although the term distributed leadership is not new, it has become one of the dominant concepts in the literature on educational administration and reform in recent years. In the words of Peter Gronn writing in the *Second International Handbook of Educational Leadership and Administration*, distributed leadership is "... an idea whose time has well and truly come" (Gronn, 2002, p. 654).

Whilst the empirical evidence about the potential of distributed leadership to contribute to school improvement and reform is growing, much remains to be explored in this relationship. Alma Harris, an influential UK researcher, notes that contemporary studies of distributed leadership are in short supply and warns that without a strong empirical

base, distributed leadership “faces the danger of becoming yet another leadership theory that proves to be misleading” (2005, p. 263). This concern is echoed by a wide range of other researchers and writers as detailed in the review of literature expanded in Chapter Two. Harris (2004, 2005, 2008) concludes that research is needed:

- to understand much more about distributed leadership practice, and how it can be nurtured, supported and developed;
- to provide more empirical studies that elucidate different models, approaches and forms of distributed leadership in practice;
- to investigate the relationship between distributed leadership and school improvement; and
- to provide case study exemplars of distributed leadership in action and identify the conditions under which this form of leadership can flourish and grow.

Whilst the research evidence being gathered on this concept has started to build internationally, there remain very limited examples of such research within Australian jurisdictions. From the reviews undertaken for this study, only a handful of Australian researchers could be identified as having engaged in theorising about the concept and practice of distributed leadership. These include Gronn (2002, 2003) whose seminal theoretical paper was previously cited, as well as the research team of Mulford, Silins and Leithwood (2004), who have produced strong evidence supporting distributed leadership practices in school case study work in Australian southern states. In Queensland, one research team led by Crowther (2004) has developed the concept of “parallel leadership” which proposes a practitioner-based model of leadership which repositions teachers as central agents who can lead school-based improvements and pedagogical renewal.

The inescapable conclusion which the international literature on this topic has reached in recent years is that the old models of heroic leadership will not be viable in the turbulent uncertainty and complexity of the 21st century. Issues such as school administrators’ workload intensification and the unrelenting demands on positional leaders have increased the pragmatic value of sharing or distributing leadership functions widely within schools. There are, however, many layers of complexity to the conceptualization and practice of distributed leadership within school settings. This study seeks to provide a further insight into the practice of distributed leadership within one large secondary school in the Queensland state education system.

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study is designed to provide insights into current conceptions and practices of distributed leadership and its contribution to sustainable change and school improvement, using a qualitative case study. The main research question being addressed is:

What is the impact of distributed leadership and how is it sustained in a large Queensland secondary school during an era of change?

Stated simply, the main objectives of this single-site case study research are to:

- collect data on the process of distributed leadership from a cross-section of participants;
- identify participants' perceptions and attitudes towards the concept of distributed leadership;
- identify positive and negative factors associated with the distribution of leadership and its sustainability within a school community; and
- develop, apply and evaluate a theoretical and conceptual framework which may have analytical power and methodological strategies for researching leadership distribution.

1.5 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The distinctive approach to this study on distributed leadership is built around specific versions of activity theory as described by Gronn (2002). Activity theory has a number of versions, all of which focus on the connections between situated knowing and doing. The version drawn upon in this research is based on work by Engeström (1987, 2000) which builds on the pioneering work of Leont'ev (1978) and Vygotsky (1978) which emphasises the link between cognitive conceptions of activities and their material realization. Gronn (2002, p. 674) suggests that activity theory has the following four advantages in a study of distributed leadership:

1. It provides a holistic view of organizational work in which the division of labour figures prominently and which takes the notion of a jointly performed activity system as its unit of analysis.
2. It offers a new and different conception of workplace ecology which accommodates the range of contextual dimensions typically omitted in reports of leadership.
3. It provides a thorough analysis of the pragmatics of work performance by making visible the dimensions of the core elements of activities and their internal relations.

4. The development and emergent approach taken to practice facilitates understanding of the role of workplace learning.

The application of activity theory to the data-gathering phase of this study is expanded in Chapters Three and Four.

In addition to the framework provided by activity theory, concepts have been drawn from a number of other international researchers who have engaged in recent explorations of distributed leadership. These include:

- National College of School Leadership (NCSL) and the research by the Hay Group (2004) and MacBeath, Oduro, and Waterhouse (2004) in its *Distributed Leadership Project* in UK schools which identified “five pillars” of distributed leadership.
- Spillane (2006) whose work on distributive “activity” is based on empirical case studies in North American schools over the past few years.
- Hargreaves and Fink (2006) who have embedded the concept of a distributed continuum in their extensive research on leadership sustainability and change in North American secondary schools.
- MacBeath and Dempster (2009) who have compiled an array of research from seven countries including links between distributed leadership and learning in a 4-year Leadership for Learning Project.
- Harris (2008) in the UK and Leithwood, Mascall and Strauss (2008) in North America, who have recently published compilations of research evidence and theory on distributed leadership.

The ideas and theoretical work of these key researchers have all been drawn upon in this study. An exploration of their individual and collective contributions occurs in Chapter Two.

1.6 Overview of Thesis

The dissertation is divided into six chapters. This first chapter provides an introduction to the topic and outlines why distributed leadership is such an important concept in the contemporary international context of school reform and improvement. The main thesis of the study is that old models of heroic leadership exercised by single positional leaders are no longer viable in the turbulent complexity of modern schooling. As a result of workload intensification and unrelenting accountability demands on formal school leaders, effective leadership activity is more likely to be spread or stretched across a wider network of individuals.

The second chapter provides an in-depth review of the literature associated with the concept of distributed leadership. It examines the history of the term from its roots in the field of social psychology in the early 1950s and its re-emergence in organizational theory in the late 1980s. A definition of the term is provided and distinguished from an array of terms and concepts which are often linked to, or considered to be synonymous with, distributed leadership. The review examines research studies from three major international sources – North America, United Kingdom and Australia – including the strong linkage of the concept within the school improvement and organizational change literature. Further, the review traces the definitional cross-over in the literature between distributed leadership and ideas associated with “teacher leadership”.

In the latter section of the second chapter, the literature of cultural-historical activity theory is examined along with its usefulness in providing a conceptual and methodological framework to this study. The specific interpretation of activity theory and its application to distributed leadership is provided by a number of key theorists – these include Gronn (2002) whose conceptualization of distributed leadership was largely developed from a theoretical adaptation of the writings of Engeström (1987, 2000). Engeström’s research is mainly undertaken in health settings, and has been built on the pioneering theories of Leont’ev and Vygotsky.

In the third chapter, the conceptual framework of activity theory is linked to the methodological structure of the study. The chapter explains why a single-site case study approach was chosen and how a Queensland public secondary school – Southern State High School ¹ – was selected as the host site. It includes a discussion on the general and specific limitations of case study research and why the outcomes of this study can only be considered “working hypotheses” or “naturalistic generalizations”. The third chapter defines the main research questions and the development of the semi-structured focus interviews which were used as the main data gathering method of the study. It also explains how entry points to the case school site were negotiated, the procedures used for selection of respondents, the method of recording and clarifying respondent accounts, and the timeline for completion of the field work.

Chapter Four provides a descriptive account of the case study data using the internal mapping techniques which have been drawn from activity theory. In this description, a

¹A fictitious name for the case study school

contextual background to Southern State High School (SHS) is provided using a number of social-cultural trends and historical influences which can be discerned within the case study account. The bulk of the chapter provides first-level insights into the respondent data, grouped for initial analysis under five main sub-headings drawn from activity theory:

- objects and outcomes of the distributed leadership activity;
- communities of interest and perspectives of the responding subjects;
- rules and constraints imposed on the respondent leaders;
- mediating artefacts or tools and signs which may constrain leadership activity; and
- the division of labour which includes both horizontal division of tasks and the vertical division of power and status.

From this descriptive analysis, the chapter identifies emergent themes, tension points and contradictions which are examined in more depth in Chapter Five. Among these tension points and contradictions are:

- challenges faced by leaders in dealing with the complexity of interactions and relationships operating within the school; and
- establishing what is “core business” and how lateral networking can create benefits and problems for those who engage in this type of leadership.

Chapter Five elaborates on the identified tension points and provides a more critical analysis of distributed leadership practice using respondent data drawn from the case study evidence. These data are assembled in 12 vignettes for ease of presentation and discussion. As this analysis reveals, there are many examples where the mapped activity of participants is clearly aligned and linked to the theoretical and conceptual framework which has been established in the literature reviewed in previous chapters. The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate that there are many dimensions and layers to the description, conceptualization and practice of distributed leadership. One of the key outcomes of the analysis reported is that distributed leadership is an existing and unavoidable reality which is manifested in a variety of ways. The analysis of data from the case study site is interpreted through a number of lenses including activity theory and various theoretical orientations and perspectives of distributed leadership.

In the final chapter, the major focus of the study is re-stated – to describe and analyse the impact of distributed leadership and how it is sustained in a large Queensland secondary school. The key theoretical and conceptual frameworks which have been

drawn upon from the literature are noted and acknowledged for their influence on the research project. Drawing on the analysis from Chapters Four and Five, the perceptions and attitudes of case study participants towards the concept and situated action of distributed leadership are summarised. The chapter also summarises the main positive and negative factors associated with the distribution of leadership and its sustainability within a school community. One of the key findings of the study is that effective distributive leadership practice depends first and foremost on a strong yet humble “head” or “principal”. This conclusion adds additional insights and knowledge to the international literature which suggests that there are many pitfalls and dangers in adopting a distributive perspective. The study also confirms that there are considerable risks for school leaders in taking a naively optimistic view of distributed leadership.

The final section of the last chapter draws a number of specific implications from the research for professional learning and suggests how distributed leadership may become a powerful resource in school capacity building in an age of change and complexity.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The basic idea of distributed leadership is not very complicated. In any organized system, people typically specialize or develop particular competencies, [which] are related to their predispositions, interests, prior knowledge, skills and specialized roles.... It is the 'glue' of a common task or goal – improvement of instruction – and a common frame of values for how to approach that task – culture – that keeps distributing leadership from becoming another version of loose coupling. (Elmore, 2000, pp. 14-15)

2.1 Introduction

The following literature review outlines key conceptual terms and definitions as well as providing a clear rationale on the importance of research into distributed leadership – “an idea whose time has well and truly come” (Gronn, 2002, p. 654). This review draws mainly on contemporary publications within the past 10 years and examines the theoretical, empirical and practical conceptualizations of distributed leadership as well as the linkages with sustainable change and school improvement.

The first section of the chapter begins with a brief historical overview of the concept and how it has re-emerged as a significant aspect of international educational literature in recent times. This leads on to an examination of the definitional dimensions of the term in the leadership literature and a variety of related terms with which it has become linked in the past few years. The bulk of the chapter examines research studies from three major sources – North American, United Kingdom and Australian theorists – as well as the international literature associated with school improvement, leadership for learning and organizational change. Literature from these sources was selected on the basis of its collective capacity to offer insights into the multi-dimensional nature of distributed leadership. In the last section of the chapter, the literature of cultural-historical “activity theory” is examined and an argument advanced to suggest why this theory provides a useful methodological framework for this study.

2.2 Historical Antecedents of Distributed Leadership

The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone ... and it shall be that every great matter they shall bring unto thee but

every small matter they shall judge so it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. Exodus 18:17-22

The concept of distributed leadership is not new, as the advice given by Jethro in 1250 BC to his son-in-law, Moses, suggested an alternative model to the individualistic leadership style of ancient Israel's law-giver. This alternative model was based on the principle that "great leaders should not only study to be useful themselves, but contrive to make others useful" (Oduro, 2004, p. 5). Delegation of authority and the development of a leadership support team had a very pragmatic and common sense purpose in ancient times. Three millennia later, John Dewey (1977, p. 231) suggested that public education should be organised so that "every teacher had some regular representative way to register judgement upon matters of educational importance, with assurance that this judgement would somehow affect the school system."

A number of contemporary writers have traced the emergence of distributed leadership as a dominant concept in modern leadership practices in schools. For example, comparative research by Dempster, Kruchov and Distant (1994) as well as Moos and Dempster of leadership trends in United Kingdom, European and Australian schools, led them to conclude:

... that there is sufficient evidence from the study to contend that teachers, parents and students are increasingly seeking a greater say in decisions about the school ... they want bureaucratic approaches to leadership to be replaced by distributed leadership throughout the school. (Moos & Dempster, 1998, p. 108)

In an in-depth historical analysis, Gronn (2002) suggests post-war references to distributed leadership were recorded in the field of social psychology in the early 1950s and cites the work of Gibb (1954). Gronn posits that the concept "lay dormant for more than three decades" before it re-surfaced in organization theory in the late 1980s in the writing of Brown and Hosking (1986). This, he suggests, was about the same time as educational leadership theorists became more interested in its manifestation in schools. He further states that distributed leadership has not so much been "discovered", but "rediscovered", due to the awareness that interdependence, rather than follower-dependence, provides the empirical foundation for leadership (Gronn, 2003, p. 72).

Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 97) produce a slightly different historical account but also conclude that the concept has, in different guises, been “a central part of organisational theory and the field of educational administration since the 1960s”. They cite the writings of Chester Barnard (1968) and James Thompson (1967) as examples of theorists who concluded that leadership was not restricted to those in “executive positions” and that it flowed through an organization “spanning levels and circulation up and down hierarchies” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 97).

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) further suggest that distributing leadership across schools and other organizations has historically been promoted for reasons of theoretical preference or ideological inclination. They cite as examples of these preferences or ideologies the classic distinctions between Theory X and Theory Y assumptions about human behaviour (MacGregor, 1960). Theory X proponents suggest that employees need to be constantly watched, supervised, regulated and held to account to ensure they do not deviate or transgress. Theory Y proponents believe individuals are basically honest, industrious and capable of sharing responsibility for organizational decisions. The legacies of both these theories are evident in most schools today, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1

Theory X and Theory Y Leadership Legacies in Schools

Theory X	Theory Y
Performance standards and measures	Individual professional development plans
Sanctions for underperformance	Emotional intelligence training
Payment of teachers by results	Collaborative decision-making
Transparent school rankings and league tables	Team building and partnerships
Records of accountability focussed on mistakes and misdeeds	Mentoring and appreciative inquiry

(Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 98)

According to these authors, the concept of Theory Y is more likely to be associated with a distributed perspective on leadership. They further propose, however, that such theoretical preferences and ideological inclinations are insufficient bases alone to build arguments for sustainable educational leadership including distributed leadership. They refer to the positive evidence emerging from large-scale studies of school effectiveness research by Leithwood and Riehl (2003) in North America and Mulford et al. (2004) in Australia which indicates the positive impact of transformational and distributed leadership in schools. Discussion of this school effectiveness research occurs later in this chapter.

In summary, it is clear that a number of recent high profile investigations around the globe have confirmed the conclusions reached by Dempster et al. in 1994 and extended the discourse and thinking about distributed leadership. These include Andrews and Lewis (2002), Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson and Hann (2002), Fullan (2003), Gronn (2000, 2002), Harris (2008), Hargreaves and Fink (2006), Invargarson, Anderson, Gronn, and Jackson (2006), Leithwood and Riehl (2003), Leithwood, Mascal and Strauss (2008), MacBeath and Dempster (2009), Mulford et al. (2004), National College of School Leadership (NCSL) (2004), Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001, 2004), Spillane (2006), and Woods (2004). Before elaboration of this research evidence continues, it is important for the argument to consider some definitional issues and problems associated with the concept and related terms.

2.3 Definitional Problems and Terminology Issues

As the preceding section demonstrated, a growing international interest has emerged around the notion of distributed or distributive leadership as well as the overlap with associated concepts including shared leadership, dispersed leadership, collaborative leadership, co-leadership, teacher leadership and democratic leadership. Whilst common elements exist amongst these respective terms and concepts, there are also more subtle distinctions, which this section addresses.

A number of writers have identified the general confusion with the similarity of terms and the difficulty which this has created in arriving at any form of singular definition (Bennett, Harvey, Wise, & Woods, 2003; Gronn, 2002; Harris, 2005; Invargarson et al., 2006; MacBeath et al., 2004; Mayrowetz, 2008; Spillane, 2006). In a recent critical review of school leadership literature, Invargarson et al. (2006, p. 21) suggested that

educational leadership as a general field of study is “riven by theoretical and methodological differences that have resulted in scholarly disputation over research priorities and problem definitions”. These authors identify three main “vibrant foci of interest” in the broader school leadership literature: *transformational leadership*, *distributed leadership* and *teacher leadership*. They suggest that the rise of scholarly interest in distributed leadership has been driven by dissatisfaction with the heroic overtones associated with transformational leadership and this dissatisfaction represents “... a reaction to the idea of the ‘power of one’ and an implicit conception of ‘super-principal’ in notions of principal-led transformational reform and high stakes accountability policies”.

James Spillane (2006, p. 23) has recently noted that it is wrong to consider the various terms and constructs often linked to distributed leadership as being synonymous, and states “... a distributed perspective on leadership is a relative, not a replica of these constructs or approaches”. Spillane offers a range of reasons to suggest why distributed leadership may be closely linked to, but distinctive from, concepts such as *collaborative*, *shared*, *democratic*, *situational leadership* and *co-leadership*. The key definitional distinction of distributed leadership as proposed by Spillane includes two key aspects:

- the *leader-plus aspect* which suggests that school leadership does not just reside in the principal’s office but requires multiple leaders, formal and informal; and
- the *leadership practice aspect* which focuses attention on practice that takes place in the interaction between leaders, followers and their situation.

According to Spillane, school leadership is best understood as a distributed practice, stretched over the school’s social and situational contexts.

Spillane’s definitional distinctions are conceptually very similar to those of Gronn (2002, p. 654) who defines distributed leadership as “... the demonstrated or presumed structuring influence attributable to organisation members acting in concert.” Gronn (2002, pp. 654-655) has also suggested that two broad meanings can be attributed to distributed leadership:

- the *numerical* or *additive aspect* which is the aggregated effect of a number of individuals contributing their initiative and expertise in different ways to a group or organization; and
- the *concertive action* aspect which is about the additional dynamic that is the product of conjoint activity – this is where people work together in such a way

that the outcome is a product or energy which is greater than the sum of their individual actions.

These meanings coincide very broadly with the “leader-plus” and “leadership practice” aspects identified by Spillane and his colleagues in the United States.

Another analysis of the confusing definitional domain has been provided by MacBeath et al. (2004) in their research project for the NCSL. They prefer a definition provided by Bennett et al. (2003, p. 3) which points out a distinction between “doing to” and “doing with” others, as follows:

Distributed leadership is not something ‘done’ by an individual ‘to’ others, or a set of individual actions through which people contribute to a group or organisation.... Distributed leadership is a group activity that works through and within relationships, rather than individual action. It emerges from a variety of sources depending on the issue and who has the relevant expertise or creativity.

This definition highlights a finer grained distinction between the terms “distributed” and “distributive” leadership. According to MacBeath et al. (2004, p. 11) the former term appears to be linked with “doing to” in which leadership roles are the “gift of the head teacher” which are distributed at his/her discretion whilst holding on to power. The latter term “distributive”, on the other hand, “implies holding, or taking initiative as a right rather than it being bestowed as a gift” (MacBeath et al., 2004, p. 12). Most studies reviewed in this chapter do not make such a distinction, however, and both terms appear to be used interchangeably in much of the relevant literature. In this study, inter-changeability of the two terms applies.

In summarising the differences amongst the various terms linked to distributed leadership, MacBeath et al. (2004) conclude that all share one common feature which is that leadership does not simply reside in one person and that many may exercise leadership in an organization. A recent review of the definitions and multiple uses of the concept in the field by Mayrowetz (2008) suggests there are at least four different usages of the terms in the field by researchers:

- a theoretical lens for looking at the activity of leadership (leading theorists of this usage are Gronn and Spillane);
- distributed leadership for democracy;
- distributed leadership for effectiveness and efficiency; and
- distributed leadership as human capacity building.

Mayrowetz (2008, p. 433) concludes that each usage has strengths and weaknesses and there is unlikely to be an agreed universal definition of the term. He suggests:

... as distributed leadership initiatives in schools and empirical research continue to flourish, the field will benefit from scholarship that clearly articulates what is meant by distributed leadership in studies that are both responsive to central problems of practice and anchored in relevant theory.

2.4 Theoretical and Empirical Conceptualizations

In describing the theoretical aspects of distributed leadership, the current international debate is being driven by key academics and researchers located on three different continents:

- In the United Kingdom, especially through the National College of School Leadership (NCSL), which has had an on-going research interest and national project around the concept and has linked it to academic theory and successful school-based practice;
- In North America, where Spillane and his colleagues have theorised that distributed leadership is a way of understanding leadership that focuses upon interaction amongst leaders, followers and complex social processes. Other writers with specific insights into distributed leadership and how it contributes to leadership sustainability and effective change are Hargreaves and Fink, Leithwood, and Michael Fullan; and
- In Australia, where Gronn has written extensively on this leadership topic basing the majority of his analysis around a particular version of activity theory. Additionally, recent research by Mulford et al. (2004) and Crowther et al. (2002) have also made important contributions to the knowledge of this topic.

One further distinguishing feature of the arguments for distributed leadership is that much of the supporting empirical evidence can be found primarily within the school improvement and teacher leadership research literature. Each of these areas is now covered.

2.4.1 United Kingdom research

As noted earlier, the notion and definition of distributed leadership is a contested theoretical topic in the academic literature (Bottery, 2004; Gunter, 2001; Gunter & Ribbins, 2002; Harris, 2005) depending largely on the researchers' orientation towards the concept of "power" and the distinction between "agency" and "structure" (Giddens,

1984). This is depicted in Table 2 which suggests a variety of research questions and examples of research within each of five “research knowledge domains” suggested in a typology by Gunter and Ribbins (2002). These authors provide examples using one of the 10 leadership development propositions which underpinned the establishment of the NCSL in the United Kingdom in 2000.

Table 2

NCSL Proposition #5: School leadership is a function which needs to be distributed throughout the school community.

Knowledge domains	Example of research question	Example of researcher
<i>Conceptual</i>	Where does distribution originate from and what are the moral implications of this distribution?	Hodgkinson (1996)
<i>Critical</i>	Does distributive leadership maintain existing power relations or seek to restructure them?	Gronn (2000)
<i>Humanistic</i>	How have principals themselves experienced leadership in their careers?	Wallace (2001)
<i>Evaluative</i>	How might we measure the impact of distributed leadership within different levels of the school?	Sammons, Thomas, & Mortimore (1997)
<i>Instrumental</i>	How can distributive leadership be transferred into the culture of the school?	Hargreaves, Moore, Fink, Brayman, & White (2003)

Since its establishment, the NCSL has had a major focus on promoting and exploring the ideas associated with distributed leadership in the UK (Bennett et al., 2003; Harris et al., 2002; Hobson, 2003; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003; Southworth, 2004). Beginning in 2004, a major research initiative on distributed and learning centred leadership was sponsored by the NCSL, which spawned a suite of research studies and investigations (Hay Group, 2004; MacBeth et al., 2004).

The Hay Group research project was built around brief case studies of 14 schools in the United Kingdom and set out to investigate the realities of distributed leadership within the case sites. The project defined a leader as “someone who has a purpose or vision; takes initiative to realise this purpose, and, crucially, persuades others to follow that purpose”. Distributed leadership was defined as “... the degree to which staff at all

levels of the school behaved as ‘a leader’, the resources and support available to help them to do so and the problems and challenges that such behaviour might create” (Hay Group, 2004, p. 4).

The authors proposed that distributed leadership could be sub-divided into a 5-level continuum which they identified as: *Instruct*, *Consult*, *Delegate*, *Facilitate* and *Neglect*. The *Instruct* and *Neglect* levels were seen as negative indicators; *Facilitate* was depicted as the “pinnacle” of distributed leadership which had to be progressively built up from the other levels. In addition to the 5-level continuum, this research suggested that distributed leadership appeared to rest on five “key pillars”:

- a confident yet humble attitude on the part of the head towards power and influence;
- clarity of accountability through role and structure;
- appropriate skills and leadership role models;
- a culture of trust; and
- a dramatic turning point in the school’s development.

A general conclusion reached by the Hay Group research in England was that distributed leadership is “given” rather than “taken”. This is not an unlikely finding given the predominantly autocratic nature of the school reform environment in that country. They further note that there are considerable risks of adopting a naively optimistic view of distributed leadership:

If they are not bound together by a clear vision, tight processes and clear accountability, multiple sources of leadership can pull a school apart. The consequences of not distributing leadership are staleness and stagnation. The risks of distributing leadership are anarchy and confusion. (Hay Group, 2004, p. 33).

An elaboration and critique of the Hay Group findings was undertaken by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) and is considered later in this chapter in the review of North American research.

The second research project sponsored by NCSL was undertaken by Macbeath et al. (2004) and addressed six main questions:

1. What is understood by the term “distributed” leadership? What meanings are attributed to the term “distributed leadership” by headteachers and by other staff?
2. Who is involved and where does the initiative for distributed leadership lie?
3. What are the processes by which leadership is distributed?

4. What issues do headteachers encounter in trying to distribute leadership to create environments in which leadership is dispersed?
5. What different forms may such distribution take? (For example, is it conferred, delegated, invited, assumed, or obtained by election or subversion?)
6. How do people in formal leadership positions deal with the multiplicity of leadership roles within a school?

In this research project, the authors identified five categories which formed a “taxonomy of distribution” which in turn contributed to a 3-phase model for sustaining distributed leadership in schools. The elements of the taxonomy were:

- *formal distribution* through designated roles/job descriptions;
- *pragmatic distribution* through necessity with regular ad hoc delegation of workload;
- *strategic distribution* based on planned appointment of individuals to contribute positively to the development of leadership throughout the school;
- *incremental distribution* devolving greater responsibility as people demonstrate their capacity to lead; and
- *opportunistic distribution* where capable teachers willingly extend their roles to school-wide leadership because they are predisposed to taking initiative to lead.

MacBeath et al. (2004, p. 35) comment on the flow between the elements in their taxonomy:

While these are neither fixed nor mutually exclusive and while each may be appropriate at a given time and in a given context, the most successful leadership would ... convey an understanding of all these different expressions of ‘distribution’ and be able to operate in each way as appropriate to the task in hand.

Their 3-phase model for sustaining distributed leadership in school appears to encompass elements of the suggested taxonomy as “...distribution begins with delegation and moves through incremental and opportunistic phases before leadership can become truly embedded in cultural mores” (MacBeath et al., 2004, p. 46). The model is depicted in Figure 1.

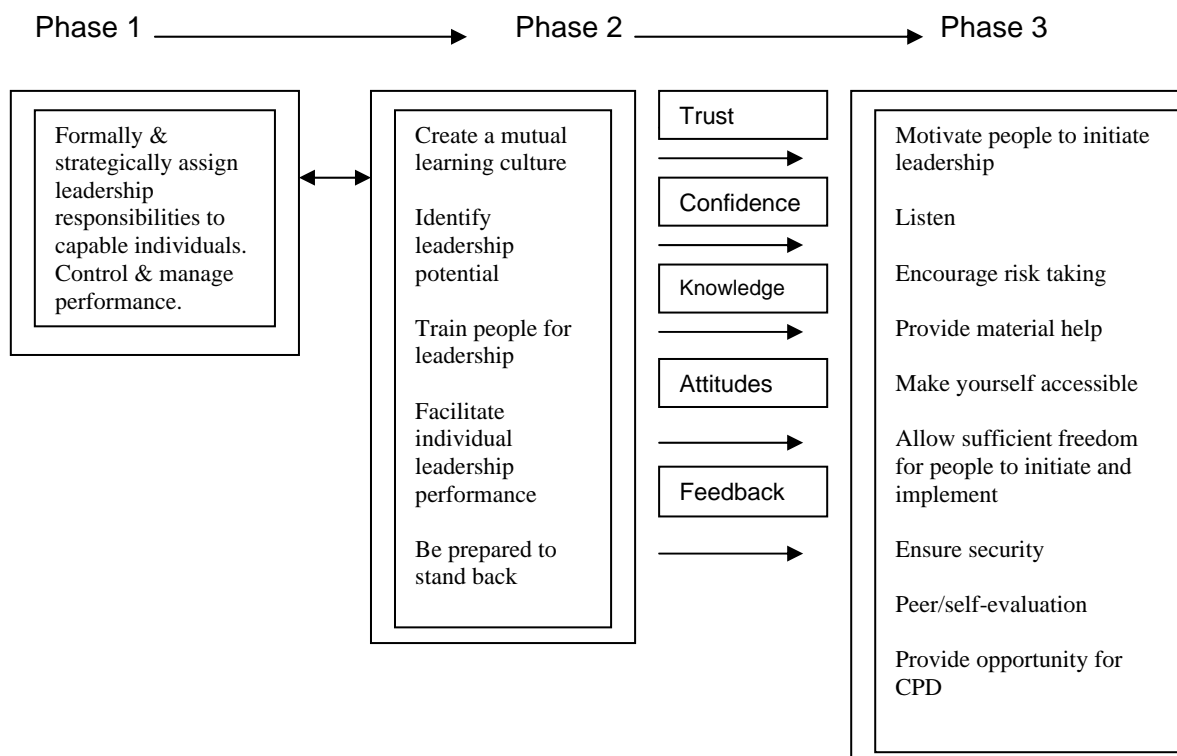


Figure 1. A model for sustaining distributed leadership in school.

This model provides a useful summary of the array of factors and influences which may contribute to the successful development of distributed leadership in a school. It aligns with the five categories of the taxonomy suggested by the authors, though the dynamics of the processes appear to rest largely on the initiative of the head or principal.

One very important element in this distributed leadership model is the building of a “culture of trust” which has been clearly identified in other well-publicized research as a critical factor in successful school reform and improvement initiatives (see Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Bryk and Schneider identified four determinants of “relational trust” in their multi-year project investigating reforms in over 400 Chicago elementary schools: interpersonal respect, personal regard for others, role competence and personal integrity. Relational trust involves “a willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on one’s confidence that that person will fulfil important obligations and expectations relevant to the shared task of educating children” (Robinson, 2007, p. 20). Based on results from this research, some of the consequences of high relational trust for the school as an organization include:

- more positive teacher attitude to innovation and risk;
- more teacher outreach to parents who are invited into the school and classrooms to observe the teaching program;
- enhanced commitment to the school, including improved staff loyalty and parental recommendations about the school; and
- enhanced professional community, with increased focus on student learning and collaboration around teaching.

The notion of relational trust and its importance in building and sustaining distributed leadership will be revisited in Chapter Five.

To summarize, it is evident from the foregoing that the United Kingdom's NCSL has been very active in encouraging a wider agenda of localized research and evaluation studies which support and inform its Proposition #5 dealing with distributed leadership. It is also apparent that work undertaken on this topic for the NCSL has had an influence on the North American research agenda, to which we now turn.

2.4.2 North American research

Sergiovanni (2001) refers to the term "leadership density" which offers many parallels with distributed leadership. He argues that high leadership density means that a larger number of people are involved in the work of others, are trusted with information, are involved in decision making, are exposed to new ideas and are participating in knowledge creation and transfer. In such a situation, a larger number of members of the organization have a stake in the success of the school. Other recent research in the North American context has explored aspects of the principal's role in facilitating shared leadership with teachers (Drago-Severson, 2004), and how distributed leadership was a critical aspect of restructuring in a longitudinal study of a Canadian secondary school (Hannay, 2003). In Hannay's research at Borden Secondary School, evidence of a distributed perspective towards leadership was gathered over a 6-year period of restructuring.

The most extensive research evidence on this topic in North America has come from Spillane and his colleagues at the North Western University in Chicago. Drawing upon theories of distributed cognition, this theoretical conceptualization of leadership rests upon a longitudinal qualitative study of 13 elementary schools in Chicago. The original analysis is based upon vignettes drawn from their research that offer support for the argument that instructional leadership *practice* has to be analyzed in relation to the task and what they call "the artefacts that represent in reified form the problem-solving

initiatives of previous human action” (Spillane et al., 2001, p. 25). In this model, leadership is best understood as “practice distributed over leaders, followers and their situations and incorporates the activities of multiple groups of individuals”. It implies a social distribution of leadership wherein the leadership functions are “stretched over” the work of a number of individuals and the tasks are accomplished through the interaction of multiple leaders. This conceptualization also implies inter-dependency rather than dependency, or “co-performance”, embracing how leaders of various kinds and in various roles share responsibility in leadership practice. The practice of leadership, argues Spillane, is characterized by a 3-tier interaction involving leaders, followers and the situation (see Figure 2). The appropriate unit of analysis is not leaders and what they do but the activity in which they engage. Further, this theory suggests that depending on the context, leadership may be distributed, so that a leader may become a follower and vice-versa.

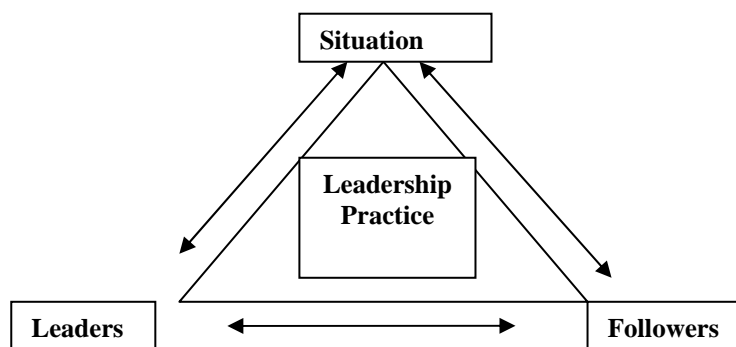


Figure 2. Leadership as a distributed phenomenon.

Leadership practice, shown as the centre of the figure, is the unit of analysis. It is surrounded by the three key contributors to that practice: leaders, followers, and the situation in which they find themselves. The dual direction of the arrows suggests that there is very strong interrelationship and interdependency amongst the three tiers or elements of the practice.

According to Spillane (2006, p. 15), the critical issue is “... not whether leadership **is** distributed but **how** leadership is distributed”, and that a “...distributed perspective presses us to investigate how leadership practice is stretched over two or more leaders and to examine how followers and situation mutually constitute this practice” [emphasis added]. As indicated earlier in this chapter, Spillane has sub-divided his conceptualization of distributed leadership into two aspects. First is the *leader-plus* aspect which suggests that school leadership does not just reside in the principal’s

office but requires multiple leaders, formal and informal. This approach however, according to Spillane, is a limited one because it overlooks the less glamorous and more mundane daily leadership tasks that teachers undertake to keep a school running smoothly. In the *leadership practice* aspect, attention is focussed on practice or joint action that takes place in the interaction between leaders, followers and their situation.

Analysing interactions among leaders in the co-performance of leadership practice, Spillane and his colleagues identified three types of distribution:

- *Collaborated distribution* characterizes leadership practice that is stretched over the work of two or more leaders who work together in place and time to execute the same leadership routine, such as facilitation of a faculty meeting. This type is analogous to a basketball game, in which players interact with each other in a team game situation.
- *Collective distribution* characterizes practice that is stretched over the work of two or more leaders who enact a leadership routine by working separately but interdependently. The interdependencies are akin to those in baseball or cricket, in which players bat alone, but their actions in interaction with that of the pitcher or bowler collectively produce the action.
- *Coordinated distribution* refers to leadership routines that involve activities that have to be performed in a particular sequence. The interdependency in this situation is similar to that in a relay race in which co-performance depends on a particular ordered sequence.

Over the past few years, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) have researched and written about sustainable leadership in North American schools. As part of their research evidence they have drawn heavily on the work previously undertaken by the Hay Group in the UK and also that of Spillane in the USA. Their extension to this previous research is considered worthy for inclusion here as it adds another layer of knowledge and analysis to this dissertation. Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 110) suggest that there are two ways to look at distributed leadership, a *normative* view and a *descriptive* view:

- In a normative view, the more distributed leadership that exists the better ... leadership should extend beyond teachers to students and parents ... it should avoid becoming self-serving and remain focussed on students ... it shouldn't deteriorate into co-opted leadership. This view equates more to Spillane's "leader-plus" definition or Gronn's "numerical or additive" definition.

- In a descriptive view, leadership activity is ubiquitous and is always distributed in some way or other whether we recognize it or not. This view equates more to Spillane's "leadership practice" definition or to Gronn's "concertive action".

Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 113) expand on the 5-level distributed leadership continuum proposed by the Hay Group research in the UK. Their continuum has subdivided the *facilitate* level proposed by the Hay Group into two, and identified at least seven levels which they depict in the form of a thermometer as shown in Figure 3:

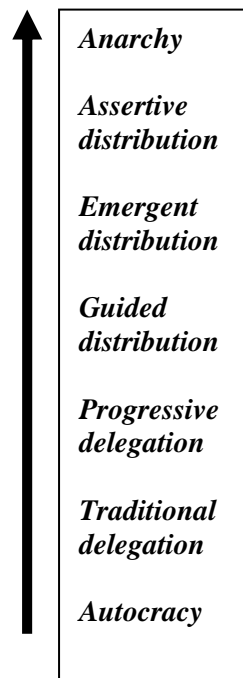


Figure 3. The temperature of distributed leadership.

In this extended continuum, depicted as a thermometer, the two extreme poles are shown as the least preferable situations for any school – in other words, being “too cold” (autocratic) or “too hot” (anarchic) are to be avoided. The authors suggest that movement up the thermometer of distribution is based on a range of factors including the situational context of the school, the attitudes and behaviour of positional leaders, as well as the degree of trust, autonomy and confidence within the organization.

Drawing upon their own extensive case study evidence from schools spread across two continents, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) provide multiple examples of schools which can be located at some point along their thermometer of leadership distribution. Their clear message is that no one has to “distribute leadership” in schools because “it’s already distributed”, and they conclude with the following warnings:

Distributed leadership can be good or bad, planned or serendipitous, focused or unfocused. Distributed leadership can enhance the sustainability of deep and broad learning for all students or disintegrate into the kind of turmoil that sucks the energy and enthusiasm out of students and staff. (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 137)

The empirical evidence from these North American theorists has provided a very useful set of theoretical constructs and tools which are utilised within this dissertation in the Queensland context. The seminal work by Spillane and his colleagues gives some powerful insights into the “leadership practice” dimension and offers some very important concepts and analytical tools which are employed in the descriptive and critical analysis of this study. Furthermore, Hargreaves and Fink’s work, though not focussed exclusively on distributed leadership, has particular relevance because it brings an alternative perspective to the UK research (especially that of the Hay Group) and extends the examples of practice from within their own extensive case study research in the United States and Canada.

2.4.3 Australian research

Gronn’s (2000, 2002) influential theoretical work on distributed leadership addresses it as a phenomenon that is widely present across organizations and takes a variety of forms. Some of its forms may be in hierarchical settings, where the power of subordinates is held within constraints determined by superiors, but it may also be present in organizations where relationships are more equal. Gronn (2002, p. 679) defines leadership as “emergent work-related influence” and distributed leadership as “the demonstrated or presumed structuring influence attributable to organisation members acting in concert.” He identifies two broad meanings of distributed leadership in the scholarly community:

- *Numerical or additive*, which is the most commonly used meaning and refers to “the aggregated leadership behaviour of some, many or all of the members of an organization or an organizational sub-unit”; and
- *Concertive action*, which is the most significant meaning in which distributed leadership is more than the sum of its parts. This is about leadership which emerges from “multi-member organizational groupings” and is defined as the “demonstrated or presumed structuring influence attributable to organizational members acting in concert”. Gronn identifies three main patterns in concertive action:
 - *Spontaneous collaboration* concerning tasks. Leadership is evident in the interaction and relationships in which people with different skills,

expertise and from different organization levels “coalesce” to pool expertise and regularize conduct for the duration of the task.

- *Shared role* which emerges between two or more people, involving close joint working within an implicit framework of understanding and emergent “intuitive understandings”.
- *Institutionalization* of structure of working together (concertive mechanisms) such as teams and committees.

Drawing from the extensive writings of Engeström (1999a, b, c, d; 2000) Gronn (2002) utilizes activity theory as the centrepiece of his theoretical depiction of distributed leadership. Activity theory may be summarized as describing social life as a process of ever-moving relationships between technologies, nature, ideas (concepts), persons and communities, in which the focus of action circulates to one person, then another, according to the social and environmental context and flow of action with this system. One person can initiate change, with others following, contributing and adding to or altering it in various ways.

Gronn’s (2000) theoretical work on distributed leadership is based on interpretation and re-analysis of existing research studies which fit his concertive action definition. He locates more than 20 studies from a variety of disciplines and organizational settings and places them within an indicative taxonomy. At this point, it is acknowledged that Gronn’s theorizing about distributed leadership, using an activity theory framework, has offered the international research community a new way of conceptualizing this phenomenon. Gronn’s interpretation and application of activity theory is a central feature of this study. Further description of activity theory and its centrality within the methodological framework of this study is covered in the second half of this chapter.

Finally, another relevant source of Australian-based research which provides strong evidence of support for the significance of distributed leadership is the work of Mulford and Johns (2004), who have gathered detailed case accounts of successful schools and leaders in Australian southern states. It is important to acknowledge the contribution which this research has made on an international scale, especially within the domain of school improvement and organizational development. Elaboration of the contributions to understanding distributed leadership, as reported by Mulford and his colleagues, occurs in the next section of the chapter.

2.4.4 School improvement and teacher leadership research

As indicated earlier in this chapter, much of the empirical evidence for distributed leadership can be found in the international literature associated with school improvement and teacher leadership. Harris (2004, 2005) has described at least four strands of school improvement research which provide unequivocal support for distributed leadership:

- Research on school culture consistently underlines the contribution of strong collegial relationships, including dispersed leadership, in enhancing school improvement and student achievement (Caldwell, 2004, 2005; Hopkins, 2001; Little, 1990; Sammons et al., 1997).
- Lists of key characteristics of improving schools typically include “varied sources of leadership, including distributed leadership” (MacBeath, Frost, Moos, Green & Portin, 2003; Teedlie & Reynolds, 2000; Waters & Grubb, 2004).
- Sustainability of change within systems, districts and schools requires lateral capacity building and distributed or shared leadership (Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2004, 2005; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2004; Harris & Lambert, 2003; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003).
- As part of an Australian contribution to an international leadership research project, *International Successful School Principals (ISSL)*, Mulford and Johns (2004, p. 72) confirmed “... the case studies provide evidence of the importance of both distributed leadership and positional leadership ... findings indicate that successful leadership involves roles for both formal and informal leaders”. Using organizational development as the focus, Silins and Mulford (2002) and Mulford et al. (2004) reported that student outcomes are more likely to improve where leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community and where teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them.

Harris and Muijs (2004), in a recent review of leadership trends in schools, conclude that:

- distributed forms of leadership are evolving in schools but are far from the dominant institutional structure for a variety of reasons including hierarchical authority, inertia, over-cautiousness and insecurity;
- distributed leadership means sharing the most important tasks within a school, which implies those associated with instructional improvement; and
- distributed leadership can co-exist with, and in effect depends upon, more formal leadership structures.

Finally, within the teacher leadership literature a growing number of studies provide clear evidence of the positive effect of distributed leadership on teachers' self-efficacy and levels of morale (Crowther et al., 2002; MacBeath, 1998, 2005). In the Australian context, Crowther et al. (2002) and Andrews & Lewis (2002) have strongly asserted the argument that "parallel leadership" involving teacher leaders is a key factor in enabling sustainable school improvement and building of capacity for renewed pedagogy. Similar conclusions have been reached in the influential research and writings of Hopkins and Jackson (2003), Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996), Muijs and Harris (2003), and Newman and Whelage (1996). A recent edition of the journal *Leading & Managing* edited by Frank Crowther (2004) provides a range of supportive viewpoints and outcomes from the growing field of research into teacher leadership.

2.4.5 International research on leadership for learning

Between 2002 and 2005 an international collaborative venture, Carpe Vitam Leadership for Learning (LfL) project, involved partners from eight universities and 24 schools located in seven countries including UK, USA, Austria, Denmark, Australia, Greece and Norway. The LfL project originated from the International Congress on School Effectiveness and Improvement (ICSEI) and was funded by the Wallenberg Foundation in Sweden. One of the key issues driving the LfL project was the desire by the research teams to bring stronger relevance between theory and practice of leadership and learning in schools. The project team members have contributed to various publications, including a volume of *Leading & Managing (Vol. 12(2), 2006)*. MacBeath and Dempster (2009) postulate five "principles of leadership for learning practice" which involves:

- maintaining a focus on learning as activity;
- creating conditions favourable to learning as an activity;
- creating a dialogue about leadership for learning;
- sharing of leadership; and
- shared sense of accountability.

These principles and their associated findings have significance for this study on at least two dimensions. First, the theoretical underpinnings of the LfL collaborative venture are aligned with the notions of "leadership as activity" and "learning as activity". The linkage element between both notions is "human agency". As this chapter explains, the conceptualization of activity and human agency are considered to be

fundamental theoretical elements in exploring and understanding how distributed leadership may work.

Secondly, one of the five principles enunciated by the international research partners of the LfL project is termed “shared leadership”. This principle has direct relevance and connection with this case study, as the following quotation by Waterhouse & Moller (2009, p. 125) indicates:

Leadership for Learning practice involves the sharing of leadership by:

- a) Creating structures which invite participation in developing the school as a learning community
- b) Symbolising shared leadership in the day-to-day flow of activities in the school
- c) Encouraging all members of the school community to take the lead as appropriate to task and context
- d) Drawing on the experience and expertise of staff, students and parents as resources
- e) Promoting collaborative patterns of work and activity across boundaries of subject, role and status.

In consideration of the obvious linkage between distributed leadership and leadership for learning, extension and elaboration of these ideas and principles are addressed in later sections of this thesis.

Efforts have clearly been made by researchers in recent times working across different continents and jurisdictions, to draw relationships and linkages between the existing empirical evidence associated with distributed leadership and the much wider and on-going search for what makes schooling and learning most effective. The work of the LfL international project team is one important example of this type of collaboration which has generated new insights and interpretations into the research base of distributed leadership.

2.5 Justification of Need for Further Research

Whilst the empirical evidence about the potential of distributed leadership to contribute to school improvement is growing, much remains to be explored in the relationship. Harris (2004, p. 2) notes that “theorising about distributed leadership ... remains a way of analysing rather than reflecting leadership practice because contemporary studies of distributed leadership are in short supply”. Lashway (2003, p. 3) warns that “the

research base for distributed leadership is still embryonic. While there is considerable theory, we have relatively little empirical knowledge about how, or to what extent, principals actually use distributed leadership.” Woods, Bennett, Harvey, and Wise (2004, p. 453) also argue that further research is needed to “encompass the interplay of the structural and agentive dimensions of distributed leadership” and that a sound research base is needed to assess the effectiveness of distributed leadership strategies in enhancing positive educational outcomes. Hopkins and Jackson (2003, p. 17) note:

despite more than two decades of writing about organisational development we are still in a position of needing to develop understandings about what leadership really involves when it is distributed, how schools might function and act differently, and what operational images of distributed leadership in action might look like.

Bell, Bolan, and Cubillo (2003, p. 4) suggest in their systematic review that “distributed forms of leadership among the wider school staff are likely to have a more significant impact on the positive achievements of student outcomes than that which is largely or exclusively top-down”. Harris (2004, 2005, 2008) concludes that we need:

- to understand much more about distributed leadership practice, and how it can be nurtured, supported and developed;
- more empirical studies that elucidate different models, approaches and forms of distributed leadership in practice;
- to investigate the relationship between distributed leadership and school improvement; and
- to provide case study exemplars of distributed leadership in action and identify the conditions under which this form of leadership can flourish and grow.

As noted in the previous chapter, Harris (2005, p. 263) has warned that without this strong empirical base “distributed leadership faces the danger of becoming yet another leadership theory that proves to be misleading”.

Given the widening international interest as expressed in the preceding references, a focussed research effort on the role that distributed leadership may play in sustaining change and improvement appears well justified. It is evident from the preceding discussion that a strong need has been demonstrated for “case study exemplars of distributed leadership in action” and that a particular focus for this type of research is to explore the relationship between distributed leadership and school improvement. Doing

so in a Queensland secondary school provides an opportunity to take up this challenge.

A key theme identified for further research by Bennet et al. (2003, p. 12) in their extensive NCSL literature review was that of the source of the change. They pose the question of whether distributed leadership is created by senior staff as part of a “vision” of the school, or if it represents a harnessing into a school-wide culture of pre-existing forms of leadership practice. Issues around autonomy, control, creation and facilitation as factors in both developing and sustaining distributed leadership should be investigated further, according to these authors.

In the first half of this chapter, I have reviewed an extensive body of relevant literature from three main continents – UK/Europe, North America and Australia. The key messages which have come from this review are that:

- historical factors and contemporary practices have contributed to a wide range of definitional confusions and complexities about distributed leadership;
- there is now universal agreement amongst educators that leadership does not simply reside in one person and that many may exercise leadership in an organization; and
- international interest and research on the topic has begun to broaden in the past few years with its direction being decided by researchers typically using one of two main orientations – a descriptive or activity-theory orientation compared with a normative orientation that seeks to explain distribution from a variety of perspectives associated with school improvement and effectiveness.

In the next part of the chapter, I examine the descriptive orientation in more detail, specifically setting out the components of activity theory which underpin the methodological framework of the present study.

2.6 Activity Theory and Distributed Leadership

The distinctive approach to this research on distributed leadership is built around specific versions of activity theory as described by Grønn (2002) earlier in this chapter. Activity theory has a number of versions or generations, all of which focus on the connections between situated knowing and doing. The version drawn upon in this study, referred to as third generation cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT), is based on extensive research by the Finnish theorist Engeström from the Centre for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research at the University of Helsinki. Engeström

has built on the earlier pioneering work of Russian psychologists Leont'ev (1978) and Vygotsky (1978) which emphasises the link between cognitive conceptions of activities and their material realization. Gronn (2002, p. 674) suggests that activity theory has the following four advantages in a study of distributed leadership:

- It provides a holistic view of organizational work in which the division of labour figures prominently and which takes the notion of a jointly performed activity system as its unit of analysis.
- It offers a new and different conception of workplace ecology which accommodates the range of contextual dimensions typically omitted in reports of leadership.
- It provides a thorough analysis of the pragmatics of work performance by making visible the dimensions of the core elements of activities and their internal relations.
- The development and emergent approach taken to practice facilitates understanding of the role of workplace learning.

In the following section, an overview is provided of CHAT and its centrality to the methodological design of the research project.

2.7 Background to Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

“Activity theory ... to this day, its rich texture remains a well kept secret to the Western scientific community” (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 2).

Within the last decade, activity theory and its conceptual tools and traditions have emerged strongly from this relative obscurity within the Western academic community. There is now an expanding international literature of work-related research applications and publications utilizing versions of CHAT in various disciplines and industries (Roth & Lee, 2007). These include:

- health care and medical environments (Engeström, 1993);
- all sectors of education and training (Engeström, Engeström, & Suntio, 2002; Meyers, 2007; Miettinen, 1999; Peach, 2003);
- human-computer interaction (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006; Kuutti, 1996);
- information science (Wilson, 2006); and
- conflict-monitoring networks (Foot, 2001).

CHAT is based on the concept that human thinking represents the interactions of systems of activity. In contrast to the traditions of Western psychology where the main unit of analysis has been the individual, the focus of the Soviet psychologists has been to encourage interaction with, and reflection on, the tools, rules, division of labour, and communities of activity systems such as workplaces. In this context, activity is understood as “a unit of analysis that includes both the individual and her/his culturally defined environment” (Cole, in Wertsch, 1981, p. viii).

Activity-centered theory is distinctive in three ways, according to Engeström (1999e, p. 378):

First, activity theory is deeply contextual and oriented at understanding historically specific local practices, their objects, mediating artifacts, and social organization. Second, activity theory is based on a dialectical theory of knowledge and thinking, focused on the creative potential in human cognition. Third, activity theory is a developmental theory that seeks to explain and influence qualitative changes in human practices over time.

CHAT extends the focus from individual actions to a collective perspective which recognizes the social-historical context of the system and the problems of a particular setting. This implies an expansion of the borders of the basic analytical unit from the individual, to groups, and to settings. CHAT includes recognition and an understanding of the activity system as the analytical unit and that the system is recognized as a “collective, systemic formation that has a complex mediational structure” (Daniels, 2001, p. 86). As a consequence of the dynamic nature and structure of the activity system, it becomes a productive unit of analysis to understand complex interactions and relationships that evolve over time and produce actions and operations that are directed towards goals associated with the activity. As depicted in the triangular model in Figure 4, an activity system is comprised of seven interacting elements which include the object, outcome, tools, subject, rules, community and division of labour.

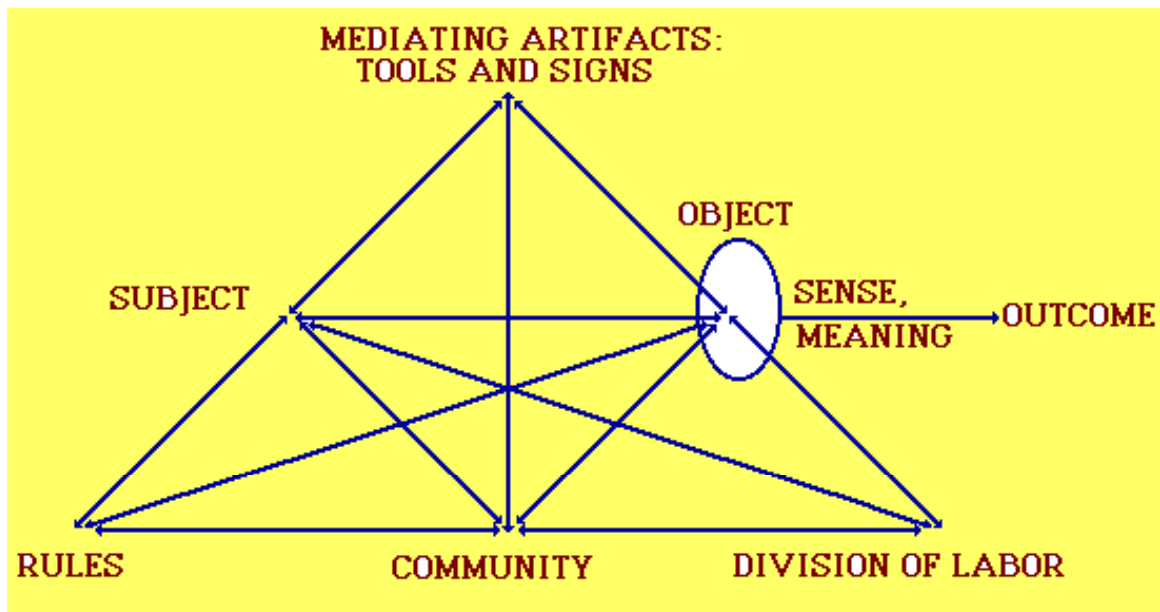


Figure 4. The structure of a human activity system (Engeström, 1987).

In the model, the **subject** refers to the individual or sub-group whose agency is chosen as the point of view in the analysis. The **object** refers to the “raw material” or “problem space” at which the activity is directed and which is moulded and transformed into **outcomes**. This occurs with the help of physical and symbolic, external and internal **mediating instruments**, including both tools and signs. The **community** comprises multiple individuals and/or sub-groups who share the same general object and who construct themselves as distinct from other communities. The **division of labour** refers to both the horizontal division of tasks between the members of the community and to the vertical division of power and status. Finally the **rules** refer to the explicit and implicit regulations, norms and conventions that constrain actions and interactions within the activity system (Centre for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, 1998).

Engeström (1999e, p. 381) highlights the constant reconstruction and refinement which is occurring within an activity system:

An activity system constantly generates actions through which the object of the activity is enacted and reconstructed in specific forms and contents – but being a horizon, the object is never fully reached or conquered. The creative potential of the activity is closely related to the search actions of object construction and redefinition.

One further central tenet of activity theory which is important to identify in this review is that “it acknowledges contradictions, conflict and discoordination as inevitable in the

functioning of any system – and identifies them as useful tools of analysis” (Foot, 2001, p. 11). Engeström (1987) further emphasizes that these contradictions and tensions emerge and evolve within and between each of the six “corners” of the activity triangle: subject, tool/artefact, object, rules, community, and division of labour. It is these contradictions, defined by Engeström (2001, p. 137) as historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems, which provide the motivating force for change and transformation. For example, in this study it is hypothesized that contradictions and tensions can be identified within the activity system of Southern SHS, which is in turn depicted as separate from the broader activity system of the State Education Department.

2.8 Third Generation CHAT

An activity system is by definition a multivoiced formation. An expansive cycle is a reorchestration of those voices, of the different viewpoints and approaches of the various participants. Historicity in this perspective means identifying the past cycles of the activity system. The reorchestration of the multiple voices is dramatically facilitated when the different voices are seen against their historical background as layers in a pool of complementary competencies within the activity system (Engeström, 1999a, p. 35).

Engeström (1999a) describes joint activity or practice, not individual activity, as the unit of analysis for CHAT. He expresses strong interest in the process of social transformation and includes the structure of the social world in analysis, taking into account the conflicting nature of social practice. It is in the instability, internal tensions and contradictions within and between the activity systems that the motivating force of change and development occurs. Moreover, he views the “reflective appropriation of advanced models and tools as ways out of internal contradictions” that result in new activity systems (Cole & Engeström, 1993, p. 40). The third generation of CHAT as proposed by Engeström has offered conceptual tools to understand dialogues, multiple perspectives and networks of interacting activity systems.

In summary, third-generation CHAT can be identified by five main principles which are a “manifesto” of the theory (Engeström, 2001, pp.136-7):

- *The first principle* is that a collective, artefact-mediated and object-oriented activity system, seen in its network relations to other activity systems, is taken as the prime unit of analysis. Activity systems realize and reproduce themselves by generating actions and operations.

- *The second principle* is the multi-voiced-ness of activity systems which consist of a community of multiple points of view, traditions and interests. The division of labour in an activity system creates different positions for the participants. For example, the classic example provided by Leont'ev (1978) is the tribal hunt, in which some individuals chase the animals while others wait in ambush to kill them. The action of chasing the game away makes no sense if separated from the overall activity and its object. The theory suggests that participants carry their own diverse histories, and the activity system itself carries multiple layers and strands of history engraved in its artefacts, rules and conventions.
- *The third principle* is historicity. Activity systems take shape and get transformed over lengthy periods of time. Their problems and potentials can only be understood against their own history. History itself needs to be studied as local history of the activity and its objects, and as history of the theoretical ideas and tools that have shaped the activity.
- *The fourth principle* is the central role of contradictions as sources of change and development. Contradictions are not the same as problems or conflicts. Contradictions are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems. Such contradictions generate disturbances and conflicts, but also innovative attempts to change the activity.
- *The fifth principle* proclaims the possibility of expansive transformations in activity systems. Activity systems move through relatively long cycles of qualitative transformations. As the contradictions of an activity system are aggravated, some individual participants begin to question and deviate from its established norms. In some cases, this escalates into collaborative envisioning and a deliberate collective change effort. An expansive transformation is accomplished when the object and motive of the activity are reconceptualized to embrace a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of the activity. A full cycle of expansive transformation may be understood as a collective journey through the *zone of proximal development* of the activity.

2.9 Expansive Visibilisation

Activity system as a unit of analysis calls for complementarity of the system view and the subject's view. The analyst constructs the activity system as if looking at it from above. At the same time, the analyst must select a subject, a member (or better yet, multiple members) of the local activity, through whose eyes and interpretations the activity is constructed. This dialectic between the systemic and subjective-partisan views brings the researcher into a dialogical

relationship with the local activity under investigation. (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 10)

Activity theorists propose that the best way for understanding transformation in human activity systems is when researchers enter the actual activity systems undergoing transformation. This type of research approach aims to build a “two-way bridge between general theory and specific practice” by engaging both researcher and participants in constructing new models of local activity (Engeström, 1999a, p. 36). One of the key outcomes of this approach, referred to as *expansive visibilisation*, is to identify contradictions inherent in activity systems. As explained by Gronn (2002, p. 678), these contradictions then become “part of an intervention strategy for the transformation of work, in which activity theory itself acts as a mediating device for the resolution of tensions in work practices”.

Four sequential expansive visibilisation stages are used by activity theorists as the basis for their collaboratively designed work transformations (Engeström, 1987). The first stage is referred to as ***gaining insight***. The aim of this stage is to collect examples of personnel within their work settings and to focus on observable behaviours, materials and instruments of the work setting as well as practices which seem to be troublesome. In this study, I used semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to gain insight into the distributed leadership work practices of key participants in the case study school. The supporting research questions which guide this stage have been listed earlier in this paper – these questions explore “who, what, how and why” aspects of distributed leadership as it is conceptualized and practised at the case study site.

The second stage, ***analysis***, is primarily concerned with mapping the activity system and placing the observable behaviours, materials and instruments of the work setting in a model of the activity system. This process has the potential to help practitioners make sense of their work practices and behaviours by making visible the continual interplay between humans and their artefacts (Engeström, 1999c). Once the system and its interacting components have been mapped, this stage of visibilisation can also be used to open up discussion about troublesome practices identified in stage one.

The third stage is ***formulating new ways of working***. Whilst mapping the activity system and making its components visible is an important stage in expansive visibilisation, it represents only the “tip of the iceberg” according to Engeström (1999b,

p. 66). He suggests that the most “dramatic” stage is when participants of the activity system are encouraged into formulating practical solutions to solve contradictions in their work activity. In the course of this project, I did not anticipate being in a position to engage participants in formulating new ways of working based on prior analysis. Whilst a written and oral summary of emergent data were reported back to the school’s major decision-making group, there was no capacity within the research project to take actions on contradictions as they related to distributed leadership practices within the school setting.

The fourth and final stage is ***practical applications***. As the term suggests, this stage is directed towards applying new instruments and ways of working as identified in stage three. It is dependent on a number of factors:

- practical “solutions” being generated from the previous stage;
- commitment of participants to apply these solutions or changes to practices; and
- the availability of sufficient time, resources and expertise needed for application.

As indicated above, there was no capacity within this research project to engage in a stage related to practical applications in the case study site.

In summary, CHAT offers a theoretical framework and expansive visibilisation as a methodology for pursuing a collective, multi-voiced interpretation of the contradictions and tensions that are manifested amongst related and interacting activity systems (Cole, 1999; Engeström, 1999b). This study demonstrates that the directions and shape of distributed leadership activity can be analyzed using the conceptual and analytical tools referred to as third generation CHAT.

2.10 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, I have reviewed an extensive range of contemporary literature which can be categorized into two broad sections. The first section encompasses the recent research evidence associated with distributed leadership and includes some useful analyses by key theorists located in three continents. From the analyses and interpretations by various theorists, a suite of conceptual ideas, continua and models of distributed leadership in practice have been described. A clear message coming from this literature is that distributed leadership is generally viewed in a positive light yet suffers from definitional confusion and an incomplete research base.

In the second section of the chapter, these conceptual ideas have been linked to third generation CHAT, which provides an array of theoretical insights and research tools which have been drawn upon for this case study project.

In the next chapter the methodological aspects of the present study are outlined, including justification of the qualitative case study research design and the limitations which apply to this project.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

Up to this point, the dissertation has presented an outline of the study followed by an extensive review of the literature base. The literature review clarified definitional issues associated with the term distributed leadership and a range of related terms. A strong conceptual connection was also drawn between distributed leadership and cultural-historical activity theory. Having established the parameters of the study, it is now necessary to extend the discussion on the research design. Descriptions of the methodological and research design employed are presented in the following sections of this chapter, starting with a general discussion on the justification of a qualitative case study approach.

3.1 Justification of Qualitative Case Study Approach

Qualitative research, broadly defined, means “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). Cronbach claims that statistical research is not able to take full account of the many interaction effects that take place in social settings and to illustrate his point gives examples of several empirical “laws” that do not hold true in actual settings (Cronbach, 1975, p. 124). Qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), is interpretative and naturalistic, which means that those who engage in this type of research:

- study things in their natural settings (e.g., schools), attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them; and
- stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry.

The ability of a researcher using qualitative data to describe a phenomenon (e.g., distributed leadership) more fully is an important consideration not only from the researcher’s perspective, but from the reader’s perspective as well: “If you want people to understand better than they otherwise might, provide them information in the form in which they usually experience it” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 120). Qualitative case study research reports, typically rich with detail and insights into participants’ experiences in the world, “may be epistemologically in harmony with the reader’s experience” (Stake, 1978, p. 5) and thus more meaningful.

Many writers have identified key characteristics of qualitative, or naturalistic, research (see for example Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Eisner, 1991; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990). The following list of eight points is a synthesis of these authors' descriptions of the researcher who:

1. uses the natural setting as the source of data, that is the researcher attempts to observe, describe and interpret settings as they are, maintaining what Patton (1990, p. 55) calls an "empathic neutrality";
2. acts as the "human instrument" of data collection;
3. uses inductive data analysis predominantly;
4. reports descriptively, incorporating expressive language and "presence of voice in the text" (Eisner, 1991, p. 36);
5. has an interpretive approach, aimed at discovering the meaning events have for the individuals experiencing them;
6. pays attention to the idiosyncratic as well as the pervasive, seeking the uniqueness of each case;
7. employs an emergent (as opposed to pre-determined) design, with a focus on this emerging process as well as the outcomes or product of the research; and
8. makes judgments using special criteria for trustworthiness (this issue is expanded later in the chapter).

Patton (1990, p. 59) points out that these are not "absolute characteristics of qualitative inquiry, but rather strategic ideals that provide a direction and a framework for developing specific designs and concrete data collection tactics". These characteristics are considered to be "interconnected" and "mutually re-enforcing" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39).

Accordingly, in this study of distributed leadership it was determined that qualitative data would be gathered and interpreted, largely using the conceptual tools of cultural-historical activity theory as outlined in Chapter Two (Cole, 1999; Engeström, 1987; Leont'ev, 1978; Scribner, 1997; Vygotsky, 1978). Although some may question beginning a qualitative study with a preconceived theoretical framework, Yin (1994, p. 32) believes that the prior development of theoretical propositions helps guide data collection and analysis: "The use of theory, in doing case studies, not only is an immense aid in defining the appropriate research design and data collection but also becomes the main vehicle for generalising the results of the case study". It is important to note that Yin emphasizes that generalization from case studies is best restricted to

“analytical generalisation” creating further propositional knowledge or adding to existing propositional knowledge.

Cultural-historical activity theory offers a powerful theoretical framework that fits within the parameters of qualitative research design. In particular this theory acknowledges the importance of dimensions such as cultural context, local setting, collective understandings from multiple perspectives, and the influence of historical variables on interactions within the specific setting. The theory also offers useful tools to assist with the systematic sampling, collection and analysis of qualitative data. These tools are used to map and analyze the respondent data to address the descriptive, interpretative and analytical questions associated with the process of distributed leadership and its sustainability within the case study school.

3.2 Case Study Approach

Case studies have become one of the most common ways to do qualitative inquiry and can be categorized in a variety of ways, including the examination of an instance in action or the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case (Stake, 1995). In drawing attention to case as an object rather than a process, a number of writers define case as a “bounded system” (Fals Borda, 1998) whilst Ragin (1992) gives emphasis to the question: What is this a case of?

Stake (1994) identifies three main types of case study in the literature: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (instrumental study extended to several cases). Case study research involves the examination of a particular phenomenon such as a person, an event, an institution or a process, such as leadership in a given school. This project is depicted as an instrumental case study, as it sets out to provide insights into the concept of distributed leadership as it operates within a singular organizational context. Yin (2004, p. 36) suggests that the case study is the “preferred strategy when ‘how’, ‘why’ or ‘what’ questions are being asked, or when the investigator has little control over events, or when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context”. All of these characteristics are evident in this study of distributed leadership.

In summary, this particular project fits the common definitional aspects of case study research as reported by Yin (1994, 2004) and Bassey (1999) by:

- *investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context* (in this study the investigation is about distributed leadership as it is defined and

experienced within the context of a functioning secondary school in the Queensland public education system);

- *acknowledging that the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident* (the concept of distributed leadership and how it is perceived and enacted is problematic and predicted to produce contradictions and tensions amongst participants at the case study site);
- *relying on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion* (this study utilizes three main data gathering strategies to confirm emergent evidence - semi-structured interviews, group interviews, observation and document analysis);
- *benefiting from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis* (the use of third generation cultural-historical activity theory and generation of specific exploratory questions has guided the conceptual and methodological framework); and
- *providing an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments* (an important part of any viable research project is the need to gather comprehensive data that can be used in a defensible way in support of the case study report).

3.3 Selection of Case Study School

The use of a single site for this qualitative case study was considered to be warranted and justified because of the need to “dig deeply” into the phenomenon of distributed leadership – providing fine-grained descriptions is necessary as an aid to understanding and this is facilitated through a narrow focus on one organization. The selection of the particular school for this qualitative case study has been based around the following criteria:

- willingness of the principal and other key staff members to participate in an extended research project during 2006;
- common acknowledgement that the school has an open and democratic attitude to and philosophy of distributed leadership and community engagement;
- a large secondary school was chosen as it would have more middle management positions in which existing distributed leadership processes could be more easily discerned;
- evidence of a history of innovation which has characterized the school as a potential site for research on distributed leadership and sustainable change;

- the principal has had an extended period of time in the school to allow leadership processes to be well embedded in the school culture;
- preferably a school displaying a wide range of complexity factors based on contextual features including socio-economic, educational, cultural and linguistic diversity; and
- the school community is likely to obtain some benefit from participation in the research project.

The identification and availability of the case study school, Southern State High School, as the host site was facilitated through personal discussions between the researcher and the school Principal in the early part of the 2006 school year. Based on the profile of the school and its fit to the pre-defined criteria outlined above, this was considered to be a fertile site for the proposed study.

3.4 Selection of Participants

Given that the focus of the study was ascertaining the impact of distributed leadership within the school organization, a wide cross-section of participants was considered for inclusion in the data-gathering phase. This included many of the positional leaders within the school – the Principal, three Deputy Principals, relevant Heads of Departments (HODs) and other formal leadership positions within the school's organizational structure. Participants also included small groups of teaching staff as well as the General Manager and staff of the career development and community centre affiliated to the school. In the initial consideration of the research, it was necessary to restrict respondents to mainly in-school personnel as a first step to understanding the phenomenon. It is acknowledged that others located outside the school may have very different insights into the types of organizational leadership questions and issues that the study sought to answer. These perspectives should rightly be the subject of further research in the future.

Gaining access to participants created various challenges for the researcher. It became evident in the first entry period during 2006 that this process required advanced diary planning and significant flexibility to adjust to individual staff members' busy work schedules. On a number of occasions, interviews with various participants had to be cancelled and/or re-scheduled due to clashes with emergent school commitments or responsibilities. Table 3 provides a synopsis of the main features of the research design. This is followed by some elaboration on the specific aspects of the research design as well as the timeline for data gathering, analysis and reporting of the project.

Table 3

Main Features of the Research Design

Leadership theory	Research paradigm	Methodology	Participants	Data gathering and analysis
<p>Leadership as a distributive process</p> <p>Based on a social theory perspective on leadership which draws on activity theory in which concertive action comprises the main unit of analysis.</p>	<p>Constructivist-interpretive research paradigm based on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relativist ontology • Subjectivist epistemology • Naturalistic methodology 	<p>Qualitative single-site case study</p> <p>Selection of a secondary school based on a range of justifiable criteria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • Deputy Principals • Heads of Departments • Selected teaching and non-teaching staff • Selected agency professional personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation • Observation and recordings of committees and teams meetings • Semi-structured individual and group interviews <p>Analysis using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • categorization devices • mapping based on activity system • content analysis of interview transcripts

3.5 Ethical Principles of Procedure in Data Gathering

As part of the research approval process, full ethical clearance was obtained from Griffith University. This ethical clearance was included in the documentation submitted to fulfil all requirements of Queensland’s Department of Education Training and the Arts (DETA) in relation to the approval process for research projects within schools. Given that there was only one school site, this research approval needed only to be sanctioned by the Principal of the host school.

In order to make explicit the specific ethical and operational procedures to be employed during the study, a set of “research principles of procedure” were developed and shared with all participants who contributed to the data-gathering phases of the project. All participants were required to sign a consent form in which they acknowledged their willingness to participate and understanding of their rights as participants in the research project. These principles are included in Appendix A.

3.6 Data-gathering Methods

In keeping with the qualitative focus of this study in examining the impact and sustainability of distributed leadership spread across many participants operating within one school setting, a range of selected data-gathering methods were utilized. These various methods were chosen for their capacity to build up a descriptive picture of the dynamics of concertive action, as elaborated and informed by third generation cultural-historical activity theory concepts.

Appendix B provides details of the main data-gathering methods and their application with participants within a timeline established for the 2006 school year. Specifics of the methods employed and the timing of administration were negotiated with the participants once agreement was reached on the overall aims and scope of the project.

3.6.1 Document analysis and demographic data

A variety of school documents were accessed as part of the initial stage (*gaining insight*) and in setting up contextual foundations for the study. These documents for analysis included school organizational frameworks, strategic policies and plans, procedural and parent handbooks, job descriptions, newsletters and so forth. The school documents were useful in informing the researcher of the way the school functions and are an insight into "... the ways in which organizations constitute reality" (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 26). An array of demographic information on the school, the community it serves and the participants in the study was gathered through various documents on the public record. A small number of "private documents" were also accessed during the project and were referenced for inclusion in the research records. These were treated as required by the ethical clearance protocol and principles of procedure outlined in Appendix A.

3.6.2 Semi-structured interviews

Individual, semi-structured interviews were considered a suitable method for collecting empirical data that represented the perceptions and viewpoints of all those involved in the distributed leadership process of the school's activity system. These interviews were structured around a series of open questions with a range of supplementary prompts. The questions were considered as being a suitable method for encouraging participants to talk openly about their observations of leadership and how it was enacted within the school. Such interviews, if conducted effectively, are able to "generate data which give an authentic insight into people's experiences" (Silverman, 1993, p. 91); Silverman refers to this as "active interviewing" which he depicts as

consistent with a constructivist model of inquiry. These interviews form the major part of the data record which was used to undertake the mapping process within the activity system of the school.

By the end of the project, 14 of these individual interviews were conducted with the nominated participants; 2 interview transcripts were, unfortunately, not able to be included in the final research record for technical reasons. One interviewee spoke very rapidly in the taped interview, so much so that meaningful transcription was not possible; a second tape had a mechanical fault which rendered it useless. In both cases, the researcher decided not to attempt a second interview, but constructed a summarised version of the interview from handwritten notes of the discussions. Each interview session had to be tightly managed and included opportunities for maximizing flow of information within a succinct timeframe. All respondents were asked to sign an agreement to participate in the research which included agreement to have the interview audio recorded. Full transcripts of interviews were treated in line with the procedural principles outlined in *negotiation of accounts* to ensure fairness, relevance and accuracy (with the exception of the two anomalies noted above). Appendix C contains four full transcripts of taped interviews with selected participants. In order to protect the identity of all individuals involved in the study, names and locations which could be used to identify individuals or the school have been removed or replaced with pseudonyms.

3.6.3 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews have become increasingly common in education and psychology to elicit a greater in-depth understanding of perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and experiences from multiple points of view (Silverman, 2001). Group interviews are not simply a number of interviews conducted at the one time with interaction only between the interviewer and participant. Rather, it is the interaction between participants that is the important part of the dynamics of these interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Focus interviews are, therefore, in keeping with the study's activity theory approach that presumes meaning arising from and within social interactions. They are also relatively inexpensive to conduct and can produce rich data that are cumulative and elaborative. Fontana and Frey (1998) however, warn that group interviews can present problems not found in the individual interview. For example, the results cannot be generalised, the emerging group culture may interfere with individual expression, the group may be dominated by one person and "groupthink" is a possible outcome, and it is difficult to explore sensitive or personal issues in a group setting.

Focus group interviews were held with two sub-groups of school community members:

- a sample of participants from the general teaching staff; and
- selected members of standing committees and teams operating within the school.

3.6.4 Observation and taping of meetings

The use of meetings as a data source is consistent with the conceptual framework of this study which is exploring distributed leadership as a phenomenon being enacted amongst individuals operating in concertive action. Activity theory (Gronn, 2003) provides the conceptual reasoning for examining the formation, deliberations and outcomes of various decision-making committees and teams within the school. Efforts were directed towards observing and recording the deliberations of a small number of key committees – including the senior management team and other decision-making groups. The researcher initially sought to audio-tape these specific events; however it was obvious that this would inhibit discussion within the group and it would also prove very difficult to analyse the multiple interactions. The final decision was to observe the meeting and take a series of hand-written notes describing the purpose, conversation topics and general outcomes of the meeting.

3.7 Management and Analysis of Data

As in any piece of worthwhile qualitative research, management and analysis of data generated in the study must be handled in an organized and consistent manner (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Freebody, 2003; Silverman, 2001, 2002). The data gathered in this project were managed and analysed in a number of ways consistent with the methodological procedures of activity theory as well as drawing upon other analytical techniques consistent with qualitative traditions.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 145) define qualitative data analysis as “working with data, organising it into manageable units, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others”. This project used inductive analyses of the data, in which most of the critical themes and issues emerged out of the data (Patton, 1990). This process is usually referred to as “open coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) which involved developing a set of initial concepts and categories while the data were being collected. This is a recursive process of sorting data segments (from interviews, observations and documentary sources) into appropriate concepts and categories, identifying patterns

and continually revisiting, refining and modifying categories to reflect emerging elements. The second phase of data analysis involved a reconstruction of the data that had been fragmented by open coding through a more intense process referred to as “axial coding” – this process focused on more specific features and their relationships within and between categories. Entwistle (1997) cautions that great care must be taken to ensure that categories come from the data and that these categories fairly reflect the responses made by participants.

With an expected large body of raw data being generated, use was made of some qualitative software suitable for sorting, coding and retrieving interview, observation and documentary data. Leximancer software had some utility in allowing a preliminary content analysis of interview data and assisted in giving insights into common themes and patterns across multiple respondents and groups. Some strengths of Leximancer as a content analysis tool are:

- ease of accessibility and interface with data sets – the ability to import and export respondent data and the capacity to cut and paste analytic outputs into documents and reports;
- flexibility with the range of analyses of the data and the ability to exercise controls and limitations on the concepts and themes which are being explored; and
- the rapidity, in which various forms of analyses can be undertaken, displayed, re-organised and produced for publication.

Consistent with the methodological procedures of activity theory, this research project provides some detailed mappings of the activity system of the case study school. This includes an array of diagrammatic information based on the structural components of the school as an activity system, as well as any interacting activity systems which are identified during the mapping process. For example, sub-systems are identified and linked with the school through a variety of shared categories including “objects”, “subjects”, “tools and signs” and “communities of interest”. From this analysis, contradictions and tensions are identified in the distributed leadership work practices of the school when it is mapped as a complex activity system using aspects of the principles of third generation cultural-historical activity theory.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

The limitations which are applicable to this study can be grouped into two main areas: those which derive from constraints linked to theoretical conceptualizations and those which derive from constraints linked to the methodological aspects of the study.

Two main theoretical limitations have been noted with respect to the application of third generation cultural-historical activity theory. First, this theory as explained in Chapter Two encompasses five central principles, all of which are considered important elements in the theoretical model. The last principle, “expansive transformations or visibilisations”, consists of four main stages which are viewed as a cyclic process: Stage 1 –Gaining insights; Stage 2 – Analysis; Stage 3 – Formulating new ways of working; Stage 4 – Practical applications. As indicated in Chapter Two, this study engaged in the first two stages only as there was limited opportunity for the researcher to engage participants in new ways of working and no capacity to consider practical applications to the case study site. Secondly, the extent to which the research was able to gather a broad range of “multiple voices” within the school activity system was simply limited by time and resource constraints. The study was mainly limited to those participants who occupied formal positional leadership roles within the school, and hence has not tapped into the points of view, traditions or perspectives of other non-positional leaders. Whilst these other voices and perspectives are viewed as important elements in the conceptual framework of an activity system exploring distributed leadership, there was limited provision in the research design for their inclusion.

Methodological limitations to this study have included the tendency for its reliance on one technique, semi-structured interviews, as the main data-gathering strategy. Though other techniques were used during the research period as explained earlier, the interpretations drawn from the analysis of data are largely based on the semi-structured interview transcripts. These interpretations are, of course, constructed from the researcher’s own readings, coding and analysis of the qualitative data, but are also readily available for others who may wish to interrogate them for accuracy, trustworthiness and authenticity. These methodological issues are expanded in the next section of this chapter. A further technical complication with the semi-structured interviews was also encountered with a few poor quality recordings as well as transcription difficulties with some of the taped interviews.

3.9 Trustworthiness and Transferability

Extensive debate in research fields surrounds the extent to which the traditional canons of quantitative research – validity and reliability – apply to qualitative research. Merriam (1998, p. 170) argues, “reliability is problematic in the social sciences as a whole because human behaviour is never static” and as there are many possible interpretations to any situation, then it is clear that “there is no benchmark by which one can take repeated measures and establish reliability in the traditional sense”.

The validity of qualitative data is usually addressed by establishing its trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The basic question addressed by the notion of trustworthiness is, “how can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?” Among the verification procedures identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985), Merriam (1998), Stake (1995) and Yin (1994), several aspects featured in this research project:

- triangulation of data (Patton, 1990) occurs in different ways; in this study it includes “methods” triangulation in which different methods such as interviews, observations and documents (from different perspectives) are employed;
- member checking has been used when all respondents were invited to validate their interview data before inclusion in any reporting;
- segments of the raw data were made available to supervisors for peer review and confirmation of interpretations which have been made;
- revealing from the outset of the study any biases or assumptions that may impact on the research outcomes;
- providing thick, rich descriptions that allow readers to make their own conclusions regarding credibility and transferability; and
- providing a detailed audit trail – or “chain of evidence” (Yin, 1994) – which may be used to review and validate all aspects of the study design, data gathering, analysis and interpretation stages of the research.

The issue of transferability is of particular concern in relation to case study approach. While scholars such as Yin (1994) have continued to use more traditional paradigms to justify the generalizability of case study findings, others such as Denzin (1983) reject generalizability as a goal. For Schofield (2002, p. 182) the provision of high quality data through “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973) provides the information necessary for the reader to make informed judgements about the degree and extent that conclusions from one case will “fit” other particular cases of interest. Stake (1994, p. 243) concludes:

Thus the methods of casework actually used are to learn enough about the case to encapsulate complex meanings into a finite report but to describe the case in sufficient descriptive narrative so that readers can vicariously experience these happenings, and draw their own conclusions.

3.10 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, the methodological structure of the study has been outlined, indicating that it is based on an instrumental case study design using qualitative data gathering and analysis techniques. The chapter has explained the advantages and disadvantages of using a case study design, how the school and participants were selected and how the research ethics and procedural principles were applied. Descriptions of the data-gathering methods and instruments were provided as well as explanations on how the various datasets were managed and prepared for analysis in the later chapters. Finally, a number of theoretical and methodological limitations were identified in relation to the conduct of this study and consideration was given to the issues of trustworthiness and transferability of case study accounts into the broader research canon.

In the next chapter, an initial descriptive analysis of the case study data is provided using the internal mapping techniques drawn from activity theory. The bulk of the chapter provides first-level insights into the respondent data which are grouped for analysis and presentation under the five main sub-headings drawn from activity theory.

Chapter Four: Descriptive Analysis of Southern State High School as an Activity System

4.1 Introduction

The first part of this chapter provides a contextual description of Southern State High School (Southern SHS) which outlines a range of internal and external socio-cultural and historical aspects of the school operating within its local community. This information has been drawn from participant interview data, existing documents, including school development plans, annual reports, and other materials accessed during the research project. The major focus of the chapter is to use the key concepts of cultural-historical activity theory to provide a descriptive account of the case study site as:

- an interdependent operational unit of the broader public education system; and
- a separate object-oriented system with its own unique history of development.

The descriptive analysis draws from a wide range of interview data, school documents and associated background literature on distributed leadership to describe the activity system including the object, subject, community, tools, rules and divisions of labour. From the initial descriptive analysis in this chapter, the case data are used to identify emergent tension points and contradictions in the leadership work practices of the school, which are then further analysed in Chapter Five.

4.2 Contextual Background of Southern SHS

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data describe the local suburbs served by Southern SHS as being mainly in the low socio-economic category. Families work in a broad cross section of occupations, with a significant proportion of unskilled and lower income workers as well as a wide range of cultural and ethnic groups. The area has a youthful population, a higher than average unemployment rate and families on a below median weekly income. In the 2006 ABS Census, 28% of the population usually resident in this part of Southern City were children aged between 0-14 years, compared with a national rate of under 20%. The median age of persons in this suburb was 28 years, compared with 37 years for persons in Australia. Of those persons aged 15 years and over who were working, 21% identified as unskilled labourers compared with a national average of 10.5% of the population.

Since opening in 1987, Southern SHS has experienced a constant growth rate with student enrolment from Year 8 to 12 reaching 1592 in 2006 and a mobility rate of

approximately 30%. This enrolment and retention pattern is considered a strong indicator of the school's positive perception as providing a sound educational service, in an outer-metropolitan area which presents many social challenges for young people and their families. A consensus opinion is that the school has built a strong reputation for providing a variety of learning pathways for its students and it enjoys generous community support which is highly supportive of its "code of dress" and "code of behaviour". Approximately 6% of students are from indigenous home backgrounds and a further 7% of students attend the attached Special Education Unit dealing with a range of physical and cognitive disabilities. More than 300 students are supported through the Learning Support Centre. In 2006, a total of 189 Senior Certificates were awarded to Year 12 students representing 77% of the cohort. The overall percentage of students eligible for entry to tertiary level institutions was 45% of the Year 12 cohort.

During 2006, the total administrative and teaching staff working at Southern SHS included the foundational Principal, three Deputy Principals, 14 Heads of Department, 115 teachers and subject specialists as well as a large group of other support and para-professional staff. During its 20-year history, the school has formed very strong partnerships and alliances with business, industry, government agencies and community organizations which are reflected in various aspects of the school's programs as this chapter describes.

4.3 Southern SHS as an Interdependent Activity System

The bulk of observations which are made in this section of the chapter are based on internal data provided by responding participants and from selected documents or records which were accessed during the project. Hence it needs to be emphasized that this is only one reading and account of Southern SHS as an entity within the larger activity system of the Queensland State Department of Education. Based on observations and reflections from the descriptive data, a number of social-cultural trends and historical influences can be discerned within the case study account. Five of these trends and influences are reported with selected excerpts drawn from the respondent dataset.

4.3.1 School-to-community relationships and school-to-business networks

The establishment of external relationships indicate that Southern SHS is not an island but a key part of a broader network of education and training providers. In contrast to the decline in public education enrolments, this school appears to have thrived very

well in the tightening grip of standards and competitive market forces by forging key networks and alliances within the community and business world beyond its district and regional boundaries. Strong evidence to support this trend was found in the interview data as provided by the Principal who outlines his opportunities to link with key community and business networks:

P: No, I could say that I get a fair bit from my two outside key organizations that affect my views; that is the Training Recognition Council (TRC) and the Greater Brisbane Area Consultative committee (GBARC); you see it is in both of these forums where I meet the key leaders from business, industry and government, and I collect a huge amount of information from them and they have all visited the school. Now they have had meetings here, breakfast meetings.

It is a federal government funded committee; there are 60 of them spread across Australia, they were put in place by the Labor Government, so it is more than a decade ago, to advise the government about regional employment matters, and it is made up of industry leaders and local government, state government leaders, departments and chaired by John Smith, who is the managing director of a company called the Brick Factory.

MG: So a combination of private and public organizations.

P: Yes but it is a voluntary organization, and we are all doing it as volunteers, but it is supported by federal government; but it is a group of business people who keep me right abreast of what is happening at a federal level, so I know exactly what is happening in the federal sphere; I then know also what is happening in their business, where the pressures are and where the employment gaps are, and this leads me into contact with state development people, transport people and all of those things have benefited us in terms of the leadership within this district, because when it comes to Southern's 'School to Work', which as the vice-president, we actually are now taking a strategic view there, and we are talking to whole industries, not just to employers, we are talking to whole industries; so transport and logistics we talk to, and we talk to construction industry; and that has probably come about because of my background contacts.

And it's the same with the TRC, I've got there all the reps of the major job networks throughout the state, these are the employment agencies, so I sit and listen to these people talk about their efforts; they are registered training organizations, group training organizations, motor training organizations, government departments, the groups who are influencing government policy and constantly commenting and giving government advice on employment and training issues; and that is what they are doing there.

MG: And you are a formal member of that council and is it a state or federal agency?

P: Yes, yes... I am and it is established under the Training and Employment Act, and it is the peak body which oversees apprenticeships and traineeships within the state;

Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) actually works on license to it, as a provider of all the VET programs in the schools. And as a peak body....I'm just amazed that Education Queensland lets me sit there.

A strong indication of the innovative school-to-work transition programs established at Southern SHS is the formation of the Southern Enterprises Association (SEA) operating commercially as *Work Right*. The SEA grew out of a mixture of student community need and a visionary team of three school key leaders – the Principal, the Registrar and the person appointed as the General Manager of SEA. SEA is run as an incorporated body and serves a broader community of over 90 schools and offers an array of community-based programs and activities that have expanded in recent years. The General Manager of SEA provides an insight into the development of *Work Right*.

MG: So it has transcended Southern now?

A: Well, I would just say that it has evolved, to tell you the truth; three years ago when we decided we had more to offer the community than just the jobs pathway program, we asked what's our vehicle for doing something more than that: One, we could continue to just being a hybrid of Southern High School, or we had the incorporation set up to apply for funding a number of years ago, and it was only there for that purpose; but we decided to use that as a vehicle then, create a trading name for ourselves that made some sense and then we found Work Right was being established in its own right....The complexity of our relationship with Southern High has served us well in one sense, but has also created difficulties for us in another. On the one hand we already have credibility in the education circles, and they see where it fits, and at the end of the day they see as a Southern High School program still...but on the other hand it is about divorcing us from the Southern High, and we have grown up now and here is the range of services we offer, and we don't directly put profit back into Southern High on the way...so we are self-sufficient for sure.

So this year this has been very much about developing that profile of Work Right in its own right; but it doesn't mean that along the way that we haven't used our advantage with Southern High as it does give you credibility in the education scene.

As the SEA initiative is considered such an important element of the Southern SHS case, it is referred to in more detail in later sections of this chapter and following chapters.

4.3.2 Successive waves of educational reform

Over the past two decades in the Queensland public education system, an array of educational reforms has had a cumulative socio-historical influence on the present day Southern SHS. As outlined in the opening chapter, systems-initiated change and reform has become a common feature of the education system in this state. Hargreaves and Goodson (2006, p. 15) refer to “repeated waves of reform that define historical periods or directions that schools, depending on their identity, either embrace or reject.” These writers suggest that many high schools have proved impervious to change and adapting to the changing learning needs of a “generation Y” student body, because of their size, bureaucratic complexity, subject traditions and proximity to university selection processes. Whilst this study did not trace or explore the impact of 20 years of systemic change agendas in the case study school, there was sufficient evidence in the data to suggest that Southern SHS had managed to keep abreast of, and in some instances ahead of, large-scale reform initiatives.

The main example of this is related to the Education and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF), an extensive and highly publicised reform program launched by the Queensland Government in 2002. In the first illustration below, the Principal explains how he and Southern SHS were featured in a publication by a federal politician, as an example of a school which had successfully engaged business and local community in enhancing opportunities for students.

P: Well, EQ did come and see us about ETRF; and you ... know it's in (Federal politician's) latest book, we actually got a mention ... he was most interested in what I was saying at Griffith University (about 16 months ago). That sheet you have there about the organizational structure, which got me invitations to speak everywhere. He was in the audience when I spoke, and came to see me, and he has been to see me before. He has related it to 'full service schools' stuff, which was what we spoke to the Goss Government about in the early 90s and I told him it is 'old hat' stuff now, and I don't call it full service schools, I now call it 'community based schools', community involvement with your schools, and it's his book so I suppose he can decide what he calls it in his own book. But the fact he came and talked to me about it, and was interested in what we were doing and the school was identified in his book

The second illustration is from the HOD (Industrial Arts) who gives an insight into his department's forward thinking approach to the ETRF agenda:

E: ...the thing about the school, my one criticism about education is that it generally tends to be a reactive process instead of a proactive process. So a lot of things that will happen is that the decision will be made by government which will be translated into the minister's role, which will be translated into the Education Queensland role and that's distributed to the schools, then everyone reacts to what the minister says. OK, for example you take the ETRF agenda, now I saw the ETRF agenda and got involved with it and I thought, right, this is what I can do, so that's why we started with what we're doing, and now as the ETRF agendas have hit the school, instead of being in a position where we have to react to what's being done, we can say, well, on a proactive stage, we are already in line, this is what we are doing, we now lead the way for education, we now have the best model, we now have best practice, and we can now disseminate that information to other schools and share that with other schools.

The respondent HOD refers to the “proactive” nature of his department in relation to the ETRF agenda. His capacity to think and respond proactively and creatively to a number of key aspects of the reform agenda is examined in greater depth in the next chapter.

4.3.3 Student and community demographics of Southern City

Demographic factors have influenced much of the organizational, curricular and social responses of Southern SHS in achieving its desired “object” or outcomes for students and their families. As noted in the contextual background introduction to this chapter, the socio-economic realities of this outer-metropolitan suburb have shaped the identity and structure of the school and its wider perception within the education system. Southern SHS is depicted in most of the respondent data as very much a “community-based school”, as described by the Principal in the previous extract. The school has maintained a strong enrolment pattern catering over time for a transitory local population augmented by a growing number of multi-cultural (Pacific Island immigrants) and indigenous families attracted by the cultural enclaves and lower cost housing of the locality.

Further changes to the student demographic have occurred through the need to cater for a growing number of students with individual physical, social and emotional needs. Commensurate with the student and community demographics, the staffing complement of the school has also expanded to cater for this diversity and in 2006 included a range of associated professional staff – youth and indigenous support workers, behaviour advisory teacher, school-to-work transition and job pathways officers, a school-based health nurse and police officer.

The following extracts illustrate the diversity of the Southern City community and some of its impact upon the day-to-day work of staff within the high school.

B: On a regular basis, we have communication with police we help them just as much as they help us. We deal a lot with the outside agencies, such as Dept of Child Safety. I deal a lot with parents; Southern has a philosophy that we have built up a lot of community issues...

E: Her (the behaviour advisor's) work includes things like going down to the park and getting the kids who are truanting there, and getting them to school; and she will arrange to make home visits; if there are issues with the Samoan community she has got contacts there in terms of different ethnic groups and she has got good connections with them and others, including the Cambodians. She has a number of those, and will try to bring parents into the school, early in the new year...

As these statements and previous ABS statistics illustrate, Southern City is a multi-cultural melting pot with a broad array of migrants, nationalities and traditions which add considerable diversity and challenges to the local community.

4.3.4 Teacher generational issues

Hargreaves and Goodson (2006, p. 23) suggest that teaching and change are driven by a “generational centre of gravity”, which involves a dominant demographic of teachers who are of a particular age range and at various career stages. At Southern SHS, the generational centre of gravity reveals the median age of teachers as approximately 41 years and the majority of staff members who have been in the school for between 5 to 10 years. The turnover rate of staff appears to be quite moderate considering some of the challenges and complexities which exist within the local community.

There is evidence of generational change with a mixture of early career graduates as well as a sizable group of very stable and experienced staff members who have formed a core of long-term teaching partnerships sub-divided by subject departments or specialist professional roles. The general perception is that the school has a good depth of human resources which can be called upon to perform a wide range of educational and support functions to meet the needs of the diverse clientele. As one of the Deputy Principal's explains:

B: OK; we're lucky at Southern; we have an army of staff, um, we have built over the years with the other deputies and P, we have built a support staff; we have support services, we have two guidance officers, we have a conflict resolution officer, we have a school-based police officer (that will be arriving soon); we have a chaplain, we have a youth and family officer, we have two mental health nurses. I work with them every single day; and then again we have two other deputies, the team of three we are constantly talking to each other, confirming decisions with each other. I have then also a core of HODs, a middle schooling HOD, a senior schooling HOD and a teaching and learning HOD, that, I also have a lot to do with on a daily basis; and then there is the administrative staff.

4.3.5 Leadership succession

Leadership succession featured clearly in the participant interview data and became a more dominant theme as the current foundation Principal prepared to depart at the end of the 2006 academic year after 20 years leading the school. The long-term stability of the Principalship, apart from a short period of one year when he was in an acting District Director's position, was depicted by many participants as one of the major reasons for the school's strength and perceived successful reputation in the broader education community. The general consensus of respondents is best depicted in the following references to the pivotal role of this man as he approached his 60th year:

G: I guess having the one Principal basically has given a fair bit of stability to the school. His ethos and his fingerprints on the things that he wants the school to be. You know a uniform school. All those sort of things are fairly evident in tracking back the record of the school. It is very clear to see the things that he has organised to get others to do as the school has developed. It would be interesting to see in time when his time is finished here which is probably reasonably close now, you know where it goes to. It wouldn't be too many schools like this where the founding Principal is still there, after what 20 years?

F: Yes, there is considerable interest in the school right now on leadership succession and leadership density issues, which seem to be critical for sustainability and continuance of direction? I would see that as our major challenge over the next 1 to 5 years.

D: The Principal in the school has a huge role to play; and one of the greatest strengths here, in talking of P as the leader, one of his great strengths is his 'personability' and his encouragement of people over a long period of time, is to encourage people to speak their minds; and that is the good side of the open door policy, and that can only be a contributing factor to the organization, because you have more people who can express their true feelings, and they are going to be more inspirational and passionate in what they do every day, and you are going to get better results.

According to Hargreaves and Goodson (2006, p. 19), three kinds of knowledge apply to the principal succession process – *inbound knowledge* (to make a mark for new leaders); *insider knowledge* (gathered by leaders who are known, trusted and accepted) and *outbound knowledge* (leaving a legacy). Based on the evidence gathered by these researchers in their *Change over Time Project* in the USA, and by analyzing succession processes in many secondary schools, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- achieving good school leadership succession requires outbound knowledge to preserve past successes, keep improvement going and leave a lasting legacy; and
- sustainability of school improvement and reform initiatives is often undermined by excessive emphasis on the inbound knowledge of new leaders (“systemic” focus) at the expense of equally important outbound concerns of leadership.

From their perspective, Hargreaves and Goodson (2006, p. 19) state that “...few things, our data suggests, succeed less than leadership succession”. This study did not investigate the succession planning process, nor did it have access to the school community following the retirement of the foundational Principal. Hence, it is not possible to depict the direction taken by the school community following the appointment of a new Principal in 2007. The sole purpose of referring to the leadership succession issue is to convey the extent to which it was an underlying theme that permeated the Southern SHS activity system and social-cultural context during the study period.

In a summary of the Southern SHS community context, a number of social-cultural trends and historical influences were discerned within the case study account. Five of these trends and influences have been identified, including leadership succession, student and community demographics, staffing generational issues, waves of educational reform, and school-to-business or community networks. Additional insights with respect to these trends are incorporated in various sections of the remainder of the dissertation.

4.4 Southern SHS as an Object Oriented Activity System

This study has posited the notion that distributed leadership is a question of the degree to which individual members of staff at all levels of the school:

- behave as **a leader** to achieve various **objects**, purposes or outcomes;

- work within a **community** of individuals who share the same general object;
- utilize **tools** (physical and psychological) to advance their purpose or object;
- negotiate a pathway through **rules** (explicit/implicit regulations, norms, conventions) that constrain action or achievement; and
- recognize that a **division of labour** can facilitate a sharing or distribution of actions and functions/routines critical to achieving the shared object.

The remainder of this chapter addresses each of these aspects of the activity theory conceptual framework which was outlined in Chapter Two. This is a descriptive analysis drawing mainly upon the participant interview records from the case study site. Each of the sections begins with a series of focus questions, followed by a table which illustrates the main themes emerging from the dataset. An interpretative commentary follows each table, which is then further summarised and presented in the form of a graphical figure. Each figure utilizes the illustrative triangle format outlined in Chapter Two, which has specific relevance to the activity theory framework. At the end of each section, emergent contradictions and tensions are drawn out of the descriptive data for further critical analysis in Chapter Five. A similar pattern for the presentation of the descriptive data is used throughout the remainder of this chapter.

4.5 Objects and Outcomes of the Activity System

There is clear evidence from the data assembled and analysed in this research that Southern SHS has a multiplicity of “leaders” who engage in a variety of “leadership-type” behaviours with various objectives, purposes and outcomes. Whilst the bulk of the interviewed respondents in this project were drawn from positional leadership within the school, there is evidence that others in non-formal leadership roles engaged in distributed leadership behaviours. These included:

- the staff members who planned and coordinated all of the formal presentations including high profile events like Speech and Award Nights;
- the Principal’s private administrative officer who carried considerable authority in controlling access to the Principal;
- members of the teaching staff who were responsible for various organizational, curriculum reform and student support activities; and
- professional and support personnel who worked with the Southern Education Association (SEA) as part of the school-community employment development initiative.

Table 4 below summarizes seven different respondents' perspectives in response to the following questions:

- o *What are the key responsibilities or objectives of your current position in the school?*
- o *Describe what you see as your "core business".*
- o *To what major purpose or outcome does your work contribute?*
- o *How do you know what you are doing is making a difference in the school?*

In this table, key phrases and words from various respondents have been highlighted in **bold print** as they relate to the illustrated aspect of the activity system.

Table 4

Perspectives on Objects and Outcomes of Leadership Practice at Southern SHS

Stated object of role	Projected outcome
<p><u>B – Deputy Principal</u></p> <p><i>Yep, to me I've got three key responsibilities. The first one is being responsive to the students – responsive, in the sense that they have an issue, or a need, and I will respond to;..... I have a responsibility to the staff, and by the staff I mean the teaching and all the other staff in the school; one of my main roles here is as human resource deputy; so my job is to make sure that it best fits them as individuals as well as the programs that we want to have.</i></p> <p><i>And my third role, isto make the school as best as it can be; so the strategic stuff, which might not actually be in the best interests of either the staff or the student;</i></p>	<p><i>I make the school safe, for the students and the staff; and my direct role, makes the school run smooth. Everybody is where they are supposed to be and if they're not, they get dealt with, good or bad.</i></p>
<p><u>C – Deputy Principal</u></p> <p><i>I guess I'd like to think more from moving forward and a proactive approach to issue and problems. I'd like to think as well as supporting staff and providing that support network for staff as well. ...it's the continuing of developing the skills and abilities...in the profession so I guess that is very much my responsibility as well. To ensure we're all moving forward, we're all learning,</i></p>	<p><i>I think there is so many aspects to it. I really think that it is really diverse. It is more than an academic education. Providing them with the ability to cope in society with the support network because some of these kids don't have a home support network. So it is providing them with the support to make it through those teenage years that are so tough. So it is a really holistic thing</i></p>

<p><i>we're all developing and we continue to maintain that journey.</i></p>	
<p><u>D – Deputy Principal</u></p> <p><i>now at my stage as a new deputy...it is my strength as personal and professional, my passion is about the 'big picture' stuff - the 'helicopter perspectives'.</i></p> <p><i>I could talk all day about this stuff, but it is only dreams unless it is acted upon; so little things lead to big things, and that is my premise; believe strongly in the positive things, and unless people are on side, for the betterment of kids, then things will not be sustained</i></p>	<p><i>....sometimes that means 'standing out front and taking the bullets', and sometimes 'standing next to them and taking the bullets'; and sometimes it means 'get your arse out there and take the bullets'</i></p>
<p><u>E – HOD</u></p> <p><i>I have a mandate I believe to make certain that our curriculum here is relevant to the needs of our students. Our population is such that about 80% of our student population don't use the OP system and don't go onto further study. Therefore a lot of them head to industry or some sort of trade or vocation. So my role is to balance off between the industry issues, the vocation issues and the curriculum issues, to make certain that we've got a smooth transition through the school from education into industry and beyond.</i></p>	<p><i>And I mean that translates itself into a whole lot of different things. If you, given the clientele that we have here. If you don't have people feeling good about themselves then you have problems. If you are not building the whole person, if you're not building self esteem, if you are not putting an affirmation in place that they can be successful and edifying them for the things that they can do well, then there is not an opportunity for these young people to feel good about themselves and where they are going to.</i></p> <p><i>Well you need to do that with everybody, including the teachers. They need to feel that they are valuable, that they're important and that they have a role to play in the team</i></p>
<p><u>F – HOD</u></p> <p><i>Well this position has a very broad range function; it has everything from curriculum issues, overseeing all the KLAs in the school, so I'm working very closely with all the HODs there and not just the curriculum issues but also the pedagogical issues which go with that and whether or not we are using 'best practice' here in terms of middle schooling and all the rest of it. So I'll start with that because that really</i></p>	<p><i>Yep, I guess it's very early days yet in terms of the academic stuff.....the biggest thing is probably in the behaviour, the Smart Choices process,what that means or indicates to us is that the connections with the students are better, and they are more engaged, and while the academic may not be substantially improved, but there is more value and more reason to be in class, than to be disruptive and being somewhere else.</i></p>

<p>is 'core business'. I have a staff of 8 to look after; mostly they are English/SOSE teachers and that is interesting for me as a maths science teacher to bounce the ideas off.</p>	<p>So that's a reasonable sort of indicators after just 18 months....</p>
<p><u>G – HOD</u></p> <p>OK. I guess there is a multitude of roles in the job description for Heads of Department.last year we did a review of each of our departments and then we had to present that one at a time at a Heads of Department meeting. And it enabled us to see what other HODs were doing. We don't get the time to sit down and do that and also to reflect on our own department. And what came out of that, in my thinking, is my major contribution; I believe my prime job is to provide the resources and the structure in work programs and organization of that, so that my staff can do their job and teach. So I think my strength is organization.</p>	<p>Science probably doesn't have as high a profile in this school as it does in perhaps some more academically inclined schools and that's part of my doing too I suppose, I'm not an up front kind of person wanting the headlines and that sort of things, I prefer to just do the job the best I can as I am required to do. I certainly advocate for Science when kids are looking for subject selection. And when kids do good things in Science and in competitions I like to let the school and community to know.</p>
<p><u>H – Registrar</u></p> <p>Well I have three key responsibilities; first is finance, and overseeing that in its totality; second is facility management; and the third is HR related for all non-teaching staff.</p>	<p>(Unable to discern)</p>

4.5.1 Commentary on Table 4

As Table 4 illustrates, all these respondent subjects identified the “object” of their respective leadership roles in the school as it related to their core positional responsibilities. These roles and responsibilities they had developed from “prior experience” and/or from direct “learning on the job”. This appeared to be a common pattern, though it was evident in discussion with some participants that they were not really able to articulate clearly what they perceived to be a common core object for the entire school. This is not surprising given the observation by Engeström (1999, p. 3) that “object-oriented actions are always, explicitly or implicitly, characterized by ambiguity, surprise, interpretation, sense making, and potential for change”.

Neither were most respondents able to draw a clear and precise linkage between their own particular job or positional responsibilities and a “common outcome” for the entire

school. There was a variety of outcomes inferred from respondents' comments, including pragmatic purposes such as "making the school safe"; to building a supportive learning environment for students and staff. There was also evidence to suggest that some of the business dealings of the school-community integration work (referred to earlier in this chapter), in which the Principal and a few other staff members were heavily engaged, was not known about nor understood by a number of the teaching staff within the school. There was strong evidence however that the Principal took considerable time to deal with the management of internal information and attention to administrative "core business" – this evidence was obtained during observations of the senior administration team meetings and the middle management team meetings with the HODs. Coordination, correlation and internal information management processes were evident in all of the meetings observed during the research period. Figure 5 provides a summarised graphical display using the activity theory triangular model, of the main objects and outcomes depicted by the respondents.

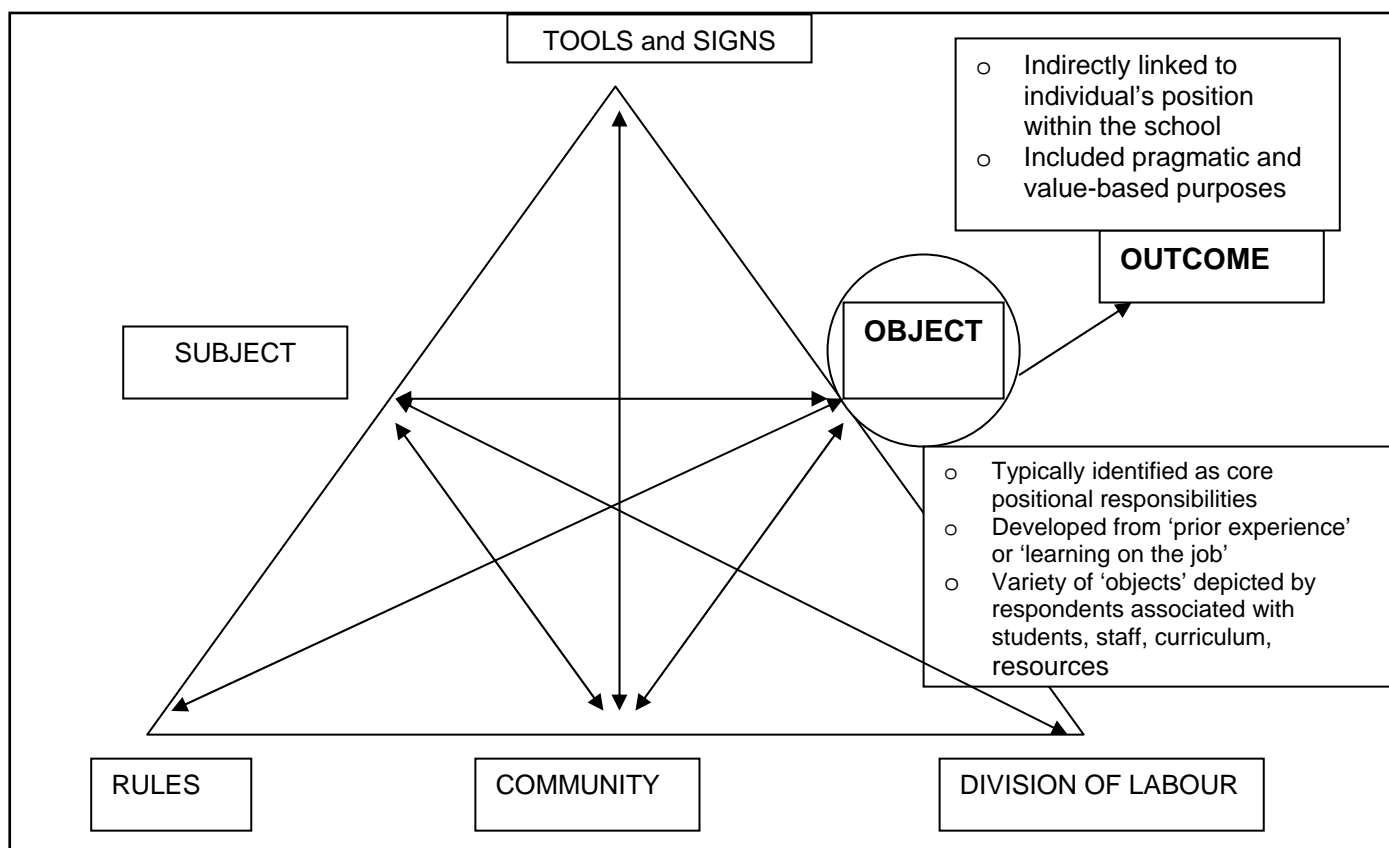


Figure 5. Depictions of Southern SHS objects and outcomes.

One of the emergent tensions which this descriptive analysis revealed was the perceived lack of ability by respondents to clearly articulate a common objective for the school as an activity system. This is not atypical for large secondary schools, where there are strong subject and disciplinary boundaries that may act to diffuse the object. This tension is addressed in more detail in the next chapter.

4.6 Communities of Interest and Perspectives of Sub-groups

As indicated in the previous commentary, individual respondents in Southern SHS represented a variety of perspectives and viewpoints about their respective roles, relationships and objectives within the school's activity system. In order to elicit information on whom respondents interacted with in their jobs and the types of relationships they developed, the following questions were asked:

- o *Who else is generally involved in working with you here?*
- o *How do you relate what you do with other individuals or groups in the school or those associated with the school?*

Table 5 contains a selection of four different respondents' perspectives in relation to these questions. One respondent is a Deputy Principal, two are HODs, the fourth is an external leader – the General Manager of the affiliated Southern Education Association. Each respondent identifies a range of others with whom they interact in the school community as well as commenting on the type of professional and personal relationships which they had formed with these individuals or groups in pursuing their own work or performing leadership or management functions. The purpose in this table is to provide a sampling of the nature of the interactions and relationships rather than describe every aspect in detail.

Table 5

Interactions and Relationships at Southern SHS

Types of Interactions and Relationships
<p><u>Respondent C: Deputy Principal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>On a daily basis? B and I work very closely together. ...and I think that has saved my sanity on a number of occasions. I find that really good that I've got that person there that I have such a good professional working relationship with as well as a personal relationship. We work on completely different things. So from the professional side of things we're not actually assisting each other with what we are doing so much as having...the debrief</i> o <i>I don't know if B said this to you, but there were apparently when I came into this role, there were bets around the place as to how long it would be before we had a major blow up. And so we've shocked everyone, apparently, by how well we have gotten along together. And we do</i>

we really do. And if I need, I have limited knowledge of timetabling things like that and that and B has low levels in curriculum and that. But I know I can go to B and say what do you think of this if she thinks she can help me and have some input she will. But if she thinks it is beyond her she will say, mate I can't help you. You know who else do you think you could ask? I think we are pretty honest with each other in our abilities and where our abilities lie.

- yeah and I think that there are people in your workplace that you choose to keep at a professional level and there are those others that you just connect with....
- I guess K and I have established a really good relationship as well cause she is in my (old) role. As far as the student stuff is concerned I have every faith in student services. If I have a query and I've got a kid in here and I'm dealing with a kid and I think something going on here and I need to know more, I have no hesitation in going to any of those people. As far as the deputy position and some of the EQ requirements, the ladies in this office they have been here a long time. They have been given so much responsibility for some of those things that most other school deputies have to take care of themselves. They're fantastic. P is great and D has come on board as part of this team. We are getting to know D really well. The HODs in this school are really good.
- No I think it was a really bad day for all of us yesterday I think it was just one of those days. Everything happened at once and we had other things happening today and we needed to prepare for it. So and I had actually a couple of HODs come up to me and say how did you go? And I had someone ring me this morning and say I was really worried about you getting home safely yesterday. The support from a lot of people around here is really good

Respondent E: HOD, Industrial Arts

- Yeah individuals that spring to mind, certainly U from the Housing Industry Association (HIA) – and V from Construction Training Queensland (CTQ) is a huge player. People like W from W Industries, X from X Industries are significant players here at our school. But in addition to that, because I am on the board with CTQ and HIA I get to meet other significant players like the unions and the TAFE colleges. So I am on their education...I am on their training boards.
- Well the HIA will have, through its membership, they have a training board. And I am a member of the training board and I am chairman of the schools partnership committee. CTQ – the Construction Training Queensland is the industry ITAB. That is the co-ordinator and the mechanism by which the funds are distributed from the building industry training fund. So as an education representative on there I get to be with other industry representatives from the unions, from the TAFE colleges, from the apprenticeship boards, from the group training schemes, from the group apprenticeship schemes and things like that.
- Well, personally I believe that it is important all leaders must have a mentor. That they have someone that they can talk to in a mastermind arrangement, whereby they can sit down and talk openly about the common good, the common goal. So I chose P to be my mentor. And I identified him to be the one to advise me and to see me from an external perspective as to how

I am travelling and what I need to do as an individual to become a better leader. And so I have a very close relationship with P whereon I communicate to him on different levels. I communicate to him on a professional level, on a personal level, and then on a...what you would call a dreaming level or a spiritual level about what things may be and what things could be. About the philosophy, about the ideology of what it is we are trying to achieve here.

- *So that then leads me to my relationships with my (colleagues).... And then any good leader has to have an eye for talent. And you find the talent wherever it exists, be it in your department, be it in other departments. So for example I have very good relationships with some of the Maths and Science teachers, the work education teachers and I have a person in the English department that I have pursued a professional relationship with to glean from them some of their expertise in literacy and communication that we don't have down here. And so I do actively seek out and look for talent that I can see.*

Respondent F: HOD, Middle School

- *Yes in the same offices which I share with I, we have got M, who is the Southern Behaviour Advisory Visiting Teacher and because most of our behavioural issues are with Year 8 and 9 students. She (M) closely works with me in terms of the students who just don't fit the school mould, and I can go and talk with her and say 'well what sort of programs do we have?' and so we have a close alliance and she works here three days a week*
- *Some other staff I work with regularly include the teacher aides who staff the planning room (behaviour centre) and carry out the tasks over there under my direction.....technically she (O) is my teacher-aide as well, and she deals with all the truancy and things like that as well, she deals with the contact with parents and all that stuff and she deals with me on issues similar to M, as most of the issues are there within the 8s and 9s.*
- *And when it comes to 10s, 11s and 12s there are lots of other options – they can go to work they can go through Work Right, etc, etc; but of course the 8s and 9s, the law says 'you have got to be at school' and of course we have a close working relationship, because a lot of the students she deals with are the same as the ones who are getting into behaviour difficulties which I see*
- *Yes, we have a correlation committee which is chaired by K and there a number of others who are part of that group who attend. I personally don't actually attend the committee meetings themselves as I have a responsibility for teaching classes myself, and it is always difficult to find time, when you have so many other commitments. So generally I deal through K on that committee to find out what is going on; and of course M quite often attends those meetings as well.*

Respondent A: General Manager, SEA

- *Traditionally I put roots down, which is the reason I am still around I guess; I could go into the corporate sector and be making a lot of money, but I am very community-based and I like P's philosophy so to work along side P suited my professional interests as well. I guess I come*

from a social justice perspective myself, and I would like to look at improving pathways for young people in particular, but Work Right has allowed us capacity to manage that a bit more holistically and provide support for parents as well.

- *Well, yes I am addressing a HOD's meeting next week, about the distinction between the different arrangements within Work Right, to try and help HODs get that message through, that even though we are still on-site, just don't send any kids to us and that we are going to solve all their problems.*
- *So that is happening next week, and I've teed that up through Z, the acting Principal; and that is something I've asked for, and when she first came over I called her up and said I think we need to have a talk to see where we fit in the scheme of things; and I got to talk with her administration team about our timeline and where we fitted in Work Right, and so that was important for her, and I wanted to follow that through and filter it out into the broader school personnel. So we are doing a presentation at the HOD's meeting; part of the reference group for the Lets Go program, which is our alternative education program, which we are doing down here; and that is in partnership with Southern and River high schools; and we are the community agency, and part of the reference group for that.*
- *Z, P, myself and H are also on the executive of the Southern City School to Work, which is another hybrid organization; it provides the local community partnership funding through DEST, to deliver structured workplace learning to students, and career and transition support and adopt-a-school initiative, which has been around for some time in a number of guises.*
- *So that is another incorporated body, but the schools in this district manage that, so again it's almost the same core people who keep coming up with their heart in this community.*
- *So a part of that, I meet a bit with K (Head of student services) and she was down the other day and I said can we meet? I've got a funding opportunity and I would like to work in partnership with the school, and it was on about suicide prevention strategy, but we decided I wouldn't apply, but the school will apply in its own right with different partners, and that suits just fine.*

4.6.1 Commentary on Table 5

The data recorded in Table 5 reveal only a small sample of the wide range of interactions and relationships which were operating in the Southern SHS activity system. These examples were chosen to demonstrate the complexity and diversity of the interactions amongst individuals who performed various leadership roles within the school. Whilst the individuals featured are all in formally designated leadership positions, it is clear that they perform much of their day-to-day work in collaboration with numerous co-workers, many of whom are not in formal leadership roles within the school. The interaction transcripts reveal some interesting types of relationships associated with a distributed leadership perspective.

First are the two female Deputy Principals who, whilst new to their jobs, have developed a close personal and professional friendship where they both "connect" – what has been called an "intuitive working relationship" (Gronn, 2003, p. 4). This type of trusting relationship has enabled them to fulfil many leadership functions and management routines drawing on each other's strengths and seeking to overcome weaknesses or lack of knowledge about aspects of their respective jobs. As the transcript reveals, they have not clashed in sharing leadership functions (as some staff had predicted) but have defined a productive and mutually supportive complementary relationship within the senior management team of the school.

The second set of examples is provided by two of the HODs, who illustrate two different styles of interaction and relationship formation in their leadership activities. E, the Industrial Arts HOD, has formed very strong professional relationships with key individuals and industry groups outside his school. These relationships he describes as being beneficial for the students and increasing their post-school options and school-based training initiatives for career development. E, however, also comments on the important internal relationships he has nurtured within Southern SHS – these include the mentoring relationship with the Principal as well as the inter-departmental connections he has explored to improve his own knowledge and departmental operations.

The illustrations from the Middle School HOD, F, emphasize that his main interactions and relationships with other staff members are more internally focussed on students. This is largely due to the nature of his dual role as a leader of pedagogical reforms in the school as well as being the day-to-day manager of the behaviour support service.

The last example provided in Table 5 comes from A, the head of SEA and *Work Right*, whose comments demonstrate the scope of her personal relationships and professional interactions with a number of leaders and staff members at Southern SHS. She also reveals the extent of her wide-ranging interactions within the community, and the professional networking which she and other key leaders of Southern SHS have developed over time.

Figure 6 summarises the respondent data using the activity theory triangular format.

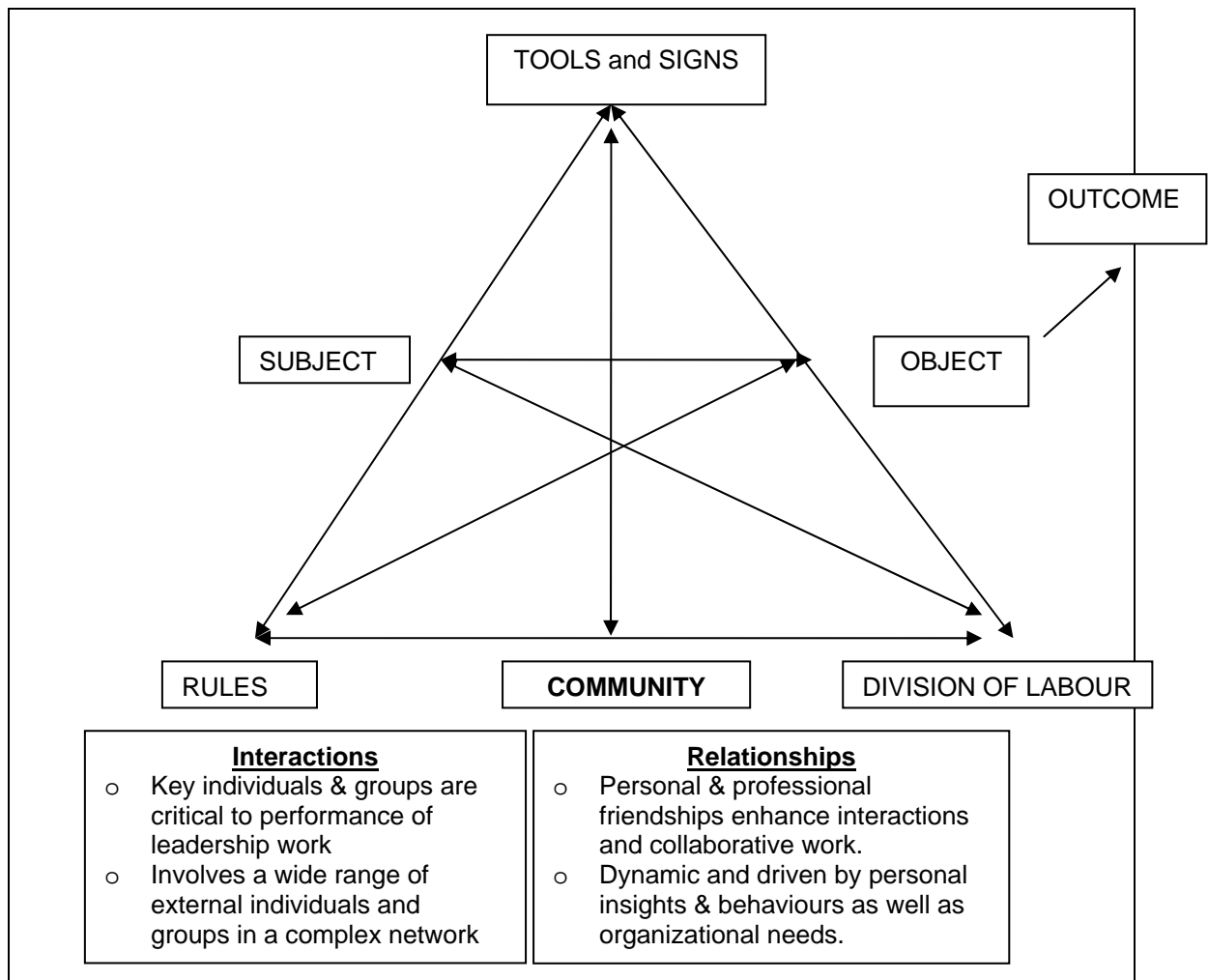


Figure 6. Interactions and relationships in Southern SHS community.

Two of the tensions emerging from this descriptive aspect of Southern SHS as an activity system are:

- the challenges faced by positional leaders in building trusting relationships amongst individuals and groups within the school community; and
- establishing what is core business for a school and how lateral networking can create benefits and challenges for those who engage in this type of leadership activity.

4.7 Mediating Artefacts – Tools and Signs

In activity theory, “tools” and “signs” are depicted as mediating artefacts or resources which may facilitate or enhance an individual’s ability to achieve a particular objective or outcome. In the structured interviews at Southern SHS, respondents were asked to describe how they utilize either “physical tools” such as instruments, signs, books or equipment; and/or “psychological tools” such as methods, concepts or forms of

discourse to advance their purpose or objectives as a leader. Table 6 provides a list of examples from the respondent interview dataset to depict this dimension of the school activity system in answer to the following questions:

- o *What are the main ways you accomplish your key responsibilities and duties?*
- o *What physical or psychological tools or resources are essential in doing your job?*
- o *What part do meetings and teams play in your job?*

Table 6

Mediating Artefacts and Resources at Southern SHS

Psychological tools	Physical tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>Arrogance (laughing).... I'm actually not joking because you really have to in order to stand strong and stand by your decisions. <u>I</u> stand by the arrogance...I do think that you need to have an element of it to stick to your decisions, and not be swayed when you know it is a good decision, or when you have made a decision which you know is in the best interest of everyone and you just stand strong on that.</i> o <i>I have my psyche training, where I've looked at group dynamics, and everything from Myers-Briggs and anagrams and all those sorts of things; which you know helps me when I'm looking at constructing an effective team, and if I want agents of change, how do I find them and how do I get them;</i> o <i>Through my HR university training, dealing with organizational culture; efficient management of HR, and I guess through the company I worked for outside EQ, was the ability to be a little more holistic, was vital...you don't get bogged down in the personalities;</i> o <i>and that is a training you get with the ability to actually delegate, the ability to let go; and I know I have got stuck in that</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>... a current book I'm reading is called 'Good to Great'; and I'm finding that it's tools like that, where I think I'm at a good level, but oh god, I'm still at level one, for goodness sake! and it helps you see your own flaws, but it also helps me to say, 'Well where is P on this?' and could I do anything better, what could I improve....that is vital... that's vital, to be constantly learning about my own leadership style...that's the key for deputies; I think once people get to deputies, they think they are good leaders and that's it.</i> o <i>So 'Good to Great' was influential... successful people 'Seven Habits.....' ; we are just getting into that, C is taking the whole staff through that, Covey; I'm getting into that sort of stuff as self-reflection.</i> o <i>My body tells me, if I'm not coping or stressed, what am I not doing right and what am I doing wrong.</i> o <i>And that is my one true coping mechanism with the kids, because when you are that angry at them, you</i>

<p><i>devolving and even though they are brilliant, I am actually hindering them or getting in the way...I'm stifling them by being there.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Also the team...it's really vital that I have support around me. I think the actual support network inside the school, because no-one understands your job better than the person working beside you doing it</i> ○ <i>I've done it through a mentor_(by yelling at me!); I've done it through P. . I find a mentor is vital here; as a HOD I had a mentor, and I have a mentor now as a deputy. But the mentor, is a concept, rather than an actual person; for example P is a major part of it, but I have people that I have, or books that I'm reading.....</i> ○ <i>I've done it through staff, because staff will soon tell you if you are doing a bad job, the staff tell you before anyone else will tell you.</i> ○ <i>Um, when my family tells me, that I'm getting cranky.... You know they will tell me 'You're not coping' when I lose my sense of humour; cause that is a key part of who I am as a person</i> ○ <i>and I think you need the full 360 feedback. I've done 360 personally,</i> ○ <i>and another thing is that when I broke my arm last year, another HOD stepped up into my role, when I came back I sat with her for an hour and asked her, 'OK, what did you see in my systems which were just crazy, or were dumb?;</i> ○ <i>again it's a HR tool at university which I learnt, which said if you want to get an accurate appraisal of your work</i> 	<p><i>can't breathe... you know you get them laughing at you, it becomes impossible to be mad at them when you're laughing, it's just impossible.</i></p>
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<p>performance, ask the person that replaced you, because they are the people who discover all the things that you've done that are just hidden away in corners (laughs) and 'what was she thinking...?' Um, so I have done that sort of feedback as well.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Talking about my role as a leader in my department: I do use some tools. For example, I have used three or four psychological measures for my staff, such as the Meyers-Briggs, and I have also used the information I have got from the personality types. ○ We went and had a three day leadership camp, professional development camp over at Couran Cove two years ago and I pursued Y and got the data out of that and I found the profiles that were on each of my guys and used his profiling and asked him what that meant and since that time I've spoken to Y on probably five or six occasions about how to develop different roles. ○ I've also used P as a mechanism for forward thinking and succession planning. ○ So apart from those things there, other professional development I've been to on leadership would sort of more or less blend those ideas together. The highly effective parts from Covey's work are very important because when you start to do these things, when you share the vision, and as the leader I am the holder of the vision, OK, I believe I have the vision, my vision is probably five to six years down the track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Similar to that was Phil Jauncey, he has a book that he has written on personality types as well, so Phil Jauncey's work we've used a bit of that and then Andrew Lester from Contab. ○ Other than those tools there, I do use some philosophical viewpoints from the Stephen Covey work. And Hyrum Smith, so Stephen Covey is the Seven Basic Habits of Highly Effective People. Hyrum Smith is the Ten Laws of Life and Time Management. ○ Other sort of books that I would use along the way: Awakening the Giant Within is Anthony Robbins stuff

4.7.1 Commentary on Table 6

Table 6 provides insights into the variety of tools that these leaders utilise in the accomplishment of their core duties and responsibilities. There is clear evidence of individuals who have used their prior training and skill development in building up a repertoire of competencies, methods and strategies to enhance their leadership work. In this leadership practice, the application of personal cognitive resources or behavioural traits (e.g., “arrogance”) function as psychological tools in enabling leaders to engage with individuals or groups within the school social system. There is also evidence that different physical tools and signs, such as self-improvement books and interpretations of motivational texts, contribute to the resources upon which these leaders draw in their work. The physical responses and emotional reactions noted by one respondent provide an interesting insight into the physiology of leadership which carries health-related implications for those who are in positional roles.

A number of respondents identified the importance of building teams amongst their natural work groups and using ad hoc groups or committees to develop new ideas and create more effective ways of accomplishing the core business of a particular department or for the entire school. Table 7 provides a sample of some of the main types of teams involved in meetings and committees at Southern SHS and the nature of the activity in which they engaged.

Table 7

Teams and Meetings at Southern SHS

Type of group or team	Nature of the activity
Departmental team meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>But we have specific meetings every Friday morning that speak about the issues. And how that relates to our philosophy.</i> ○ <i>So you know like, we have regular meetings; I have subject coordinators that you know I delegate things like the preparation of exams, unit overviews. All they have to do is see me and say is this ok, what should we be doing? Obviously I check more with the senior subjects.</i>
School-wide committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>When I run a committee I am merely there to facilitate it. I let them work out what they want to have happen. And then I believe in the communication of that information is really important. After every meeting I do up minutes of that meeting. I give it to every HOD. They have a folder in their staffrooms where all the admin stuff is supposed</i>

	<p>to go. And I say to them put it in your admin folder so that all the teachers can see what is going on. And can...everyone knows what's happening.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Because I often get feedback from other people who aren't on the committee. I talk about what the committees are doing at meetings. I make an agenda list for meetings. So I will talk about it at HODs meetings. Or I often talk about things at staff briefings. And I'll say look the curriculum committee, the staff health and well being committee just to give you an update, this is what's going on at the moment. ○ Absolutely, that is why I actually delegated quite a few things when I was acting – I was head of quite a few committees, I was head of the workplace health and safety committee, and I delegated my position off; I actually asked staff members ... and what it does, it gives staff members a bit of get up and go and they go 'I'm in charge of this'. ○ all committees here at the school are by invitation. So yes I do the curriculum. C runs it we have just looked at the reporting last year and now we are looking at the subject pathways for students. ○ I run a couple of committees and I look at other people still coming. Have I been able to maintain the numbers on the committees? Are we actually doing something or are we meeting for the hell of meeting? So I look at those things and I measure my outcomes in terms of that. I hate meetings. I really hate meetings so as far as I am concerned...I won't say that to the committees...if we're not actually making something happen then we need to give up. So we measure and there with me particularly the curriculum committee they're probably the most awesome group of people I have ever worked with. And they're on my wavelength and we are making things happen and they're measuring progress in the same way now which is really great.
<p>Heads of Departments middle management meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I guess there is a multitude of roles in the job description for Heads of Department. I will probably reflect on something...last year we did a ...this is the Heads of Department, P had us do a review of each of our departments and then we had to present that one at a time at a Heads of Department meeting. And it enabled us to see what other HODs were doing. ○ Yes, the HODs and deputies – (meet) every Monday. It was interesting the other day we actually had someone come and talk to us about middle management and we were running through different ideas to improve our middle management; and one of the things was to pick out

	<p><i>someone from the heads of department and someone else in the administration that you don't really know well, and I couldn't do it; I know all of them really well because of my job, because I deal with all of them on a regular basis, so I just sat beside someone and we just talked, um because they know me pretty well. So that is a big aspect of this job.</i></p>
<p>Senior administration meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>We've brought N into the admin team and it's been interesting, because she has had difficulties. She has had difficulties with the need to make the decision and stand by it and also in working under pressure and just making sure that you hit the deadlines and that you don't make errors in administrivia things that may affect the whole school. She is only doing an elementary sort of job which is the daily substitutions, but that has been a bit of a test for her.</i> ○ <i>And she has found it difficult on Tuesday's mornings just getting into our meetings and of course those meetings are very hard, fast and sharp and get through the items very quickly. You've seen them, and then we just get through the agenda of the meeting, make and confirm the decisions, and if there is any debate, we just stop and have to move on. I've given them the responsibility of making the decisions, and then beyond them the committees that they lead also to make the decisions, the power to make the decisions; and just keep running by me what you're doing and keep me in the loop.</i>

4.7.2 Commentary on Table 7

This aspect of the activity system at Southern SHS provides insights into the leadership practice that takes shape in the interactions amongst leaders, followers and their situations. The examples chosen reveal that the formation of teams or committees and their participation in meetings are high profile artefacts and tools used by leaders in the school activity system. The formation of teams comprising leaders and followers occurred at all levels of the school's operational life including:

- small departmental teams bounded by a common subject domain structure and engaged in a variety of functional activities, including correlation of timetables, delegation of administrative duties, curriculum planning and assessment, student welfare, and so forth;
- committees that dealt with school-wide matters such as curriculum, workplace health and safety, behaviour management – most of these groups were formed

as forums for staff members to participate in defined areas of organizational practice; and

- formal decision-making groups that included the middle management team (all of the HODs with the senior administration) and the senior administration team (consisting of the Principal, Deputy Principals, Head of Special Education and the Registrar) who met independently.

Due to the large number of staff at Southern SHS, large formal meetings of all staff members were uncommon and reserved for one or two occasions during the year when combined professional development programs were offered. The most common impression which emerged from observing various teams operating at the school was that positional leaders were the main initiators and facilitators of each group's business or actions. Figure 7 summarises the artefacts and resources, including teams and meetings, which were utilised by leaders at Southern SHS.

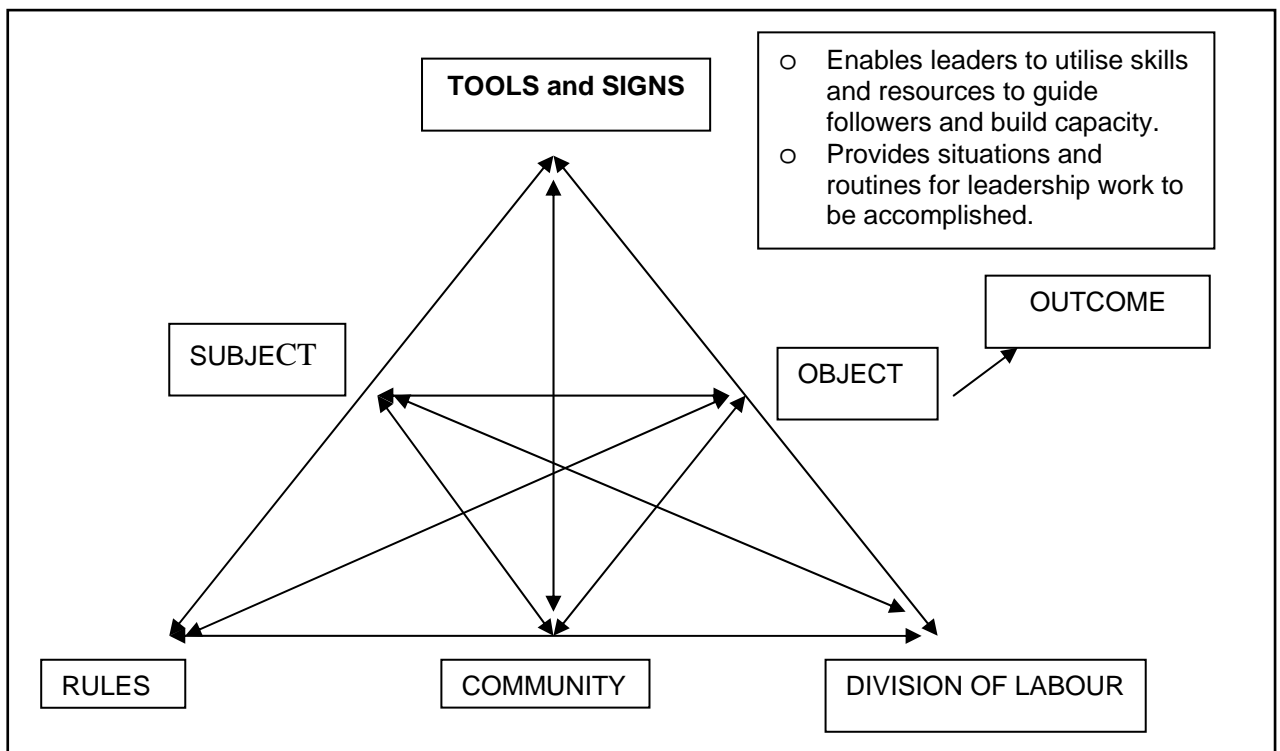


Figure 7. Mediating artefacts – tools and signs.

Analysing detailed interactions among leaders and followers in these various groups and teams was not undertaken in this study. However, there was evidence in the descriptive data to suggest that tensions had arisen over committee membership,

communication practices and co-performance of leadership practice in some of these groups. Aspects of these tensions are analysed in further detail in the next chapter.

4.8 Rules and Constraints

In activity theory, **rules** refer to the explicit and implicit regulations, norms and conventions that constrain actions and interaction within the activity system. In the Southern SHS study, these rules and constraints were explored using the following questions directed to respondents:

- o *What rules or regulations constrain your work as a leader in the school?*
- o *Do you have access to sufficient information and resources necessary to perform your job well?*
- o *Are you satisfied with the regulations, norms and conventions of the school as well as those from outside the school?*

Table 8 provides a descriptive analysis of the responses provided by selected participants. The table lists the respondent subject's position and outlines some of the factors related to rules, regulations and conventions which they believed impacted on their work within Southern SHS. In the third column, a brief description is provided of the implications of the identified constraints.

Table 8
Rules and Constraints at Southern SHS

Subject	Rules and Constraints	Implications
B Deputy Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>And what hinders us, staff and parents..... concerns over litigation... the way that the court system works. You may come up with a fantastic idea, but you can't do it, because the risk of litigation. On the other hand, when I talk with parents, I talk about things like workplace health and safety legislation and duty of care; and I say to them, well do you want me to over-step that, and they say 'oh no we wouldn't want you to overstep that'. So for every positive there's a negative and for every negative, there's a positive.</i> o <i>Yep, the hierarchy. I know that they have changed the whole hierarchy above us – because we've got the regional executive directors above us now, we've still got the district directors, but P now actually deals with the Regional Executive Director (RED) as he does with District</i> 	<p>Threat of external litigation imposes constraints on the procedural activities which a school might engage in as part of its curriculum.</p> <p>The organizational re-structure of DETA with another layer of management at regional level, has slowed down</p>

	<p><i>Executive Director (DED) but it stops at principal level.....That communication; it stops at principal level; and the funny thing is the day-to-day running of the school are the deputies. So, in my mind, I would say that I would probably be the one to associate more with the DED, at District level, because at district office they deal more with the day-to-day running of the schools. P doesn't have much to do with the day-to-day running of the school, because P is 'out here' in the stratosphere, so he should be dealing more with the RED; but district office only deal with P, so when they ring up and talk with him about a staffing issue, he says 'Mmm, right...'. They don't want to talk with us, they only deal with the principals, because ultimately P is responsible for the decision that we make; but it just slows all the processes down.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>.... I think they have tried to minimise the hierarchy, but they haven't gone to the next level beyond the principal. They've stopped at the principal, but they haven't really looked at the day-to-day running of an actual school; and if they did, they would see that 9 times out of 10, the day-to-day decisions of the school are done by the deputies. Hopefully, in consultation with the Principal, so that he knows what is going on (small laugh)...we try really hard not to tell him in hindsight, we try and tell him upfront.</i> 	<p>communication lines.</p> <p>Hierarchal protocols have imposed constraints on the role of associate administrators such as Deputy Principals</p>
<p>C Deputy Principal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Yes we're looking at a whole staff perspective not just teaching staff. We're looking at...we're trying to...trying to get rid of the barriers between the staff. And I think there are, barriers in this school. I think that...I think that they're not necessary and I think that it's a better work environment for everybody if they don't exist. So you know, we are trying to talk. Now when people hear me talk about staff, they're starting to get the picture that I'm not talking about teachers, I'm talking about everybody. Yeah. So I'm really trying to work on that.</i> ○ <i>Kids that have disengaged from here and we've lost and they've literally disappeared and they were like 14 years of age. I've found them. And I've got them reengaged down the road (in an alternative centre program)..... we've</i> 	<p>Internal conventions and norms about the positioning and status of teaching and non-teaching staff.</p> <p>DETA is</p>

	<p><i>employed a teacher, a trained teacher down there, we got permission to actually advertise in the print media which was a hell of a process let me tell you because I really don't have anyone here who is the right person.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>But I find some of the system stuff. In all honesty. While they are saying to schools...and this is something I have worked through recently. We need to find a way to re-engage our kids there are so many disengaged ra ra ra...that whole process in setting up that centre down there was ridiculous.....even to put an ad in the bloody paper. It was just like....you know they want you to do this stuff and yet the ability to do it is hindered so much and the extra hours of work that the thing created was just simply ridiculous...in all honesty.... because of EQ rules.</i> 	<p>encouraging schools to develop re-engagement programs for drop-out youth but also imposes a range of rules and regulations which make the process very difficult for schools</p>
<p>G HOD</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>One thing in terms of your staffing. I have a lady at the moment. She came to the school last year from overseas. Very good teacher, very experienced. And she came in on some sort of contract last year.And she is in staff but she is on contract until September..... And you know I've got two ladies from this department who are on maternity leave and both dropped in yesterday. One has got no immediate plans to return. One probably perhaps part time. But the thing that annoys me is that this teacher is a particularly good teacher. I want her full time. I have expressed that to P, I have expressed that to B. And I know that their hands are kind of tied too. My concern is that if we don't find her full time, she will find a job elsewhere. She has already asked me if I would be a reference and I said yeah. She would love to stay here. I have had this kind of thing happen before. You know you get a good person in on a contract and the Department stand on their hands and do nothing..... And we end up losing them to somewhere else. It's just the frustration.</i> ○ <i>.....workplace health and safety. If we followed everything to the letter of the law we would never get anything done. You can take a pace into one of our prep rooms or into the lab and anywhere. And things that don't meet the regulations and we can spend countless amounts of</i> 	<p>DETA regulations relating to the offering of contracts versus permanent positions creates constraints for school administrators seeking to employ the best staff</p> <p>Industrial rules and regulations relating to workplace health and safety standards within various subject departments (e.g., science) have become onerous and very difficult to</p>

	<p><i>money and resources on that and so it's sort of...there's a fine line there between what is necessity what you follow, and lab rules and stuff like that. When teachers order prac stuff they are supposed to do a risk analysis on every prac they do. Well you know you multiply the number of staff by the number of classes by the number of pracs they do, mate, you would be here forever. My two labbys they are already worked off their feet as it is and then they would have to process all of this. If they see/know something is not going to be potentially safe, if it is serious like that, they will come and see me direct. Or they will just go to the teacher and say we are not prepared to give you this. Or here is a better way of doing this. And that is more workable. It's just...whoever developed the Workplace Health and Safety Act. It has just grown into a hierarchy of unbelievable magnitude, in terms of relations and paper. We want a safe work environment. I don't say that it is not important. I think we have gone to the extreme. You can invest your whole time just being concerned with that. And like doing science experiments there is always a risk.</i></p>	<p>manage</p>
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4.8.1 Commentary on Table 8

Excerpts from the respondent data are mainly related to external rules and constraints which leaders report as being a hindrance to them in their work. The examples recorded in Table 8 indicate that leaders and followers at Southern SHS are regularly faced with barriers or constraints to their practice. Most of these barriers appear to originate from various forms of legislation and departmental policy or guidelines which are part of the wider social system to which Southern SHS is connected. Whilst acknowledging that legislation is a necessary factor impacting on school operations, including teachers' work and leadership practice, respondents noted there is very little degree of freedom in compliance with this legislation or policy. This is obviously a source of some frustration, especially in the interactions between the school as an activity system and the wider departmental activity system.

By contrast, respondents appeared to be very satisfied with the level of information and resources which they received to do their jobs in the school. Many commented on the very wide range of resources, both human and material, which the school possessed and which helped them in their work assignments. The one internal barrier noted

related to some of the internal conventions and norms about the positioning and status of teaching and non-teaching staff. One Deputy Principal indicated that this was “a problem” and that she taken a leadership role in attempting to ameliorate its influence.

As noted previously, Figure 8 summarises the respondent data using the activity theory triangular form.

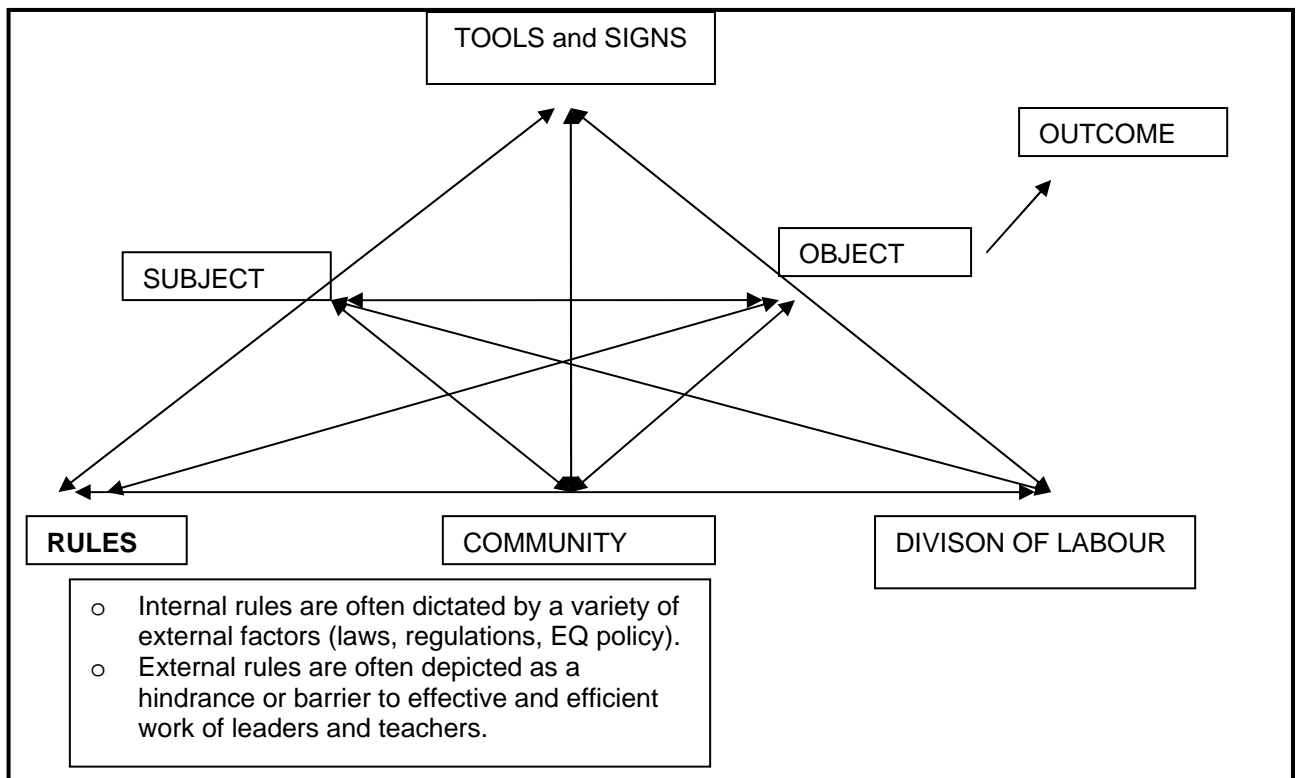


Figure 8. Summary of rules and constraints.

One of the main tensions identified in Table 8 centred around an organizational re-structure of DETA, which had resulted in the imposition of another layer of management at regional level. One Deputy Principal noted that the hierarchal protocols in dealing with senior executives at regional and district level had imposed constraints on the leadership role of associate administrators. This was seen as adding another layer of unnecessary administrative burden to the work of the school leaders. In the view of the writer, this was considered an impediment to developing an effective model of school-based leadership distribution and decision-making and is explored in more detail in Chapter Five.

4.9 Division of Labour

The *division of labour* refers to both the horizontal division of tasks between the various members of the school community and also to the vertical division of power and status.

E: Well the thing is like when you look at a situation like that, there are some people that believe that the division of labour should be delegated according to your pay packet, to your scale of pay. But I don't believe that personally. I believe that the division of labour is distributed according to the talent and enthusiasm that is available at that time. Everyone has an individual journey. And as a leader I would believe that when you have identified that talent if you understand people's strengths and people's weaknesses whether that be through a Meyers Briggs analysis or whether a personality trait type thing. But you work with people's strengths and you complement their weaknesses by building teams and by strategically working alliances that would be complementary nature to get the common good.

This statement by E, one of the more vocal HODs, not only provides an interesting insight into his perception of this concept, but makes a good descriptive starting point for this section. E believes that the vertical division of labour, defined by one's seniority level or pay scale, is a notion with which he disagrees. To elicit the breadth of opinions on this aspect of the activity system, respondents were asked to consider the following questions during the semi-structured interviews:

- o *How are leadership responsibilities and duties shared or distributed within the school?*
- o *Who decides on what work is shared with whom? How are major decisions reached?*
- o *Are there any aspects of the division of labour which concern you right now?*

The evidence from the respondent data to these questions has been initially coded into three overlapping arrangements as outlined in Table 9. The coding scheme has been derived from the work of Spillane (2006) who suggests that the distribution of responsibility for leadership routines in schools can occur in at least three ways: a division of labour, co-performance, and parallel performance. An explanation of each of these is provided in the left hand column in Table 9, with examples drawn from respondents in the right hand column. Bold text is used to highlight key elements in the transcripts related to the respective concepts discussed.

Table 9

Distribution of Responsibility for Leadership Routines at Southern SHS

Division of Labour	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders in different formal positions perform various functions sometimes with overlap of responsibilities. • Usually not a neat division and more related to formal delegation of functions and duties. • Division of labour with respect to leadership is not the standard operating procedure in most schools. • Where it does exist, predictable patterns can be difficult to identify. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Well, we've got lists of it and we talk about it all the time and we discuss it every time someone new comes into the team</i> • <i>I think that if you have been in the job of the HOD for a while, you get to understand things that are going to be assumed that are your responsibility. On top of the ones that you know definitely are. Every school will have a collection of those. As a new HOD I guess it is the stumble and learn process. I know the admin team, meet on a weekly basis. So they deal with big issues that need delegation and so on... And then we have HOD meetings each week as you know. So if there has been some decisions made to the admin meeting that is usually disseminated at the HODs meeting, where it gets brought at discussion amongst the HODs.</i> • <i>.... across the school now we have a clear set of guidelines that are absolutely 'non-negotiable' and that has been put in place by P and the previous admin team, and other people who have gone before, and they are a direct indication of the need for these kids to have good self-esteem, to be proud about themselves and the uniform and all that stuff; but in terms of the decision-making that happens on a daily basis, I think that right has been given to HODs</i> • <i>Again I think you've got all the usual problems that you have. You've got a reasonably large group of people, so sometimes to get a consensus is extremely difficult. Everyone's passionate about their own faculty so everyone looks at it particularly from a point of view, and that's what you want your middle managers to do. You want your HODs to be passionate about their subject areas and their faculties. Sometimes that then creates difficulty in getting them to look at it from the bigger picture but again they're being passionate and defending their subject area and doing those sorts of things, it's hard to tell them that they're wrong so there are issues with that as well.</i>
Co-performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For example, the behaviour management committee, I'm the</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves two or more leaders performing a function or routine in a collaborated fashion • Working together on projects or programs, formal leaders, teachers, and others (insiders and outsiders) perform leadership functions and routines 	<p><i>deputy but I also have every single HOD involved and I have 8 particular agents of change; so the HODs don't have to do a lot extra in their daily jobs, because it is the 8 agents of change, but they are all informed every step of the way; so that if for example, I left tomorrow... there are at least 3 or 4 HODs who know right now, the push for consistency for consequences; the next step is to get people involved in the timetable process and staffing.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>So that's why the three of us working as team is vital; because we need to make sure that we are not making decisions against each other; and as you were saying before, who makes those decisions, I make all the decisions as far as staffing is concerned; I don't ask B or D, I might ask a HOD and ask them about a particular staff member; but I would normally go... 'B just to let you know this is what I'm doing with this particular staff member'; B makes decisions about the curriculum committee, and then she will just let me know as a courtesy.</i> • <i>What we do talk about is, oh heck do I suspend this kid; or do I give him 5 days suspension, because that is something we need to be consistent about, because all three of us making decisions about these things. Um, so that's where, we are really quite autonomous in our area....D calls it the 'silo effect'; this is my silo, that's his and that's B's. And within our own silos we make our own major decisions, we simply just inform the others.</i> • <i>F and myself, decided two years ago, that middle schooling and senior schooling – F was over here (separate building) and senior schooling was in administration, and this was the reason why these offices were built; and we both agreed that we needed to be closer to each other, so that we could have, if you like, a dove-tailing of middle schooling with senior schooling; and so there is a clear pathway, so that they could see a clear pathway and also it gives us two points of contact, as F learnt more about senior schooling and I learnt more about middle schooling so that when F is not around, I can help out and vice versa</i> • <i>Targeting specific people and approaching them openly and transparently, works well for the staff at this school; given that we do have 115 staff out there, so we have a wealth of talent, experience and enthusiasm and passion....; the demographics shows the average age is 41; our biggest band of people have</i>
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	<p><i>been here 5 to 10 years, so we have got a lot of experience. So we know them and if I want a specific job done, I've got a pretty good idea in my mind already who I'm going to target who I think would be good at it. But we are starting to at the moment, instead of picking on one particular person, we are trying to get a culture change of a team, because we're conscious of the fact that we are overloading other people</i></p>
<p>Parallel Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders can often execute the same functions/routines – thus duplicating one another's work. • Redundancy or inefficiency can result – but this is not always bad news. • Multiple leaders working in parallel can help separately reinforce a vision and increase likelihood of staff buy-in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>... I think we need to communicate because there are lot of things that over cross one another as well, and it's like sometimes you get a little bit caught because you haven't communicated well enough and the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing yesterday afternoon in the staff health and well being committee we were having a discussion over something in the committee and I had one of the members say if two deputies can't even tell me how something should be and they both give totally opposing advice... and I thought oh goodness, what's that all about.... but obviously that's where staff do get disillusioned and I think we need to make sure, and this is with our middle-management, and right across, we need to make sure that things are communicated really well so that staff feel comfortable that we are all on the same page and that it's not conflicting.</i> • <i>So, for example, we've had changes over the years here about where the driving of the curriculum has come from – so in the past it has very much been, a curriculum deputy overseeing the heads of the subject area departments, but with changes over the years, people like myself and J in the middle and senior schooling, have become important in the leadership role with the curriculum deputy in seeing change happen, with J more with things like vocational education, and with me more in the middle school.</i>

4.9.1 Commentary on Table 9

The respondent data which are presented in Table 9 provide evidence of a variety of different arrangements for distributing leadership amongst formal and informal leaders at Southern SHS. The three arrangements of leadership responsibility – division of labour, co-performance and parallel performance – can involve leaders striving for similar goals or objectives. But it can also involve leaders striving for different or even conflicting goals as they take on responsibility for the same leadership routine (as evidenced in the “parallel performance” example). There are also indications in these

data on *how* leadership has been distributed or delegated at Southern SHS. There are clear indications in the initial comments by respondents that distribution has occurred by “design” (*we have formal lists*); there is also an indication of leadership functions and routines being taken on by default (*you get to understand things that are going to be assumed that are your responsibility*). Though not evident in Table 9, a third type of leadership distribution can result from a “crisis” or spontaneous collaboration (Gronn, 2003). One example of this was reported by the Principal in dealing with some major behavioural incidents between groups of male Polynesian students who were acting in a confrontational way with other students. The Principal reported that he and his senior staff left the resolution of the problem entirely in the hands of local cultural leaders who stepped in as authority figures and resolved the problems.

Within Table 9 there are also a number of examples which fit the theoretical propositions as posited by Spillane and outlined in Chapter Two. For example, in his “leadership plus” perspective, Spillane discusses the co-performance of leadership practice and identifies three types of distribution – collaborated, collective and coordinated. Each of these types of distributive leadership practice can be discerned in the data from Southern SHS, and reveal a variety of emergent tensions and contradictions which are evident in these accounts. Elaboration of aspects of these is provided in the next chapter.

Figure 9 summarises the respondent data using the activity theory triangular form.

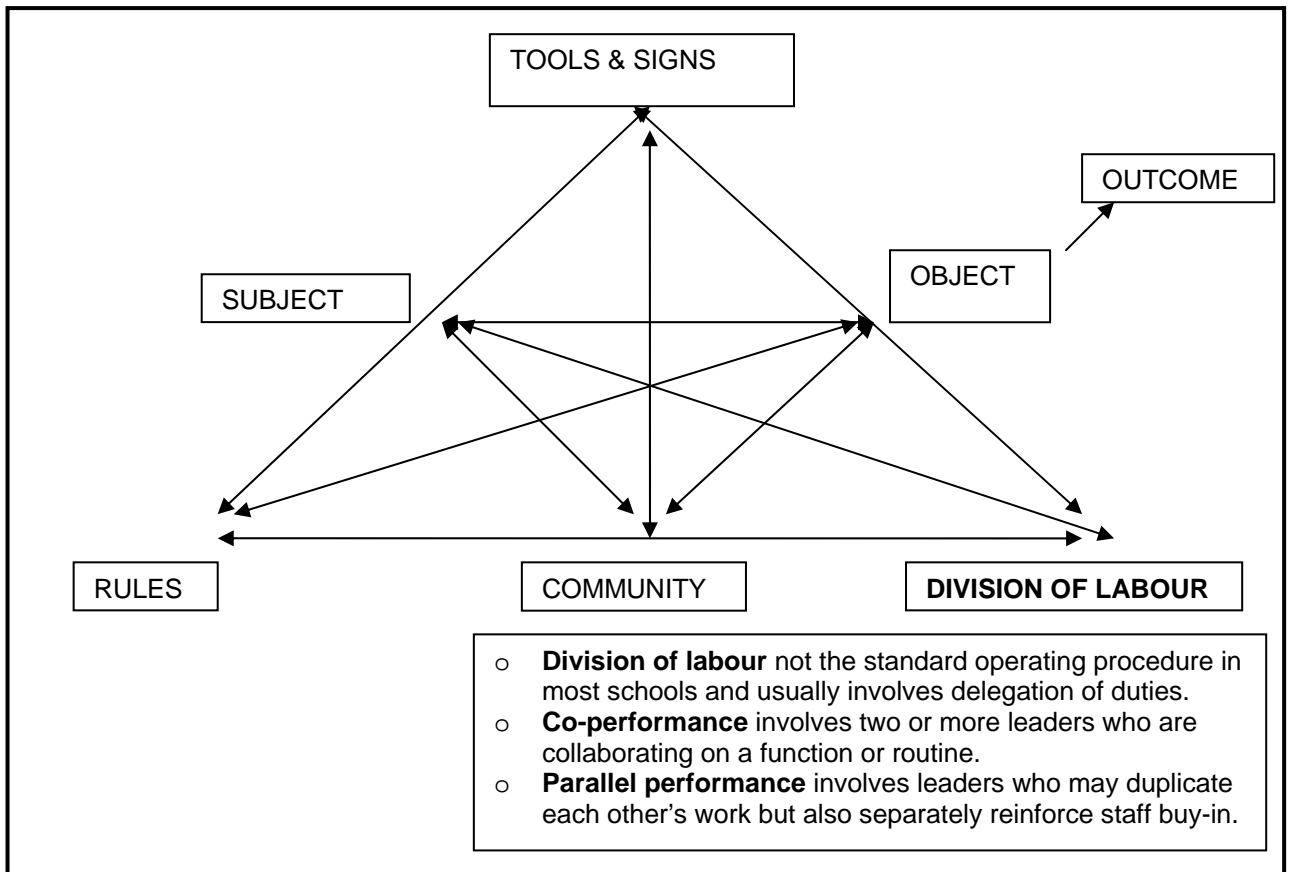


Figure 9. Summary of division of labour.

4.10 Summary of Chapter

To sum up, this chapter has presented an array of contextual and descriptive data associated with Southern SHS:

- as an interdependent operational unit of the broader public education system; and
- as a separate object-oriented system with its own unique history of development.

Using key concepts and terminology drawn from cultural-historical activity theory, the chapter has provided a descriptive account of the case study site. The initial analysis examined a wide range of interview data, school documents and associated literature on distributed leadership to describe the school as an activity system including the object, subject, community, tools, rules and division of labour. From this descriptive analysis, the case study data have been used to identify a number of *emergent tension points and contradictions* of the leadership activity in the school. These are now listed and summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

Tensions and Contradictions in Leadership Practice at Southern SHS

1. Diversity of objects in leadership roles
2. Building of trusting relationships
3. Leader-plus conceptualization
4. Leadership co-performance
5. Leadership practice conceptualization
6. Rules which constrain the work of leaders.

It is important to note that these tension points and contradictions are interrelated and, as defined by activity theory, play a central role as sources of potential change and development. It is also important to reemphasize that contradictions are not the same as problems or conflicts, but are historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems. The next chapter explores these tensions and contradictions from a critical perspective, relating that critique to key elements taken from the literature review contained in Chapter Two.

Chapter Five: Critical Analysis of Distributed Leadership at Southern State High School

5.1 Introduction

In the first part of this chapter, a number of emergent tensions and contradictions identified in the descriptive account of the preceding chapter are analysed. The conceptual and theoretical ideas of key theorists as outlined in Chapter Two are used to inform this critical analysis. The analysis examines in more fine-grained detail than was possible in the previous chapter, examples and evidence from the Southern SHS case study account which reflect the various dimensions of the activity system previously described. In the second part of this chapter, data from the case study school are plotted on a continuum of distributed leadership devised by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) and comparisons are made using five key pillars of distributed leadership drawn from the Hay Group study (2004).

The following outline gives an organising schema for the first part of the chapter. At the start of each section, a brief revision of various theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter Two is provided. Selected examples of tensions and contradictions are drawn from the case account and illustrated with the use of a series of vignettes. These are analysed using concepts taken from key theorists with interpretations offered based on the interaction between the data (tensions and contradictions) and the concepts. The following six sections are covered in the first part of the chapter:

1. diversity of objects in leadership roles,
2. building of trusting relationships,
3. leader-plus conceptualization and school committee example,
4. leadership co-performance and student discipline example,
5. leadership practice conceptualization, and
6. rules which constrain the work of leaders.

5.2 Diversity of Objects in Leadership Roles

As noted previously, the *object* of the activity system refers to the raw material or objective at which the activity is directed. The object and projection from the object to the *outcome* is the central issue of activity theory. Engeström (1999e) suggests that the object of an activity system can be understood as a “project under construction” and as moving from potential raw material to meaningful shape and to a result or outcome. He further suggests that it is common for the object to be characterized by ambiguity,

various interpretations and potential for change. In a general sense, the object of the Southern SHS activity system is the provision of secondary education and training which, if effectively provided, could lead to a multiplicity of outcomes. The outcomes may vary from helping students fulfil subject assessment requirements, being better prepared for work and/or further study, or realizing their academic, personal or social potential as individuals.

The case study data presented in Chapter Four provided many examples of this diversity amongst positional leaders, with some of the most obvious appearing when individual leaders were asked to define their positional objective and projected outcomes (depicted in Table 4 and Figure 5). The diversity of stated objects and outcomes in leadership roles is clearly linked to the variety of leadership functions and activities undertaken by different respondents, as depicted in Table 11.

Table 11

Leadership Functions and Objects

Positional Role	Leadership Functions	Stated Objects
Deputy Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic development • Procuring resources • Community relations • Staff welfare • Student welfare • Human resource management 	'responsive to students' 'responsibility to staff' 'make the school safe'
Heads of Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing teaching and learning • Curriculum development • Teacher development 	'help people feel good about themselves' 'keep students engaged' 'advocate for students' 'kids to have good self-esteem and to be proud about themselves' 'promote my subject area'
Registrar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage finances • Manage facilities • Manage non-teaching staff 	Not evident

In cultural-historical activity theory, Leont'ev (1978) has distinguished between goal-oriented individual or group actions and object-oriented collective activity. Leont'ev argues that there is no activity without an object. The object carries or embodies the true motive of the activity, which gains durability by becoming institutionalized. Object-oriented collective activity is a product of the division of labour, which as Spillane (2006) suggests is not a "neat division" and is more related to formal delegation of functions and duties.

In a complex activity system such as Southern SHS, it is problematic for teachers and leaders to construct a connection between the goals of their ongoing actions and the more durable object/motive of the collective activity system. Engeström and Blackler (2005, p. 310) suggest that "objects are constructed by actors as they make sense, name, stabilize, represent and enact foci for their actions and activities.... objects have histories and built in affordances, they resist and bite back...". An example of this individual construction of an object is shared by E, the HOD (Industrial Arts), in the following vignette:

Vignette #1

I'm a person that believes in the philosophy that it takes a village to raise a child. I have a significant point to play in the role of things here but I'm one significant point. My analogy would be that a child coming through school is much like a tree; and I'm a tree farmer. And so what happens when you have a tree? It needs to be staked, but not staked beside the trunk, it needs to be loosely staked between several points of anchorage. One of which is the school, one of which is the community and the other one I believe would be industry and there may be other stakes there too, but between those stakes a young tree can grow and move and makes its mind up and change and see things and try things that ultimately when the tree is older it will be strong enough to withstand the winds of time and tests of courage. As a tree farmer, I know where the fruit grows, and I know when the fruit's ripe, and I know when it is time to harvest and I know when it is time to plant, I know when it's time to fertilise and I need to do those things in relevance to the other mechanisms that exist within the school community and the industry community and the community itself.

This vignette gives an insight into the individual construction of a philosophical type of "object" which E uses to "represent and enact foci" for his actions and leadership activities as a HOD in Industrial Arts. His analogy of being a tree farmer who tends and

stakes the young trees or students in their learning growth is full of symbolism and reveals aspects of his own philosophy and approach to education and learning opportunities. Notwithstanding the appeal of his argument or representation, it is not an object which could be considered as a “collective activity” at Southern SHS. This diversity and multiplicity of objects is to be expected, as Engeström and Blackler (2005, p. 310) state: “Arguably, indeed organisations are built and maintained around partially shared, partially fragmented and partially disputed objects... the paradox is that objects/motives give directionality, purpose and meaning to the collective activity, yet they are frustratingly elusive.”

5.3 Building Trusting Relationships

In Chapter Four, an array of data and commentary were presented to illustrate the wide range and complexity of the interactions amongst individuals which occurred in the case study school. Table 5 and Figure 6 provided a summary of these data. In a deeper analysis of the data, it becomes very apparent that the building of positive relationships amongst participants is heavily dependent on the notion of trust. As outlined previously, the existence of effective relational trust is one of the most fundamental aspects of successful school improvement and reform. It is also a critical factor in the development of distributed leadership, as noted by Hargreaves and Fink (2006), the Hay Group (2004) and NCSL (2004) research cited in Chapter Two.

Without mutual trust, suspicion and doubt will erode relationships – between administrators and teachers, amongst teachers, between teachers and pupils, between teachers and parents. Trust can be depicted as an essential pre-condition or concomitant of risk-taking, change and improvement. Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 212) state that effective schools depend on and thrive on trust, and declare “if truth is the first casualty of war then trust is the first fatality of imposed reform”. They further suggest that in relationships and organizations, trust amounts to people being able to rely on each other so that their world and relationships have coherence and continuity. “When we trust, we believe others will act in a reasonably predictable way, according to agreed-on or assumed expectations, in a context of shared understanding and assumptions of good faith” (p. 212).

Bryk and Schneider (2002) identified four determinants of relational trust in their long-term study in Chicago elementary schools. These determinants and some related examples include:

- interpersonal respect – civility, deep listening to others' concerns and inclusive processes;
- personal regard for others – extent of caring about staff;
- role competence – the ability to do one's job well, including addressing incompetence; and
- personal integrity – putting children's interests above one's own personal interests, consistency between what a leader says and does.

At Southern SHS, there were a number of examples of this type of relational trust evident within the documented relationships and interactions, as depicted in Vignette #2.

Vignette #2

Interpersonal respect

C: yes we're looking at a whole staff perspective not just teaching staff. We're looking at...we're trying to get rid of the barriers between the staff. And I think there are, barriers in this school. I think that...I think that they're not necessary and I think that it's a better work environment for everybody if they don't exist.

Personal regard for others:

C: I think it was a really bad day for all of us yesterday I think it was just one of those days. Everything happened at once and we had other things happening today and we needed to prepare for it. So ... I had actually a couple of HODs come up to me and say how did you go? And I had someone ring me this morning and say I was really worried about you getting home safely yesterday. The support from a lot of people around her is really good. The staff are good as well.

Role competence:

B: as an admin team we are responsible... because we take responsibility for our staff, and if there is an issue between a parent, a student and a teacher, and then we will discipline our staff, because we understand education and it is our job to explain to parents where the teacher is coming from; we are a very big buffer for our staff....

Personal integrity

C: Outcomes for kids. again an example. Kids that have disengaged from here and we've lost and they've literally disappeared and they were like 14 years of age. I've found them. And I've got them reengaged down the road.

This vignette provides some insights into the area of relational trust. It must be noted that while aspects of trust were in “good shape”, some respondents suggested that Southern SHS was still striving to develop a high level of relational trust across the whole school as an organization. Some aspects of trust building which were of specific concern to respondents included “barriers” between the teaching and non-teaching staff and the low level of parent participation in the school.

In the next section, the analysis examines in more detail the numerical-additive or aggregated leadership behaviour of selected participants.

5.4 Leader-plus Conceptualization

Spillane (2006, p. 12) identifies the *leader-plus* aspect as an important component of distributed leadership, which acknowledges that “leadership doesn’t just lie in the principal’s office any more than it does in the chief executive or the corner office of the multinational corporation”. This conceptualization suggests that leading schools requires multiple leaders and that leadership is “more than what people in formal leadership positions do”. The simple notion of leader-plus is that many individuals can be added in to the mix of leadership functions and activities that go on in the school. Gronn (2002, p. 679) reaches a very similar conclusion with his *numerical-additive* definition which he describes as “the aggregated leadership behaviour of some, many or all members of an organisation”.

There is a broad array of evidence cited in the previous chapter to confirm that this conceptualization of distributed leadership was evident at Southern SHS. Life in a large secondary school with a multiplicity of daily routines and responsibilities associated with students, staff, parents and the wider community requires a wide range of leaders if the school is to operate effectively. Spillane (2006) posits that the distribution of leadership differs in schools depending on leadership function, subject matter or disciplinary areas, school type, size and development stage. Commentary on some of these differential aspects is included within this section on the leader-plus conceptualization.

Two main examples which are included and critically analysed are:

- the work of decision-making teams and committees (the curriculum committee example), and

- the arrangement of leadership responsibilities (the co-performance of student discipline example).

5.4.1 The leader-plus concept and school committees

As outlined in Chapter Four, there were at least four main types of teams and committees operating within Sothern SHS: departmental groups, school-wide operational committees, middle management team (HODs), and senior administration team. The majority of staff members were participants, at some point in time, in various teams and committees though clearly not everyone was involved in them all. In this analysis, the focus is on school-wide operational committees. The school's stated philosophy was that "all committees are by invitation", meaning that any member of staff could join one or more of the school-wide groups at their own volition. A number of tension points were identified in the previous chapter around the functioning and purpose of various school-wide committees. These included:

- the role of formally designated leaders and those depicted as co-leaders or participants, and
- the ways in which leadership of these committees was shared or distributed amongst various participants – by design or by default.

Vignette #3 offers insights into these tension points.

Vignette #3

*C: I run a couple of committees and I look at other people still coming. Have I been able to maintain the numbers on the committees? Are we actually doing something or are we meeting for the hell of meeting? So I look at those things and I measure my outcomes in terms of that. I hate meetings. I really hate meetings so as far as I am concerned...I won't say that to the committees...if we're not actually making something happen then we need to give up. So we measure and there with me, particularly the curriculum committee, they're probably the most awesome group of people I have ever worked with. And they're on my wavelength and we are **making things happen** and they're **measuring progress** in the same way now which is really great..... We just looked at the reporting system last year, and now we are looking at the subject pathways for students.*

This comment by one Deputy Principal indicates that she has taken the lead in ensuring that the Curriculum Committee has a clear purpose and direction, and despite

her personal dislike of meetings, that the group collectively is “making things happen”. She clearly sees her formal leadership role or function as one of maintaining a viable membership as well as monitoring and “measuring outcomes” of the committee and keeping it focussed on curriculum decision-making. Other members of the committee are depicted as “being on my wavelength” or sharing in these beliefs about the core work of the group. This committee had a number of very experienced staff members who were either subject area specialists or teachers with a professional interest in school-wide curriculum, assessment and pedagogical improvement. In “making things happen”, these participants were clearly involved in co-performance functions as curriculum leaders within the school.

This vignette is certainly an example of leader-plus distribution “by design”; with the design originating with the Deputy Principal’s direction setting supported by the numerical addition of volunteer staff members, some of whom were formal leaders and others informal, but who collectively participated in shared leadership routines in curriculum decision making.

Whilst the Deputy Principal perceived her formal role as pivotal to the work of the Curriculum Committee, not everyone agreed with her approach, as the following alternative perspective by another positional leader reveals.

5.4.2 Alternative perspective on committee leadership

A different opinion on the role and function of formal leaders in the work of committees was illustrated from another participant in the case study account. The following vignette (#4) gives the background to this alternative perspective from one HOD, who had spent 12 months previously as an acting Deputy Principal:

Vignette #4

J.: When it comes down to curriculum, I think the senior/middle school and HODs, and we’re talking about subjects, should be more a part of a committee... and that administration shouldn’t be part of that committee – deputies and principal shouldn’t, in my opinion, be part of that committee – they should be a line manager to that, but I think the personality of a deputy is overpowering or overbearing to many staff, um and I just don’t think they need to be there; I think, from a management point of view, it needs to be middle management and staff as to what needs to be done, and then given, like if you want to enter another subject into the school, as the HOD you come to the curriculum meeting and put it through and they give it the tick, then give it to

administration to say the final 'yes' or 'no', and if 'yes' we can do it; and if there any problems to get back to the committee to talk about it or then go to the committee meeting to discuss the reason why they said 'no' at this stage.

Um, I just think it is a waste of time, for deputies for a starter to do that, you know, to actually go to committees, because it's just not needed.

The opinion expressed in this example provides a different perspective on the role of formal leaders and the design and function of school-wide committees. The respondent, a HOD, believes that neither the Principal nor Deputy Principals should be involved in leading the work of a group such as the Curriculum Committee. The main reason given is that the senior positional leader will “overpower” or “overbear” the committee’s deliberations. This is elaborated in the continuing transcript of the vignette:

...sometimes deputies have an overall picture which they are thinking about, and that interferes with a teacher's thought processes, because they bring out that overall picture straight away; now that can be brought out at another time, let's get the creative thinking of teachers in there and a collective thing ... Because a deputy ... you know a creative thought might come through from a teacher, and the deputy will automatically jump in and say, 'Ah no we can't do that because of such and such...' It may not be the case – the simple fact is the deputy has not thought about an alternative which may not have been in their minds. Now as a collective group we say 'Yes', now how can we do that and we will always have other teachers in there who may have the same thought as the deputy, and they will come up and say 'well what about this problem?' rather than 'we can't do it because of this', they'll say 'what about this problem?' and then alright we haven't thought about that, let's see if we can work around it.

So as far as I'm concerned the deputies can inhibit a lot of staff members.

In this perspective, the conceptualization of leader-plus is complicated by a perception that the role and function of a senior leader (i.e., a Deputy Principal) will act as an inhibitor to the creative thoughts and deliberations of others. This observation reveals the level of complexity and challenges which are involved in setting up structures and processes to accomplish various leadership functions within a school. It reinforces the conclusion that the distribution of leadership functions does not operate in a simple or linear fashion, and that different modes or styles of leadership behaviour are more or less suitable depending on the nature of the tasks, audience and context involved. It is evident that the HOD's perception of distributing leadership is quite different from that

of the Deputy Principal. The HOD had assumed that when he was acting as a Deputy Principal that his leadership style on committees would be “from a distance”, as his continuing comments in the following interaction indicates.

J: That is why I actually delegated quite a few things when I was acting deputy – I was head of quite a few committees, I was head of the workplace health and safety committee, and I delegated my position off; I actually asked staff members to take the lead ... and what it does, it gives staff members a bit of get up and go and they go ‘I’m in charge of this’.

MG: So is this what you say ‘distributing leadership’ is all about?

J: That’s right, yes it is all about that. Yes I actually did that with the workplace health and safety committee and that turned out well.... And if I had continued as deputy this year, there were a few other committees I would have done the same thing; I would only have turned up when needed or when invited to give them some more information about something to keep myself in the loop. Yep, I just think (staff) are too intimidated and they (deputies) just don’t need to be there.

The two examples demonstrate some of the diversity of opinions and operations which can occur around a leader-plus concept in school committee work. In the first example, the Deputy Principal believes that she has a pivotal role in forming and guiding the deliberations of the committee, while in the second example, the HOD believes that the presence of the Deputy Principal can be an inhibiting factor to sharing of leadership and idea generation on the committee.

5.4.3 Leadership co-performance of student discipline

The notion of co-performance as a conceptualization of distributive leadership was outlined in Chapter Two and a number of examples were provided in the later section of Chapter Four. Co-performance is a key concept in understanding not only the leader-plus aspect but also the “practice” aspect of distributed leadership which is examined in more detail in the next section. At Southern SHS, the responsibility for student discipline and behaviour management can be depicted as an example of leadership co-performance with a variety of leadership roles and functions shared amongst a wide range of school staff.

The following account in Vignette #5 has been drawn from separate recordings in the case study data to show the evolution of a leader-plus approach to one of the core

objects of the school activity system – supporting and managing student behaviour and social development.

Vignette #5

The Problem

The Deputy Principals reported that student behaviour management had become an internal tension and major problem for the school administration in the previous year. Incidents of serious misbehaviour and high numbers of students being referred to the deputies for disciplinary reasons were an indication of an urgent need for an overhaul of school-wide practices. A review was initiated led by one of the Deputy Principals (B), who used the school's Behaviour Management Committee as the vehicle to begin addressing the problems.

The Solution

One of the outcomes of the review was to 'reverse the triangle' – an idea of transferring ownership and responsibility for student behaviour management to a wider group of staff.

B: Yes we did a big behaviour management review last year, and this was the concept that we came up with. To reverse the triangle! So instead of being pointed at the admin., to reverse it...teachers (were appointed)... who we have made house leaders; they're given a couple of extra spares during the week (it certainly isn't enough); and they have taken a lot of the low level behaviour from the deputies; we are trying to reverse the triangle.

The review recommended that all 1600 students be grouped within four 'pastoral care groups or houses' and additional staff delegated to assist in dealing with behaviour and social issues and incidents at a lower level before they possibly escalated.

B: Each house now has a deputy, three HODs of the house, plus two house leaders; but that is the management team of that house. And instead of three deputies looking after 1600 kids, I've now got a team looking after just 400. It's an effort to recognise the good kids, as well; the mediocre tend to get lost, and that is 80% of our kids; so it is an attempt to get more time to look at the ... lovely kids.

.... so instead of three people dealing with all the behaviour management in the school, there are now 23 dealing with it (total delegation). So by the time the students come to us, it is something quite major.

In addition, a proactive student support program 'Smart Choices' was introduced to allow teachers and HODs to ensure a consistent approach in dealing with and managing student behaviour and performance in class. The management of 'Smart

Choices' which included a 'time-out' room and behaviour modification programs for repeat offenders, was delegated to the HOD - Middle Schooling (F). He received additional resources and staff to manage this program.

The Outcomes

1. Deputy Principals reported a significant drop in the amount of time they were required to devote to dealing with student behavioural issues (one noted from 80 to 90% of her time has now dropped down to about 40 to 50% of her time). She now has a lot more time to deal with staff relations and professional development initiatives as another core aspect of her job.
2. The HODs noted that there had been a reduction in student referrals to the Smart Choices program and a more positive approach by teachers in dealing with a variety of non-compliance issues in classrooms.
3. The Middle Schooling HOD also noted that his professional development work in enhancing the pedagogical skills of teachers was providing a more supportive and challenging classroom environment for students. Joint leadership for learning between teachers and students was becoming a renewed focus in classrooms.

This analysis of the behaviour management example reveals a number of salient features of the leader-plus conceptualization of distributed leadership. First, the original "problem" was identified as a form of crisis in the school and led to a realization by the senior administration that focussed coordination amongst staff was the best way of resolving many of the problems. Second, use was made of the Behaviour Management Committee as a group of informed professionals who produced a suite of practical solutions and ideas that one or two leaders acting alone would not have been able to produce. Third, the eventual models of intervention and support for student behaviour were designed to ensure that leadership roles and functions were widely dispersed amongst formal and non-formal leaders within the school. Finally, the example also reveals insights into the "division of labour" concept amongst various levels of staff within the school as they combine to manage the flow of low-level and high-level behaviour issues within a hierarchical structure of positional leaders. For example, teachers exercised leadership over student behaviour "to a point" at which reference was usually made to a HOD or house leader. Similarly, HODs or house leaders had various protocols to follow before deciding if the matters needed higher-level action. The Deputy Principals had been delegated responsibility, by the Principal, to manage all of the official requirements of student suspension, or in most serious cases, recommendations for exclusion.

It should be noted that while these examples give valuable insights into the leader-plus concept they are also pertinent to a more detailed understanding involving the leadership practice or concertive action conceptualization. In the next section of the chapter, further attention is given to the notions of “collaborative”, “collective” and “coordinated” distribution.

5.5 Leadership Practice Conceptualization of Distributive Leadership

Spillane (2006, p. 13) comments that the “leader-plus perspective is an important component of a distributed framework, but it provides only part of what it means to take a distributed perspective on leadership”. His conceptualization of leadership practice pushes past a single lens focus on leadership roles and functions. From a distributed or multi-lens perspective, leadership practice takes shape in the interactions between leaders, followers and their situations (see Figure 2 in Chapter Two). Spillane asks the following question as a provocative challenge to those who believe that leadership resides in formal positional roles: “Is distributed leadership in schools an aspirational future state that we should strive to achieve or an existing and unavoidable reality that we need to acknowledge?”

Spillane (2006) believes in the latter position which suggests that leadership is always distributed in some way or other. Leadership is not limited to the principal or other formal leaders but it stretches across individuals within the school, the community and wider networks. As depicted in Figure 2, Spillane identifies two main themes in his writing about the leadership practice dimension:

- the “people dimension” (leaders and followers), and
- the “situation dimension”.

In development of these ideas, Spillane and his colleagues draw illustrations from a variety of theoretical perspectives as well as the grounded research of his *Distributed Leadership Study* in Chicago schools. In analyzing the interactions amongst leaders in the co-performance of leadership practice, they identified three types of distribution:

- *collaborated distribution* characterizes leadership practice that is stretched over the work of two or more leaders who work together in place and time to execute the same leadership routine, such as facilitation of a faculty meeting;
- *collective distribution* characterizes practice that is stretched over the work of two or more leaders who enact a leadership routine by working separately but interdependently; and

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

In the two examples cited in the previous section of this chapter, these three types of distribution are also evident and hence extend the leadership plus concept into leadership practice. In the following paragraphs I review both the Curriculum Committee and the behaviour management examples, and suggest there is sufficient evidence to identify leadership practice which is collaborative, collective and coordinated.

5.5.1 Curriculum Committee and behaviour management examples

In this Curriculum Committee example, it is notable that there are multiple leaders and followers who have collectively engaged in the work of curriculum decision making. The situation in which they are working appears to have changed from one Deputy Principal leading the way to a range of other staff members who are taking leading and/or supporting roles around various aspects of the curriculum decision-making process. The practice aspect of the co-performance has also produced structural tensions, as there is some indication that “parallel performance” behaviours have appeared in the team. For instance, in the alternative perspective already presented, one HOD is adamant that the senior positional leaders should not take part in the normal deliberations of the committee. His view is that the attendance of a Deputy Principal will inhibit or impede the creativity and innovative thinking of the team members. In some ways, this perspective is perhaps suggestive of a coordinated form of distribution rather than a collaborated distribution, though both types of distribution are evident in the example.

The behaviour management example also demonstrates various types of distributed leadership practice operating in a number of ways. The basic axiom for this position is that all school staff members have a stake in the effective management of student behaviour – how well they work together as well as independently in responding to the challenges of student disciplinary problems is a measure of successful shared leadership practice. The initial review of the behaviour management program indicated that shared leadership practice was not the standard operating procedure across the school – the deputies had become the oversubscribed “default position” in dealing with student discipline irrespective of context or situation. Through a collaborative process of committee deliberations and extensive reviewing of current protocols, a new model was created that took co-performance of the routines of behaviour management to another level. This included collective distribution of the routines so that everyone

understood their part in the respective situations or contexts involving students. It also included providing a clear set of sequential steps that needed to be followed by all participants in coordinating the co-performance of behaviour management routines.

Two further examples drawn from the Southern SHS data to illustrate the leadership practice conceptualization are:

- community capacity building in 'The SEA Enterprise' example, and
- lateral networking and the HIA Industry Development Project.

These examples reveal the scope of the far-reaching activity system of interactions and relationships which various leaders from the school had developed within the local community, including other schools, businesses and industry bodies, and government agencies at local, state and federal levels. Both examples also include elements of contradictions or structural tensions within the school activity system and between the school and DETA as an activity system.

5.5.2 The Southern Enterprises Association (SEA)

As outlined in Chapter Four, the development of the SEA and its business arm, *Work Right*, was identified as an example of leadership co-performance which had become a pivotal turning point in the history of Southern SHS. The three key leaders, who were instrumental in “dreaming, designing and developing” SEA, were the Principal, the Registrar and the current General Manager of *Work Right*. In Vignette #6, the Principal first describes the dreaming aspect of his leadership which lead to the establishment of SEA; this is followed by the Registrar (H) describing his leadership role in the history and development of SEA; the final segment is from the General Manager (A) who comments on the evolution of the organization and how she has lead its separation from Southern SHS.

Vignette #6

P: Now H is my fellow dreamer – I'm not sure if I've told you that, but when it comes to the designing and dreaming of the school, the late afternoon conversations often happen first with H. My people closest to me here, and the ones I use for a lot of thinking that goes on; but in terms of management of people, development of people and management of resources. And he and I will spend many an afternoon between 4 and 6 o'clock, talking about the things that could make this a better organization or better school, or whether the strategies we are using are working.

H: Well it was initially P and myself back in 1999 we set up SEA Inc; I guess I did the process work in researching it and setting it up. We set up the incorporated body with a

view of enhancing opportunities for the school to attract funding. What happened over the years... we ran a couple of Community Job Plan programs; then EQ changed the rules about how we could employ people, and we were concurrently running a contract Jobs Pathway program, which was quite a large Commonwealth project, so even though it was run under the school, it had separate books of account and it ended up that the staff were employed under SEA Inc, because we could make savings doing it that way. Um, it was more cost effective to do it that way, and I had the skills to manage all the implications.

But it got to such a stage that they (the Education Department) tightened up all the HR policy and centralized the process, and it became impossible for schools to employ people under very narrow guidelines, and thus SEA became a vehicle for us to employ staff, 'outside of the box'; and where it has come to now is that SEA has outgrown the school and has become a very community based organization, a non-profit organization; and the Jobs Pathway project finished and the school has no new contracts, as they are all now with Work Right, which is the registered business name.

A: Well, I would just say that it has evolved, to tell you the truth; three years ago when we decided we had more to offer the community than just the Jobs Pathway program, we asked what's our vehicle for doing something more than that: One, we could continue to just being a hybrid of Southern High School, or we had the incorporation set up to apply for funding a number of years ago, and it was only there for that purpose; but we decided to use that as a vehicle then, create a trading name for ourselves that made some sense and then we found Work Right was being established in its own right....The complexity of our relationship with Southern High has served as well in one sense, but has also created difficulties for us in another. On the one hand we already have credibility in the education circles, and they see where it fits, and at the end of the day they see as a Southern High School program still... but on the other hand it is about divorcing us from the Southern High, and we have grown up now and here is the range of services we offer, and we don't directly put profit back into Southern High on the way... so we are self-sufficient for sure.

So this year this has been very much about developing that profile of Work Right in its own right; but it doesn't mean that along the way that we haven't used our advantage with Southern High as it does give you credibility in the education scene.

This vignette emphasizes the co-performance of leadership practice amongst these three key members of the SEA governance group. There is abundant evidence of both collaborative and collective distribution of leadership practice, either in their shared work as a team or with one individual taking a lead role depending on the context or

situation. The Principal, the “entrepreneurial dreamer”, clearly demonstrates that he has become an “expert” at this type of community capacity-building leadership enterprise. He is prepared to challenge the status quo and will take calculated risks to improve the opportunities and benefits for students and the local community. Of his two fellow entrepreneurial “travellers” in this school-community engagement process, H, the school Registrar, is the “backroom organiser” who is an expert in designing new staffing models and financial structures. It is evident from his reflection that the early formation and growth of SEA was attributable to a reaction to the human resource rules imposed by DETA. These rules and regulations had placed serious constraints and restrictions on schools undertaking innovative school-community projects. This structural tension had led to the development of SEA as an organization in its own right, to engage staff “outside of the box” and pursue an alternative model. A, the General Manager and public face of *Work Right*, had successfully transitioned SEA Incorporated from a small school-based entity into a public organization with an array of funded career development and skills training programs for students and adults. This enterprise had given Southern SHS a very high profile within the wider community and through *Work Right* exposure and reputation, it had enabled the school to maintain a strong, viable enrolment base and maintain an enviable position within the public school system.

5.5.3 Networking and industry development initiative

Another example of an entrepreneurial Southern SHS leader with lateral networking ability was E, the Industrial Arts HOD who had formed strong personal and professional relationships with key individuals and industry groups outside his school. He outlines some of these industry networks in Vignette #7, noting the benefits that have flowed to the students for their post-school options and careers through school-based training initiatives with various industry partners.

Vignette #7

E: And I am a member of the Housing Industry Association (HIA) training board and I am chairman of the Schools Partnership Committee. I am also a member of CTQ - Construction Training Queensland, which is the industry training board. This is the coordinator and the mechanism by which the funds are distributed from the building industry training fund. So as an education representative on there I get to be with other industry representatives from the unions, from the TAFE colleges, from the apprenticeship boards, from the group training schemes, from the group apprenticeship schemes and things like that.

There are other training organizations that I am involved with...we have the... Metal Industry Training Board, which has just been taken over and the Vocational Education Teachers' association. So there are other associations that I choose to be involved with personally, so I know what is going on in the wider community too.

In fact, E had become so successful in his external networking capacity that he left his school-based position mid-year to take up a specialist consultant role for one year with one of his industry partners (HIA). The Principal, in commenting on the HOD's new appointment, noted just how successful he had been in taking on a school leadership role which expanded beyond the school community:

P: Well he (E) hasn't gone too far; he's just hopped the fence and he's still going to be very allied to the project that he got going, and thank goodness because it is a very large project - that submission is \$1.6 million and it's in and has been progressed through government... So he has a one year contract, and he has the option of returning, so his position just sits in limbo until he makes a decision; but I would think there is a fair chance they he will never be back, because the work that he can do for them, they will probably see it as being very important, and he's a good operator and they will snap him up so they will offer him more money than he could make around here.

There is sufficient evidence from the case account to depict E as another entrepreneurial leader who has engaged successfully in high level networking activity with key leaders and decision makers within business and industry. He describes himself as "a maverick" with a very strong commitment to "making a difference" and has developed a unique approach towards leadership practice. He comments further, *I know that in myself I tend to be a little bit different because I have been into industry, I've run my own business and I've had experiences outside of education. I tend to be a little different.* As a consequence of this wider experience in business and industry, E has moved beyond the school activity system, establishing productive partnerships that are both innovative and creative. In doing this, he has challenged many of the conventions which might constrain a typical HOD:

...instead of being in a position where we have to react to what's being done, we can say, well, on a proactive stage, we are already in line, this is what we are doing, we now lead the way for education, we now have the best model, we now have best practice, and we can now disseminate that information to other schools and share that

with other schools. So that's me being a maverick, alright, that's me being a maverick. So that would be my criticism of the education system.

The richness and complexity of these interdependent relationships adds another dimension to the study of distributed leadership. It suggests a further area for productive research into the means by which school leaders engage in community capacity building and networking to achieve the objective of developing the learning and career opportunities for their students (and in some cases for themselves).

5.6 Rules and Constraints

This chapter, as well as the previous one, has identified a number of rules and regulations which have imposed constraints on the role and work of school administrators and teachers. In activity theory, rules refer to the explicit and implicit regulations, norms and conventions that constrain action and interactions with the activity system. These rules and constraints can also be viewed as contributing to contradictions which can become historically accumulating structural tensions between activity systems. Vignette #8 provides an example of one structural tension between the school activity system and the DETA activity system. The particular tension involves the imposition of an hierarchal protocol on official communication from senior officers external to the school. It was chosen because of its implications for distributive leadership and is explained by one of the Deputy Principals:

Vignette #8

B: Yep, the hierarchy (is a constraint). I know that they have changed the whole hierarchy above us – because we've got the regional executive directors above us now, we've still got the district directors, but P now actually deals with the Regional Executive Director (RED) as he does with District Executive Director (DED) but it stops at principal level... That communication; it stops at principal level; and the funny thing is the day to day running of the school are the deputies. So, in my mind, I would say that I would probably be the one to associate more with the DED, at District level, because at district office they deal more with the day to day running of the schools. P doesn't have much to do with the day-to-day running of the school, because P is 'out here' in the stratosphere, so he should be dealing more with the RED; but district office only deal with P, so when they ring up and talk with him about a staffing issue, he says 'Mmm, right...'. They don't want to talk with us, they only deal with the principals, because ultimately P is responsible for the decision that we make; but it just slows all the processes down.

I think they have tried to minimise the hierarchy, but they haven't gone to the next level beyond the principal. They've stopped at the principal, but they haven't really looked at the day to day running of an actual school; and if they did, they would see that 9 times out of 10, the day to day decisions of the school are done by the deputies. Hopefully, in consultation with the principal, so that he knows what is going on (small laugh).

In this example, the Deputy Principal highlights one of the external constraints in which hierarchical communication protocols are causing internal frustration and potentially inhibiting a distributive leadership approach within the school. The District and Regional Office personnel appear to be ignoring fundamental aspects of school-based leadership practice; this includes the pragmatic policy of a principal delegating school leadership responsibilities and accountabilities to members of the senior management team. The inability of external Departmental officers to acknowledge or accommodate the co-performance of distributive leadership practice not only causes frustration but can impede the efficiency of the school as an organizational unit.

5.7 Summary of Part One

This concludes the first part of this chapter in which aspects of the Southern SHS activity system identified in the previous chapter have been subject to a more detailed critical analysis. The bulk of the analysis has focussed on various structural tensions which have been drawn from the case study data, and illustrated with the use of eight vignettes.

In the next part of the chapter, I extend the critical analysis by plotting aspects of the case study school on a continuum of distributed leadership, based on a scale devised by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) as outlined in Chapter Two. This is followed by reviewing the Hay Group's five key pillars of distributed leadership and their applicability at Southern SHS. The theoretical and empirical findings of these writers are considered to be highly relevant and valuable for a more detailed understanding of the topic. Vignettes are again used from the case study data to illustrate aspects of the interpretation and analysis.

5.8 The Distributed Leadership Continuum

Sustainable leadership spreads. It sustains as well as depends on the leadership of others.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 95) suggest that sustainable leadership is distributed leadership but not all distributed leadership is sustainable leadership. It depends on how the leadership is distributed and for what purpose. They further caution that there are considerable risks in adopting a naively optimistic view of distributed leadership. In this second half of the chapter, the adaptations by Hargreaves and Fink of the Hay Group continuum on distributed leadership are applied to the Southern SHS case study data. As indicated by Figure 3 in Chapter Two, Hargreaves and Fink suggest that the distributed leadership continuum can be represented as a thermometer with the two extremes being either anarchy or autocracy. In the Hargreaves and Fink model, as the mercury ascends the thermometer, various forms of delegation or distributed leadership are depicted as occurring.

At the bottom end of the thermometer is autocracy (“too cold”) which suggests that if leadership is not deliberately distributed in ways that engage teachers with the goals of the school, it will end up being distributed by default. Eventually, leadership will emerge to subvert and sabotage the principal’s plans at every step. Sometimes, however, an autocratic approach to leadership is needed, such as where teachers abdicate responsibility for poor performance. At the top end of the thermometer is anarchy (“too hot”). Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 135) suggest that the line between autocracy and anarchy is a thin one:

Autocracies foment resentment and rebellion. Lacking government, anarchies give rise to lawlessness and disorder. Anarchies result from distribution by neglect and create a leadership vacuum e.g., senior leaders who are never present, who can’t maintain clarity or unity or purposes, who are weak or afraid or want only to be liked by staff.

The evidence from Southern SHS was sufficiently clear to suggest that the school was neither an autocracy nor facing a revolt which could be described as anarchy.

5.8.1 Traditional or formal delegation

This type of delegation typically occurs at the bottom end of the continuum through structural means such as position descriptions, formal roles and procedural statements, management directives, and committees (the “division of labour” notion). This formal process of distribution usually gives a high degree of security to staff as everyone

knows where they stand. Additionally, parents also know whom it is they should speak to on various issues which arise with their students, and the expectations of all groups of stakeholders are met. Traditional or formal delegation, at best, gives structure and stability and allows some individuals such as HODs or deputies to enjoy “opportunities for prestige and power” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 116). At its worst, delegated leadership can amount to assigning subordinates “tasks that are menial, uninteresting or unpleasant” such as student discipline, routine committee work and evaluation of teacher performance.

There were many examples of traditional delegation occurring at Southern SHS. Vignette #9 provides examples of this formal delegation, with the bold print highlighting key terms illustrating this concept.

Vignette #9

- *Well, **we've got lists of it** and we talk about it all the time and we discuss it every time someone new comes into the team.*
- *I think that if you have been in the job of the HOD for a while, you **get to understand things that are going to be assumed that are your responsibility.** On top of the ones that you know definitely are. Every school will have a collection of those. As a new HOD I guess it is the stumble and learn process. I know the admin team, meet on a weekly basis. So they deal with big issues that need delegation and so on... And then we have HOD meetings each week as you know. So if there has been some decisions made to the administration meeting that is usually disseminated at the HODs meeting, where it gets brought at discussion amongst the HODs.*
- *.... across the school now we have **a clear set of guidelines that are absolutely 'non-negotiable' and that has been put in place by DW and the previous admin team, and other people who have gone before,** and they are a direct indication of the need for these kids to have good self-esteem, to be proud about themselves and the uniform and all that stuff; but in terms of the decision-making that happens on a daily basis, I think that right has been given to HODs.*
- *Yes, the **HODs and deputies – (meet) every Monday.** It was interesting the other day we actually had someone come and talk to us about middle management and we were running through different ideas to improve our middle management; and one of the things was to pick out someone from the heads of department and someone else in the administration that you don't really know well, and I couldn't do*

it; I know all of them really well because of my job, because I deal with all of them on a regular basis, so I just sat beside someone and we just talked, um because they know me pretty well. So that is a big aspect of this job.

It was evident that the Principal had developed a model of organizational “span of control” at Southern SHS through the traditional line management role of the Deputy Principals and then to the departmental heads (HODs). These subject leaders were quite autonomous in their respective departments, and each of them had a different or particular style of leadership which influenced the direction of their own staff and department. The Principal was also very clear and explicit in holding all of these positional leaders accountable for their outcomes in their respective areas of responsibility. Evidence of formal delegation was noted in the weekly meetings of the senior administration team, followed later by the regular meeting of the HODs with the Principal and Deputies.

5.8.2 Progressive delegation

It is apparent that within Southern SHS, there has been an extension of decision-making structures beyond the formally designated leaders to include various representative teams and staff committees. The Principal had created new roles or positions through internal staffing flexibility, expanded the functions or powers of associate administrators and secured additional resources to meet a wide range of needs or circumstances which had arisen within the school. Based on the previous analysis, all of these circumstances were evident at Southern SHS, as the following evidence in Vignette #10 confirms:

Vignette #10 Southern SHS examples of progressive delegation

- *OK; we're lucky at Southern; we have an army of staff we have built over the years with the other deputies and P, we have built a support staff; we have support services, we have two guidance officers, we have a conflict resolution officer, we have a school-based police officer (that will be arriving soon); we have a chaplain, we have a youth and family officer, we have two mental health nurses. I work with them every single day; and then again we have two other deputies, the team of three we are constantly talking to each other, confirming decisions with each other. I have then also a core of HODs, a middle schooling HOD, a senior schooling HOD and a teaching and learning HOD, that, I also have a lot to do with on a daily basis; and then there is the administrative staff.*

- *...at the end of first term last year there was changes in the admin here and P actually approached me and said would you be interested in filling in. and at that stage I thought it would be a term maybe two terms maximum and I said 'yep ok that's fine'. I guess it's really made me look now at what really does interest me in my job and I've been able to...P's given me the capacity here to be involved in so much. He's been very good in that he gives us enough rein to go and explore things and come back to him and so I've set up the alternate education site down the road. And P gave me the free rein to explore that and to explore the possibilities there. So you know...Now, I think now to go back to just teaching or even a HOD position for me now where I couldn't be quite as involved would be really difficult and I never thought I would be saying that.*
- *So that's our focus and in doing that.... I think I've got the word right 'to devolve first'; where we stay with the finger in the pie very much to show, guide, lead and help manage. Then we get to delegation, and that is something that has been handed to us from P down. You devolve first, keep the finger in the pie, keep the finger in the pie, yep you're fine, you know what you are doing, so it's now totally delegated to you.*

Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 118) warn that traditional and progressive delegation can give the illusion of shared leadership but create further tensions particularly when “people’s hopes are raised only to see them dashed when their administrative champions move on”. There was some evidence of this tension occurring at Southern SHS, especially in the transition phase during the research study period when the Principal took a term’s extended leave as a precursor to announcing his eventual retirement at the end of the school year. His replacement during this period was a female external appointee from a nearby school, whom P acknowledged he had been grooming as his possible successor. The acting Principal was more directive and managerial in her leadership style than P, and this appeared to be a cause of some disquiet amongst staff members who thought that she may eventually replace P as the principal.

5.8.3 Guided distribution

The extension of delegated functions to guided distribution of leadership occurs by design, according to Hargreaves and Fink (2006). In their analysis, guided distribution relies on more than formal structures and delegation of tasks: it is more about developing better relationships amongst staff and showing a genuine concern for

people which includes building effective communication processes, empowerment, positive relationships and emotionally intelligent behaviours. All of these aspects were evident in the Southern SHS activity system.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 121) suggest that guided distribution can create strong professional learning communities and can also sustain them – “as long as the principal lasts”. Guided distribution is usually so dependent on the senior leader, that is, the principal, that the sustainability of significant change may be confined to the period of that person’s tenure. There was an obvious parallel at Southern SHS, which was witnessing the planned departure of the school’s foundational Principal after 20 years in the post. As respondents noted in the cited transcripts in Vignette #11, P’s firm and guiding hands were demonstrated in numerous ways:

Vignette #11 *Southern SHS examples of guided distribution*

- *The principal in the school has a huge role to play; and one of the greatest strengths here, in talking of P as the leader, one of his great strengths is his ‘personability’ and his encouragement of people over a long period of time, is to encourage people to speak their minds; and that is the good side of the open door policy, and that can only be a contributing factor to the organization, because you have more people who can express their true feelings, and they are going to be more inspirational and passionate in what they do every day, and you are going to get better results.*
- *So I chose P to be my mentor. And I identified him to be the one to advise me and to see me from an external perspective as to how I am travelling and what I need to do as an individual to become a better leader. And so I have a very close relationship with P whereon I communicate to him on different levels. I communicate to him on a professional level, on a personal level, and then on a...what you would call a dreaming level or a spiritual level about what things may be and what things could be.*
- *I think we have good leadership in our school and it starts from P and disseminates from there. I think P has fine attributes as a leader. I don’t always agree with him. But then again you know he is my friend...I have an admiration and a respect for P. I have an astonishment, I don’t understand sometimes how he does things he does. I am amazed at what he is. I am not the same as P. He is probably polar opposite to me. But he has something to offer me and I respect those things.*

- *I came here because of the name 'P' and what that represented through the things that other people told me. And as I said to you, every leader that I have met has been good in some ways, and I think that P is outstandingly brilliant in some of the things that he does, and that's not just 'syntax', I really mean that; but every leader, and P included has their faults, and me and you and all of us; but I'm just really peeved now that he's leaving.*
- *I guess having the one principal basically has given a fair bit of stability to the school. P's ethos and his fingerprints on the things that he wants the school to be. You know a uniform school. All those sort of things are fairly evident in tracking back the record of the school. It is very clear to see the things that he has organised to get others to do as the school has developed. It would be interesting to see ... when his time is finished here which is probably reasonably close now; you know where it goes to. It wouldn't be too many schools like this where the founding principal is still present, after what 20 years.*

These examples illustrate the strong influence and presence of P upon the school community during his 20-year tenure. He had guided the development of the school as a learning organization from its infancy through to its current position as a vibrant and successful community-based school. His strengths as a Principal and leadership mentor had been recognised widely and sought by others, but there was now a degree of uncertainty about the future without his presence.

5.8.4 Emergent distribution

Emergent distribution, according to Hargreaves and Fink (2006), does not occur by design (delegation or direction) but emerges from individuals and groups who seize the initiative to inspire and influence their colleagues to take up opportunities, move in new directions, or attend to external pressures – with or without the principal's blessing. Leadership from this perspective is everywhere: in the principal's office, the science laboratories, the teachers' workrooms, anywhere staff members join together to focus on learning, teaching or change.

Hargreaves and Fink (2006) closely associate the notion of "emergent distribution" with two other linked concepts which were identified earlier in the literature review in Chapter Two:

- *Parallel leadership* which is the focus of Australian research by Crowther et al. (2002) in which teacher leaders were identified as the initiators and creators of

new ideas and programs which succeeded in improving student learning outcomes; similar findings can be found in the North American context as cited in the work of Lieberman and Miller (2004, p. 26). These authors suggest that the heart of teacher leadership is “groups of teachers intentionally working together to transform the very cultures in which they work and lead”; and

- *Professional learning communities* in which the best facilitative principals can work with their teachers, supporting and inspiring them to re-culture their schools and districts so that they become strong professional learning communities. The most important contribution which senior school leaders can make to the development of emergent distributed leadership is to create an “inclusive, purposeful and optimistic culture in which initiatives can easily come forward” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 123). The principal is not made irrelevant by the positively distributed leadership that professional learning communities represent.

In Vignette #12, examples are provided of teachers at Southern SHS who had taken up the opportunity to assume a leadership role, irrespective of their formal positional roles within the school.

Vignette #12 Southern SHS examples of emergent distribution

- *well, for example, I have a staff member right now who is wanting to get off the ground a HECS-style system for kids who want to do a school-based traineeship, because the biggest problem is they can't get to jobs because they don't have transport, so he wants to buy cars for his kids and build a relationship with a car yard to buy these cars for five to eight grand, to get these kids to their jobs and we are trying to build in a loan system, and that is a 'goer'; I mean it might be a few years away yet but it is a 'goer' and he has just picked that up and run with it.*
- *...we've had a large turnover of teachers in recent times, and ... that has brought in new people and ideas and we have done a lot of collaborative work with them and people enjoy being there.... I had a middle school meeting for just half an hour yesterday, and apart from the people who are away sick, every single core teacher that I have got in Year 8, all attended. So you know, they were there and they were willing to listen and we had presentations from two of the teachers, just in that group, just discussing behaviour management techniques from some seminars they had been to, and just giving some feedback and people walked out of the room, sounding positive and having conversations about what went on; as opposed to ones where they can't just wait to be somewhere else. So that is a good sign.*

- *You've got a reasonably large group of people, so sometimes to get a consensus is extremely difficult. Everyone's passionate about their own faculty so everyone looks at it particularly from a point of view, and that's what you want your middle managers to do. You want your HODs to be passionate about their subject areas and their faculties. Sometimes that then creates difficulty in getting them to look at it from the bigger picture but again they're being passionate and defending their subject area and doing those sorts of things, it's hard to tell them that they're wrong so there are issues with that as well, but I've worked in a school where everything went back through the principal and that was it, and it was awful.*

There are many parallels to be drawn from the Southern SHS case study to the development of a vibrant professional learning community. Hargreaves and Fink (2006, pp. 127-128) argue that “strong principals are crucial to the creation of professional learning communities ... but the image of how a strong principal operates needs to be reconsidered”. They propose that strong principals are not “strident and forceful”, but that their true strengths include:

- modelling and building strong and rewarding relationships by paying attention to the human side of school change;
- establishing a high-trust environment;
- developing a renewing culture of learning and improvement at all levels through problem solving, inquiry and intelligent, evidence-informed decision-making;
- helping the school community develop and commit to a cohesive and compelling purpose that also prevents dissipation of initiative and effort;
- stimulating a culture of professional entrepreneurship in regard to innovations and ideas that benefit student learning;
- establishing and enforcing grown-up professional norms of civil argument and productive debate;
- ensuring that the voices of minority members of the culture always receive a proper hearing; and
- doing all this within an unswerving commitment to improving learning and achievement for all students, especially those who are furthest behind.

Based on the extended analysis provided in Chapters Four and Five, it is evident that P fulfilled many of these characteristics at Southern SHS. His administrative colleagues and teaching staff were overwhelmingly unanimous and complimentary about his strengths as the senior positional leader of the school. They further agreed that he had

exerted significant influence in developing the type of professional learning community described above, and the majority believed that many of these characteristics would persist after his retirement. The unknown factor was, off course, the type of principal who would replace him when he retired.

5.8.5 Assertive distribution

According to Hargreaves and Fink (2006, p. 132), assertive distribution means that teachers in a school feel free to “challenge the principal or superintendent and are actively empowered to do so, provided their assertive leadership strengthens and does not undermine the overall vision for sustainable learning and improvement”. The concept of assertive leadership is described as moving distributed leadership to a “higher, riskier and more overtly political plane”. The extent of evidence for this type of distributed leadership at Southern SHS is very limited.

The two instances which appear in the case study were:

- E, the Industrial Arts HOD, who had taken significant steps in moving his leadership beyond “emergent” to “assertive” through his efforts at challenging various constraints about the way things were being done in the school and the wider education system. His entrepreneurial initiatives had taken him beyond the borders of the school and facilitated the setting up of a major industry-partnership project which had significant benefits for students – as well as for E himself.
- The principal, P, who exhibited a strong pattern of assertive leadership in challenging government and departmental bureaucracies that sometimes impeded the setting up of alternative pathways for the diverse range of students from challenging backgrounds who attended Southern SHS. P took the initiative within the local community and through his external professional and personal networking, forged strategic alliances in an extended campaign which produced the SEA and *Work Right*. His colleague, the school Registrar, was also a major contributor to the assertive co-performance of leadership practice, though working behind the scenes, he was far less visible than the Principal.

5.8.6 Summary of continuum of distributed leadership

The last section of this chapter has examined the idea that distributed leadership can be represented in the form of a continuum, extending from autocracy at one extreme to anarchy at the other. Drawing upon the case study data, it has been possible to plot Southern SHS along the various dimensions of the continuum. The evidence and

examples cited indicated that the school displayed a number of different dimensions of leadership, including traditional and progressive delegation as well as guided and emergent distribution. It has also been suggested that there are only two examples of assertive distribution identified in the data set. One of these is the entrepreneurial Industrial Arts HOD and the other is the Principal who has exercised assertive leadership in setting up an alternative approach to student and community career development. He has not undertaken this without considerable assistance from his fellow entrepreneurs who have been heavily involved in an extended co-performance of leadership practice.

In the final section of this chapter, I review the Hay Group's (2004) five key pillars of distributed leadership and their respective applicability at Southern SHS. The inclusion of the Hay Group research serves as a very useful summary to the chapter and provides an advance organiser link with the overall outcomes reported in the final chapter.

5.9 The Five Pillars of Distributed Leadership

If they are not bound together by a clear vision, tight processes and clear accountability, multiple sources of leadership can pull a school apart. The consequences of not distributing leadership are staleness and stagnation. The risks of distributing leadership are anarchy and confusion. (NCSL, 2004, p. 4)

In the research undertaken by the Hay Group in 2004 for the NCSL in the United Kingdom, as reported in Chapter Two, the authors suggested that there were five common factors involved in establishing, extending and sustaining distributed leadership. This study has established that these factors were evident in the case account data from Southern SHS. The following section provides an analytical summary of some of the evidence which reinforces aspects of the five pillars of distributed leadership as outlined in the UK research.

5.9.1 Pillar 1: Self-confident and self-effacing “headship”

This factor is described as a desire by the head or principal to make an impact upon the world without a strong need for personal status. The Hay Group study found that distributed leadership depended first and foremost on a strong, powerful, but also humble principal. This type of leader is what Fullan (2005) refers to as a “systems thinker” and Collins (2002) as a “Level 5 leader” with a deep sense of personal humility coupled with intense professional will. The Hay Group (2004, p. 23) research

suggested this type of leader shared power because it enabled him/her to have a greater impact: "...it created capacity within the school, raised morale and commitment, enabled more things to happen at once, and ensured that they had something that would endure beyond their direct presence".

P was depicted by his staff as a leader with "moral purpose" who could communicate the "big picture". He constantly provided opportunities for his staff to "influence the big picture" as evidenced by the key members of staff who secured successful external partnerships. The case account recorded many instances of P providing staff with incentives for collaboration and encouraging the building of lateral capacity with individuals and organizations outside the school.

5.9.2 Pillar 2: Clarity of structure and accountability

The Hay Group found that in schools where leadership was successfully distributed there was a clear hierarchy of accountability defining responsibilities and functions to create a "permission to act" culture. They posit that "organisational clarity and the clear delegation and demarcation of responsibility are the hallmarks of successful distributed leadership" (Hay Group, 2004, p. 33).

In the schools they observed where leadership was more successfully distributed, the following characteristics were noted:

- everybody counted in the organization and junior staff members could offer feedback and ideas to senior staff members,
- people communicated openly and freely in all directions, and
- those in senior leadership positions were senior because they added value, not merely because of a title or length of service.

Examining the Southern SHS case study data, there is very clear evidence of the senior management team (Principal and Deputy Principals) providing appropriate organizational structures and accountability mechanisms. The Deputy Principals were identified as the major decision makers in their respective assigned "portfolios" and acted as a buffer between the Principal and all other stakeholders. The examples and vignettes also identified how positional leadership responsibilities were arranged and practised at Southern SHS. There was very strong support for the conclusion, that middle managers (the HODs) hold major keys to successful implementation of the curriculum within classrooms. Consistency of follow-through, monitoring and review of

responsibilities were evident in connecting accountability, authority and capability of individual staff members.

5.9.3 Pillar 3: Investment in leadership capacity building

The third pillar which the Hay Group research emphasizes is the requirement to build the skills, abilities and attributes of effective leadership in all members of staff. Fullan (2005, p. 95) provides some strong support for this pillar in the following statement:

What system leaders should want to see is the proliferation of leadership ...where the lead leaders are creating intensive opportunities for new leaders to 'learn in context' – job-embedded learning that is specific to the organization and is learned on the job through mentoring and related opportunities to engage in reflective practice, working with others on significant school and district priorities.

The Hay Group also identify three forces which helped individuals grow as leaders: role models, self image, and values. They concluded that the most fundamental barrier to leadership capacity derived from individuals' beliefs about leadership in which:

- they did not see themselves as leaders, or
- their role required "leadership", or
- their internal model of good leadership was flawed.

At Southern SHS, there was clear evidence from the case study data that investment in leadership capacity building had been a deliberate strategy by the current Principal and others in formal leadership positions. Multiple examples were cited of individuals who had been nurtured and promoted within the school environment to grow professionally. Others had specifically come from outside the school in order to access this level of leadership capacity building. Opportunities for promotional advancement and professional growth were widespread and encouraged in those who displayed talent and commitment to self-directed improvement.

The Principal as a role model and mentor was a common theme mentioned in many of the interview transcripts. Other staff members also identified internal and external role models who had shaped or helped them in their leadership development. On the other hand, there was also evidence to suggest that the building of leadership density and capability still had some way to go in the school. Whilst this was not explored further, it may be partially related to the barriers to leadership capacity identified in the Hay Group (2004) research cited previously.

5.9.4 Pillar 4: A culture of trusting relationships

In the first section of this chapter, this type of relationship issue has already been analyzed, but it is clearly a pivotal factor worthy of re-emphasizing. Trust emerges consistently as one of the key factors favourable to the distribution of leadership within schools. Four factors were identified by the Hay Group (2004, p. 46) as contributing to trust building:

- senior leaders who act as visible role models with integrity,
- senior leaders who add value to their subordinates' work,
- empathy and understanding the position from the other's perspective, and
- moving beyond token honesty and openly dealing with differences.

At Southern SHS collegiality and sharing of resources, both human and material, occurred amongst respective layers of senior administration, middle managers and other staff. There was a high degree of universal respect and admiration for the Principal as the “strategic” and “visionary” leader of the school community who generated strong ethical and trusting relationships within it. Staff loyalty and commitment to the school were evident in many instances as were the indications of strong parental recommendations of the school to others within the community.

Whilst evidence of a collaborative professional community existed there was also some evidence of communication breakdowns amongst some individuals and indications of a perpetuation of separate “silos” within the subject-centred departmental structure.

5.9.5 Pillar 5: Turning points

The Hay Group (2004) research suggests that specific actions or events in the school's history may lend momentum to the evolution of distributed leadership. These incremental events may range from appointment of a new principal through to a major investment in the training and development of middle leaders and other staff members. In examining the data set for the Southern SHS case study, there was no one definable turning point in the development of distributed leadership within the school. Rather, there were a number of events which appeared to be contributing to the school's openness and willing approach to distributed leadership.

Three examples of potential turning points at Southern SHS were identified. First, the imminent retirement and departure of some senior leaders gave opportunities for understudies or aspirants to be appointed to acting leadership roles within the school. Second, succession planning for internal positional leaders was a dominant theme in

the interview transcripts – for example, the current Principal reported that he was grooming another local Principal whom he perceived would continue the philosophy and ethos of the school once he had retired. Finally, the formation of SEA or *Work Right* as a major career development organization as well as the creation of external industry-business linkages gave Southern SHS an innovative profile in the broader community.

5.9.6 Summary of the Five Pillars evidence

Drawing together some of the evidence from the Southern SHS case and comparing it to the Hay Group research has provided another lens of analysis to measure the development of a distributed leadership perspective. From the evidentiary base which has been presented in this section, the following general conclusions can be made about the initiation and extension of a distributed leadership culture at Southern SHS.

First, the Principal, P, possessed the characteristics typical of a self-confident and self-effacing leader with a deep sense of moral purpose. This underpinned all aspects of his professional practice including his willingness to share power and opportunities for growth and development with the staff, the student body, and the general community.

Second, there was a very evident “permission to act” climate permeating the school which was built upon a clearly defined structure of organizational responsibilities and accountabilities. This structure helped to reduce the amount of duplications, conflict or confusion in the school and created an environment which encouraged individuals to lead in their preferred areas of expertise.

Third, investment in leadership capacity was a very salient feature of the school and was displayed in the number of staff who successfully moved on to other promotional positions as well as the number of role models who were cited by respondents as being influential in their leadership development.

Finally, the fundamental importance of developing an atmosphere of trust and respect was emphasised in numerous ways – staff acting with integrity, showing empathy and understanding were cited as key factors and were evident in the case records.

Whilst there was sound evidence in the Southern SHS case study to support many of the conclusions in the five pillars research, there was also evidence that differences and challenges remained.

5.10 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, the purpose has been to provide a more wide-ranging and in-depth critical analysis of the data gathered as part of the Southern SHS case study. In the first half of the chapter, six main themes were constructed around structural tensions and contradictions identified in Chapter Four. These were based on various theoretical conceptualizations identified earlier and then extended to explore the practical applications in the case study data. These themes were:

- diversity of objects in leadership roles,
- building of trusting relationships,
- leader-plus conceptualization and school committee example,
- leadership co-performance and student discipline example,
- leadership practice conceptualization, and
- rules which constrain the work of leaders.

In the second half of the chapter, data from the case study have been plotted and analyzed on a continuum of distributed leadership using a scale devised by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) and drawing on five key pillars of distributed leadership identified in the Hay Group study (2004).

The final chapter brings together an overall summation of the entire study by restating the original research questions, reviewing the theoretical constructions and frameworks used, as well as providing a coherent conclusion based on the analysis and interpretations of the qualitative evidence.

Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusions

Distributed leadership can be good or bad, planned or serendipitous, focused, or unfocused – it can enhance sustainability of learning for all students but it can also disintegrate into a turmoil that sucks energy and enthusiasm out of students and staff. (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 136)

6.1 Introduction

The main aim of this study was to provide insights into the current conceptions and practices of distributed leadership and its contribution to change and school improvement in a large public secondary school in Queensland, Australia. It has achieved this aim in a number of ways. First, the case study has used the framework and tools of cultural-historical activity theory to map and gain insights into Southern SHS as a dynamic interdependent activity system. Second, the mapping process has facilitated an analysis of the perceptions and attitudes of case study participants towards the concept and action of distributed leadership. Third, the study has identified a range of tensions and contradictions associated with the distribution of leadership and how these have influenced leadership practice at Southern SHS. Fourth, the investigation has contrasted its findings with other international research on distributed leadership and its potential for influencing change and school improvement.

This final chapter provides a review of the theoretical principles of the study and a summation of the findings which have emerged from the analysis and interpretation in Chapters Four and Five. It also highlights some specific implications from the study for professional learning and suggests areas in which further research on distributed leadership could occur.

The four main sections of the chapter are as follows:

- Section 1: A synopsis of the preceding five chapters is made.
- Section 2: The limitations of the study are briefly restated.
- Section 3: The major findings of the study are summarized and linked to the original research questions.
- Section 4: The implications of the study are linked to developmental initiatives in distributed leadership as well as further research efforts on this topic.

6.2 Synopsis of the Preceding Chapters

Chapter One provided an introduction to the topic and outlined why distributed school leadership has become prominent in the contemporary international context of school improvement and leadership in the past decade. Reasons include the intensification of principals' work, dramatically increased accountabilities of positional leaders, inadequate succession planning, parent participation in school decision making, and continuous reform driven by social, political and technological change.

The main thesis of the study is that in the turbulent complexity of modern schooling, effective leadership is more likely to be spread across a network of individuals rather than concentrated in the hands of one or two leaders. This reinforces dissatisfaction with the heroic overtones of charismatic leadership, the "power of one" or "super-leader" which has become increasingly challenged by those who define leadership as a collaborative and team-based activity. The core notion of distributed leadership suggests that school leadership does not just reside in the principal's office but requires multiple leaders, formal and informal, spread across the school community. Yet, the interesting paradox is that effective distributive leadership practice depends first and foremost on a strong, powerful yet humble head or principal. This research project strongly reinforces that conclusion.

In Chapter Two, the literature review examined the historical antecedents of distributed leadership and clarified the confusing definitional debate. Based on the separate yet complementary work of researchers in three continents, it was concluded that distributed leadership can be defined in two ways, from a *normative* viewpoint or from a *descriptive* viewpoint. The former viewpoint posits that the more distributed leadership exists, the better. From the descriptive viewpoint, leadership activity is ubiquitous and is always distributed in some way or other, whether we recognize it or not. The final part of the chapter outlined third-generation cultural-historical activity theory and the conceptual tools of a human activity system. One of the key principles enunciated in activity theory is the central role of contradictions as sources of change and development. Contradictions are defined by Engeström (2001, p. 137) as "historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems" and a number of these are identified in the thesis.

Chapter Three presented the methodological structure of the study, indicating that it was based on an instrumental case study design using qualitative data-gathering and analysis techniques. It explained why a single-site case study was chosen and how a

large Queensland public secondary school (Southern SHS) was selected as the host site. The chapter included a discussion on the general and specific limitations of case study research and why the outcomes of this investigation can only be considered working hypotheses or naturalistic generalizations.

Chapter Four provided a series of “thick descriptions” or first-level analysis into distributed leadership at Southern SHS using the internal mapping techniques drawn from activity theory. This initial descriptive analysis was grouped under five main sub-headings drawn directly from activity theory – objects, community, rules, mediating artefacts and division of labour. The conceptual tools of activity theory were used to summarize and display the respondent data gathered at the case study site. From the initial analysis, the chapter identified six emergent contradictions or structural tensions which were the main focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Five provided a finer-grained critical analysis of distributed leadership practice and the respective structural tensions identified at Southern SHS. Drawing on the descriptive data set and taking it to another level of abstraction, the chapter utilized a series of vignettes to aid interpretation and analysis. Further in-depth analysis was also provided of selected samples of case study data plotted on a continuum of distributed leadership identified earlier in the thesis.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

Specific limitations of the study were identified in Chapter Three and grouped into two interrelated areas – the first area was theoretical and the second, methodological. Whilst the majority of theoretical principles underpinning activity theory were drawn upon for this study, adaptations had to be made to enable the study to proceed to completion in a given time frame. It was not feasible for the researcher to engage participants in “expansive transformations” or looking at new ways of working in relation to leadership practice in the case study school. A full cycle of third-generation cultural-historical activity theory would typically involve such attempts at practical applications based on specific contradictions uncovered. Furthermore, it was necessary to focus the bulk of the data-gathering activities on those in formal leadership roles within the school. Whilst the number of non-positional participants was small, it was felt that there was sufficient breadth to reach some emergent conclusions based on “multiple voices” within the Southern SHS community.

In relation to methodological limitations, the study tended to rely strongly on semi-structured interviews as the main data-gathering technique. Though other techniques were utilized, it is from the interview data that the majority of the analysis undertaken in Chapters Four and Five has occurred. However, as with all qualitative studies seeking to establish their trustworthiness and authenticity, the author has employed a number of verification procedures including member checking of the interview data and an audit trail. These were explained in detail in Chapter Three.

6.4 Major Findings of the Case Study

This study was designed to provide insights into current conceptions and practices of distributed leadership and its contribution to sustainable change and school improvement using a qualitative single-site case study. The main research question addressed was:

What is the impact of distributed leadership and how is it sustained in a large Queensland secondary school during an era of change?

The main objectives of the research were to:

- collect data on the process of distributed leadership from a cross-section of participants;
- identify participants' perceptions and attitudes towards distributed leadership;
- identify positive and negative factors associated with the distribution of leadership and its sustainability within a school community; and
- develop, apply and evaluate a theoretical and conceptual framework which may have analytical power and methodological strategies for researching leadership distribution.

In considering the main research question of the impact of distributed leadership at Southern SHS, the next section of the chapter provides a summary of responses to each of the research objectives. These responses are based on the array of data and tentative conclusions which were drawn from Chapters Four and Five.

6.4.1 Scope of participants' involvement in distributed leadership

The case study gathered evidence of a broad distribution of leadership practice amongst the members of the senior management and the middle management groups within Southern SHS. The qualitative data gathered revealed a pattern of leadership practice that was widespread and embedded in the organizational culture of the school. The evidence indicated the development and refinement of a community-focussed school in which the Principal had taken deliberate actions, over an extended period of time, to ensure that leadership opportunities flourished and that the benefits of this

organizational culture enhanced the learning and growth of staff and students. One of the very clear messages emanating from this study is that the Principal was a pivotal agent in ensuring that Southern SHS *stood for something in a challenging community* and that one of his main leadership roles was nurturing, supporting and enhancing the leadership practice of others throughout the formal and non-formal structures of the organization. As emphasized in Chapter Five, successful distributed leadership depends first and foremost on a strong, powerful but also humble principal. P epitomised the notion of a “self-confident yet self-effacing” (Hay Group, 2004, p. 23) principal who knew the “why” and “how” of shared leadership practice. This is not to suggest that all members of staff or the school community necessarily understood or agreed with the Principal's approach, but there is little doubt as to his influence on the successful outcomes achieved by this school.

It is clear from this case account that Southern SHS had thrived in the turbulent complexity of the system-level changes which had impacted on all schools through the Education and Training Reforms of the Future (ETRF) agenda of the Queensland Government. The evidence to support this claim is laid out in the previous chapters, which provide many examples of how distributed leadership practice had contributed to this positive outcome during a long-term era of change. The imminent departure of P from the school was about to become another key turning point of change for the Southern SHS school community.

6.4.2 Perceptions and attitudes towards distributed leadership

An array of insights into how distributed leadership was perceived by respondents at Southern SHS was gathered and reported in the two previous chapters. In particular, perceptions and attitudes were revealed as participants described, from their perspective, how leadership responsibilities and management duties were enacted and shared within the school. As noted in the previous comments, the Principal's influential attitudes and values had a strong positive influence on his staff and how they engaged, on a daily basis, in their responsibilities and duties.

A clear example of the Principal's underpinning values was the focus given to two main issues identified in Chapter Five:

- clarity of structure and accountability, and
- investment in leadership capacity building.

All members of the senior management and middle management groups involved in the study exhibited strong awareness of their positional responsibilities and the

respective accountabilities they had in the school as an organization. There was an apparent clarity in their knowledge and understanding of traditional or formal delegation in the division of labour; and all participants knew that their individual and collaborative work was open to scrutiny, both internally and externally, by others within the school community.

There was also clear evidence that progressive delegation had enabled some junior staff and non-positional leaders, opportunities to demonstrate their skills and competencies in a manner that was advantageous to both the participants and the school as an organization. The Principal was passionate in his approach towards building leadership capacity amongst the positional leaders as well as extending developmental opportunities to many other aspirants within the large body of professional and support staff in the school.

It was also apparent that not everyone on the school staff shared the same perception or understanding of the benefits of a shared model of leadership, as articulated by the Principal or other positional leaders. There were a few members of the teaching staff who did not see themselves as “leaders” or feel that what they were doing could be considered “leadership practice”. Nevertheless, to the majority of those who were involved in this study, P was depicted as a key role model and mentor who was instrumental in their own professional learning and growth. His reputation was widely established beyond the borders of his own school as an influential educator who motivated and supported staff in their career aspirations. This study described how this happened partially through a guided distribution model in which co-performance of leadership practice was enacted across the school and into the community. A critical factor in the building of a professional learning community with multiple leaders at Southern SHS was the high level of relational trust which was noted amongst key participants. As research in other contexts and cultures has demonstrated, the presence of relational trust in an organization is likely to signal effective communication and decision-making practices. This study reaffirms the fact that relational trust is an associative factor in effective distributive leadership practice.

6.4.3 Positive and negative factors associated with distributed leadership

Whilst a strong positive image of distributed leadership practice was evident at Southern SHS, there were a number of contradictions or structural tensions identified from the data set. It would be inaccurate to assume that these contradictions were all negative or that any one aspect which initially appeared negative could not be

transformed into a positive. There is some clear evidence that identification of these structural tensions in the school activity system had also provided the motivating force for change and transformation.

Table 12 provides a combined summary of the main contradictions as well as the principles associated with the distributed leadership continuum presented in the previous chapter. In the discussion of these, attention was given to positive and negative themes and issues as well as intended and unintended consequences of various actions which were reported by participants.

Table 12

Leadership Tensions and Contradictions

Example	Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Multiple goals and means in leadership roles	<i>Gives focus and energy to the organization</i>	<i>Confusion and dissonance occur about direction and purpose</i>
Leader plus and school committees	<i>Allows multiple individuals and opportunities to participate in shared action by design</i>	<i>Obtaining a consensus can be difficult and cause conflict</i>
Leadership co-performance	<i>Brings improved division of labour and enables multiple perspectives on key issues</i>	
Leadership practice	<i>Enables the development of various forms of distribution – collaborative, collective and coordinated</i>	
Self-confident and self-effacing principal	<i>Can create capacity, raise morale and commitment amongst staff, students and community</i>	
Clarity of structure and accountability	<i>Well-organized school and clear lines of delegation and accountability for professional performance</i>	
Leadership capacity building	<i>Multiple opportunities created for personal and professional growth and development</i>	<i>Failure to see 'leadership' role and internal model of good leadership is flawed</i>

Trusting relationships	<i>Strong collegiality and sharing of resources and expertise freely</i>	
Turning points	<i>Southern Enterprise Association initiative Appointment of acting/new principal</i>	<i>Departure of incumbent principal</i>
Traditional delegation	<i>Supports accountability and gives high degree of security</i>	<i>Can simply delegate menial, uninteresting or unpleasant tasks to others</i>
Progressive delegation	<i>Extends opportunities for shared decision making and improved structures</i>	<i>Can create illusion of 'shared leadership' and raise expectations which are not met</i>
Guided distribution	<i>Can create strong professional learning communities and lateral networks</i>	<i>Change and reform may last only as long as the principal lasts</i>
Emergent distribution	<i>Innovation and creativity flourish within the school and outreach to the community is successful</i>	<i>Changes in senior leaders may affect the continuance of effective distributed leadership</i>
Assertive distribution	<i>Enhancements to the school's leadership and learning creates a long-term sustainable model for improvement which outlasts the principal</i>	<i>Moves distributed leadership to a 'higher, riskier and overtly political' plane</i>

As indicated in Table 12, there are multiple dimensions to the concept and practice of distributed leadership as described and reported in this case study. Whilst there appear to be more positive than negative aspects, this does not mean that Southern SHS was more or less successful than similar schools given the same type of factors, including community context, staffing and positional leaders. What has been suggested in this study, however, is that the particular combination of factors identified appeared to have created a school that had moved along the continuum of distributed leadership over time. Sustainability of this type of leadership practice is still an unknown factor and would clearly require further research at the case study school to confirm the tentative conclusions which have so far been drawn.

6.5 Evaluating the Theoretical Framework

In this study, a number of theoretical concepts have been drawn from the international literature and utilized as part of the research framework. Having used these theoretical concepts to varying degrees in the data-gathering and analysis process, it is appropriate to comment on their respective strengths and weaknesses. This section reviews the following four areas and their usefulness in a study of distributed leadership:

- application of activity theory, as theorized by Gronn (2000, 2002, 2003) and based on original research work by Engeström (1987, 1993, 1999a, b, c, d, e);
- research by Spillane and his colleagues (2001, 2003, 2004, 2006) who have gathered extensive school data suggesting that distributed leadership can be best understood through leadership practice;
- NCSL research in UK schools by the Hay Group (2004) and MacBeath et al. (2004) which identified five key pillars of distributed leadership; and
- development of a distributed leadership continuum by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) in their writings about leadership sustainability.

6.5.1 Application of activity theory

In Chapter Two, Gronn (2002) outlined four main advantages for the application of activity theory as proposed by Engeström and its centrality to a study of distributed leadership. To Gronn, activity theory was particularly suited to his “concertive action” notion of distributed leadership as the product of conjoint activity amongst educators and their contextual environments. This study found no reason to suggest that the advantages identified by Gronn were not relevant or applicable, though it must be clearly acknowledged that methodological limitations did not allow for a full review of all the listed advantages.

Further, it is also noted that what Engeström (1999d) defines as “third generation cultural-historical activity theory” has only been partially utilized within the present study. Of the five main principles noted by Engeström, the following insights can be described. It was conceptually and practically worthwhile to:

- define the school as a collective, artefact-mediated and object-oriented activity system which would provide the prime unit of analysis;
- depict the school as a multi-vocal activity system with multiple points of view, traditions and interests in which the division of labour featured as a strong structural aspect linked to its history, artefacts, rules and conventions; and

- identify “contradictions” as key sources of change and development in an activity system, noting that such contradictions as identified in this study had both positive and negative aspects as well as the capacity to generate innovative solutions.

Of the other two principles enunciated by Engeström – “historicity” and “expansive transformation” – partial or limited application was noted in this study. The historical dimensions of the case study school were introduced and touched on lightly in Chapter Four and whilst individual histories of some respondents were noted, it was not possible to draw these various threads of personal history into a more coherent historical picture of the school’s development as an activity system. Similarly, the notion of engaging in a full cycle of expansive transformation or passing through the “zone of proximal development” was not achievable in this study. It was, however, pragmatically useful to draw upon the structure, concepts and terminology of activity system theory in the main methodological aspects of this study. As the major descriptive analysis of Chapter Four revealed, it was possible to gather valuable data on distributed leadership practice using the insights provided by the interrelated elements of the school as an interdependent activity system. Furthermore, these elements of subject, object-outcome, community, tools, rules and division of labour provided a strong conceptual framework for further in-depth analysis in Chapter Five.

In relation to the last objective of this qualitative single-site case study, a naturalistic conclusion is that the use of activity theory in a study of distributed leadership is generally worthwhile and apposite. To the best knowledge of the author, this study of distributed leadership is the only one in Australia to date which has utilized the theoretical lens of activity theory or its descriptive methodological techniques (see Mayrowetz, 2008, p. 428).

6.5.2 Leadership practice from a distributed perspective

This study has also drawn extensively on the research and ideas generated by Spillane and his colleagues (2001, 2003, 2004, 2006) in North America who have investigated school leadership practice from a distributed perspective. As Chapter Two indicated, a distributed perspective on leadership emphasizes practice and process and is founded on the dual belief that school leadership requires multiple leaders as well as the centrality of interaction between leaders, followers and their situation.

There is much of similarity between the theoretical perspectives of Spillane and Gronn, and this study has brought both theorists together in various analytical sections of Chapters Four and Five. Of particular relevance was the analysis of case study data which illustrated the following concepts in action:

- *leader-plus* or *numerical-additive* conceptualizations demonstrated in the school committees and student discipline examples (Vignettes # 2, 3 & 4); and
- *leadership practice* or *concertive action* conceptualizations demonstrated in the leader co-performance and lateral networking examples (Vignettes # 4, 5, & 6).

It is relatively easy to understand and describe the logic of multiple leaders (the “leader-plus” perspective); however, it is far more problematic and complex to describe and analyze the interactions and processes occurring between leaders, followers and their situation (the “practice” perspective). Problems arise particularly when efforts are applied to understanding when “leadership” actually ends and what could be seen as “regular” professional work begins. Additional complexity is also encountered when attempts are made to define and understand the wide variety of contextual and situational factors that must be taken into account when looking at leadership from a distributed perspective. To a certain degree, this complexity is addressed when using the activity theory framework and associated methodological ideas (e.g., mediating artefacts including tools and rules).

Spillane (2006) acknowledges these research challenges in his writings when he attempts to describe the three dimensions of his distributed practice framework by examining or unpacking the interactions between leaders, followers and their situation. It is my own conclusion that the concepts which have been developed best by Spillane and his colleagues relate mainly to “leaders”. Building on the work of Gronn, these theorists have investigated the notion of “co-performance of leadership practice” and identified three useful types of distributed leadership (collaborative, collective, coordinated) for which they provide examples. In my own case study, it has been possible to describe and elaborate on this co-performance of leadership practice in the vignettes which were recorded and analysed in Chapter Five.

One noted shortcoming in Spillane’s research, which he also acknowledges (2006, p. 70), is that attention in his research program to “followers” is very limited. He draws upon the notion of “heedfulness” to describe the interactions between leaders and followers, and cites examples of differences between various curriculum subject areas. This type of analysis was not undertaken in the present study and remains a possible

area for further research effort (see McBeth, 2008, p. 13). In relation to the third dimension of Spillane's distributed perspective, the "situation", it has been possible in this study to bring some additional understanding to the importance of context. For example, by mapping and describing the tools, signs and rules which were identified as mediating artefacts in Chapter Four, it has allowed a greater insight into leadership practice using a distributed perspective. It is my belief that there is great potential to use these methodological resources in further research on this topic.

6.5.3 Distributed leadership continuum

The distributed leadership continuum proposed by Hargreaves and Fink (2006) has had strong resonance and application in this study. Based on the evidence obtained in the case study data (refer to Vignettes #9-12) it is apparent that Southern SHS demonstrated many of the indicators that were relevant to the various layers of delegation and distribution depicted in the Hargreaves and Fink continuum. The nature of the evidence analysed suggested that the school was not yet an example of "assertive distribution", but had reached a point where considerable "guided" and "emergent" distribution was actively flourishing. As Hargreaves and Fink maintain, the chances of a school community sustaining its innovation and distributive leadership practice from a guided distribution stage are problematic. This and the statement below seem to suggest that a distributive perspective may "last as long as the principal lasts":

One of the best ways to secure successful succession is to stretch and spread leadership across people now, not just in the future, to distribute and develop leadership so that successors will emerge more readily and take over more easily. Distributed leadership develops capacity in others, so that they can become as gifted as those who lead them and can build on their achievements. (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 93)

As the study has previously noted, the sustainability of a distributed leadership perspective at Southern SHS was facing new challenges in the principalship succession process. Sufficient evidence was drawn from the case account and linked to the distributed leadership continuum to suggest that there was optimism for Southern SHS to continue with a positive future as the "baton" was passed to a new principal.

6.5.4 Five pillars of distributed leadership

The analysis of case study data using the Hay Group's (2004) five pillars research provided some very useful corroboration of common factors which have been identified in establishing and sustaining distributed leadership. Each of the pillars is embedded in

the model developed by MacBeath et al. (2004) (refer to Figure 1) which posits a three-phase approach to building distributive leadership in any school. With the type of evidence drawn from the case study data, it is possible to conclude that Southern SHS demonstrated many of the milestones and factors listed in this model. The first four of the pillars have been referred to earlier in this chapter and give strong support to the prior proposition that Southern SHS was well placed to be considered an example of a school embracing distributed leadership. It was also noted, in relation to the final pillar – a turning point – that the school was likely to face new challenges in sustaining the type of leadership practice observed during the study period. With the imminent departure of P, after a 20-year period as Principal, as well as two of the acting Deputy Principals, the future direction of leadership practice to be taken in the school was somewhat uncertain.

This case study account has provided a strong argument for Southern SHS to be depicted as an example of a community-based school in which distributive leadership was practised for the benefit of staff, students and the wider community (at the time when this research was undertaken). All of the preceding sections have provided evidence to suggest that this naturalistic conclusion can be drawn and backed up by the data record.

6.6 Implications for Distributed Leadership from the Study

This dissertation has provided one case study account of distributed leadership in action and has identified some of the conditions and circumstances under which this form of leadership practice can flourish and grow in a school setting. The limitations on drawing wider inferences and conclusions from this small-scale qualitative study have been acknowledged previously. Notwithstanding these limitations, it is the author's belief that a useful theoretical framework has been established and evaluated, and that improved knowledge and understanding has been generated on different models, approaches and forms of distributed leadership and professional learning.

It is not within the scope of this study to engage in a comprehensive discussion of the implications of distributed leadership for education policy and practice. Nevertheless, there are some basic suggestions from the study for those who have a stake in school leadership, and these can be broken down into three main audiences. Firstly, for senior bureaucrats in central, regional and district offices, and their political supervisors, who create policy and allocate resources in line with departmental or government priorities; secondly, for university academics and those responsible for leadership preparation

and development programs; and lastly for those who work within the schooling sector and can be collectively identified as practitioners responsible for the day-to-day work of leading and managing in teaching-learning contexts.

It is self-evident from this study and from a growing body of international research findings that the work of leading schools involves more than the leadership of the school principal. The evidence asserts that many other leaders are critical for school improvement, whether they are formally designated positional leaders such as deputy principals or heads of department, or teachers who take on additional leadership responsibilities. System level policy makers and senior education officers must ensure that they continually review their strategic plans and operational procedures and protocols relating to school leadership appointments, professional development priorities and accountabilities. This study found examples of constraints on a distributed perspective for leadership practice in the case study school, mainly generated by hierarchical and bureaucratic practices operating at regional and district levels of Education Queensland. It was evident from this study that the Principal employed a variety of creative strategies in his efforts to overcome some of these “structural tensions” in order to support teachers and associate administrators in the work of leadership.

A second policy implication from this study relates to the area of school leadership preparation and development and has specific relevance for educational policy makers and the university sector. From a distributive perspective, the notion of leader development is more relevant if enhanced with the concept of leadership practice that extends beyond an exclusive concern with the knowledge and skills of senior positional leaders or aspiring principals only. Spillane (2006, p. 99) sums up this implication in the following statement:

If leadership practice takes shape in the interaction among leaders and followers ... then it seems wise to think about the challenge of school leadership development as one of developing the practice of leadership rather than thinking exclusively in terms of developing school principals.... Anchoring the leadership preparation and development challenge in leadership practice could involve principal preparation programs that work to develop a distributed mindset.

The key message suggested by this type of leadership preparation and development program is that leadership practice is best developed in situ, within the school context

in which expertise, knowledge, and skills are already widely dispersed. Programs of this type would rely much more extensively on peer observation, reflective analysis and action research as well as mentoring and coaching around the routines and interactions between leaders and followers.

A final implication from this study suggests that distributive leadership relies on the willingness of senior positional leaders such as the principal to relinquish or redirect their power. The case study account provided numerous examples of P engaging in this deliberate practice at Southern SHS. However, distributive leadership also relies on the readiness and willingness of other formal and non-formal leaders to take up the opportunities and challenges of leadership practice which permeate the school context. This study has also suggested that considerable risks exist for formal school leaders in adopting a naively optimistic view of distributed leadership. The literature reviewed for the study contained countless warnings suggesting that distributed leadership is not a panacea for all the current problems of leadership; nor is it, in itself, a simple recipe for effective leadership practice.

6.7 Suggestions for Further Research

Alma Harris (2005, p. 263) has commented that without a strong empirical base, distributed leadership “faces the danger of becoming yet another leadership theory that proves to be misleading”. One of the particular issues identified by Harris and other writers is the need to undertake further research on the relationship between distributed leadership and school improvement. This study did not attempt to prove or suggest that there was a direct causal relationship between distributed leadership and school improvement at Southern SHS. A far more detailed research project would be required for such a conclusion to be drawn. However, this study has confirmed a number of tentative conclusions with respect to distributed leadership and school improvement as noted earlier in this chapter. It is in this direction that further developmental and practice-based research could be usefully directed.

Mayrowetz (2008, p. 431) has suggested that whilst the descriptive, activity theory-based understanding of distributed leadership has a strong conceptual underpinning, the “connections to school improvement and leadership development are diffuse”. He also notes that most educational leadership researchers, policy makers and project developers have “morphed” the descriptive orientation of distributed leadership into a more normative stance and that very few “have embraced the activity theory framework or the methodological techniques suggested by it”. This study has taken a descriptive

orientation and as a consequence, it has been able to extend some confidence in the further use of activity theory as a methodological framework for studying distributed leadership practice. In expanding on the current framework it is proposed that the following research initiatives and questions be considered within the educational leadership community.

First, it would be helpful to continue to use the activity theory-based notion of distributive leadership but move beyond the extensive descriptive analysis of practice to assessing the effectiveness of various leadership practices and behaviours in different contexts or settings. For example, in what ways do small schools differ from large schools in the nature and style of distributed leadership practice? Do variations in distributed leadership practice arise in cross-cultural contexts, single-sex schools or schools in rural or urban locations?

Secondly, it is also suggested that a detailed developmental framework for distributed leadership practice could be constructed and considered by those who are responsible for supporting and enhancing the leadership skills of positional leaders. If a more practical and pragmatic set of distributive leadership resource materials is available for school-based practitioners, it is conceivable that the concepts, principles and ideas will be applicable to, and give impetus to, continuing school improvement and reform.

Finally, further research on distributed leadership should include combinations of many of the principles, practices and concepts outlined in the proposed developmental framework. For example, how do effective positional leaders support and sustain teachers, parents and students as co-performers of leadership practice? In what ways is relational trust developed as a foundational element in successful distributive leadership? What are the key attributes of “self confident and capable” positional leaders that support a distributive perspective? How does a distributive leadership perspective contribute to a vibrant professional learning community?

At the beginning of this thesis I suggested that distributed leadership has a significant role to play in the long-term process of enhancing and sustaining educational change at the school level. In light of the main research question which motivated my study, it is my belief that the future survival of school reform and improvement could depend to a large extent on the way that leadership practice is conceived, distributed and celebrated within the education profession and the wider community.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH ETHICS AND PRINCIPLES OF PROCEDURE

1. Independence

- 1.1 No participant in the project will have privileged access to the research data or accounts.
- 1.2 No participant will have a unilateral right of power of veto over the final content of published accounts of the project (refer also to 5.1 for the process of negotiation of accounts)

2. Disinterest

The researcher will attempt to represent, as widely as possible, the range of viewpoints encountered in the research, rather than to enunciate his own perspectives of private views.

3. Negotiated Access

The researcher will seek only reasonable access to relevant data sources. The researcher will assume that he can freely approach any individual associated with the project to collect data. Those approached should feel free to discuss any matters they see fit. All such discussions will be treated as privileged by the researcher. The researcher is bound to portray the project and the issues it raises, but the release of specific information likely to identify informants will be subject to negotiation with these informants.

4. Negotiation of Boundaries

- 4.1 The research project will be essentially a descriptive case study involving interpretative and analytical aspects. The principles for inclusion of concerns, perspectives or information (i.e. data) in the study are that this data contributes to understanding the case; especially in so far as it is variously understood by participants from their different points of view.
- 4.2 A major task of the research, therefore, is to attempt to piece these separate perspectives together into a coherent account of the case study as a whole. Thus according to this principle of inclusion, the perspectives of all participants and interested observers have a right to be considered in the research.
- 4.3 The principle for exclusion of concerns, perspectives or information is that they can be shown to be false or unfounded, irrelevant to the case account, or to unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups involved with the research.

5 Negotiation of Accounts

- 5.1 The criteria of fairness, relevance and accuracy form the basis for negotiation between the researcher and participants in the study. Where accounts of interviews, meetings or the work of participants can be shown to be unfair, irrelevant or inaccurate, the accounts will be amended. The process for verification of accounts will be to return copies of transcripts of interviews and meetings to respective individuals or groups and allow them to check the content for accuracy and relevance. Once draft accounts or reports have been negotiated with informants on the basis of these criteria, they will be regarded as having endorsement for wider publication.

5.2 The process of negotiation of accounts will, where, necessary, be phased to protect participants from the consequences of one-way information flow. Parts of an account or report may first be negotiated with relevant individuals who could be disadvantaged if the account was negotiated as a whole with all participants.

6. Confidentiality

6.1 The researcher will not examine files, correspondence or other documentation without explicit authorization and will not copy from these sources with permission from school authorities.

6.2 Interviews, meetings and written exchanges will not be considered 'off-the-record'; but those involved are free, both before and after, to restrict aspects of parts of exchanges, or to correct or improve their statements. Quotations, verbatim transcripts and attributed observations, judgments, conclusions or recommendations will be used in reports only with the authorization of the informant. Where information is general or the sources of the information are sufficiently obscured to defy identification of specific individuals, no clearance will be sought.

6.3 The researcher is responsible for the confidentiality of data collected by him in the course of the research project. The researcher cannot, however, be held responsible for breaches of these principles by others involved in the research. It is the responsibility of the primary audience and other participants to respect the confidentiality of accounts and any restriction on their circulation.

6.4 It should be noted that confidentiality rules cannot be used to withdraw written reports of accounts from general view. Once fair, relevant and accurate accounts have been released and when they are presented in ways which do not unnecessarily expose or embarrass participants, such accounts should no longer be sheltered by the restrictions of confidentiality.

7. Publications

7.1 Reports (e.g. thesis or journal articles) will be released for wider circulation only in the form established by the procedure of negotiation of accounts: i.e. they must be 'endorsed' by project participants as fair, relevant and accurate. Any published account or report must first meet this criterion.

7.2 The researcher reserves the right to disavow any incomplete or summary version of the study which purports to be a report of the research project.

7.3 Summary versions of the final report will be made available by the researcher to the primary audience at the study site and other individuals, groups or institutions that may have an interest in the research.

7.4 It is the expectation of the researcher that the major sponsors of the research, Griffith University, will have the right of first refusal on any publication for a wider audience.

8. Accountability

8.1 The researcher cannot make all his case account records publicly available without breaching the study's principles of procedure. Nevertheless, the

researcher must be accountable to the sponsors, project participants and the wider research community. Therefore, the researcher will keep appropriate financial and administrative records which will be open to the immediate sponsors; furthermore the researcher will be accountable to participants at the case study site as outlined in these principles of procedure.

8.2 The researcher will work with a supervisory group of academic staff to whom the entire research process and its records; files and reports will be open in principle. The primary role of this supervisory group is to evaluate the research process, check emerging interpretations against available evidence, suggest further data-gathering activities, and to assist with the interpretation and implementation of the principles of procedure.

(Key members of the supervisory group will include **Professor Neil Dempster** Dean of the Faculty of Education; and **Dr James Skinner** - Griffith University)

Researcher - Matthew Glen *Dip Tch B Ed M Ed*

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Consent Form for Interviewees

Distributed Leadership Research Project

I agree to take part in the above research project. The Senior Researcher has outlined the project to me and I have read the *Explanatory Statement and Principles of Procedure* which I understand and have retained for my records.

I am aware that this consent entails my participation in one (1) tape-recorded interview, which may be conducted face-to-face or via a telephone conference link-up. All audio tapes will be erased following transcription of interviews and a copy of my interview transcript will be made available to me. I understand and accept the principles relating to confidentiality of data and the negotiation of accounts and that no names of any individuals within the school or the school will be identified in any reporting or publication of the research.

I also understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team; and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.

NAME (print)

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:

.....

The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and / or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A de-identified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University's Privacy Plan at www.griffith.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 3875 5585.

Please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, at Griffith University Human Research Ethics Committee on 3875 5585 (or research-ethics@griffith.edu.au) if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project;

Thank you for your participation

Matthew Glen – Senior Researcher

Ph 0405 834 904

Professor Neil Dempster – Principal Investigator

Griffith University

Ph 3735 6836

APPENDIX B

DATA GATHERING PROCEDURES

Interview Schedule

Introduction

- Confirm procedural issues including signing of Consent Form and copy of ethical clearance to be left with participant. Check participant understands that taped interview transcripts will be transcribed and returned for their perusal and that this process will take a number of weeks.
- The individual subject of each interview should give a brief biography at the start of the interview, which serves to answer the question: '*Whose perspective is this?*'

1. Objects and Outcomes

What are the key responsibilities in your current position in the school? To what major purpose/s or end does your work contribute?

- Describe what you believe is your 'core business' as a principal/deputy principal/HOD, etc.
- How do you know what you are doing is making a difference in the school?

2. Community

Who else is generally involved in working with you?

- Identify other positional or non-positional leaders you interact with regularly in your job.
- How do you relate what you do with other groups in the school e.g. senior management, HODs, teachers, other staff, parents, students?

3. Division of Labor

How are the leadership responsibilities and duties shared or distributed in the school?

- Who decides on what work is share and with whom?
- Does it involve delegation; by invitation; by assumption; by election?
- Are there any aspects of the division of labor which concern you right now?
- How are the major decisions of the school made? Are you satisfied with this process?

4. Tools

What are the main ways in which you accomplish your key responsibilities and duties?

- What physical attributes or resources are essential in doing your job?
- What psychological attributes or resource are essential in doing your job?
- What part do meetings and committees/teams play in your job?

5. Rules

What supports and/or constrains your work as a leader in the school?

- Do you have access to sufficient internal information and resources necessary to perform you r job well? What about external information and resources?
- Are you satisfied with the internal regulations, norms and conventions of the school? What about external regulations, norms and conventions from places like district and regional office?

APPENDIX C

SELECTED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

(P) Principal

19 June 2006

P: Yes I have thought that for some time; to lead this school with three acting deputy principals for so long and that we could just keep producing when we had stability. And the great strength of this school has been the stability of its leadership since the outset; all that's happened is that I've just added one or two and have lost one as they've been promoted; so it's been a natural transmission; but then coming forward to loose them all in a very short time, was just diabolical and then to not be able to replace them, because they were just acting and thus couldn't be replaced permanently

At the moment we have one substantive vacancy at last; and that is just sad. But I have argued for some time that I needed to keep my appointments internal in order to maintain that continuity, but what's happening now is that my good young people are getting a bit thin on the ground, because there is a strong chance that I will loose C, and I can't hold her up because it's her life and career, but to loose her and B who are two key operatives and with me going on leave, oh brother....but it's my problem to solve, but it will be hard, and I have gone beyond to bring F in as acting deputy and gone outside to bring in a middle schooling HOD; F and I interviewed her and she was impressive and we feel she will be good. But I haven't done that for ages, and we went outside to look for somebody for maths and couldn't find anybody; so came back inside and solved my problem. And if I loose C by the end of this week, I'll probably have another job to do, probably inside again.

MG: So you have lost a few key people this year – people like E.

P: E, yes, well he hasn't gone too far; he's just hopped the fence and he's still going to be very allied to the project that he got going, and thank goodness because it is a very large project - that submission is \$1.6 million and it's in and has been progressed through government and I just hope that it gets funded in this financial year.

MG: So he has only gone for a short period.

P: Yes he has a one year contract, and he has the option of returning, so his position just sits in limbo until he makes a decision; but I would think there is affair chance they he will never be back, because the work that he can do for them, they will probably see it as being very important, and he's a good operator and they will snap him up so they will offer him more money than he could make around here.

And he likes the freewheeling in this new job because he hates the minutiae which drove him nuts and of course around here there is a lot of that to deal with and he didn't like that; and of course I still have to have a look at the minutiae in the departments as well as the big picture because at the end of the day I need to sign off on every expenditure that goes through the school. And of course this gives me opportunities to know what is going on in each department and provides me with enormous avenues for conversations with them about their work.

MG: OK so this is a normal part of your leadership role and that is reflected in the conversations which people have had with me about their relationship with you as principal.

P: Yes, well it has been interesting this year with the HOD's meetings it has been quite amazing, because working with KH this year, she had asked me if I would be the case study for a lot of the sessions; and I think it was about leadership style and method, but somehow it ended up being evaluative as well, it just somehow went there. When they were looking at leadership style it was just looking at the methods which I employed and that was the way that the HOD's saw me as well.

MG: So in terms of your own feelings about the direction this school is going and something which has been your life for a number of years; what do you see in the future?

P: Well you mentioned X; I've been preparing X for this for the past two years; and I have been working very closely with her and I have told her this up front and, hopefully, (dare I say this) I hope to get her into the position of president of the Southern School to Work Scheme which we have owned here for some time, primarily because I wanted to shift the focus away from all of the depth being here in this school, and because I could see that she wanted to take on more and that she was an emerging leader. Consequently I have worked hard with her to prepare her for the thought that I'm not going to be here for too much longer and when I put that to her, she was flattered when I first put that to her about 12 months ago. And I said that I would like you to consider putting in an expression of interest to be acting here, and I wasn't concerned at all when the District Director rang me and said that I would like to offer your job to X, how do you feel about that? And I said I think it's fine because I had been having conversations with X over the past year and of course I don't know if you're meant to do these things, but I wasn't going to just walk away and leave the school without anyone, especially when you look down the coast and see that they just can't get principals. But I did learn that there was another principal interested, but I only learnt that after the event; another Band 9 principal (Western SHS) who was interested. But X will come in here knowing what we do, she has already been for a briefing the other day

MG: So you feel that this is almost getting to be a form of succession plan for the school.

P: Well, it's sloppy but it's the best that I can do from where I sit; I don't know whether you're meant to do this but as I've said to you, I'm nearing the end and I'm just finding the right time - I think X is the best bet on the horizon for this school, and that would be out of the existing principals and deputies in this region for this school. I think the other lady from Western SHS would also be OK. But I've been working hard to X to build her style and methodology...

MG: SO you felt that you could offer this opportunity to her....

P: Well, she got it whether she liked it or not (laughter)...basically we talk, and as she is talking I listen to her problems and challenges and I try to calm her down; she is a bit of a volatile and explosive character, and I try to encourage her to keep it cool; and she still probably has a long way to go; but when I spoke to her about the appointment here, she asked how do you think I will be received there. And I said that she would be well received here, as I have talked her up to the office and staff here, and when we went through the office she was very well received.

MG: But she will have to go through the normal selection process when the position becomes vacant?

P: Yes, they will have to start making appointments though, because they can't just leave all these big schools with no principals, and put people in as acting and say they aren't good enough to do the job'; basically if I was the actor and they didn't appoint me, just go on acting, I'd say well what are you telling me; because that's a very mixed message, but I think you have basically got to say to your actor, well you're either up to it or not, goodbye, and give somebody else a go.

MG: It has been rather messy like this for some time and seems to be a waste of talent and energy.

OK so school succession planning is one of those leadership issues which appears to be very poorly managed – Hargreaves has stated that 'nothing succeeds less than administrative succession planning'?

So, in casting the net of distributed leadership a bit wider into the community, what advice or comment can you offer about the other leaders who seem to be playing pivotal roles in furthering the broader aims and purpose of the school within the community context.

P: It has become more external, in preparing for me to go. Now we, (that is H, A and myself) have developed a gap between Southern and Work Right; and the gap is only in terms of when another principal comes in here, that will not be an impediment, nor will it be a millstone around the new principal's neck. Because the principal can't do a lot of damage, and it will exist in its right and it will survive beyond here and it is bigger - absolutely. And they have got their premises out of the school – but of course it is crazy to move them out, because I charge them rent (enormous rent). You know some people think I do this for love, but I do it for more money and income for the school (laughs), on top of my P&C income and any principal coming in will see that very clearly.

A lot of people don't know this and of course I don't tell them how all of this is sustained; it's not that I just don't tell them, but I don't go out of my way to tell them.

Work Right are an industry provider, they are an ally of this school and they are on-campus of this school, and students benefit from it; and the fact that I am president of it is not necessarily widely known, it's not hidden, but it's not widely known.

MG: So what happens to that position when you leave?

P: Well, that won't be one that I will necessarily relinquish when I leave; I'll probably be in transition with that, but I guess I will eventually go from that too; but leaving the school will be the first thing I will do, and leaving that other organization will be something comes afterwards. That organization needs to have another person come in, so I might have a bit of 'wait and see'; it may be the next principal of the school, but it may well be someone else, a businessman or someone who has an interest in education and wants to have a go. And we have already sourced some possibilities on that as well.

MG: So do you have any documentation that is available publicly that shows the organizational linkages between the SEA Inc and the high school.

P: Well I guess that most of those linkages are just internal - SEA Inc is the organization, and Work Right is the trading name. Like Southern School to Work is also an incorporated association.

MG: So does this have its own documentation trail such as annual reports and other official records?

P: Yes, this is available via their web site which would give you some idea. And A would have the history and details of the relationship with the school, and when we cut free and why we cut free

MG: So it would be better for me to speak with A about this type of relationship?

P: Yes, she has all of the historical information about when the organization was set up here at the school; because it was on-site here for so long, and because the programs we were doing, the payroll was through EQ; and that was from 1997 to 2002 and then we separated them in 2001-02; and the fact that they maintain a presence here on site, they have got two classrooms – and there have been some questions asked about that here from time to time.

The advantages are for our students here on site, and where they can just drop in there and obtain support, and they do this all the time.

Yes A would have all the details about this and the setting up of the organization, how they were set up under the Justices Act, and all of the staffing, superannuation and structural issues which have to be taken care of in this type of organization. The set-up took hundreds of hours for both A and H who worked to get the structure right.

MG: So H has also been a key person in the organizational arrangements for Work Right.

P: Yes, you need to talk with H, and you will get a different perspective from him, a more clinical viewpoint and he sees a much different future for Work Right. He can see it becoming a far larger organization. Now H is my fellow dreamer – I'm not sure if I've told you that, but when it comes to the designing and dreaming of the school, the late afternoon conversations often happen first with H. My people closest to me here, and the ones I use for a lot of thinking that goes on; but in terms of management of people, development of people and management of resources. And he and I will spend many an afternoon between 4 and 6 o'clock, talking about the things that could make this a better organization or better school, or whether the strategies we are using are working.

MG: SO H has been here how long?

P: O, he has been here a lot of years, probably about 10 years now. And his substantive position is as an AO6 and he has a degree. Now his father who has been with us even longer for the past 15 or 17 years, he has been the auditor for the P&C Association and we knew Fred before H came; and I don't know if it was just a coincidence that H was appointed here, or he maneuvered it himself, but he just came. Now Fred has given the school marvelous actuarial advice about how to get your profit margins worked out, so that Fred actually works on what do you want to achieve, and then comes back to the pricing – he showed them how to operate on a profit margin and to do that with the uniform shop, and I had seen how useful that was for the school. So H and I both understand how important it is to make sure that every cent of the school is achieving the best possible return, and he is very tough on that. So everything is designed because of the massive amounts of money we are pushing around to achieve the best value for our funds.

An example is the purchase of materials for schools within the SEA; so we can buy cheaper than the large educational supplier (EDSCO) and make significant savings so that we can get a bigger cut of it by bringing everybody in.; so everybody may get a 4% discount but we will get 5 and ½% just for bringing everybody in. So those little margins when you add them up over the years, they can make a significant difference. H does all this sort of thing; we buy up all of our photocopy materials through a single point, and we nail them down hard, and do good deals. And there is always an opportunity to do deals. So when we built our new special unit block, we were asked by Q-Build to purchase furniture, and they said we'll give you a \$100 000, and we said 'no can't do it for that; give us a \$110 000; and they said yes OK, because they didn't want to do it.

So we do a lot of our buying by bulk orders, in all sorts of areas of purchase. And those savings add up to significant amounts over the years, which can be channeled back into the schools programs.

MG: So you would probably agree that school-based management has been an advantage for Southern for controlling the financial agenda and doing the things which you have wanted to for the students?

P; Well, yes, and I have given seminars about this to other schools, and because I thought that this was something that everybody did. Well, all the catering for the school is done through Home Economics; I purchase the service and all the food, and it might cost 50cents and I pay them a dollar, so they have another 50 cents to spend, and we are doing the same through the manual arts, and we are setting up a stationery shop through the business. The food outlets, that is where we have been doing some dreaming, but we are a bit short of cash there. But the manual arts, they do all the desk refurbishments, and other stuff; and it is all done for real live dollars, and they get the extra to spend in their own departments; and of course it all meets audit requirements of the department.

So all of these is internal budget adjustments, which they get more to spend on their own departments. So 'Cookie' (head of Home Ec.); will do a couple of outside jobs each year and same with manual arts, through their trailers and sprinklers they generate tens of thousands of dollars in extra income which they can use on their own projects. And this year that is what I'm encouraging all departments to do, some entrepreneurial activity in which they can bring in some additional money.

MG: So new public management is alive and well at Southern, and the school has done very well out of these school-based initiatives.

P: Ah yes we do very well, and the school is not poor. We have in another submission for \$250 000 for an ensemble rehearsal space, and the department came up with such a good idea, and their idea was accepted by H and I, and G couldn't believe it and said how could that happen. But we told him that his idea was so much better than others, and he couldn't believe how quickly it got up, but that submission went in and I think it will be a very good chance of picking up funding under the EQ subsidy scheme. We are in an area that for every 70 cents raised we get a \$1 subsidy, so because of our disadvantaged community we get this additional resource. And of course that is very helpful for the P& C association.....

MG: We have covered a lot of ground over objects and purpose and direction of the school. You mentioned all these other key external people, and it would seem that these are all part of the distributed leadership function stretched across the school, who all are contributing to achieving the vision and direction in which they school is heading.

P: Yes, we had the superintendent from the Mt Druitt area in Sydney up here recently; and he said a few things, and I smile at this....because this applies to us. He recounted that the nursery of promotional appointments for NSW Education was in his district – a tough area; what happens you have your solid, older stable teaching workforce which stays there and retires from there, they don't look to go anywhere else. Then you've got all these young ones who come in, and they are 'goers' and they come in and the goers find projects, and they find gaps and they invent projects because there are needs all over the place; they do well and they get promoted and they go. So you've got this – he calls it 'churning' (laughing) - crikey, that about describes Southern in about one go.

And that's exactly what happens here; your young people do well, they get appointments in other schools very easily, or they go to private schools or they go overseas. And that's all my young people; we're back this year and it is exactly the same because we have about a dozen or so younger teachers and they are going to be the strength of the school in the coming years. And we are molding them and bringing them forward, actually I'm going to have to hurry them up because we are running a bit short (laughing).

MG: Yes, that seems to be very evident here that you have a lot of younger staff for whom this has been their only school or they have only been in a one or two schools. And they have blossomed here in terms of opportunities and have been well mentored and supported here. Is that how you see it?

P: I don't think we've had a mistake here; I guess I could be a bit smug about that, and say that all of them have been good, all the appointments I have been able to make at the school have been good for the individuals and they have been good for the school. I've always said they were not just choosing a senior administrator, not just such much a HOD; I'll ask the question "where are you going? I'm picking a future principal" And basically I put that notion in their heads, you're not just here warming a seat; I don't want you to just be a career HOD or a career deputy, I want you to be excelling in what you do and aiming to leave here to further your career.

And they say: 'Oh you don't want me to stay' and I'll say "Oh yes I do, but look the time will come when I'll tell you to go because it will be important for you". And that time had come for B, that she needed to go and that there was no guarantee that she would get the job here. Because you have to win it on merit, and I will be particular and scrupulous in trying to find the best person; if I thought you weren't, then I would appoint the other one. And I said to both of them, both B and C, that they would be very hard to beat; F in another 12 months will be very hard to beat; he has all the makings of a fine administrator; he's going to be a good principal, and I don't think he's even thirty yet, but it doesn't matter.

W left here at 32 to go to a Band 10 at Northern; I had no idea that he was only 28 when I appointed him, but it seemed irrelevant because he had such good qualifications and such a good profile, and I really liked what I saw in him.

MG: In terms of the division of labor, are you quite satisfied with the way the leadership responsibilities are distributed across the school?

P: Well, its pretty formal, we've got lists of it; and we talk about it all the time, and we discuss it every time someone new comes into the team. We've brought L into the admin team and it's been interesting, because she has had difficulties. She has had difficulties with the need to make the decision and stand by it and also in working under pressure and just making sure that you hit the deadlines and that you don't make errors in administrivia things that may affect the whole school. She is only doing an

elementary sort of job which is the daily substitutions, but that has been a bit of a test for her.

And she has found it difficult on Tuesday's mornings just getting into our meetings and of course those meetings are very hard, fast and sharp and get through the items very quickly. You've seen them, and then we just get through the agenda of the meeting, make and confirm the decisions, and if there is any debate, we just stop and have to move on. I've given them the responsibility of making the decisions, and then beyond them the committees that they lead also to make the decisions, the power to make the decisions; and just keep running by me what you're doing and keep me in the loop. But I wanted those committees so the Curriculum Committee is empowered; the Lets Go Committee, I gave D a bit of a kick along the other day, you know the Eat Well committee which has got to be finalized by the beginning of next year; basically it's not far away from being done, we've only got to figure out how we 'cut off our arm' when we send those rotten drink machines back, because we need the money (laugh); but you can get other alternatives, and they are looking at that now.

And the workplace health and safety committee, it's done a good job and D has got that working. And those committees are empowered to make those things happen (indistinct recording.....) ; and I'm quite happy to let them happen.

Some of my colleagues find it hard that I don't enter the staffing debate, directly; B is our HR coordinator and she is our expert and she talks about it to me all the time; but she is the expert and she is the one who is putting people into slots, she knows where the holes are and where people need to be put; and she keeps me fully briefed (pretty well) though sometimes I run across a teacher and I ask "who are you?" (laughter). But I can live with that.

MG: Yes she seems very competent. So are there any aspects of the division of labor in the school that concern you?

P: No, I could say that I get a fair bit from my two outside key organizations that affect my views; that is the Training Recognition Council (TRC) and the Greater Brisbane Area Consultative committee (GBARC); you see it is in both of these forums where I meet the key leaders from business, industry and government, and I collect a huge amount of information from them and they have all visited the school. Now they have had meetings here, breakfast meetings.

MG : So what is the Greater Brisbane Area Consultative Committee?

P: It is a Federal government funded committee; there are 60 of them spread across Australia, they were put in place by the Labor Government, so it is more than a decade ago, to advise the government about regional employment matters, and it is made up of industry leaders and local government, state government leaders, departments and chaired by DP, who is the managing director of a company called the DP factory.

MG: So a combination of private and public organizations.

P: Yes but it is a voluntary organization, and we are all doing it as volunteers, but it is supported by federal government; but it is a group of business people who keep me right abreast of what is happening at a federal level, so I know exactly what is happening in the federal sphere; I then know also what is happening in their business, where the pressures are and where the employment gaps are, and this leads me into contact with state development people, transport people and all of those things have benefited us in terms of the leadership within this district, because when it comes to Southern's School to Work, which as the vice-president, we actually are now taking a strategic view there, and we are talking to whole industries, not just to employers, we are talking to whole industries; so transport and logistics we talk to, and we talk to

construction industry; and that has probably come about because of my background contacts.

And it's the same with the TRC (Training Recognition Council), I've got there all the reps of the major job networks throughout the state, these are the employment agencies, so I sit and listen to these people talk about their efforts; they are RTO's , group training organizations, motor training organizations, government departments, the old industry training bodies, groups who are influencing government policy and constantly commenting and giving government advice on employment and training issues; and that is what they are doing there.

MG: And you are a formal member of that council and is it a state or federal agency?

P: Yes, yes... I am and it is established under the Training and Employment Act, and it is the peak body which oversees apprenticeships and traineeships within the state; QSA actually works on license to it, as a provider of all the VET programs in the schools. And as a peak body....I'm just amazing that EQ lets me sit there.

MG: So is that an elected role or a voluntary role?

P: Well no, I was appointed firstly, now in a second term, as a community member; and I didn't know this at first, I thought I might have been EQ's rep, but I wasn't, but I'm now EQ's representative, because when the new Employment Act that came out, somehow I became EQ's rep, and I have spoken to the Director General about this and written to him, and he has endorsed my continuation in this representative role. What I think happened, prior to my getting the position, there used to be an Assistant DG, but they were vacant – 'too boring' – but I don't know that, I could be wrong, but they don't know what they were missing out on; but they probably wouldn't look at it they way I do, because I'm able to use it all, and they couldn't use it in central office, but I can use this into all the networks that I go.

MG: So this is a key part of your lateral networking capacity?

P: Yes, the influence and effect that I am able to bring into the Southern area, with all these leaders of these businesses, is amazing; I'll give you an example – the demographer, I'll call him the social demographer at Southern City Council uses, a fellow named WB, you know I need some information, I need to know what the unemployment rates, I can go and read the 2002 comparative analysis stuff; or I ring up W, and say what's the deal? And where are we up to in the unemployment situation in the Southtown, Southern and Riverford districts, and can you give me some update on the figures in the comparative analysis? And he'll say, 'Yes P, certainly and away he goes' and his source is the latest ABS data, and that's what his job is now, is collecting all this data, so I can get it straight from the latest figures. And he actually gives data to the Brisbane City council as well and he gives it through the GBRAC, and so there I have source of incredible data for when I need it; so if I want to quote the latest unemployment rate in the Southern City local area, I can do it.

MG: So you are able to access this information through your network....

P: Yes and it can take me back into federal government departments, and back into relationships with GH and CE (Federal politicians) ; and those things for me, those things at this school are very, very important.

MG: I imagine that you could have had a strong influence on the ETRF agenda as it was being formulated...

P: Well, EQ did come and see us about ETRF; and you.....know it's CE's latest book, we actually got a mention.....he was most interested in what I was saying at Griffith University (about 16 months ago) that sheet you have there about the organizational structure, which got me invitations to speak everywhere. He was in the audience when I spoke, and came to see me, and has been to see me before. He has related it to 'full service schools' stuff, which was what we spoke to the Goss government about in the early 90's and I told him it is 'old hat stuff now, and I don't call it full service schools, I now call it 'community based schools', community involvement with your schools, and it's his book so I supposed he can decide what he calls it in his own book.

But the fact he came and talked to me about it, and was interested in what we were doing and the school was identified in his book.....(indistinct - laughter). Yes, it's not every day you get a reference in a book by a politician!

MG: It is an indication of the school's success and profile in the local community.....

P: Yes, so what happens, this all comes back into my school through my networks. So I'll give you another example, the last time we built the new student centre out here, I was able to get all the local council application fees waived, because I knew the right people; it was only \$4 or \$5000, but I was able to say 'how about it?' and they said 'yeah OK'. And of course I meet these people all the time, and that is the advantage of the networking for the school, and in terms of what I do. So how they help the leadership of the school is by providing their resources, their support and expertise for me, and that has been on-going for many years.

MG: So a key question is how will that continue after your departure?

P: Well, it can't because that is around me, and so it can't?

MG: So that is back to your ideas about succession planning?

P: Yes, I've thought about that, I have thought about this..... and have already said to X 'I want you to go to the QSA meeting in my place', because I'm the TRC representative on the QSA P-12 Curriculum Committee, and as their rep on the P-12 Curriculum Committee (it's a bit of a back door way to get onto it), but that is a very, very important committee; and that committee allows me to stay in contact with the VET agenda at the highest level, plus all the other agenda that go on at the QSA. This is the group that develops the VET's, and oversees and recommends to the QSA Board all the committee documents, the upgrades, reads through them and says 'no that's rubbish' or you've got to be joking' or "yes" and it's influential. So I've advised X about this and asked her if she will go, and she has said yes, and so I'll clear it with TRC and I'm sure they will clear it, as no one else will want to do it.

MG: All of those things you are talking about, which are based around your personality and psychological attributes and your connections or networking; these are really all the tools which you have used or are using in a way to advantage Southern. That's how I see it - is that how you would describe it?

P: Yes, absolutely.

MG: So if you were able to describe and capture these particular tools and attributes and how you use them for maximum benefit of the school, and then somehow build those into programs of leadership development for others; this would be valuable for

people to learn from in other schools and systems on the notion of leadership distribution. Because this seems to be very much part of what you are doing here.....

P: Yes, I suppose to that a lot of it is about me, and that is an advantage of having been in one place for 20 or so years and working to build the community and the networks. And I wouldn't have understood this 10 years ago..... I think it dawned on me, well it was probably coming to me, but not in sense that I can look and reflect on it now; I think it was something I thought I could do but I never realized the full implications, and even sometimes now, I have to draw back and it's a bit of 'aha'.

I'll give you another example, a few years ago the Registrar's association asked me to do a few seminars for them on how I spent money in the school, and I thought, who would want to know about that, because I thought it would be a bit boring and what am I going to say. But it was all the practices that we used, and when I actually sat down and wrote them down, there were an enormous number of practices and what I had seen and things that we had done that I had talked about, and sometimes you see these things in other schools, but I realized that no everyone does these things, and people just go "wow that is amazing what you've told!". And I'm thinking doesn't everybody do this, and I've realized that's not what happens, and not everyone does this. And so how did I learn it, and I guess it has just been by going and looking, and I guess it's a bit of my Scottish mother's heritage (laughter).....You know if you're going to spend a dollar, make sure that it's spent wisely. And I'll still pull them up about \$50 which is spent unwisely, and make a note saying 'don't let this happen again', because everything that you save is an advantage. Well I get up on assembly and go off about broken glass in the school, and tell the kids what it is costing, and I think that attitude "making sure that you are spending or using your resources wisely" has just made the school "resource rich".

But also to get the extra mile in writing a submission – we got one the other day for \$10 000, would you believe they (EQ) offered us last Thursday, they offered \$10 000 to 'a' school in the district, and it had to be in by last Friday; and I wrote in about 40 minutes or an hour, and H said to me 'come on, you can do it.' We haven't heard about it but

MG: So a lot of the leadership skills which others have gained in the school have been through your mentoring, as I have had reflected to me. I wondered if there was anyone who had been your mentor.

P: Oh yes, BW; in the early days of the school, TB and DR. All three of them were absolutely marvellous....if I had a problem; I had the confidence that I could ring them. DR, it was amazing, he rang me in the first week that I was here, and said when you need help, just call me; you will probably need help with your photocopying breaking down, because you've only got one. And I said, 'yes sir, thank you very much'; and he was right about a month later and our newsletter, the photocopier broke down, and I called him up and was frantic, and he said what is it that you need done, and I told him, and he said courier it up and he took care of it. All the masters and the photocopying for classes, all done and I said to him 'what do I owe you' and said 'a beer at the next principal's meeting'; and that was it, never a bill and never a thought, just did it, amazing man and that happened during the first year.

BC, I had a football field and had no posts and couldn't get posts; I went to the QRL and the BRL and couldn't get posts. So I called up BC and said I can't get any posts, and have all these kids who want to play football. He said leave it with me, and then he called me back the next day and said, 'If you're prepared to join the Gold Coast association for the next 2 years, then the Tweed Seagulls Club will give you the posts

and a set of old jerseys; and I said 'we're in' and they came and I had to go to Tweed to get them.

Marvellous men who I knew would help me, you know BW told me how to timetable. When I was a HOD at Western, he said to me: "I want you to fix these, and I couldn't do it and he said, 'oh, it's pretty easy, you just do this, this and this'And I said could you do that again, so" (laughter).

.....(*tape transcript was affected by sound problems here*).

P: Well I guess basically, I've always had a bit of wariness about the upper echelon... I probably haven't had any close mentor in recent years; I've discussed things with X in the past few years, but I would probably see it being the other way around. I can still talk to her about what I'm doing. I also have talked to DI at Southton College, but he's now gone over to Rural SHS.

Probably the other link I haven't spoken about has been the Learning Education Alliance (LEA). When I went away, the leadership fell to DH, and I was delighted about that; but when I came back, they gave it back to me. The LEA has basically run on DH and my pushing, to make sure that it does run, or it might falter. It does need a principal to push it hard, but I've always thought that there was a lot more for me to take out of that, than I ever put in. And over the years I would say that's the way it has always been; I've been able to get good advice for my HOD's in terms of their links with the primary schools, just because we have maintained an eminent position in the LEA; and it has probably been good for the primary schools too, because we have tried to help and nurture them, especially with their resource buying. We had a seminar here the other day for salary packaged laptops; and 60 or 70 people came from all the LEA schools.

MG: Yes, it must have been successful.

P: We just don't have any bureaucracy – the LEA runs on the 'smell of an oily rag'; it runs on the good will of the principals who can just make the meetings and drive the thing through. We do our 'days of excellence' and we have a conference coming up in August; neither DH or I will be here and I'm getting a bit anxious about that, so I hope that what they get is OK; and it will need to have some others like X to step up and take a leadership role, but we have catering for up to 400 teachers for morning tea and lunches. And 'cookie' will cater for that and it is a very big day and they will make a few thousand dollars out of it. The run a whole lot of workshops on the day; it is a bit of aconcept this year as B, who was the conference organizer has been transferred.....so that makes it a bit harder, and has put a bit more pressure on the LEA. But it has been a marvelous thing for me and for DH; ME has been a very successful member and also KL, she has been doing a marvellous job over at Hillside. And I have valued their association

(Tape Concludes)

(B) Acting Deputy Principal

9 March 2006

MG: The first thing I want to ask is for you to give me a pen picture and back ground of yourself leading up to your current position as deputy principal at Southern.

B: Yep, I've actually been 'acting' deputy principal of Southern; we calculated over the last 4 years, I've been acting Deputy Principal for 3 and ½; so, my substantive position in the school is senior school Head of Department; Southern SHS is my first and only school. I came here at 27; I taught for 3 years, became HOD for about 2 or 3 years and have been acting deputy since then.

Um, my background is in business, I have a business degree with a triple major in psych., office admin and HR; so I've worked for about 10 years in private industry, in everything, from running public bars; I was head of a dating agency, I've been industrial relations officer for a timber mill; umm, so handle many things including accounts receivable. So I've done quite a few things before I came to Southern.

MG: Excellent thanks for that, I'm looking at the first question I want to focus on ; what do you see as being the key responsibilities you have in your current position here at the school? Can you elaborate on these, spending 5 or 6 minutes if possible?

B: Yep, to me I've got three key responsibilities. The first one is being responsive to the students – responsive, in the sense that they have an issues, or a need, and I will respond to; um, whether it be through discipline or referral to outside agencies – for example the Dept of Child Safety, etc. I have a responsibility to the staff, and by the staff I mean the teaching all the staff in the school; one of my main roles here is as human resource deputy; so my job is to make sure that it best fits them as individuals as well as the programs that we want to have.

And my third role, is probably,to make the school as best as it can be; so the strategic stuff, which might not actually be in the best interests of either the staff or the student; it might be, say for example, a directive from t EQ , it might be something that we become involved, for example the Southern Education Alliance; or something that the community wants me to do, for example, uniform at the school; that is certainly not in response to the students, and it might be a pain for the staff, but it is something that the community really believe that we need to have her at the school; so it is about strategising to have minimal impact on both the students and the staff.

MG: So your leadership core business is encapsulated in those three key responsibilities?

B: That's my core business; my core business is to students, and responding to them; now that I'm not a teacher, um, units of work and curriculum and pedagogy, so something that, um, I'm still definitely interested in, and when you look at the strategic things, that comes in to it, but on a day to day basis in dealing with students are in responding to something where they have a need; and that's probably, it's better this year, but in the last 4 to 5 years, that would probably be 80 to 90 % of our time as a deputy. Um, that is now changed, we did a big review last year, and it has now dropped down to about 40%, maybe 50% of my time; um now I deal a lot more with staff, because I have now become the staffing deputy, and so that 30-50% I have gained from students (laughing) I'm now making up with staff; and it is in response to is their needs too; um, you know they have problems or issues, or they need training or whatever . The strategic stuff, I do outside the hours of 9 to 3, and that's another full-

time job in itself; but it does impact on the other two; but from my hours from 9 to 3 that's what I do - I respond to the needs of staff and students.

MG: *Is it possible to quantify the amount of hours you spend in a typical week?*

B: I'm normally at work by 5.00 and I go home by 6.00.

MG: *5.00 in the morning? Five days a week?*

B: 5.00 in the morning five days a week. I don't take anything home; normally when I go home I'm asleep, but I try very hard, I try very hard, when I do get home it is time for me to spend time and have dinner with my family, etc etc. Um, I find and it does go in spurts, ...um because my role at Southern has changed dramatically in the past 18 months, with the main deputies leaving, my role has just ballooned. Um, and I find that there will be days when, for example, P will walk in and say 'alright you're going home, you're going home now!'. But on average, probably 12 hours a day, about a 60 hour week.

MG: *Yep, I understand that.*

B: And 5 to 7.00 am is beautiful, it's so quiet, and the phones don't ring, and I probably get maybe, more work done in those two hours, than I do in a whole week; but it sound funny but it doesn't interrupt with my family time, cause they're all asleep; but if I stayed back late at night, it would impact on them, so coming in the morning has less impact on everybody...and I'm not tired (laughing

MG: *This is something that is supplementary to that core responsibility issue that you had outlined so well; to what major purpose or end, do you think your work contributes, that is what you do personally as a positional leader in the school?*

B: I make the school safe, for the students and the staff; and my direct role, makes the school run smooth. Everybody is where they are supposed to be and if there not, they get dealt with, good or bad.

MG: *So safe and smooth.*

B: Yeah safe and smooth, and its operational; I don't do the day to day operational things in the school, that's another deputies job, like there's something away today and you've got to fix that. My job is timetable, staffing, that more strategic side of things.

MG: *That leads into the next question, which is who else is generally involved in working with you on a daily basis?*

B: OK; we're lucky at Southern; we have an army of staff, um ,we have built over the years with the other deputies and P, we have built a support staff; we have support services, we have two guidance officers, we have a conflict resolution officer, we have a school-based police officer (that will be arriving soon); we have a chaplain, we have a youth and family officer, we have two mental health nurses. I work with them every single day; and then again we have two other deputies, the team of three we are constantly talking to each other, confirming decisions with ach other. I have then also a core of HODs, a middle schooling HOD, a senior schooling HOD and a teaching and learning HOD, that, I also have a lot to do with on a daily basis; and then there is the administrative staff.

MG: *Is there such a thing as the senior management team?*

B: Yes, the senior management team is the three deputies, P and I think there are 13 HOD's.

MG: That's what you define as the senior management team.

B: That's the senior management team, and we meet every Monday. That's the SMT; underneath that there is another level, what I call lower management; and they again help us to deal with they are a new level that we have only introduced this year... and they are a new level helping us ... you know I said earlier that we have a reduction in our actual response time to kids, it's because we have introduced a third level of management that deal with the day to day things like uniform and low level behaviour .

MG: So the people you mention in the senior management team are all positional leaders.

B: They're all positional leaders.

MG: These people you mention at the lower level, they're all teachers...

B: They're teachers, yes.... they would be people, who we have made house leaders; they're given an couple of extra spares during the week (it certainly isn't enough); um, and they have taken a lot of the low level behaviour from the deputies; we are trying to reverse the triangle.

MG: So it's mainly behaviour that they deal with?

B: Yes we did a big behaviour management review last year, and this was the concept that we came up with. To reverse the triangle! So instead of being pointy at the admin., to reverse it....

MG: So is this an example of delegation of responsibility?

B: Total delegation; so instead of three people dealing with all the behaviour management in the school, there is now 23 dealing with it. So by the time the students come to us, it is something quite major.

MG: And so there is a process for sifting that through.

B: Yes, a whole stream of paper work and support networks and meeting. Each house now has a deputy, three HOD's of the house, plus two house leaders; but that is the management team of that house. And instead of three deputies looking after 1600 kids, I've now got a team looking after just 400. It's an effort to recognise the good kids, as well; the mediocre tend to get lost, and that is 80% of our kids; so it is an attempt to get more time to look at the ...lovely kids.

MG: It would be interesting to see how that looks in a flow chart.

B: That I can do, because I was chair of the committee that did the review, so that I can do.

MG: Is there anything else about your broader involvement with the community that you would like to add here?

B: On a regular basis, we have communication with police; we help them just as much as they help us. We deal at lot with the outside agencies, such as Dept of Child Safety.

I deal a lot with parents; Southern has a philosophy that we have built up a lot of community issues, that may have something to do with a particular teacher or a particular department; as an admin team we are responsible, you draw a line in the sand, and we are in the front of that line and the rest of the school is behind that, because we take responsibility for our staff, and if there is an issue between a parent, a student and a teacher, and then we will discipline our staff, because we understand education and it is our job to explain to parents where the teacher is coming from; we are a very big buffer for our staff.

So we have a very big invisible wall around this school; and parents come in, and we bring them in to this office, and they are nowhere near our student foyer, and if we say to them don't go past this point, they don't go past this point; it's just a protection for our kids and for our staff, and it just stops issues becoming personal issues; and again that is responsive to the needs of staff.

MG: So do the parents accept that pretty well?

B: Oh, they are awesome with it, it never ceases to amaze me that how they do respond to that; but also too, I guess it is human nature, that they are dealing with a higher level – “I want to speak to your manager” – so they are dealing with someone a little bit higher up the food chain; and they seem to appreciate that, plus we are not caught up in the student battle, and we are not emotionally involved; so it is easier for us to be objective. On average, I would probably do about 20 phone calls a day. Follow ups, or queries from the community, someone saw one of our students doing such and such, could we respond to that, those sorts of phone calls.

MG: Are there any other people within the community you would identify as being key leaders?

B: Industry, industry... we value our industry people at the moment, this is where we get our best results at the moment for our students. Um, actual businesses, who take our kids on, who sponsor our kids and who take our kids on for apprenticeships and traineeships; we have a very big structured workplace learning program; currently we have 128 Year 12's ready to go out, and each one of them is placed with a different employer and I have about another 150-160 Year 11's to go out in semester two; and of course helping us with that is Work Right, who support our kids better than anyone I know.

MG: So you deal directly with the Work Right Manager – A?

B: Yes, we deal directly with her... who is the manager of the whole thing; but we also deal separately with the lady who handles all the apprenticeships and traineeships, and Elena the other lady who handles these as well, we deal with them regularly.

MG: So looking generally at the leadership responsibilities within the school, how are the shared or distributed within the school.

B: Um,.... in the past not well! It was easier in the past, where the principal (P) had three deputies that were his permanent deputies who had been here for quite a while; that has now been a little harder for P to delegate; keeping in mind that he has had three deputies, and to this day I am now his most experienced deputy; so P has had to pick up a fair bit, which he would not normally not have had to take on, because we are less experienced and he has had to support and to have more to do with us than he has ever had to do in the past. So for example right now, we realise the importance, and this is one of the reasons why we have reversed the triangle with behaviour management; that the more people in the school that can do our jobs, the better off we are. Um, for example, I know that I am looking for promotion and C is also, and D has

only just arrived, and the one thing that has struck us is that we need that succession planning definitely; so that middle management becomes vital, so that any major program that we are now picking up on has at least one deputy, one HOD and at least one teacher that knows exactly the process.

For example, the behaviour management committee, I'm the deputy but I also have every single HOD involved and I have 8 particular agents of change; so the HOD's don't have to do a lot extra in their daily jobs, because it is the 8 agents of change, but they are all informed every step of the way; so that if for example, I left tomorrow... there are at least 3 or 4 HOD's who know right now, the push for consistency for consequences; the next step is to get people involved in the timetable process and staffing. And I know each of us as deputies, and I know C will say the same to you, that any project that C gets involved in she has her next person in line who knows exactly what she has done so that we have a succession plan.

MG: So that you can be replaced if necessary?

B: Yep, P's another w-h-o-l-e kettle of fish; I don't know what we are going to do there; but with the deputies it's vital.

MG: So in relation to the division of labour, who decides on what work is shared and with whom?

B: We do really! We do; for example, we have an admin meeting every week which is the three deputies with P, plus the head of our special education unit (HOSES); she is probably borderline being classified as a Band 7 (L is her name), and this is a new thing as L has just come on board this year. So again this is just another person in place, who knows what is going.

MG: So this admin team meeting is held weekly?

B: Yes, the three deputies, the HOSES and the principal meet every Tuesday, for roughly about 1 and ½ or 2 hours, depending on the And that is the time when we all touch base with what we are all doing at the moment, including P, and anything major we need to get a consensus on that is discussed there. So this is where I say, "Look P this is what I'm thinking of doing, I am going to get these people involved, does anybody have any objections or does anyone have any ideas about who else I can get involved"; for example, the Southern Education Alliance (LEA), is usually P and I; it's a huge, huge workload, and it's a fantastic thing, but say if I leave in Semester 1 and P (he will eventually have to leave at some stage, he keeps saying one day he will have to go); then we will have no one else in this school that knows the history of the LEA and can be passionate about it. So this year, I've actually invited a head of department and 4 teachers who are interested in promotion down the track, to now be involved in the LEA, and they are now coming along to meetings with us and I have meeting with them and they are going to be involved in the big conference with us, and they are now recognised as faces of the LEA. And so this is an example of where I went to the admin meeting, and said this is what I plan to do and asked for any advice or suggestions about the names I was proposing.

And for example, I'm out tomorrow working from home on my selection criteria; P has suggested that because of the hours that we do, and he is very good at recognising our promotional possibilities.

So while I'm not here, we have three HOD's that I can call up and they will be here all day tomorrow while I'm away; so if something did happen there is somebody who can step up.

MG: In terms of the division of labour in the school, you mentioned 'delegation'; and I'm interested in exploring those terms. So how would describe the division of labour here in the school? Is it by delegation, by invitation, by assumption, or people assuming responsibilities....

B: All of the above, all of the above...The one which predominates is 'invitation'; because open house doesn't work...is there anyone who would like to take this on? Uh no!

MG: What about by democratic election?

B: That doesn't happen...Targeting specific people and approaching them openly and transparently, works well for the staff at this school; given that we do have 115 staff out there, so we have a wealth of talent, experience and enthusiasm and passion. So, our statistics are quite high; the demographics shows the average age is 41; our biggest band of people have been here 5 to 10 years, so we have got a lot of experience. So we know them and if I want a specific job done, I've got a pretty good idea in my mind already who I'm going to target who I think would be good at it. But we are starting to at the moment, instead of picking on one particular person, we are trying to get a culture change of a team, because we're conscious of the fact that we are overloading other people. So the Southern Education Alliance; instead of me just passing on to another person to take over my role...it is 5 other people. So you might go the meetings every Thursday, but K ...you'll do the conference workshops, so we are trying to develop that team and we are trying to develop a cross-departmental team.

MG: So how successful have you been with that?

B: Southern is excellent at departmental running of the school; we have a maths department, and an English department, and history department – but they never talked. It is a strength within the school-but what we are trying to do though is to infiltrate that and get little fingers in all the pies; so for example with our house structure, it goes across the school; so the Top House people are English, business and home economics, so those three HOD's come together to discuss Top people; so we are getting staff cross –mixing; and it is a good way to promote awareness of everyone else's jobs; um, for example home economics don't work the hardest in the school, they work just as hard the other departments.

So that's our focus and in doing that, it is very hard to I think I've got the word right "to devolve first"; were we stay with the finer in the pie very much to show, guide, lead and help manage. The we get to delegation, and that is something that has been handed to us from P down. You devolve first, keep the finger in the pie, keep the finger in the pie, yep you're fine, you know what you are doing, so it's now totally delegated to you.

MG: Are there any aspects of that division of labour in the school that concern you and you feel need to be improved?

B: Yeah (lightly), there is always room for improvements. The fact that majority of the division of labour traditionally is based on position and promotional opportunities weren't based on EQ (emotional intelligence); it was all IQ. Your ability to write a selection criteria, etc.....

MG: So are you saying that is an internal issue....?

B: No, I think that is It's globalI think it's global; promoting people has traditionally been based on your ability to 'talk the talk' or your ability to 'be the best at...'; so for example the best at maths, got to be the Maths HOD, or the best at writing

accounts ...or fixing or juggling the accounts and made them balance got to be the account manager. It had nothing to do with their ability to manage or lead. So as a result, in any organisation, I don't think its particular to Southern; we have people who were promoted 10 or 15 years ago based on being a curriculum leader; but there not just curriculum leaders any more, they're managers of people, they're managers of money, they're managers of this and managers of that. And I don't know that we have trained them enough to take on that role.

MG: You mention the issue of training for these people in terms of their delegated responsibilities; is there a particular training model you are using to ensure that people have access to the particular skills and developmental needs for their work?

B: Yeah, it's again we work from the top down; the deputies run the professional development in the school; and each HOD is asked to go to their department and develop a vision for their department, and under that what sort of professional development do your staff need in order to achieve your vision. Then that comes back to us and we can start looking at other categories, and source, that sort of thing. So that's where that is devolved to the middle managers, it's not delegated to them; they don't get a PD budget

It's still very much that we have a hand in that we are working with them and devolving that to them; I feel that at this level, at admin level, you do start getting promoted based on other things about from your IQ. So where we are working with them and mentoring them, to devolve it to them rather delegating that sort of stuff.

MG: So how do you see the major decisions in the school being made?

B: In all honesty, the deputies. There is also a bit of a buffer between P and the rest of the school. Because P, we see, his major role is the real strategic stuff, beyond Southern State High, because that's what he does best. So the day to day running of the school, is us three deputies.....

MG: So P is the strategic leader?

B: Oh yes, sure definitely and P is the entrepreneur (repeated); and P (pause...) always has the power of veto, always, always; but it is a rare day that P would exercise that in any way, shape or form. If there was major decision being made...I'm trying to think of an example; OK, take the behaviour management review; I'm changing the whole structure of the way we ran the behaviour management system, we simply came back to the HOD and the admin.team and we told them what we were going to do, 'do you have any objections, no fantastic' ...and away we went. And that's come from P; P is very big at allowing and pushing the decision making process further down. In a school this size, he knows that he can't authorise everything, he just can't. So that's why the three of us working as team is vital; because we need to make sure that we are not making decisions against each other; and as you were saying before, who makes those decisions, I make all the decisions as far as staffing is concerned; I don't ask D or C, I might ask a HOD and ask them about a particular staff member; but I would normally go... "C just to let you know this is what I'm doing with this particular staff member"; C makes decisions about the curriculum committee, and then she will just let me know as a courtesy.

What we do talk about is, oh heck do I suspend this kid; or do I give him 5 days suspension, because that is something we need to be consistent about, because all three of us making decisions about these things. Um, so that's where, we are really quite autonomous in our area..... D calls it the 'silo effect'; this is my silo, that's his and that's C's. And within our own silos we make our own major decisions, we simply just inform the others.

The only other time that anything is really big time; the things we make decisions on can come from anywhere; they come from expressions of concern from the community; a lot of it comes from staff, you know staff have concerns about what is happening in the playground, or this is about uniform or what is happening here, or this is just a terrible side effect of the timetable. So a lot of these issues come from staff, but ultimately the decisions, the ideas traditionally came from us; but it is only in the last 12 months, since C and I came aboard, where P has really asked us to pick up strategically, because it had slumped there for a little bit; um, so we have really picked up strategically, so P has said, 'just go and make it happen' and we have.

MG: Thank you, so now we have reached the fourth main question. I am using the term 'tools' broadly; so what sort of tools or resources help you accomplish your main duties and responsibilities? So what are the main attributes that are important to have in doing your job?

B: Arrogance (laughing)... I'm actually not joking because you really have to in order to stand strong and stand by your decisions. Um, what else...you need.....yes the tools that I have are: I have my psyche training, where I've looked at group dynamics, and everything from Myers-Briggs and anagrams and all those sorts of things; which you know helps me when I'm looking at constructing an effective team, and if I want agents of change, how do I find them and how do I get them; um through my HR university training, dealing with organisational culture; efficient management of HR, and I guess through the company I worked for outside EQ, was the ability to be a little more holistic, was vital...you don't get bogged down in the personalities; and that is a training you get with the ability to actually delegate, the ability to let go; and I know I have got stuck in that devolving and even though they are brilliant, I am actually hindering them or getting in the way...I'm stifling them by being there.

MG: So when do you make the decision that it is time to let go, and in your terms, you delegate fully the responsibilities?

B: When they come up with ideas that I have never thought of; that's when I go 'yeah, yeah, you are really getting it now'; I don't have to be the deputy there going, 'Yep that's just great, guys, in a real world, or in fairy land, let's just have all the kids in uniform; come on just give me a solution. When they stop giving me the top five easy solutions, and actually start saying, 'Here's a solution; we might have these problems, but it might outweigh...' Yeah when they actually show me that they are thinking holistically, and actually think in a bigger picture, then I've got a(unclear). That's when I certainly agree to delegate...That's when they can show me that they got the concept, and they're not just stuck down in the mundane, and need me constantly to bring them back up to the holistic; and generally it's really clear by that stage.

MG: Are there any other tools you would draw upon or resources that you think 'I just can't do the job unless I've got that ?'

B: Ohum; the team...it's really vital that I have support around me.

MG: Is that internally or externally, or both?

B: Oh, probably both, Within the school, if I didn't have that close bond, say with C, I would not be able to off-load and leave things here at the school; I think the actual support network inside the school, because no-one understands your job better than the person working beside you doing it. A mentor is... I find a mentor is vital here; as a HOD I had a mentor, and I have a mentor now as a deputy. But the mentor, is a concept, rather than an actual person; for example P is a major part of it, but I have

people that I have, or books that I'm reading... a current book I'm reading is....(pause) called 'Good to Great'; and I'm finding that it's tools like that, where I think I'm at a good level, but oh god, I'm still at level one, for goodness sake! and it helps you see your own flaws, but it also helps me to say, 'Well where is P on this?' and could I do anything better, what could I improve....that is vital... that's vital, to be constantly learning about my own leadership style...that's the key for deputies; I think once people get to deputies, they think they are good leaders and that's it.

MG: So how do you get that reflective feedback ..is that through a mentor?

B: I've done it through a mentor (by yelling at me!); I've done it through P. I've done it through staff, because staff will soon tell you if you are doing a bad job, the staff tells you before anyone else will tell you. My body tells me, if I'm not coping or stressed, what am I not doing right and what am I doing wrong. Um, when my family tells me, that I'm getting cranky.... You know they will tell me 'You're not coping' when I lose my sense of humour; cause that is a key part of who I am as a person, and that is my one true coping mechanism with the kids, because when you are that angry at them, you can't breath.. you know you get them laughing at you, it becomes impossible to be mad at them when you're laughing, it's just impossible.

So 'Good to Great' was influential... and , oh (pause)... um successful people "Seven Habits....." ; we are just getting into that, C is taking the whole staff through that, Covey; I'm getting into that sort of stuff as self-reflection; but I stand by the arrogance...I do think that you need to have an element of it to stick to your decisions, and not be swayed when you know it is a good decision, or when you have made a decision which you know is in the best interest of everyone and you just stand strong on that; and I think you need the full 360 feedback. I've done 360 personally, um....and another thing is that when I broke my arm last year, another HOD stepped up into my role, when I came back I sat with her for an hour and asked her, 'OK, what did you see in my systems which were just crazy, or were dumb?'; again it's a HR tool at university which I learnt, which said if you want to get an accurate appraisal of your work performance, ask the person that replaced you, because they are the people who discover all the things that you've done that are just hidden away in corners (laughs) and 'what was she thinking...?' Um, so I have done that sort of feedback as well.

MG: Looking for your blind spots..

B: Yeah, picking out the things that you don't say...playing to your strengths; um I'm very open, as I believe in this position you have to be very transparent, if a staff or student thinks even for one minute that there's something going on that they don't know about, then that is your downfall...yeah, you earn the respect, you can't just be given it. Transparency and communication are two of the biggest tools that you've got.

MG: You have talked quite a lot about teams that you work with, so I would appreciate negotiating a time when I could get access to some of those teams, if that is possible; to observe how some of those teams are working.

B: (nodding) Yep.

MG: So my last question I want to ask is about 'rules' that you deal with as a leader; what most supports you in your work as a leader in this school?

B: (pause)... My position... the authority of my position! For example a teacher could be yelling at a student, and I come into the room, and the student will get up and walk out. That is just an authority thing; it's the same with the community, you know, they forget your age. What am I? 37, and I've been doing this since I was 32 or 33, and

they forget your age, your gender, they just see the authority that is attached to your position. That's with the school. The same with the staff; I've got half as much experiences as most of the staff, but I've got more experience in this job. Now what else supports me? (Phew.....pausing)

MG: So the internal information, the resources in the school...

B: Oh, the resources in this school are absolutely fantastic (we won't tell EQ that);... but they are absolutely outstanding. But the human resources in this school are marvellous, look every school has good staff, but this school has staff as add-ons; there are not many schools that have a conflict resolution officer, or have two guidance officers, and all the support staff that we have make my job at lot easier to do.....Um, the...umm.....(pauseI know it sounds silly, but at lot of things that help are also a hindrance). The fact that we come from Southern, we're in the middle of Southern, the expectations for our kids are very low...amongst the community... and we constantly exceed that at the school.. so when you have a difficult situation with parents, you don't like our rules, well take your child out... they go 'no, no, we like this school, we wouldn't take them anywhere else. That helps me in when I'm dealing with a difficult situation, as soon as I offer another school, 'oh no, no, we're staying'; the reputation of this school , that fact that this school thinks regularly outside the box, gets incredible support; and not to mention the speed of my promotion, that helps.

MG: So the school has an existing culture that is highly respected in the community.

B: Yes, and not just our local community, in the bigger picture as well...um, there is a lot of people who have heard about us. And what hinders us, staff and parents.....(tape pauses and moves to side B) and litigation... the way that the court system works. You may come up with a fantastic idea, but you can't do it, because the risk of litigation. On the other hand, when I talk with parents, I talk about things like workplace health and safety legislation and duty of care; and I say to them, well do you want me to over-step that , and they say 'oh no we wouldn't want you to overstep that'. So for every positive there's a negative and for every negative, there's a positive. For me personally, my life outside of school, is what gets me through what happens at school; when we have...it's a funny thing, teaching, it gets you down, like some of the horrific things that we have, but then you go to a dinner party on the weekend, and they'll say 'tell us a story, tell us a story'; and when you word it, you get a sense of humour back about it, and you put it back into perspective. And every job has its issues and its problems, and when somebody says to you. 'ah teachers, they have ten weeks of holidays...'; and I'll say, 'I'll swap you' ;and the first thing they say is 'No, no ...you can have your holidays...' like; it's the people outside of education, who remind you that it is just your job, and I've got my husband and my children and my family to think about. Otherwise, the amount of times I've gone home and said to my husband, 'what happens if this young girl comes to live with us?' The horror stories and the anguish that you put yourself through; you go outside of education and you go, Ok, it's fine; we gripped about EQ giving us 6 months...everything new..... Ahh! What is it this year that they are focussing on? It is the same anywhere; every company has the new industrial relations laws...it's what you face outside that makes you a better teacher and manager.

MG: You mention EQ and the new district/regional structure; is there anything there that is a constraint on your role as a school leader?

B: Yep, the hierarchy. I know that they have changed the whole hierarchy above us – because we've got the regional executive directors above us now, we've still got the

district directors, but P now actually deals with GB (Regional Director) as he does with KH (District Director) but it stops at principal level.

MG: So what stops at the level?

B: That communication; it stops at principal level; and the funny thing is the day to day running of the school are the deputies. So, in my mind, I would say that I would probably be the one to associate more with C, at District level, because at district office they deal more with the day to day running of the schools. P doesn't have much to do with the day-to-day running of the school, because P is 'out here' in the stratosphere, so he should be dealing more with GB; but district office only deal with P, so when they ring up and talk with him about a staffing issue, he says 'Mmm, right...'. They don't want to talk with us, they only deal with the principals, because ultimately P is responsible for the decision that we make; but it just slows all the processes down.

MG: So you think that sort of communication is not delivering the best outcomes for the schools?

B: No, I don't think.... I think they have tried to minimise the hierarchy, but they haven't gone to the next level beyond the principal. They've stopped at the principal, but they haven't really looked at the day to day running of an actual school; and if they did, they would see that 9 times out of 10, the day to day decisions of the school are done by the deputies. Hopefully, in consultation with the principal, so that he knows what is going on (small laugh)...we try really hard not to tell him in hindsight, we try and tell him upfront.

MG: He doesn't like surprises...

B: No, he doesn't like surprises; and that is fair enough, because he is ultimately responsible for the decisions that we make, which is why we believe that regular meeting every week is so important.

MG: Right final question is if you could make one improvement of change to the way leadership functions in the school, what would it be?

B: (Reflecting) Time away from the school... for me. For me to do my job better, time away from the school (emphasised). Two reasons: One, to work strategically; and two to see what's happening in other schools, because you get a tunnel vision; you get a tunnel vision of your school, and ahh.... we did that five years ago; you know that sort of tunnel vision.

MG: You don't get that from networking.

B: Well we don't, probably because we are such a big school, and we do a lot of things really, really well... we are really ahead of the game in lots of things. I would like to go to Melbourne schools to Sydney schools, I would like to go and see what's happening closer to home, I'd like to go to Bremer; but as a deputy, going back to my core jobs, responding to staff, responding to students, responding to community, when do I get time, because I'm sure most schools won't be open after 5 o'clock; so that, yes we do get time to network, but I can't just sit down for a day with the deputies at Southernlea, and ask how do you do that damn timetable; now they don't have time to give towards helping me to do my job, or me to helping them do theirs.

So that is a major time issue for me at Southern right now. So me taking a day off tomorrow, whether it is to write my selection criteria, or a policy, it still allows someone else to do my job, and that is till that succession planning, which is vital to any school;

but unless I get out, there is no opportunities. And if I go, the school is going to fall down around my ankles, and how will the school cope?

MG: You don't think that...

B: No, I don't anymore; because I've seen too many who have been my mentors in the past as deputies, the likes of John..., Sue, Bevan ,,,,; my god I all thought we were going to fall apart when AB left, as a Maths HOD; I've seen too many excellent deputies, and JB and BC.....; and when P left, we were all waiting for chicken little to come running in and say the sky is falling down.... And in came X, different to P, but revitalised us all, but we all realised the good things about P, but we saw a different way of doing some things. And that's what we need, we needed deputies to stop wallowing in their own self-pity and to get out and to realise that we are not indispensable in any way, shape or form and the only way to do that is to get that regular non-contact time.

(Interview Concludes)

(E) Head of Department – Industrial Technology

16 March 2006

E: And some time in Bordertown, I realised that there was maybe something other than teaching for me. So I had a qualification as a residential design draftsman and my own business running on the side so I tried to do that full time. So once, realising that it was difficult that way to make ends meet, I went to the tools. So I worked then in my family business then for some years. And then when there was a down turn in the business, I picked up a position with Optus selling mobile phones. So then I moved into corporate sales. In 1995 I was made head of corporate sales for JVC communications, which is a consultant company for Optus. And from there, once we had completed the digital roll-out, I was looking for work so I came back to teaching. I picked up a position here in Southern as a maths teacher. When the opportunity came up I put in a position for Head of Department of Industrial Technology and here I am now.

MG: that's a very multi-skilled pot of history. Thankyou

E: it is.

MG: so a wide array of issues you would have dealt with obviously, in that career. Can I come back to this question now about the key purpose of your current position and what are; you see are the main responsibilities. If you could define what you would believe are the main responsibilities in your position as HOD in the school.

E: ok I am head of Industrial Technology and therefore I have a mandate I believe to make certain that our curriculum here is relevant to the needs of our students. Our population is such that about 80% of our student population don't use the OP system and don't go onto further study. Therefore a lot of them had to industry or some sort of trade or vocation. So my role is to balance off between the industry issues, the vocation issues and the curriculum issues, to make certain that we've got a smooth transition through the school from education into industry and beyond. To do that it requires me being relative to the other subject areas in here. Because often times, we are the context of a lot of other subjects, like the maths, the science, the English for these young people.

MG: tell me, in terms of those key responsibilities that you define is balancing between the non-OP pathway students as you just described that. What is the major purpose that this school has and that your work contributes to in this particular role?

E: I guess our major work here with our students is to... that we create opportunities for these young people to find the pathway that is probably best suited for them. And be able to define for them success, in terms other than just OP or academic achievement.

MG: so there is success in other pathways?

E: Yeah. And I mean that translates itself into a whole lot of different things. If you, given the clientele that we have here. If you don't have people feeling good about themselves then you have problems. If you are not building the whole person, if you're not building self esteem, if you are not putting an affirmation in place that they can be successful and edifying them for the things that can do well, then there is not opportunity for these young people to feel good about themselves and where they are going to.

MG: so you've gotta start with those internal aspects of each student is really critical for their success in life

E: well you need to do that with everybody, including the teachers. They need to feel that they are valuable, that they're important and that they have a role to play in the team

MG: tell me how do you personally know that you are making a difference with these kids and in this school?

E: there are several measures that you can use, we know that we can talk about the measures in terms of where our destinations lead us to and so we track our people to see where they've gone to and how they are going. We have a method of following up and following through. We also measure ourselves in terms of the number of qualifications that are obtained throughout this school, not only certificate one in vocational education and training or the senior certificate, but also too, the number of school based apprentices or school based trainees that we produce, or full time apprentices, so under the current policy of earning and learning the earning part is very significant for us. We have a significant shrinkage in our population here, as I said before, we start with a hundred students in year 10 cohort and as they start year 11, I'll start with a hundred, by the end of year 11 I'm down to 60 because 40 of them have left to go into full time employment. And between the beginning of year 12 and the end of year 12, we'll generally finish the end of year 12 with about 40 which means another 20 or so students have moved off into full time employment, where the rest of them will complete year 12 with a school based apprenticeship

MG: do you feel that that applies to the majority of those kids who do???? At some degree of success

E; yeah, with our current figures, we've been tracking it for the last five years, currently our conversion rate of students to work is in the high 80's to early 90's. Last year we had 150 school based apprentices go into full time employment. That's one of our measures of success. The other measure of success is too the number of students that will come back and tell you what you they're doing, the number of students that drop in here to offer their services and things that they feel they can contribute back to the school and the number of contacts that you make when you are looking to integrate the school into the community and into industry they then help you make more contacts to meet more people out in the industry

MG: that leads very naturally to the next question I wanted to ask you and that's sort of a broad term community. The question is this: who else is generally involved in working with you in terms of your role as a HOD. Can you identify some of the other positional and non-positional people who you would see as being leaders that you interact with regularly?

E: I'm a person that believes in the philosophy that it takes a village to raise a child. I have a significant point to play in the role of things here but I'm one significant point. My analogy would be that a child coming through school is much like a tree; and I'm a tree farmer. And so what happens when you have a tree? It needs to be staked, but not staked beside the trunk, it needs to be loosely staked between several points of anchorage. One of which is the school, one of which is the community and the other one I believe would be industry and there maybe other stakes there too, but between those stakes a young tree can grow and move and makes it's mind up and change and see things and try things that ultimately when the tree is older it will be strong enough to withstand the winds of time and tests of courage. As a tree farmer, I know where the

fruit grows, and I know when the fruit's ripe, and I know when it is time to harvest and I know when it is time to plant, I know when it's time to fertilise and I need to do those things in relevance to the other mechanisms that exist within the school community and the industry community and the community itself. So I would rely on industry leaders that I deal with,

MG: are there other individuals that sometimes...

E: yeah individuals that spring to mind, certainly RR from the Housing Industry Association.

MG: RR?

E: yeah AW from Construction Training Queensland is a huge player. People like BS from BS Industries, RD from Prider Industries are significant players here at our school. But in addition to that, because I am on the board with CTQ and HIA I get to meet other significant players like the unions and the TAFE colleges. So I am on their education... I am on their training boards.

MG: so the training board is linked, its auspicing (?) the agency for that is it?

E: well the HIA will have, through its membership, they have a training board. And I am a member of the training board and I am chairman of the schools partnership committee. CTQ - the Construction Training Queensland is the Industry Training Advisory Board (ITAB). That is the co-ordinator and the mechanism by which the funds are distributed from the building industry training fund. So as an education representative on there I get to be with other industry representatives from the unions, from the TAFE colleges, from the apprenticeship boards, from the group training schemes, from the group apprenticeship schemes and things like that.

MG: so is that a volunteer position or is that an elected position or what?

E: well its... one of them is an elected position. The CTQ position was an elected position, whereby I was nominated by the HIA to be a delegate on that.

MG: CTQ again stands for?

E: Construction Training Queensland. There are other...

MG: it is a statutory body?

E: yeah it is a statutory body. There are other training organisations that I am involved with. Because we have the MIRS, which is the Metal Industry ITAB. Which has just been taken over. and the VET teachers association. So there are other associations that I choose to be involved with personally, so I now what is going on in the wider community too.

MG: ok. You have explained a little bit about the external linkages you have with those industry leaders. So tell what else in terms of internal issues or internal group that you see you would interact with on a regular basis, and what role you play in terms of senior management? Heads of Department, teachers or other staff.

E: well, personally I believe that it is important all leaders must have a mentor. That they have someone that they can talk to in a mastermind arrangement, whereby they can sit down and talk openly about the common good, the common goal. So I chose P

to be my mentor. And I identified him to be the one to advise me and to see me from an external perspective as to how I am travelling and what I need to do as an individual to become a better leader. And so I have a very close relationship with P whereon I communicate to him on different levels. I communicate to him on a professional level, on a personal level, and then on a...what you would call a dreaming level or a spiritual level about what things may be and what things could be. About the philosophy, about the ideology of what it is we are trying to achieve here. In the administrative roles you then have the deputy principals and they form an effective mechanism for me to bring about change. We have three deputies here. One who looks after curriculum, one who looks after timetabling issues and one who looks after the professional development and the human resource element there. So they each have a different role. Timetabling is important because if you can't make the thing work it doesn't work. The curriculum issues are important. Because often times what happens is people in general don't have a big view they generally have a narrow view of what their area is. If they can't see the bigger picture, if they can't see it in the context of the school if they can't see it in the context of the world. Our world being local or bigger. Then they often lose track of where they are going to. So, you know we have an issue at the moment where I believe what we need to do is backtrack, and back map our pathways through to the places we want to go. Whereas often times, teachers will start from the year level that they are at and they will develop something from there. Which means basically that they are meandering through the curriculum. And sometimes they lead themselves up dry gullies and sometimes they lead themselves down dead ends. So from my point of view I think it is really effective that I have an understanding of the relevance my subject has to other curriculum areas, what pathways exist for my students and what companion subjects are needed to balance off that student to make them whole, to be an effective learner, to be an effective communicator and to be a balanced person in society. So that then leads me to my relationships with my heads of department. And then any good leader has to have an eye for talent. And you find the talent wherever it exists, be it in your department, be it in other departments. So for example I have very good relationships with some of the maths and science teachers, the work education teachers and I have a person in the English department that I have pursued a professional relationship with to glean from them some of their expertise in literacy and communication that we don't have down here. And so I do actively seek out and look for talent that I can see.

MG: Yep. Um what I do want to cover and jump back a bit- and you have given me some wonderful data. The mentoring role that you have with the Principal, Don, can you just expand a little bit more on that and look at how that relationship works for you particularly in terms of what you are gaining from it and what you believe is helping you in terms of your own leadership development in the school

E: it relies on...it comes from some of reading that I have done in the past and some of the self help books that you read and probably the one I first sort of picked up on the idea of this mentoring was from a book by Napoleon Hill – Master Key to riches. And in that book there he talks about the power of the mastermind being where if you have individual you have your own intelligence, if you have two individuals you have two intelligences but when you work together on a common goal, a third intelligence is developed which he calls the mastermind, Which is the blending of ideas and creation of new ideas. You know, he said if you are looking to go somewhere you find a coach or a mentor - someone who is going to show you the ways and to advise you from their perspective, so that you can see a balance. So I thought that that was a really good thing. So I have applied that to my career across everything that I have done. And I apply it both up and down. I also apply it to my young talent in my department as well. So with P ...you know for example, when I first met P and took the role on here, he's first time that I had to go and speak to him about an issue was he said we need this job

done and I said fine bang I will do it. And so I did it and I did it in a very short time frame and not the way he was expecting me to do it. So his reaction to me was that I was a maverick. Whereas what he really meant was that I had come from the industry and when you are given a mandate within industry it meant that you could do it. And I probably didn't understand all the protocols that went into it that were required to keep everyone happy. And so not intending to offend anybody I sort of said to P well I don't know these things I need you to show me, I need you to teach me these things and if my way isn't comfortable around with people can you help me on these things. Now to put yourself in a mentoring role is to put yourself in a position of trust. You need to be able to trust this person and that what they have in their mind is the common good and the common goal. That has led to a deep relationship that operates on a number of levels. When we start talking about...on the personal level, P is the one person that I can vent. S*** floats you can't take it down stream. There are things that are frustrating. If there are things that I would like some advice on I can go to P and say listen this is the situation that I currently have here. And I will explain the current situation and talk to him about what I think and then by the same token he will pose questions for me to rethink and answer. And so it is a good exercise of the mind. And a wonderful experience for the soul. Because it then builds other bridges that enable you to be creative. If you know that you have got support you can do things with passion and you can do things with energy and you can do things with enthusiasm. And if you mess up (expletive) then you can be forgiven. And that is an important thing have happen. I now with some of the young people that I have mentored down here and I have given them the support and enthusiasm to go ahead and sometimes they have done stuff with great gusto. And they have made mistakes. Now I don't ever see that as being a mistake. Ok they may have got themselves into a position of difficulty so you turn the winds of adversity to the winds of advantage by changing the set and the sails of your mind. so a lot of the things that have happened have been ok we have done this really good thing lets now shake out all the things that didn't work, lets collect all the things that did work, lets think about it again and go again. And that way there you can be forgiven and you can be dusted off, you've got the spirit to keep going and try other things.

MG: So you've learnt a lot about...in that relationship which you have identified with P obviously there is issues here. The third dimension that I am looking at here really cuts the core of this topic. It is the division of labour. And by that I would take that as you understand that term and probably the question that relates to that would be how do you believe or see the leadership responsibility being shared and distributed within the school. Do you feel that you could...who decides on who shares what work and with whom? Basically with in your own department and then across the school.

E: well the thing is like when you look at a situation like that, there are some people that believe that the division of labour should be delegated according to your pay packet, to your scale of pay. But I don't believe that personally. I believe that the division of labour is distributed according to the talent and enthusiasm that is available at that time. Everyone has an individual journey. And as a leader I would believe that when you have identified that talent if you understand people's strengths and people's weaknesses whether that be through a Meyers Briggs analysis or a whether a tower personality trait type thing. But you work with people's strengths and you compliment their weaknesses by building teams and by strategically working alliances that would be complementary natures to get the common good. So in my case I have got different areas in my school that need attention. So for example, engineering, the engineering section down there. I happened to find a student teacher who came along here and he happened to come from a motor coach and body building background. And as a first year teacher I gave him 12 months to settle in and all the while talking to him, I was

saying to if you had the chance to change something what would you do? As so I started with the wishful...wish list, the wishful thinking ideas with him in his first year. And I sort of kept those ideas floating around and then the opportunity came up to give him the taste of control. And so we had the opportunity where he had to do a trailer for himself. And I said to him instead of making this a foreigner teach it, do it as a manufacturing exercise. Incorporate it into your curriculum make it a rich task. And so he ran with that and was so excited about what he did and the outcomes were so good for the students that I said hey look that was great but what would you do if you did it again? And so we took it apart and we put it back together and so that is what happened with Y. And that is why the trailers are part a parcel of our everyday existence here and it has expanded into bractery, it has expanded into sprinkler rises, it has expanded into off-road vehicles and other avenues. And so what ahs happened here is that department grew as a result of the enthusiasm and now I have three teachers in that department. And Y has had the opportunity there to develop and grow that department, learning to identify staff, learning to work with industry, being able to take criticism in a positive sense rather than a negative sense. And the same thing has happened in the construction area, and the same thing has happened in furnishing and the same thing has happened in senior graphics. And then I have a couple of other guys around the place that are good soldiers but they are not good generals. They don't have the drive to be the general. And so sometimes I will delegate tasks for them to do.

MG: Your total staff compliment that you have responsibility for is?

E: 13.

MG: You've got 13? OK. Tell me a little bit about that understanding of delegation and again perhaps looking more broadly across the school in terms of major leadership and responsibilities. Do you think that in the school it involves delegation or is it by invitation?

E: well I think that it is a bit of both. There are some people around the place that will need the invitation to take up the challenge. And for example you can see that some people have certain gifts and certain talents and certain strengths. But often times they don't necessarily see the context because of either their inexperience or perhaps where they are, or their context that they see themselves in. so, I would believe that if you are a leader then it is an opportunity to get them to take up the challenge. I have just put the challenge before two of my teachers. The manual arts department are now running the multi-cultural concert for the school. Out of context perhaps.

MG: Quite unique.

E: it is unique but when you've got South African coloured, and a Fijian Indian who you've got on staff and at the moment live within the shadows of my staff, this is a great opportunity to give them profile within the school. And just by that mechanism, that was a challenge that I threw before these guys. First they've gone oh I don't think we can do it. It not really what we do, we teach wood-work and metal-work. And I'm saying that is not what the challenge is. The challenge is who do we know that we can bring into this problem that we can add to the experience. And as soon as we started talking about it we had guys that said sound and lighting and we had one guy over here who certainly looking after the stage. And another guy said he would look after the gate and we started to advertise and we had people coming in and all they had to do was coordinate it and it has given them elevation within the school community. Which is starting to build there self esteem and their recognition. And now I've got opportunities for other people to pat them on the back. Now P can say to them guys well done. I've got people

from other departments like performing arts and the physical education department coming to them and saying we can contribute this or we could contribute that. Now they would never had accepted that challenge by themselves.

MG: Unless you had made the invitation.

E: unless I had made the invitation. By the same token it gets to the point where it needs to be delegated because you can over burden your staff. And so to me it is really important that the dynamics are there. I would rather have someone do a job with energy and dynamics and then have a breather and so the next time that they come along they can hit that one with energy and dynamics. As opposed to giving them this and giving them that and then spending the whole time juggling, or spinning plates. So delegation is important because for example I will go back to the example of Y and the trailer. So when Y was managing the trailers and the sprinkler rises and then the bracketry that has basically put his plate pretty full. Now all of a sudden we have got the Delfin project came along and I am thinking right well everyone will think that naturally that will fall to Y, but I am saying hold on no, W this is an opportunity for you mate. It's the Delfin project it's a stand alone project but it is still engineering it is the same. So how about you take that on board, oh by the way how about you talk to Y about how you would do it and talk to me about how we are going to fund it. So now I have delegated that job to W. He has the expertise but wouldn't assume that role because he would feel that the hierarchy would dictate that Y would do it. But I am saying to him NO this is your chance. This is my chance to give you something to do. And there is reward in it for you.

MG: that meets the downward delegation process, how do you see that happening from senior management to you as a HOD and how do you define that and see that in your role.

E: ok well it gets very much into the sense of that I see myself as part of a body. That I have a mechanism...

MG: that being?...

E: the body of the school

MG: the body of the school

E: and so if we maybe we take the analogy of driving a naval frigate. You certainly need a captain, and you need a navigator and you certainly need that military type chain of command and as such as a subordinate looking towards the administration here, I would see that I have certain roles and obligations and duties to perform. But I also know that I have certain talents and gifts that I need to share.

MG: Yes

E: and so when the delegation comes down across the Heads of Department, which would be my peers, I will in some cases take on responsibilities. And I will in some cases share my views with the boss. And say that I think that this would be a good opportunity for one of my other peers to take on board. However I can offer a supporting role in these ways. And if I feel that I am getting overloaded, which sometimes happens...if you are a talented person what tends to happen is you keep getting more and more and more until it can't be done. So then the option goes to...you can go to the boss and do one of two things. One I have said with P here. Like we have created a model and our model here in this department is very sound, very workable,

and very productive. And what I have done or what I have said to P, well P this is what we have done in our department, and you understand that don't you? And he goes yes...and I have said why can't that work over the Home Economics department? Can that not work over also the Phys. Ed. Department? And so I will float the idea to him that this model might be transferable to other departments. Which then led to a bigger picture, which P will now talk about the community school. P will also talk about portals, whereby we can plug the community and industry into our school. So that is one way I have been able to transfer some of the responsibilities and some of the burdens. On other cases I will say to P look I have been handling this student representative council for some years now. I think it is time for someone else to take this on cause it is running effectively...

(End of side one....)

E: So in that case there there are people who's personalities are such that they are good managers, and that is why they are Heads of Department. They are good managers and therefore they can come in and maintain systems. You will have some people that are, in terms of personality types, you will have some people that are the melancholy, that are the meticulous detail, routine people that are good at keeping all those loose ends together. And they are very good at coming in managing systems. You have other people who are choleric, and goal orientated and very focused, and they are very good at getting things done but they need someone to come along behind them and clean up the mess. You have some really great sanguine people that are the gregarious sales people that have the energy and enthusiasm to excite and communicate and translate the story. and you need the sales people to help sell the idea and generate enthusiasm and excitement and be that bomb that draws people into the project. And you also need the phlegmatic type of personality who just says hang on there's a more effective way of doing this, is it the path of least resistance. If we did this, this and this doesn't that tie in together?

MG: so do you think that the school has a good balance of all those particular personalities and leadership management styles that you've described

E: well, you've gotta understand the nature of industry and the nature of community and the old saying 'birds of a feather flock together'. What you'll tend to find, for example in a school, if you went to the performing arts department you'd find a personality trait that was fairly liberal, and sanguine in their personality type. The style of learner that you would have down there is going to be more gregarious where if you come to the manual arts department, we would find the majority of our learners are kinaesthetic learners – definitely hands on – if we went to the social sciences area you would find more those cerebral type learners over there, so having said that, within education what you tend to find, the teachers tend to come from a mould, ok, and sometimes you go ooh, we're all the same and I know that in myself I tend to be a little bit different because a) I have been into industry, I've run my own business and I've had experiences outside of education. I tend to be a little different. So to answer your question, we tend to have a sameness within our cohort of teachers but by the same token we do have individuals there and we do have different personalities and we have different strengths, so within our spectrum range of moderate people, there are ranges within that and you've just gotta work within what you've got there. You will still find your goal oriented people and you will find your phlegmatic people, you will find your melancholy detail people and you will find your people that are your sanguine gregarious people and so you've gotta work with what you've got. I still believe that it's a very important thing to build teams around balanced viewpoints. If you haven't got someone challenging then you're not growing

MG: you get a nod of the head and saying everything's all right but their not really with you

E: and if you haven't got people that can make things go then you are not moving

MG: the major decisions that are happening in the school... who do you see as making the major decisions in the school? Is it a single, is it a collective, is it a HOD team, senior management or does it...

E: the thing about the school, my one criticism about education is that it generally tends to be a reactive process instead of a proactive process. So a lot of things that will happen is that the decision will be made by government which will be translated into the ministers role, which will be translated into the Education Queensland role and that's distributed to the schools, then everyone reacts to what the minister says. OK, for example you take the ETRF agenda, now I saw the ETRF agenda and got involved with it and I thought, right, this is what I can do, so that's why we started with what we're doing, and now as the ETRF agenda's have hit the school, instead of being in a position where we have to react to what's being done, we can say, well, on a proactive stage, we are already in line, this is what we are doing, we now lead the way for education, we now have the best model, we now have best practice, and we can now disseminate that information to other schools and share that with other schools. So that's me being a maverick, alright, that's me being a maverick. So that would be my criticism. So for example the issues that are going to cause a lot of change at the moment are the middle school/senior school transition. To me, rather than being reactive to that, let's be proactive, let's look at what we are trying to achieve and back-map a path through that, take the good stuff at the top and filter it down to it's roots. I think that things like professional development that you get when you go out to industry, the team building, those kinds of challenges that will cause you to think differently are important aspects that aren't part of the school culture. All our professional development tends to be on responsive or reactive natures. They don't encourage people to think in an entrepreneurial type thought pattern, they don't encourage people to think creatively so if I had the money to be able to do it, I reckon that on student free day we should be across to Cooran Cove doing the corporate type team building exercises.

MG: do you think that the culture of the school has encouraged that? Does it hear what you're saying that there is that sort of thinking outside the square or the box; but there are constraints because of the other aspects of the broader social system, or the education department that sort of repress that because people don't want to take the risks or is risk taking encouraged in the school in terms of your leadership role? You've mentioned quite a bit about that.

E: I think honestly that schools need to realise that they are not insulated from the world, That individual subject areas are not isolated from other curriculum areas; that individual students are part of the whole community of the school, and what we tend to do is break them down into little tiny boxes and not make the connection between them. So if for our schools we can develop people that will make links, that are networkers, that can see themselves in context, then I think you'll develop a strategy that will allow more opportunity for people to demonstrate their talents and gifts. And when you do that, when you are encouraging that , then I believe you are encouraging leadership, and leadership is the two way thing: you must be able to follow as well as to lead. The thing is we talk about these mechanisms with our students and see what happens. You go to primary school... My son the other day was named vice captain of Summer Road Primary School and he is a very important boy at his Primary School,

and next year when he goes to Summer High School, he'll be a pleb and he'll have no function and no role.

MG: he has to start again.

E: he has to start again. And to me I don't understand why that doesn't flow through. I mean if we are talking about developing leadership within students, why doesn't it happen within every cohort of schooling? Why aren't those cohorts contributing to the wholeness of the student body? And why isn't that student body contributing to the curriculum and vice versa.

MG: yep, you are making valid points. Can I jump to another topic. Fourth question as time is getting away. This one is good for someone with an IT background and the term is tools. By tools I mean basically physical attributes or psychological attributes, and you've mentioned a number of those, but what are the main ways that you would say that you accomplish your key responsibilities and duties? Is it through individual talent and ability that you have, are there other resources that you use to achieve your chief or main responsibilities?

E: talking about my role as a leader in my department: I do use some tools. For example, I have used three or four psychological measures for my staff, such as the Meyers-Briggs, and I have also used the information I have got from the 'la towell' (?) personality types. Similar to that was the PJ (?), he calls them 'mosquitoes' and he has a book that he has written on personality types as well, so PJ work we've used a bit of that and then AL from Contab. We went and we had a three day leadership camp, professional development camp over at Grand Cove two years ago and I pursued AL and got the data out of that and I found the profiles that were on each of my guys and used his profiling and asked him what that meant and since that time I've spoken to AL on probably five or six occasions about how to develop different roles. I've also used P as a mechanism for forward thinking and succession planning. Other than those tools there, I do use some philosophical viewpoints from the Stephen Covey work. And Hyrum Smith, so Stephen Covey is the Seven Basic Habits of Highly Effective People. Hyrum Smith is the ten laws of life and time management.

MG: Hyrum Smith? Good name.

E: Yeah. Other sort of books that I would use along the way: Awaking the Giant Within is Anthony Robbins stuff. So apart from those things there, other professional development I've been to on leadership would sort of more or less blend those ideas together. The highly effective parts from Covey's work are very important because when you start to do these things, when you share the vision, and as the leader I am the holder of the vision, OK, I believe I have the vision, my vision is probably five to six years down the track

MG: your department?

E: my department. Now I share that vision with my guys, and it's like peeling the layers of an onion, there are those people that can take it as a 'oh yeah thumbnail sketch that may or may not happen', there are those people that go 'ooh, yeah that sounds really good and if it happens it would be great', and there are those people who will say 'wow! How are we going to make this happen' and there is the next layer that says 'right now let's get on with it.' So you have people at different layers throughout your vision and so when you start sharing your vision you need to share the vision of where they fit into the scheme of things. So having done that I then start working with what is that grid of

urgent versus important and try to focus on the things that are important. Things that are not necessarily urgent but are important

MG: the top right quadrant?

E: the top right quadrant. Now that for me in my department is the articulation of our philosophy. I need to know that they know where we are philosophically and can they articulate what it is we are doing here. Can they articulate what it is that we do within our curriculum. Now if you ask the average guy what we do, they'll say 'we make jobs'. The department of wood choppin' and tin bangin'.

MG: [chuckles]

E: but then you know I know that my department...my department have a different philosophy on what we are doing. That we are about developing skills, we are about developing understanding and knowledge, which is laying our platforms so that we can take our young people to the next layer so that we can challenge them to analyse and synthesize the information and lead them on to some creativity, some evaluation and then start the process over again. You know, to me what we do is the rich embodiment of Bloom's Taxonomy. So that philosophy is really important.

MG: do you do that regularly in teams or with your department or I mean what is your meeting structural process?

E: ok there's three mechanisms that I use to do that. My mechanisms are affirmation, which is me speaking them into existence. As it says in the good book, mate as you speak so shall it be.

MG: Mmmm...

E: and so you use the power of suggestion, if you are using it strongly, repetitively, that that becomes an affirmation that becomes the manifestation that you are speaking into existence. So I believe long before they believe. And therefore I speak it into existence. So it is in my talk, it is in my mannerisms, and that happens constantly. But we have specific meetings every Friday morning that speak about the issues. And how that relates to our philosophy. The second thing that I will do is edification. Which means I will take every opportunity to lift my people up to be seen. So that might mean for example Y the other day was at an expo and he was running the expo. W took some kids to the radio station to do an interview. Andy took some kids to the woodlands launch the other day. I take opportunities whenever I have delegates come in to the school. So I will break the department down into 4 areas and I will say right ok. Walt can you take the guys through the graphics IT area. Mustafa can you do the junior wood. Al can you do the junior metal. Mick can you do the senior furnishing. W you've got the engineering. AJ you do the construction. I'll do the furnishing, Y you the plastics. And they all become little experts in their field where they have to speak to an audience of people. So then I will go to the boss and tell him about their good work that he doesn't see. And you know hopefully he will write them a note, or that they might get some recognition throughout the department.

MG: That is the sharing part isn't it?

E: oh yeah you have to share the rewards. and the thing is to the last one that I do is celebrate. I am a huge believer in smelling the roses. And I celebrate. We celebrate things...

MG: in what ways have you celebrated?

E: we celebrate the success of our kids. That's probably the thing we do constantly.

MG: So this is through rewards through publication?

E: yeah we have through things like that. Through acknowledgment through awards through the school, through recognition through the newsletter, through promotion to...you know even sending your kids over to another department. I send my kids over to the maths HOD. Go and show Mr RD your box, go over to the Phys. Ed. Department. I send them (???) it doesn't matter so long as they give them some recognition. But then with the guys to, part of the celebration to is we put some money into a pot. And then at three or four times in the year there is enough money to take us and our spouses out to dinner. And we do things like last year we did Siromet Winery. We did a lovely three course meal down there. And it was a great night and we did Thai at the Thai Palace.

MG: and that is about building your team spirit and (???)

E: its also too – guys I appreciate what you've done. I celebrate the fact that we have done great things. I celebrate the fact that I am with a great bunch of blokes and I look forward to coming to work everyday. I celebrate individuals too. I will take time out one-on-one generally on a Friday to walk around pat them on the bum and say you did good.

MG: it is a big part of you role. Yeah I was saying that a pat on the back is not very far removed from a kick in the bum but it achieves far, far better outcomes.

E: Absolutely, absolutely. I need to be able to walk around at the end of the day and say to W who is next door that has come in here as a relief teacher, mate you have made a significant contribution this week, I appreciate what you have done. You know those drawings you did for homework the other day mate they are contributing to the whole pitch of this place.

MG: I bet he looks forward to coming back.

E: I want him to come back. I want him to feel part of the team. It is very important that he feel...that he is part of the team. I have got some great bricks. I need to be the bond that holds them in. I've need to be the mortar.

MG: Last Question. This is about rules. We all have to have rules in all aspects of life. And I guess what I am looking for here is the sort of things that would support your work, as well as constrain you work as a leader. What are these things, I mean for example you have access to sufficient internal information in resources to perform your job or are there the rules?

E: the rules I believe. Number one – give 100% effort.

MG: that is you personally?

E: me personally, and that I what I apply to the guys in my team. I want 100% of what you've got to give me. That's what my expectation is. And if I don't feel that I am getting a 100% from myself I will challenge myself, if I don't feel I am getting a 100% out of you, I'll talk. There may be a reason why you are not giving me a 100% but that's what

I believe you need to do. The second thing would be...is the rule number two is that you need to network to find out what people need to do and what they have to offer. And that means everyone from the janitor through to the principal. Because I tell you mate some days the most important person is the janitor. The ladies in the print room you know. The office girls, they're really important. It's an acknowledgement that everyone has a role to play and it is an important role. These are my rules. I'll get to some of the other mechanisms in a minute. Plan your work. Work you plan. Do it now. That's my personal philosophy. It stops me procrastinating. It keeps me on track.

MG: Yep.

E: my other rule is I have an affirmation for myself. My affirmation is that I have magnetism. People are drawn to me. People feel better for having been with me. I make a difference. That's my personal affirmation.

MG: of course

E: It's on the back of my toilet door, and every morning I look at it and every morning I believe it. But in terms of other things in the school – respect for the people who have the authority to make the difference.

MG: so others have to have that respect or you have that respect?

E I have that respect. I believe that if you...one of the things that needs to happen because you ask do I have the mechanisms in place to make things happen. The answer is sometime truly a) I don't know what the mechanism is and b) it may or may not exist. So for example, lets say I have an issue before me and I've got an issue within the curriculum. Well I have to know that I have the respect for the person who has that authority that I may or may not agree with is the vehicle I need to use. So I need to have a certain amount of respect for what they tell me. And they also need to have a certain amount of tolerance to allow me to do what I need to do. I need to be open to find what other mechanisms exist and sometimes other mechanisms don't exist inside the school. Sometimes the mechanisms come from outside the school. So that's what I would believe. I mean other than that – resources. I think we are resource rich.

MG: Yes?

E: Talent? I think we are talent rich.

MG: talent Being... Resources being materials and talent being human resources

E: human resource yeah.

MG: the school is in both of those categories you believe?

E: absolutely.

MG: yes

E: and I think that I do believe that there are in place good mechanisms that work.

MG: Yep

E: we have a good system.

MG: and is there any one or two things that you would put all of that down to? Individuals or groups within the school?

E: speaking of our school, I think we have good leadership in our school and it starts from P and disseminates from there. I think P has fine attributes as a leader. I don't always agree with him. But then again you know he is my friend. But I wouldn't say that he is my best friend, if you know what I mean. I need to have...I have an admiration and a respect for P. I have an astonishment, I don't understand sometimes how he does things he does. I am amazed at what he is. I am not the same as P. He is probably polar opposite to me. But he has something to offer me and I respect those things. And so other things that happen in the school, I think that I can learn something from every leader in the school. Because I am imperfectly flawed.

MG: you are imperfectly fluid? I thought you said perfectly flawed? And thought you had an oxymoron there. But you're imperfectly flawed.

E: yeah I'm imperfectly flawed. I have some strong strengths and some strong weaknesses.

MG: we all do. (???)

E: that is why I have others. I am only one part of the whole thing.

MG: if there was one thing that you could suggest or that you would suggest that would maybe with pixie dust make some changes within the leadership of the school, what would you see it as being?

E: look the one thing....there is only one thing with education.

MG: this is not the school it is just education?

E: well...you can say it is the school, education. The thing is like, when you start talking about leadership...one of the things with leadership is that you feel you are going somewhere. And the one that is very evident in education is that how replaceable you are.

MG: that's a concept that you think...

E: well it's...it's just the truth. Ok. You know and I have seen it happen here at my school where I have had three deputy principals who've left for different reasons and within a day they're replaced. Ok. When P retires, how long do you think it will be before someone jumps into his seat. You know when I go here, I know that I have three guys that could step into the breach. I know that that's great but what about me? What of the individual? What of the person? And it is really important that I feel valued by my employer. But you know my situation now, where do I go from here? Because there is nowhere in education that I can go now. So I have to go to industry. And I will. But I will go to industry with a rich background of educational, philosophy and understanding. And I will take that into a new circumstance. And I think sometimes too education needs to realise the fact that maybe we are a breeding ground for industry leaders as well as educational leaders.

MG: we have all started this haven't we?

E: Exactly.

MG: E. Is there anything further that you would like to say about what we have covered today? One other issue that I wanted to check with you before we conclude. Anything else that this discussion has brought out today that you are burning to say?

E: no I don't think that there is anything that I have got that is burning...that I need to say. I just think that the environment to create leadership needs to be one that is positive and proactive. Schools tend to be an environment where you tend to have people who are reactive and sometimes critical bordering on cynical. When you have that kind of environment there it stifles leadership and it becomes the isolating mechanism. Now I don't know how to fix that one. It may just be the case that this is the environment. If could get rid of it geez I think I could do some great things.

MG: its coming back to this relationship between the school as a social system and how it sits with other broader social systems that are out there as well and I think those constraining factors certainly are there from my own experience as well too. Look I thank you very much for you time.

(Interview concludes)

(A) General Manager of Work Right

24 August 2006

MG: Thanks, so can you give me a brief biography of your background.

A: My background before Southern high school was employment services, so working across government, schools and the old DES regime then I took a redundancy, had a family and looking for something different, and I suppose a variation to a career but also with part-time opportunities which is what draws a lot of support workers into a school environment, the hours suit and there is capacity to blend family as well. But it is interesting that you can't really escape where your roots are from, and having been back in the old network as a leader, you automatically go into a strategic role. So it doesn't matter how operational you are but the job I went into was a job pathways program, about finding jobs for Southern school leavers. So the responsibilities were to pick up our Year 12 school leavers, help them job ready and then find the jobs for them and we actually got paid for them by the Federal government on a placement basis.

So my links to local employers were obviously part of the attraction of hiring me into the role; we made a success of it and the principal at the school thought it was wonderful; it gave him accolades in a field different just to education, but it also made sense from a social justice perspective, that we were helping to provide another pathway for students from the school.

MG: And that started when?

A: It started '96-97; it was December '96, so it's coming up to 10 years now. Traditionally I put roots down, which is the reason I am still around I guess; I could go into the corporate sector and be making a lot of money, but I am very community-based and I like P's philosophy so to work along side P suited my professional interests as well. I guess I come from a social justice perspective myself, and I would like to look at improving pathways for young people in particular, but Work Right has allowed us capacity to manage that a bit more holistically and provide support for parents as well.

Ah, educationally I'm still completing my social science degree so that I have gone back to that part time, and I'm coming to the end of that; but my interest is more business management anyway and I've come up through the ranks in that human services/business management environment.

So predominantly I've had a lot of in-house programs that governments offer and also have a diploma in career guidance and workplace assessment and training - very much more of a practical training bent.

As the job pathways role evolved, we were fortunate enough in securing funding for a career and transition pilot program, again through DEST which is where the career pathway for me came into play, which could build upon offering young people,, you know, a stronger career focus to their decision-making rather than just focusing on a job or work pathway.

Umm, I guess along the way in doing that you start to notice trends that are happening in the community and the trend that was very obvious to us is that schools were still very focused on tertiary pathways for young people, yet we had all the evidence of the success we were having with workplace pathways; and then young people were going on to university and TAFE afterwards, as they began to make more informed decisions. And some of those who had gone on to university were dropping out and coming back to others, and asking where do I go now and how do I get help; because they were wanting other access points to get help and advice.

So that in itself was a valuable service to offer through the local schools, and we were working through 9 schools at that time and it has developed over time to over 25 schools last year. Our contact this year with Youth Pathways is we are working across 90 schools –

MG: 90 schools and multiple sites?

A: 90 schools and we have 5 sites now and over 30 staff in Work Right now. And so I guess I have been fortunate that I have been able to play with my entrepreneurial bent and P is very supportive of that. You know he says don't ask.....just tell me if it fails, and I'll be there to celebrate if it works; and that's fine with me because I'm pretty success driven anyway, and so I'm fine from that business perspective, but at the heart of it all we were having all these parents coming along to these sessions with their children saying why isn't the program there to help us, we don't know what the current world of work is like today, we don't know how to do a resume.

So that got us to develop, we got ourselves registered as an RTO to deliver accredited training and we continued with a school theme and thought a wonderful opportunity for mum's to re-enter the workforce is from a schools perspective, they work voluntarily in the school, they help in the tuckshop and they have an interest in that, the hours suit. So our certificate 3 in educational support has been hugely successful - mmm, yes very heavily subscribed and we deliver that now throughout Brisbane, northside, Gold Coast, Bayside etc. And a lot of that is building self-esteem, and it also builds further connections back into their local schools...

MG: So there are local connection points...

A: yes, absolutely and because we deliver the programs in their local schools and that fits really well with what we are about. So some smart decisions along the way there, and I guess we realized to be a community agency we are very dependent on government funding, it is wise to try and spread that as much as possible. So we have some federal funding, state funding and some fee for service, some income along the way as well, which gives us a spread so that if something goes under we can still sustain ourselves as an organisation. Becsue that is important to us as well, to build up a profile but then find that we are not there tomorrow.

MG: So this is about sustainability....

A: Absolutely, mmm.... And we are starting to get some support now in the business community, not a lot at this point, other than goodwill from local businesses, but we haven't got a lot of sponsorship coming in. We have set up a community trust fund as part of what we do, so that we can give back without it having to be a funded model that can become frustrating to manage. What else would you like to know there?

I guess to summarize, we are about careers employment and training; we are about creating opportunities, and even though we might work with a whole raft of people in the community, we like to look at positive outcomes; and we see employment, careers and training as a way to springboard that for our community members.

MG: So it has transcended Southern now?

A: Well, I would just say that it has evolved, to tell you the truth; three years ago when we decided we had more to offer the community than just the jobs pathway program, we asked what's our vehicle for doing something more than that: One, we could continue to just being a hybrid of Southern high school, or we had the incorporation set

up to apply for funding a number of years ago, and it was only there for that purpose; but we decided to use that as a vehicle then, create a trading name for ourselves that made some sense and then we found Work Right was being established in its own right.....The complexity of our relationship with Southern high has served as well in one sense, but has also created difficulties for us in another. On the one hand we already have credibility in the education circles, and they see where it fits, and at the end of the day they see as a Southern high school program still...but on the other hand it is about divorcing us from the Southern high, and we have grown up now and here is the range of services we offer, and we don't directly put profit back into Southern high on the way...so we are self-sufficient for sure.

So this year this has been very much about developing that profile of Work Right in its own right; but it doesn't mean that along the way that we haven't used our advantage with Southern high as it does give you credibility in the education scene.

MG: So how many schools are involved in your wider network now?

A: Mmm, 90 which is from the Beenleigh region through to the Brisbane River.

MG: So is there any sort of boundaries around where career organizations such as your own go, or is it just basically an open market.

A: It is, there are certainly some professional boundaries where those of us who are working in the school transition area have created for ourselves, you know I wouldn't, unless I made a conscious effort, I wouldn't be tendering for instance on the north side of Brisbane or the Gold Coast because those areas are quite strong, and we work quite well professionally together.

MG: So these are unwritten sort of rules....

DF: Yes, there are, and then you have to get letters of support where ever you go, and the minute you start exploring that you get blocked anyway, as there is a lot of loyalty out there.

MG: So, OK just one more thing I wanted to ask, about how you would know whether your organisation is making a difference in the area here?

A: We haven't done that well in the past, as most of our outcomes and statistical focus has been more of what the programs have asked of us and that is just part of the job, just making sure that you are keeping the right statistics; this year we have initiated a bit more of a an internal surveying and collection process to monitor just how well we are traveling. I have just completed a survey in schools, for instance, to see how we are traveling as part of the new Youth Pathways service...umm, when you are providing support services to young people though, it is very hard to say yes they are in a better place than when they started seeing us, because their journey might be like this; so it would depend on the day that you asked them as to how they are traveling. Sure we have got placement outcomes into TAFE, uni and the number of school-based trainees, but there is almost an ethical dilemma there, when you are providing truly independent career advice, you can't be providing, really, informed pathways in either direction; so how do you really monitor how well you are actually doing that role for young people. They might come back to that in 3 or 5 years time, and act upon it..... We have been keeping some longitudinal data, when we started the Career and Transition pilot, which is 5 years ago now, we would monitor the outcome of those Year 12 students in that cohort

MG: Yes, I believe that JA has been keeping track of those statistics.

A: Yes, exactly, JA has been keeping those stats for us. And this has been a very interesting exercise for us, because it reveals that those kids are a lot more stable than we were expecting. You know, the itinerant nature of our population is certainly going to make that hard to capture that fully, but we are certainly doing what we can there.

MG: So that is one area that you might want to beef up your evidence base in?

A: Absolutely.

OK, if I can come and discuss how you might still relate back to other positional leaders in Southern, on a fairly regular basis, apart from P and H.

A: Well, yes I am addressing a HOD's meeting next week, about the distinction between the different arrangements within Work Right, to try and help HOD's get that message through, that even though we are still on-site, just don't send any kids to us and that we are going to solve all their problems.

So that is happening next week, and I've teed that up through Elena, the acting principal; and that is something I've asked for, and when she first came over I called her up and said I think we need to have a talk to see where we fit in the scheme of things; and I got to talk with her admin team about our timeline and where we fitted in Work Right, and so that was important for her, and I wanted to follow that through and filter it out into the broader school personnel. So we are doing a presentation at the HOD's meeting; part of the reference group for the Lets Go program, which is our alternative education program, which we are doing down here; and that is in partnership with Southern and Riverview high schools; and we are the community agency, and part of the reference group for that.

Z, P, myself and H are also on the executive of the Southern School to Work, which is another hybrid organization; it provides the local community partnership funding through DEST , to deliver structured workplace learning to students, and career and transition support and adopt –a-school initiative, which has been around for some time in a number of guises.

So that is another incorporated body, but the schools in this district manage that, so again it's almost the same core people who keep coming up with their heart in this community.

So a part of that, I meet a bit with K (Head of student services) and she was down the other day and I said can we meet? I've got a funding opportunity and I would like to work in partnership with the school, and it was on about suicide prevention strategy, but we decided I wouldn't apply, but the school will apply in its own right with different partners, and that suits just fine.

(Interruption from office at this point)

MG: We've talked about the school, the staff. How about the parents, do you get to meet with them at all and also with other schools?

A: Predominantly at Southern, I guess, everything from subject selection evenings, where we attend, through to our parent programs that we run. You may have seen the community development project, that brought a lot of parents into the school, which is supposed to be about broader community, but in Southern the school IS the community hub.

So one of our reasons for opening up down here (in the shopping centre), is that not every one is comfortable going into the school, but at the end of the day we still have an office up there, and that will continue and we are still connected.

MG: Yes, I wanted to ask you about the issue of the 'division of labor' and how this has developed over the past few years. So do you think there is something left to be done there in that separation between the school and the Work Right functions?

A: Well there are always things to be done, but if I could just show you our strategic plan. (A accessed documents which outlined graphically the relationship which Work Right had with the local schools).... But you can see when we talk about our school, Southern is located there, and is important that we still have that support link.

MG: So in terms of the Work Right organization how critical is that continuing link with Southern High ? P has obviously indicated that his time is coming to an end at the school, and he sees there may be some changes in the relationship built on his occupancy of the principal's role.

A: Yes, his time is coming to an end and it will change the dynamic.

MG: So in what ways do you think it will change?

A: Well, this has all been very personality driven, all of it really, from P's entrepreneurial approach to management, as opposed to mine to which runs along a different direction, but we often come back and meet; through to the energy levels that it takes to keep doing this, and of course you really have to have your heart in it, as you can be up to all hours; so anyone of us was to leave, it would really change the dynamic of the organization, as we really don't have enough to sustain us without that personal HR influence.

MG: So that is really of concern to you.

A: Absolutely, yes. Do you understand a bit about the labor market at the moment? You know I have never seen it like this, and I'm not at dinosaur stage yet, but haven't worked in employment-related services for many years, I have never been in a labor market where you can't get people to remain or commit to stay in human services; and normally in human services that is what it is about; we've had about a 30% turnover in staff this year, in Work Right; and in the past we were very a family-grounded organization and it was a really good place to work for, but it has a different feel for it now. And I guess as you grow that's what happens, umm... and I guess part of that is personality driven; in the past where I was head or chief of everything, now I've set up an operational level, and after it was done, I said what have I done; but for the organization it needed to happen, but staff struggled with that and there was a sense of me divorcing myself from what they were doing and did I value their role, depending on where I was putting my time and effort. And there were other power struggles that came into play which tested me.....and to the point where I usually enjoy the recruitment process, because I have another 4 people starting on Monday, and all the work of recruitment and induction and setting up the programs.

MG: So how critical is that linkage with Southern in the education and training pathway?

A: We are at a stage now where we don't need that strong link as we did in the past, there are other schools which we can just work as well with; and in some ways we do try and demonstrate that Southern isn't getting professional treatment from us; there are a lot of professional jealousies in the education sector, and we have had to play that relationship game for many years. I guess from a strategic perspective this year, I have made it my business to get a lot more involved with the Executive Director of schools?

MG: So what is the relationship in terms of connections and rules with the district office stakeholders?

A: Well, I'm very involved in ETRF initiatives that are happening in the region from the start; have moved over the last couple of years, more from the employment expertise side, now across to the community side. And that would mean just a change in work groups for me.... But it is also about how we are placing ourselves within the sector, and the fact that we are providing a lot more social support that we had done three years ago; so that has been important.

And of course you know that P has such a high level of respect in the area because he has been here for so long, there is a sense of not having to dig too deep to see what P is doing (you know what I mean). So unless we were initiating things we didn't have to worry too much about protocols and stepping on toes and that type of thing, but we make out business to make sure we are accountable. So from a professional ethics perspective which is really very important to me, we send out a for bit of information saying this is what we are and this is what we doing and this is where we help across a broader spectrum, so at the end of the day, I guess there is something which is between Southern High and us and that might just be a business relationship that helps P manage his school.

And I'm not too concerned, because we have a rental arrangement happening, which is a two way partnership, and if the school felt it needed the space then we would have to look at alternative accommodation, and we have other accommodation now anyway, and I think we would just see that it was a natural progression.

MG: OK, do you feel that there any other rules which you feel constrain your work as a leader in connecting back with the education sector?

A: I find them frustrating As a system, the institution and in the education department.... And particularly educators, principals - they have their own mind-set and world viewpoint, and they are quite sheltered where they come from and where they are sitting.

MG: So is this associated anyway with a power issue, do you think?

A: Oh yes, very much soI don't see that in P, however, which I believe is why we have had a very good professional relationship. You can always have a fairly decent argument with P, and you can walk away with your dignity intact, but you don't necessarily have that with other principals; you know it always has to be on their terms. But that doesn't mean that I can't work with that, because I have the skill set to deal with that, but it is always 'what's in it for them?' and I think the idea of partnership is still growing within schools.

MG: So do you have any teachers on your own staff?

A: One... ahh, no it's two if you count ML (teacher of an alternative program for school drop-outs).

MG: So does she report to you?

A: No she reports to the school, which isn't an ideal arrangement because she is really caught between the two a bit; and she is on contract to Southern High school; the other teacher I have on board was disillusioned with teaching, so she comes from a good place and still able to work in that environment from a different perspective.

MG: So looking in the next 5 years or so, what do you see as the top two or three leadership challenges which you feel will confront your organization as it sits here with Southern, and the link back to the high school?

A: Ah, a major one - well certainly growth versus consolidation, or the impracticalities that you get where you are either going through a growth spurt because you win a new contract, or heaven forbid, you loose a contract and you have to reduce your workforce. And, you know, the constant energy which that takes, to always go, OK can we apply for that, does it fit, is it what we are about.....

(Tape stops)

Side 2

A: This was really important for us, because we had come from a place where there were only 4 or 5 of us making all the strategic decisions (the executive)... And me rolling it all out, so it was pretty important that we were all working from the same page, and where we were going, and did we want to be around, and how do we need to help ourselves become sustainable and do the right thing by the community as well as the staff; because part of my commitment in all of this has been providing security for the staff that we have here, and I guess that is part of my motivation; so that was really important because it helped us and we use this as a bit of an induction tool now, and this (A referred to a diagrammatic representation of the business operation) helps us identify who we are and what is our commitment and who are stakeholders are, and what our key themes are what we are trying to achieve.....

So within the local community I guess we have found our place as a player, we are working in partnerships with other community agencies now, which I think is certainly the way you need to be positioned within this sector.

So we are now sharing resources, sharing expertise, sharing some of ourwell, for instance one of our programs is very female focused, so we have linked up with another neighboring centre runs more multi-media sort of stuff, so we are looking at how we can interchange some of our participants so we can get that extra experience, so a bit more of that sharing, which is all to greater good of the community and the individuals who are involved....

And I guess on long the way there will be some larger strategic decisions to be made, for instance we are in the employment game, and does that mean that we want to be a Job Network provider.....

MG: So you're not in that network and what are the advantages if you are?

A: No we are not in the Job Network; and we have chosen not to be, because we didn't want to go down that road of, ummm..... and we do job placement, but we do it from the employer perspective, and we didn't really want to be in the place where we were forcing unemployed people to take that job, because it puts money in our pocket; so we're happy with the role we play in that, and that is a conscious choice.

So there is really a number of those larger funding operations which we haven't really good down that road.

Um, some other leadership challenges - we are fairly dependent on..... and have certainly had good will to date in occupying premises at Southern High school; we are certainly paying leasing costs at other sites, at commercial rates; so that is something we will need to think about in the longer term in relation to our links with Southern.

...we also have a number of other leadership challenges in relation to the human resource component of a medium-size business organization has its challenges...

MG: So this would include things like?

DFM: All of the issues associated with sourcing staff , keeping them, succession planning for sure.....

MG: So do you have a succession plan or is it just in your head?

A: There isn't one! (Laughs) No there isn't one..

MG: Yes, it appears this is a common issue for many organizations, which they don't handle well.

A: Yes we've got lots of problems in well you know P is really our major problem. You know we have got our health, and with P leaving soon, but I guess if all three of us were to go where does that leave the organization; we really an to get to the point, and think we are, that the organization is bigger than us, because it needs to be, it's about more than just our personalities, and ambitions and passions – and every time you bring someone in and interview you think, yes they will be good for us but then you have issues, about can you afford them where do they fit for now, and too many chiefs create other problems – and you know I have been bouncing that around , but I don't really know what the solutions are.

Another issue we are dealing with right now is headhunting-

MG: Other organizations who are taking staff from you?

A: Yep, that is hard to match and of course the person being approached feels good about it, and that has also happened to me and I declined.

MG: Well, I certainly have taken more than enough of your time, and I do thank you for your willingness to take this interview and discuss openly your perspectives with me

(Interview concludes)