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Leadership Development at independent secondary colleges: a needs analysis case study focused on leadership development infrastructure

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Abstract[1]

Leadership development within secondary schools is the subject of increasing research, but is frequently not factored into school infrastructures. The required leadership and management competencies are often left to 'develop organically' rather than being fostered strategically and proactively. While the body of research into educational leadership development is expanding, there is a gap between tacit understanding of the benefits of more systematised approaches and application of this understanding in secondary school practice. This is particularly the case with regards to the training, induction and ongoing support of teachers promoted to middle-management positions within schools. The aim of this research is to determine the leadership development needs of an Australian independent secondary college as perceived by both senior management and middle-management. This case study will endeavour to mediate any discrepancies between the two perspectives, allowing for recommendations to be made about how the needs identified might be addressed in practice. The data identified several pressing leadership development needs within the college, including improved leadership development strategies such as succession planning, training and induction processes, and release of time, financial and human resources to address leadership development needs. How these needs can be met is described. The results have implications for other independent secondary school management teams.

Key words: leadership, management, education

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Introduction

Although leadership development within the educational context had a tendency in the past to be 'under-examined and under-researched' (Brundrett & Dering 2006, p. 89), study has been undertaken in the past decade by researchers and practitioners internationally into the inadequacy of training, induction, development and support of secondary classroom teachers promoted to 'middle management' roles. This research is published in journals such as *The Australian Educational Leader, Educational Leadership* and *School Leadership and Management.*

The complexity of researching the leadership development inputs required to prepare and support individuals in education middle management roles lies at least in part in the complexity of actually defining what those roles mean in terms of leadership and management, and what they are expected to include within school structures.

Team leader roles commonly incorporate responsibility for staff team management and curriculum oversight, in addition to the appointed individuals meeting the concurrent demands of ongoing classroom teaching responsibilities (Glover, Gleeson, Goh and Johnson (1998). Teachers who are deemed to be competent in the classroom are frequently promoted to such roles. However, these promotions are not usually supported by organisational infrastructure to articulate, foster and evaluate the competencies required to be successful in the new role. Faculty Heads are appointed 'because they were successful teachers, not because they displayed any managerial expertise or recognised managerial potential' (Adey 2000, p. 425).

Teaching responsibilities aside, tensions are inherent within the multi-faceted middle management role which encompasses translating senior management policies and perspectives into classroom practice throughout the faculty, fostering staff cohesion and

group identity, improving staff performance and subsequent student outcomes, and liaison and advocacy on behalf of the faculty (Moon, Butcher and Bird 2001). Yet such responsibilities are often undertaken with little if any training, induction or ongoing support with regards to the required leadership and management skills.

Moreover, research indicates a gap between tacit acknowledgements of the potential benefits of schools proactively addressing leadership development needs and implementation of this understanding. In the United States, research about school leadership preparation 'has not made a large dent in overcoming many of the deficiencies noted' (Murphy and Vriesenga 2006, p. 183), and the same applies to other nations such as Australia and New Zealand (Chetty 2007). There are clearly significant gaps between senior management and middle management perceptions of interventions needed to optimise middle-management leadership development and how this might be most effectively implemented. These gaps are to some extent a direct result of the fact that discussion between the two tiers of management regarding leadership development needs is rarely formalised (Chetty 2007). The situation is exacerbated by the fact that secondary schools generally do not have a dedicated human resource management function (Yorks 2005).

Three stages of professional development are critical to performance success in middle management roles within secondary education: preparation for the post, induction into the post and development in the post (Tomlinson 1997). However, appointment of teaching staff to team leader (middle management) positions within secondary education frequently fails to address these three stages, thus compromising the success with which their roles can be undertaken due to lack of infrastructural support (Chetty 2007). This research paper contends that schools, their staff and students would benefit from practices of leadership development that are proactively integrated and made central to independent secondary school operations.

This report has five sections following this introduction. An orientation section will provide background regarding some of the research that has been conducted into the area of

educational leadership development and trends within this field; it will also articulate some of the difficulties of defining leadership in the context of educational middle-management, particularly in relation to College A (the college). The section on data collection and analysis will outline in detail the case study methodology employed, followed by a summary of the findings about leadership development need identified within the college and the need for more systematised processes to meet these needs. The key learnings and recommendations derived from this study will then be outlined. Finally, the conclusion will offer some final insights as to the likelihood of change occurring as a result of the research conducted, both in the college specifically and for the independent secondary education sector as a whole.

2.0 Orientation

There is a growing awareness of the need for leadership development strategies to be formalised and integrated to support secondary schools' primary objectives of delivering high quality teaching and learning to students (Adey 2000; Chetty 2007; McCormick 2009). However, implementation of the findings of such research is inadequate. In Australia, it has been 'difficult to point to any systematic programs for preparing school leaders across most states and territories' and consequently 'future leaders caught what they could on the run' (Ingvarson and Anderson 2007, p.11). Presumably, deficits in educational management stem from the fact that middle and senior managers are usually promoted to such positions without any formal management training or experience. A survey conducted in Queensland (Clarke 2006, p. 175) 'portrays a picture of under-prepared staff being expected to improve and sustain schools with little induction and support', with insufficient induction in preparation for the complexities of the leadership roles being assumed. It has been possible for Principals to be appointed 'with little formal development in school leadership', leading to the recommendation of the development of standards for school leadership that can be successfully 'embedded in everyday thought and practice' (Ingvarson and Anderson 2007, p. 11).

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This deficit in leadership development appears to be more readily recognised by the middle managers themselves than by the senior management of their schools. This is particularly evident in the study of six New Zealand secondary schools which indicated distinctly discrepant perspectives between the perceptions of middle and senior managers: 'Whilst senior management felt that these needs were being met, this was not the view of middle managers' (Chetty 2007, p. 3).

This research is designed to draw out and reconcile the incongruous perceptions of leadership development needs held by senior and middle managers within one specific secondary college, and to offer some recommendations regarding leadership development strategies and interventions that will help to bridge and address this perceptual gap.

Defining leadership in the context of educational middle management. The title 'Team Leader' (in other studies and schools, 'Head of Department' or 'Faculty Head') is used to describe the role of middle-managers who oversee the teaching staff in subject faculties. However, the term is somewhat perplexing as the role often appears to be more a management role than a leadership function. The consensus amongst focus groups in a UK study aiming to distinguish leadership from management in the educational context was that 'leaders held, shared and promoted a vision, whilst managers put the vision into action and were involved in the everyday running of the school or a sub-unit of the school' (McCormick 2009, p. 29). Thus it may be construed that senior managers (including the Principal, Head of Campus and Director of Teaching and Learning) are leaders, while team leaders function predominantly as managers, taking their cues from senior management.

Hence, the concept of 'leadership' embedded in the labelling of educational middle-managers might be considered a misnomer to describe the largely administrative nature of team leader responsibilities. The team leader role is at times akin to what Wise, Bennett and Marr describe as the 'buffer and bridge' who 'interpreted the vision created by the senior staff, or indeed the whole staff, in relation to the perceived interests of their subject'(2003, cited in

Bennett et al 2007, p. 462). Consequently, the role involves upward communication of departmental needs and perceptions into the hierarchy of the school, and downward communication and mediation of senior management and external demands. Such responsibilities preclude the level of vision and empowered authority that might be expected to accompany a true leadership role (Marquardt 2000).

Leadership development practices and trends within secondary education. Research into leadership development within education repeatedly reveals a lack of infrastructure initiated from the top-down to develop the leadership capacities of middle-managers charged with implementing senior management objectives. Hierarchical structures must be supported by developmental infrastructure in order to be effective: 'the time you invest in developing leadership should be in direct proportion to the importance you attach to it' (Cunningham 2006, p. 44).

In a 2009 study of focus groups comprised of principals, middle-managers and classroom teachers from 70 UK primary and secondary schools, principals indicated 'the desirability for classroom teachers and middle leaders to take responsibility for their own leadership development' (McCormick 2009, p. 29). That study also found a divergence between the beliefs and perceptions of principals and teachers about identification and development of leadership talent.

In brief, leadership development needs to be 'job-embedded, organisation-embedded, and system embedded' (Fullan 2009, p. 45). Independent secondary schools have a high level of autonomy with regards to structure. However, there is a tendency within education to systematically fail to employ infrastructure to equip middle-managers to implement organisational objectives most effectively at an operational level. Consequently, schools frequently fail to address the strategic goals of continuous improvement and improved performance. This research aims to address ways in which such deficits can be addressed.

3.0 Data collection and analysis

A case research strategy for data collection and analysis was considered appropriate because the research is about *how* leadership can be implemented in secondary schools, the researcher had little control over the events involved, and the focus is a contemporary phenomenon (Yin 2009). The college was selected as the single case for this study due to the researcher's strong, long-term association as an employee of the college, fulfilling Yin's (2009) access criteria for a single case. This access allowed candid and *in-depth* reflections from the Principal and the full cohort of current team leaders.

Introduction to the College. The college has grown rapidly over the last decade from 186 students in 2000 to 598 students in 2010. Because staff numbers have expanded in order to cater to increased student enrolments, the role of faculty team leader was introduced approximately eight years ago in order to provide direct oversight to staff in terms of pastoral care and administrative oversight. Despite the college's rapid growth, there has been little concerted effort to date to improve the processes by which high performing and high potential teachers are transitioned into and supported in their new leadership roles. Additionally, the college is yet to move beyond cursory annual performance appraisals to develop a more formal performance management system to support the setting, achievement and evaluation of developmental goals amongst staff.

There are no clear policies or practices currently in place to support succession planning into middle and senior management positions. Candidates are promoted from the pool of teachers within each curriculum area to team leader positions based on their demonstrated competence within the classroom, perceived leadership potential and willingness to assume a leadership role. These appointments are made without any formal or ongoing assessment, training or development in the required leadership and management competencies. Direct oversight of team leaders is one of an extensive list of responsibilities of the Head of Secondary whose time and attention are thinly spread across dealing with senior management, student, parent

and staff issues. Despite maintaining an active open door policy to support team leaders as required, proactive development of team leaders has not to date been considered a priority.

As the college has grown, there appears to have been increasingly less direct, two-way interaction between senior management and team leaders, beyond the primarily administrative fortnightly meeting between the full cohort of team leaders and the Head of Secondary. While the college appears to have recognised the value of leadership development through its nomination of a small number of new and existing team leaders to participate in externally run leadership development programs and courses, a formal infrastructure to proactively develop all staff serving in team leader roles has not been developed.

The college has now reached a size and stage of development where the introduction of a formal human resource management function appears to be critical. Helping senior management to recognise and advance the potential of its current human resources will improve leadership strength within the college, and the possibility of team leaders being deemed more suitable candidates for higher levels of responsibility as new roles are created to support the growth of the college and as more senior vacancies arise. Such vacancies have to date generally been filled by external applicants.

Methodology employed in the collection of data. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with the Principal of the college (to whom the Head of Secondary and Director of Teaching and Learning are directly accountable), and with all but one of the team leaders, including four male and two female team leaders, who are directly responsible for staff oversight in curriculum area groupings. Additionally, one female team leader who had resigned at the end of the previous year participated by supplying written responses to the questions posed to team leaders in the interviews, contributing to a total of eight participants.

Questions were open in style (Saunders et al 2003) with a specific focus on both current practices and future possibilities. Notes were taken during the interviews and interviewee permission was granted to audio record interviews to ensure accuracy of transcription. The interviews were conducted in the first three weeks of the school year which is a particularly busy time for secondary school teachers and leaders. However, all were willing to participate due to the perceived need for an audit to be undertaken to enable any recommended leadership development interventions to be devised and implemented as early as possible in the new school year.

A survey approach would have provided a more expedient, yet less thorough method of data collection. The respondents may have been less willing to engage fully with a survey compared to their level of engagement after committing to an interview where responses were likely to be more candid. The interview process was the most effective way to 'get a view of informal procedures [and] consider apparent contradictions between attitudes and behaviour' (Hannabuss 1996, p. 25) and enabled responses to be instantly probed for clarification and elaboration where necessary. This group of middle managers were deemed to be 'more likely to agree to be interviewed, rather than complete a questionnaire … [providing] them with an opportunity to reflect on events without having to write anything down' (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2003p.324).

Assurance of respondent anonymity was important so that middle management respondents felt less guarded about making critical comments about current institutional practices. Interviews were approximately 50 minutes in length and were conducted on-site in the college's General Office Interview Room for the sake of privacy and convenience. The interview questions (Appendix A) were provided in advance for the consideration of the Principal of the college on request. A second set of questions (Appendix B), aimed to probe team leaders' views of the perspectives that emerged in the interview with the Principal without compromising the confidentiality of the Principal's responses, was then administered in the interviews with team leaders.

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To address the need for an ethical approach to be applied to the research undertaken, all interviewees were informed of the nature of the research project and signed a research consent form (Appendix C). That the researcher was a current employee of the college in a middle management role posed the risk of potential conflict of interest (Hannabuss 1996). To this end, open questions were constructed as objectively as possible for potential presentation to a range of colleges within the sector. The researcher's own responses to the questions were not included in the research. While it may have been possible to conduct similar research at an alternative school with the view to reducing the level of researcher subjectivity, the researcher's own employer was selected due to ease of access to and level of rapport with the key players. These advantages were coupled with a general openness within the ranks of both senior and middle management to an audit of current practices with the objective of moving towards best practice through informed investigation.

Data analysis of handwritten notes and transcription was content-focused to identify patterns, connections and discrepancies within and between responses (Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhaug 2001). This was achieved by looking for responses which revealed articulation of current practice, shared and incongruous perspectives about ways in which leadership development needs are identified and addressed, and articulation of potential avenues of action by which identified needs might best be addressed. Of particular interest was the identification of any significant gaps between how the issue of leadership development needs within the college were seen by senior management and by team leaders and how any discrepancies might be addressed in order to start working towards resolutions.

Findings

Analysis of interviews conducted with the Principal and team leaders Analysis of transcribed recordings and handwritten notes taken during interviews conducted with the Principal and seven team leaders revealed several key issues that need to be addressed.

Lack of a formalised approach to leadership development. The Principal of the college, speaking on behalf of senior management, revealed that to date there are no formal strategies in place to support the identification, training, transitioning of teaching staff into team leader roles. There is also no formal ongoing development infrastructure to support middle-management leadership development once those appointments have been made: 'We're into informal. I'm not saying there's not a need for formal though. But if you were trying to describe how we operate at the moment, yeah'. When asked to what extent the Principal believed that team leaders are well prepared and well qualified for their roles, the reply appeared to indicate an implicit belief that leadership is an inherent individual trait that should be fostered independently by aspirant leaders:

> Well, if they are, it's more as a result of who they are and the sorts of growth and development that they've sought to, or that they've put into place, that they've worked on in their life and we as a school, we benefit from that. So in other words what I'm saying is it's probably more as a result of who the individual is, the experiences that they've had and what they've done to develop those, rather more than what we as a school may have specifically strategically done as a leadership pathway to this particular point.

Consequently, the college has not invested dedicated time, human or financial resources to proactively facilitate the development of the specific core competencies required to perform the role of team leader successfully.

Lack of clarity regarding responsibility for leadership development. In response to the question regarding who was primarily responsible for development of leadership amongst team leaders, the Principal nominated the Head of Secondary and the Director of Teaching and Learning. The Principal also nominated fortnightly meetings between the full cohort of team leaders and the Head of Secondary as a primary support mechanism for leadership development. However, it was acknowledged that the probable balance of focus in these meetings was 80% administrative and 20% leadership development:

> I would place a strong value on informal leadership development within those meetings, so even though you're not sitting around saying we're now going to do a leadership development type activity, the way issues are discussed, the way they're managed, the way they're processed, all those sorts of things, the different views, I think that's all leadership development. It's not like those meetings you're listening to one person talk about a whole bunch of administrivia. I mean there's a lot of dialogue, a lot of interaction, and sharing of wisdom that takes place.

When asked the same questions, several team leaders replied that in their perception, that the college placed the primary onus on team leaders themselves to identify and address their own developmental needs: 'there seems to be a sense in which you are responsible for your own development as a team leader' (Interviewee A). Team leader perceptions about the specific role currently played by the Head of Secondary and the Director of Teaching and Learning in leadership development were varied. Despite the Principal indicating that the Director of Teaching and Learning was primarily responsible for team leader development in conjunction with the Head of Secondary, most interviewees suggested that this specific role was more focused on curriculum issues and delivering more generic professional development programs for the full cohort of classroom teachers and 'does not appear to have a role in team leader development' (Interviewee G).

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Regarding the contribution of the fortnightly team leader meetings to leadership development, team leader responses were mixed: 'I don't think team meetings are about us in the role or how to do our role. They are about issues, not our own ability' (Interviewee A). The responses of team leaders who were newest to the role ranged from acknowledgement of these meetings as beneficial to their development of understanding about their new position ('You learn a lot in those meetings', Interviewee C) to perceiving the meetings as making a contribution of 'zero for leadership development of us as team leaders' (Interviewee D). In brief, there is little clarity and consistency amongst senior management and team leader perceptions about leadership development strategies. There is also no clear, shared understanding of the responsibility for leadership development attached to particular positions.

A reactive rather than proactive approach to meeting leadership development needs.
There was consensus expressed in the views of the Principal and team leaders interviewed that the college tended to operate reactively rather than strategically in dealing with matters related to leadership development. Frequently reiterated by team leaders was the perspective that leadership development at the college is 'an ad hoc kind of thing' (Interviewee B) and that 'management adopt a reactive stance' (Interviewee B). When asked how the developmental needs of individual team leaders within the college were determined, the Principal's response indicated that such consideration was most likely to be taken when 'there was a clear need for further growth and further development' with the approach that 'we would talk about that with the individual and then look at ways at how or what was necessary could be achieved. So that would be on an individual basis'. There are currently no standardised practices in place, however, for helping team leaders to address such areas where the need for growth and development is identified. Hence, there appears to be an implicit assumption that staff will either be able to demonstrate the required competencies or to rectify any deficiencies themselves without any formalised support strategies facilitated at the level of organisational infrastructure.

Lack of formal infrastructure to support leadership development. Rather than providing any formal support mechanisms internally to supplement its informal 'open door' opportunities for support, the college's investment in leadership training and development programs appears to have been primarily directed towards a limited number of external opportunities for a limited number of participants:

> I think we've probably responded externally to the opportunities that have presented themselves in the broader educational community … I don't think we've sat down and said let's develop our own program for people that are at this particular point and want to move to this particular point.

One interviewee indicated that the external program they had been encouraged to attend was 'good but aimed for a higher position than I was going into and 'not at the level required' (Interviewee C), suggesting that more tailored approaches to meeting the needs of the college and its individual leaders are required to better address specific leadership development needs.

Lack of planning for succession requirements. The primary leadership needs of the college were expressed by the Principal in terms of needing to 'ensure that we have a continuing supply of people that are ready to step into leadership roles as and when they arise'. Team leaders at the college have historically been appointed exclusively from within the internal cohort of teachers rather than recruited externally. However, this has been undertaken without any formal infrastructure in place to 'pass the baton' from predecessor to successor: 'The Head of Secondary gave me a list of team leader responsibilities on a piece of paper – that's my induction' (Interviewee D). Hence, this strategic priority is not addressed systematically via any sort of formal, continuous performance management system (beyond the annual staff appraisal interview process) or by any deliberate succession planning policies or strategies. When asked about the primary leadership development needs of the college and of individuals transitioning from teaching positions to the team leader role, all team leaders

indicated a desire for more formal successor training strategies to play a greater role in preparing staff for such roles and responsibilities.

Lack of training and development support. The commonly held perception amongst interviewees is that candidates who are appointed to the role of team leader are perceived to have the required skills, traits and attributes to perform the role upon appointment without requiring additional support: 'My understanding so far is that you're here, you've asked for the job, you got the job, you just need to do the job' (Interviewee F) or, as expressed by another interviewee: 'Congratulations, you have the job, now go forth and do'(Interviewee C). Another team leader expressed their perception that from a senior management point of view, 'Once you're a team leader you've arrived and don't need development. Like obviously they just assume that the team will be better with you taking care of it but who takes care of you?' (Interviewee D). The relatively ad hoc nature of middle management induction surfaced repeatedly as a key area of need related to the successful transitioning of classroom teachers into their new role:

> The year that I became a team leader I was told several times that it's a shame that there couldn't be any - it's like there wasn't enough time, it was an intentional thing of it would have been a good thing to meet with the new team leader to talk to them but time just goes and so there's nothing. (Interviewee C)

Interviewees indicated that any coaching or mentoring currently experienced in preparation for, during or following the transition period into their new role was generally only informal or incidental. There was consensus amongst team leaders that a more formalised training and coaching period prior to appointment to the role would provide more effective induction infrastructure: 'I think there needs to be more induction. I don't think it needs to happen the year of. I think the induction needs to happen the year before if they're already on staff, if that's possible' (Interviewee D).

All interviewees emphasised the benefits of the open door policy of the Head of Secondary as the primary method by which support could be solicited as needed. However, there was consensus that 'a more properly structured program'(Interviewee F) 'better induction strategies' (Interviewee A), 'more access to management' and 'more effective two way communication'(Interviewee G), 'proper feedback' (Interviewee B) and 'more adequate follow through of issues raised at team leader meetings'(Interviewee B) were required to help support the development of team leaders.

Lack of team leader accountability. In addition to the need for improved induction processes, additional ongoing team leader monitoring and support mechanisms seemed to be areas of concern. One respondent indicated a belief that processes should be in place to keep team leaders more accountable ('There isn't much accountability … there's no tracking of team leaders') and suggested the regular involvement of 'someone who meets with us individually, you know maybe once or twice a year … a regular sort of meeting where you can be held accountable' (Interviewee C). Team leader performance was deemed to be monitored 'informally, reactively, not proactively, not strategically' (Interviewee B) and there was a shared perception that the alignment of leadership development with the needs and objectives of the college 'hasn't been thought through by senior management' (Interviewee F). One team leader suggested that there was 'an attitude of continuous improvement, but not much flesh on the bones' with regards to equipping and empowering team leaders to perform their roles more effectively: 'the infrastructure does not support the role' (Interviewee B).

Lack of time to support leadership development. Time was mentioned by the Principal and most team leaders as a key barrier to team leaders performing their roles and responsibilities optimally. This issue is compounded by the dual role of team leaders also being classroom teachers with 'no time to move or breathe' and not wishing the allocation of any additional time to lead to the situation that their teaching duties become compromised:

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'The bottom line is, at the end of the day we have to be here for the students' (Interviewee B). Most team leaders identified that they would benefit from more training in the area of conflict management and resolution, 'some sort of counselling training' (Interviewee E) and more formalised ongoing leadership development opportunities. However, the tension of juggling the dual role of classroom teaching and team leading poses logistical challenges with regards to how this might be achieved within already extremely demanding time constraints without significant compromise to either role. Such tensions seem to be a major contributing factor to the gap between acknowledging the need for infrastructures which more proactively support leadership development and what occurs in practice.

In summary, all respondents indicated that a more formalised approach to leadership development, particularly at the level of proactive succession planning prior to assuming new leadership roles, would be beneficial to those taking on those roles. The Principal expressed recognition that 'it's timely in terms of our strategic objectives that a more formal approach to leadership development in the college is put into place' in light of the growing number of middle managers needed to undertake the workload in a growing school.

The data analysis indicated that the greatest areas of leadership development need within the college to be addressed include: planning for leadership development driven by strategic thinking rather than reactive response; a more proactive approach to succession planning for middle-management roles; improved processes for team leader training, induction, ongoing support and skill development, clarification of roles and standards, monitoring of progress towards the maintenance or attainment of the required competencies; introduction of infrastructure that is not compromised by competing priorities which relegate leadership development to a peripheral position; improved lines of communication between senior management and team leaders to ensure role clarification; and more deliberate alignment of leadership development initiatives and interventions with the strategic objectives of the college as a whole. At this point, tacit understandings of weaknesses within the current system need to be translated into systematised processes to support the role of team leader

within the college – a role that has been acknowledged by senior management to be crucial to the fulfillment of the strategic objectives of the organisation.

5.0 Key learnings and recommendations

The data obtained through the interview process has led to the following recommendations for the college and similar independent secondary colleges.

A more formalised approach to leadership development. The interview data supported other research that 'aspiring middle managers are likely to receive no training to prepare them for promotion' (Adey 2000, p. 422). There was general consensus amongst interviewees at the college that a more formal proactive approach needs to be adopted at this stage of the college's growth. Strategies should encompass more deliberate identification and preparation of teaching staff prior to their appointment to team leader positions to help them develop the competencies required. This should be coupled with ongoing developmental support of teachers performing as team leaders.

Improved induction processes. There was general consensus with regards to induction processes that success as a team leader required more understanding of the role than what was possible from the job description. A number of interviewees suggested that putting additional policies and measures into place to facilitate smooth and successful transitions would particularly to help key stakeholders to navigate the intricacies and interpersonal dynamics of change management within the leadership of the team. A more formalised expectation from senior management regarding the management of the succession process or new appointments to middle-management positions may help to reduce the negative impacts of transitions into the role.

The consensus amongst team leaders about the need for an improved induction process to the role was coupled with an acknowledgement that creating a permanent position of Deputy Team Leader (a model recently introduced at the college to support the role of student-focused Year Level Coordinators) was probably not necessary or ideal. Instead, where possible the training process would perhaps better be focused on an intentional coaching period or official deputisation during the overlap of several months between the selection of the incoming team leader and the residual tenure of the incumbent team leader. This strategy is particularly fitting given that specific roles and responsibilities are usually relinquished by any outgoing position holders at the end of the school year and that new appointments (made in approximately September or October) generally begin at the start of the following year.

Investment of time to support leadership development. Time constraints were identified as one of the most significant factors inhibiting the effective development and performance of team leaders in their roles. The notion that leaders within smaller schools 'often have to contend with a 'double load' that may cause tensions between the professional concerns of teaching and the demands of management and leadership' (Clarke 2006, p. 174) was reinforced in this case study. All team leaders interviewed acknowledged individual and whole school leadership development needs. However, several were reluctant to consider future leadership development interventions due to the investment of time that they perceived would potentially decrease their ability to serve the needs of the students in their classes.

Thus, the college could give consideration of time release for current team leaders to engage in leadership focused retreats or meetings dedicated purely to the development of leadership and management skills such as conflict resolution and counselling, given the extensively pastoral nature of the role. Several interviewees recommended that time be made for team leader team engagement with non-administrative matters including brainstorming sessions and ongoing dialogue related to critical aspects of education. This could be balanced with opportunities for more social interaction amongst team leaders. Such interaction may foster an environment that would facilitate a more collegiate approach to discussing and

collectively trouble-shooting ways in which to deal with challenges that arose in the administration of the role.

Creation of a position to oversee human resource development. The individuals named by the Principal as being primarily responsible for the development of team leaders (the Head of Secondary and the Director of Teaching and Learning) seem to lack time within their multi-faceted portfolios to prioritise the initiation and oversight of relevant interventions. It is recommended that at this stage in the college's growth that identification, development and support of team leaders be made a primary responsibility in a newly created Human Resource Management and Development position as part of the senior management team. This role could also encompass specific aspects of recruitment, selection, general staff induction, pastoral care, whole staff performance management processes and interventions, oversight of succession planning policies and protocols. A specific focus on leadership development and support could help to alleviate some of the time-related pressures currently inhibiting the leadership development of middle-managers within the school.

Improved communication between senior management and team leaders with regards to leadership development policies, needs and strategies. It is essential for senior management to clearly convey and proactively support the development of the specific competencies and standards required to help fulfil organisational objectives. Systematically placing the onus on middle managers to identify and address their own leadership development needs can cause some leadership development needs to go unidentified and unaddressed. This can lead to a potential disconnect between the organisation and the managers entrusted to help facilitate the fulfilment of core strategic objectives. Several team leaders expressed an increasing sense of disconnect from the senior management team in terms of lack of direct contact between the team leaders and the Principal throughout their tenure. This is understood to be the result of recent restructuring decisions in light of college growth, with the Principal playing a less active role in the daily operations of the college and having less direct contact with middle management. This appears to have been a key

contributing factor to the perception of several team leaders that 'there is an unwillingness on the part of senior management to listen to strong recommendations we give' (Interviewee A) and a lack of clarity about the direction of the school: 'If I was on senior management, I would want to meet at least annually with the middle-management team' (Interviewee A).

The process of beginning to scrutinise current practice through this research project in light of potential strategies for leadership development improvement has already led to the introduction of the Head of Secondary booking regular individual appointments (approximately once every three to four weeks) to meet with team leaders with the view to providing more proactive ongoing support and accountability.

Improved team leader accountability to senior management via a better integrated performance management system. With regards to issues of accountability, monitoring and evaluation of team leader performance, several respondents suggested that expectations of standards of team leader performance could be made clearer. This could be achieved through the introduction of rubrics that clearly outline and help to evaluate developmental progress of the competencies required for successful performance in the role according to clearly articulated performance standards. As the college is currently in the process of reviewing its annual staff appraisal process to improve its focus on continuous professional development, it is recommended that team leaders undergo a two-tiered evaluation process, separating, evaluating and seeking to develop the two distinct sets of competencies required in their dual role as teachers and middle-managers.

Conclusion

Action clearly needs to be taken to close the chasm which currently exists within independent secondary schools between acknowledgement of leadership development needs and implementation of the findings of research which articulates these needs. For the college and similar independent secondary colleges, this closure can be initiated through the creation of a

new senior management position with a dedicated focus towards improving current, primarily reactive practices and ensuring that best practice is implemented as part of strategic thinking and planning. Such a position would help to ensure that the objectives of the college and its team leader structure are fulfilled optimally. The findings of this research complement much of the research already done into this field of enquiry but are challenging for independent secondary schools to address in terms of making human, time and financial resources available to ensure the necessary infrastructural change. The suggestion that active development of all leadership potential should be 'a professional imperative for all Principals' (McCormick 2009, pg. 29) seems a most obvious and reasonable conclusion.

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Appendix A: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

For principal only:
Leadership model, influence of organisation growth and team leader selection

1. How would you describe the leadership model currently in operation within the college?

2. What are the key needs of the college with regards to leadership development?

3. What methods have been used to ascertain these needs?

4. In what ways have the college's leadership development needs changed as the college has grown?

5. What strategies have been used to support these changing needs?

6. What criteria are currently used in the selection of team leaders within the college?

7. How would you describe the pool of candidates currently eligible for promotion when team leader vacancies arise?

8. What do you feel are the central priorities to align leadership development with the needs and objectives of the college?

9. How is dialogue about specific ways in which to achieve college strategy occur between senior management and team leaders as middle managers facilitated?

(Also for Team Leaders to answer)

The role of team leaders:

10. What are the primary roles and responsibilities of team leaders within the secondary school?

11. What do you believe to be the contribution of team leaders towards fulfillment of the college's strategic objectives?

12. Do you consider the role of team leader to be primarily a leadership role or a management role? Why?

Team leader training and induction

13. To what extent do you believe team leaders within the college are well prepared and well qualified to execute their specific duties?

14. What training, induction or support strategies are currently in place to help teaching staff transition into the role of team leader?

15. What training, induction or support strategies could be introduced in future to help teaching staff transition into the role of team leader?

16. What are the core competencies required of middle-management leaders?

17. How are these competencies communicated and fostered in teaching staff who are potential or successful candidates for team leader positions?

18. To whom are team leaders directly accountable?

19. Who is responsible for team leader development?

20. How are the developmental needs of individual team leaders within the college determined?

21. Is there any budgetary provision to develop current or future leaders within the college separate from their development in the areas of their teaching responsibilities?

22. What incentives or support are provided for leaders within the college to further their own development?

23. To what extent are coaching and/or mentoring utilised to support emerging or incumbent team leaders?

24. What specific ongoing support is offered to teachers performing in executing the team leader role?

Team leader evaluation

25. How are expectations of leadership performance communicated to Team Leaders?

26. How is this performance monitored?

27. What do you believe to be the main barriers to Team Leaders performing their role effectively?

28. What strategies would you suggest could be implemented to address these barriers?

29. What do you consider to be the college's greatest needs with regards to leadership performance evaluation?

30. What strategies are being currently being used or planned to aid this development and evaluation?

31. What strategies do you believe would be beneficial to meet the leadership induction, development and support needs of team leaders within the college?

Appendix B: Team leader interview questions

1. How long have you worked in education?

2. How long have you been a team leader?

3. What are the primary roles and responsibilities of team leaders within the secondary school?

4. Do you consider the role of team leader to be primarily a leadership role or a management role? Why?

5. What are the core competencies required of middle-management leaders?

6. To what extent do you believe team leaders within the college are well prepared and well qualified to execute their specific duties?

7. How are the developmental needs of individual team leaders within the college determined?

8. How are competency gaps identified and addressed?

9. What training, induction or support did you receive from the college as you transitioned from classroom teacher to team leader?

10. To what extent are coaching and/or mentoring utilised to support emerging or current team leaders?

11. What specific role does the Director of Teaching and Learning currently play in the development of team leaders?

12. What specific role do team leaders meetings play in the development of team leaders?

13. What do you perceive as being your own personal leadership development needs?

14. To what extent do you believe these needs are understood and addressed by the college?

15. What do you believe are the key barriers that prevent team leaders from performing optimally?

16. What could be done to address these barriers?

17. What do you do personally to identify and address your own leadership development needs?

18. What are the key needs of the college with regards to leadership development?

19. What are the key needs of the college with regards to leadership development?

20. What do you believe that the college could do to improve the way in which it identifies and supports the development of leadership amongst team leaders?

21. What training, induction or support strategies are currently in place to help teaching staff transition into the role of team leader?

22. What training, induction or support strategies could be introduced in future to transition to the role of team leader?

23. What specific ongoing support is offered to teachers performing in executing the team leader role?

24. How are expectations of leadership performance communicated to team leaders?

25. How is this performance monitored?

26. What do you consider to be the college's greatest needs with regards to leadership performance evaluation?

27. What strategies do you believe would be beneficial to meet the leadership induction, development and support needs of team leaders within the college?

28. How do you think the college aligns leadership development with the needs and objectives of the college?

29. How is dialogue about specific ways in which to achieve college strategy occur between senior management and team leaders as middle managers facilitated?
30. What do you believe to be the contribution of team leaders towards the fulfilment strategic objectives?