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A Changing Perspective: leading and learning in new ways

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Schools are learning places, tasked with providing rich, meaningful and diverse learning experiences for all of its' learners. Educational leaders are facing increasing challenges and demands to become more responsive to the fast changing world in which we live and work. With the increasing complexity and unpredictability that surrounds us, as educators we need to respond in new ways to address the inequity and increasing disparity that exists for our learners.

The traditional model of schooling that aimed to equip learners with the skills and knowledge to live in a predictable world are no longer fit for purpose, placing new demands on educators. As leaders we need to consider how we are leading change and building the capability and capacity of ourselves, and others to cope with the increasing complexity and demands of education today. This requires us to critically reflect on how we create the conditions and learning experiences for our colleagues with the ultimate aim to improve the quality of teaching and learning in our schools.

We need to consider how we can bring about deep and sustainable change in our practice that creates transformational shifts in our learning and leading. This will require us to rethink about what we pay close attention to and how we shape our schools as authentic learning communities.

The aim of this research was to explore what leadership practices could support the professional learning and growth of educators in these complex and unpredictable times, with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for student learners.

The focus for this research was to investigate whether leadership practices could be strengthened when the leader took in to consideration the adult developmental stages of the team members they were working with. It was hoped that using the constructive developmental theory to inform leadership practices it may strengthened the learning experiences of the team and

subsequently all of the teaching community in the school over time. These leadership practices required the Key Leader to build their own knowledge of constructive developmental theory and consider how this strengthened their own leadership capacity and then how it could be used to inform the leaders practices in order to support the growth of the team the leader was working with.

The findings indicated that when we begin to explore the theory of adult development it exposes a great deal more about how we learn, lead and can create conditions for transformation. It highlighted the importance of deepening our understanding of the developmental diversity of those we lead and work with and responding appropriately to this diversity. This requires us to ensure learning experiences are developmentally orientated, providing enough support but also challenge to create transformational shifts.

As indicated in these findings, as we gain greater insight in to our own developmental capacity and ways to grow we become far more at ease in working in the complex domain of the unknown unknowns. We are able to view challenges in new ways, taking a more adaptive leadership approach to how we embrace and lead change.

When we consider new ways to think, act and engage we have the potential to create places where learners can flourish amongst the uncertainty and complexity.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Educational leaders are continually being bombarded with new initiatives; increased accountability and ministerial mandates that demand leaders to make changes in the way they lead. Leaders in today's educational landscape are required to grapple with increasingly complex challenges, that place new demands on they way they lead. If leaders could pay greater attention to the developmental diversity of their colleagues and provide support for growth and transformation, what could this mean for student achievement?

This chapter introduces the thesis by providing my personal motivations for undertaking this research. The aims of this thesis are then outlined along with my overall research question. Finally, the structure of this thesis is provided with a brief description of the chapters.

Personal Motivation

"Leaders are more powerful role models when they learn than when they teach." Rosabeth Moss Kantor

I have been involved in the leading change for over twenty years in a variety of contexts: within the state primary and secondary school system; in a private school; as a curriculum advisor, and as part of University and Ministry of Education (MoE) contracts. These positions have all provided opportunity for me to explore, lead and implement change in a range of ways. For the past 6 years I have been the deputy principal in a large co-educational secondary school. Part of my role is leading professional learning and performance management of colleagues.

In my current role, I have discovered that one of the most challenging areas in which to lead change is the area of adult learning and development. It can be demanding work encouraging the hearts and minds of others to contemplate

new perspectives. Colleagues who are resistant to considering change can be particularly challenging to work with, and as a result are often ignored or their views dismissed. At times I have found myself in such a position, discounting their opinions and making a conscious decision to write off these colleagues.

However, I have recently had a change in perspective as a result of exploring ideas and theories around adult learning and development, namely the work Jennifer Garvey Berger. In 2014, I attended a three-day workshop facilitated by Jennifer Garvey Berger and Keith Johnston titled 'Conversations at the Growing Edge'. This workshop explored the ideas and practices around the adult constructive developmental theory of Robert Kegan. This theory provides a framework that describes the stages of meaning making through an adult's lifespan, taking in to account the cognitive, interpersonal, intrapersonal and affective domains and how they connect in an individual's meaning making process.

Over these three days, I gained a deeper understanding of this adult developmental theory, gaining experience in having conversations on the edge, exploring concepts and reflecting deeply about my own meaning-making system. This incredibly rich learning experience generated some very profound insights for me on how adults engage and respond to learning.

This learning experience coupled with what I had already explored around adult developmental theory challenged me to re-think about leading change and the position I had held about those colleagues that resist change. It caused me to think more deeply about adult learning and the extent to which all experiences are interpreted in many diverse ways. Considering a constructive developmental theory approach within the context of learning and change provided the missing link for me. My perspective had shifted and I began to unravel some of the assumptions and beliefs I had about why some resist change.

Ultimately, this sent me on a quest to learn more about adult developmental theory and how this can influence the way leaders approach the task of leading school-wide change and the professional learning. As educational leaders I consider this research is important because learning in the professional plays a major role in the lives of educators today as education grapples with addressing concerns around student achievement and the increasing diversity and complexity of learning.

Aim of the Research and Research Question

This thesis investigates the leadership work of a deputy principal as she progressed through a major school-wide change initiative, with a team of middle leaders in a secondary school. It explores what impact a constructive adult developmental theory approach might have on leadership practice and professional learning experiences for the deputy principal and potentially the team of middle leaders she was working with.

This thesis has both a practical and academic purpose. Firstly, it will provide clear practical recommendations for myself and other leaders in my school, who are responsible for leading learning. These recommendations could also be adopted by leaders in other New Zealand Secondary Schools, with slight modifications, if necessary, to suit their particular school.

Secondly, while this thesis aims to be practical, it is not based on the assumption that it provides all the answers to the many complex issues that are discussed. Further research into this subject area is needed, as many of the issues analysed in this thesis have not been explored in New Zealand academic literature. This thesis aims to add to and hopefully generate further academic debate and research in New Zealand and overseas.

Thesis Overview

This thesis is structured in six chapters. This first chapter has provided an introduction to the research project.

Chapter Two presents a literature review on leading learning. It begins with a discussion of changing leadership demands. It then discusses professional learning. The literature review also investigates constructive adult developmental theory.

Chapter Three outlines the study's methodology. Through the study's focus and research question, a critical theoretical framework that underpins this study is explored. The participants are described within this section. An action research methodology, as well as the methods used to gather data, is also elucidated. This chapter concludes with an explanation of the data analysis, credibility and dependability, and ethical considerations.

Chapter Four presents the results and discussion. It reports on the research question through three related themes: complexity in education, learning communities and leadership practices.

Chapter Five synthesises the key findings and draws conclusions to the research. Finally it highlights limitations and provides practical recommendations for the future.

Research Questions

This thesis will examine the following questions.

Main Question

What impact could a constructive adult developmental theory approach have on leadership practice and professional learning experiences?

Additional Questions

How might leaders adopt a differentiated learning approach that takes in to account the developmental needs of adult learners?

How could professional learning and development be refocused to support personal and professional growth?

How might a differentiated professional learning approach that takes in to account the developmental needs of the adult learner, influence their learning experience?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter overview

The purpose of this review is to explore the literature related to leadership practices that support the professional growth of educators in ways that improve education outcomes for all learners. The intention is to consider new ways of thinking about leadership and learning that compliment current leadership research. As Albert Einstein once said “No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it”. These new ways of thinking require us to consider our consciousness as the operating system of our performance. So how we can increase the complexity of our minds to flourish as leaders and learners in a way that will improve educational outcomes for all?

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section explores the landscape for leaders leading professional learning in secondary schools today. The second section identifies some key practices that current research identifies as critical for leaders leading change. The third section investigates the research linked to leading effective professional learning in schools. The fourth section identifies some of the challenges for leaders in bringing about improved learner outcomes. The fifth section explores the recent research on constructive developmental theory that provides new possibilities for leaders leading learning. In the final section the literature of leadership that transforms learning is discussed.

Landscape for Leaders Leading Professional Learning

There has been a significant amount of research and literature written about what leaders need to be and become to successfully lead in secondary schools today, and to ensure all learners experience meaningful learning experiences and achieve to their full potential. Current research is trending towards a need for a greater focus on leaders taking an active role in leading learning in their schools (Bottery, 2004; Guskey, 2002, 2003; Hattie, 2009; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2009).

This body of research has drawn strong causal links between leadership practices and student achievement. In the widely published meta analysis conducted by Robinson et al., (2009), the focus was on identifying characteristics of leadership that linked to improving the learning outcomes for learners. Other research work by Leithwood and Seashore-Louis (2011) investigated high performing schools and leadership practices.

Both studies identified that those leaders who took an instructional approach, focused on quality of teaching and learning, and the creation of conditions that supported learning to flourish, had the most significant impact on student outcomes (Hattie, 2009; Leithwood & Seashore-Louis 2011; Robinson et al., 2009). Robinson et al., (2009) found that this practice generated an effect size twice that of any of the other identified factors linked to improving student outcomes, stating “effective pedagogical leadership creates the conditions that can ensure quality teaching in every classroom and, by doing so, reduce within-school variance in student achievement” (2009, p.57).

Authentic leaders of learning cannot be defined by a leadership style or theory, it is about what they create, model, experience and practice (Fullan, 2004; Notman, 2011; Robinson et al., 2009; Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton & Kleiner, 2000). These leaders, as described by Notman (2011) in his research, use; “an eclectic approach that incorporates the pedagogical leadership of teachers and students, contextually responsive leadership that promotes the relational connectedness of leader with constituents, and an inner leadership of self where one’s values, motivations and intrapersonal intelligence inform leadership behaviours” (2011, p.148).

In order to effectively lead learning, leaders need to create and foster the conditions for learning. The next section examines literature on ‘Learning Organisations’ and ‘Professional Learning Communities’ considered by the writer as mutually inclusive and relevant to this review.

Creating the conditions for learning

There has been extensive research and literature written about professional learning communities and their role in building teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Du Four & Eaker, 1998; Du Four, Du Four & Eaker, 2009; Senge et al., 2000). The consensus from the literature reviewed is that, in order to build teacher capability and engagement there needs to exist an enabling environment that promotes and supports learning (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Du Four, 1998; Du Four et al., 2009; Hargreaves, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Senge et al., 2000; Snow-Gerono 2004; Stoll & Seashore-Louis, 2007; Timperley, Wilson, Barra & Fung, 2007; Timperley, 2008).

This evidence suggests that there are definable qualities that an effective professional learning community must possess (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; DuFour & Eaker 1998; Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Timperley et al., 2007). This includes a shared vision and values, the unequivocal commitment and shared sense of purpose towards student learning and a shared believe that all students can learn and achieve. Engaging in critical conversations that are dialogic in nature and open to learning through the sharing of insights and wonderings is essential, as is the situation where it is safe to challenge beliefs and assumptions.

Engaging in collective inquiry through the sharing of ideas, teaching practice and artifacts is another key quality of an effective learning community. With the focus on team learning that is supportive yet challenging, promoting deep authentic reflection. In order for this to happen there needs to be trusting relationships between colleagues, mutual care and respect for one another, and a strong sense of integrity. As well, having access and support from external expertise provides new perspectives and ideas to be shared relevant to the collective inquiry.

These learning communities have the characteristics and dispositions that allow all learners, adults and young people to grow and flourish. Such organisations do not exist by chance, but because of leaders that are orientated and committed to learning (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Other scholars such as Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), and Robertson and Timperley (2011) write of the important influence that leaders play in establishing a culture of learning through their own modeling as learners. The researchers contend that is more about what we do as leaders than what we say, espoused theories versus theories of action (Fullan, 2006). Those leaders ensure there are adequate resources available to support professional learning, not only fiscally but also creating adequate space and time for effective learning to take place. It is about committed strategic intent that creates a 'learning' school culture (Bottery, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Senge et al., 2000).

Richard Du Four and Robert Eaker (1998) ask the question "Is there a place for a strong principal in the professional learning community?" (1998, p.182). They talk of the importance of strong leadership. In their interpretation of 'strong' they believe the leader is a learner themselves, actively engaging in the learning process, being ever present in the professional learning community, and having personal credibility. Other important qualities they identified for this strong leader included creating collaborative structures that focused on teaching and learning; consistently communicating the vision for learning; sharing the leadership with others, and maintaining a sharp focus on evidence (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Leading effective professional learning

In the last two decades significant research has been undertaken on professional learning and its role in building teacher effectiveness and the impact on school-wide change. High quality professional learning experiences focusing on building

quality teachers' practice can have a significant positive impact on student achievement (Alton Lee, 2003; Du Four 1998; Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Timperley et al., 2007).

The publication; *Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis* (Ministry of Education, 2003) was a response to the growing concern about the increasing disparity within New Zealand schools. This issue was initially highlighted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report on student achievement in 2001 (Timperley et al., 2007). The purpose of this synthesis was to develop an evidence base that would inform practice and policy in schooling aimed to “optimize outcomes for students in New Zealand Schools” (Alton-Lee, 2003, p.1).

In response to the findings of the quality teaching synthesis (Alton-Lee, 2003), the MoE (2007) published the report, *Teacher Professional Learning and Development*. It is a synthesis of 97 individual and group studies focused on how to promote teacher learning in ways that would improve the learning outcomes for the diversity of students in our classrooms. They found 72 studies (16 in New Zealand and 56 international) that assessed the effectiveness of professional learning and development on student outcomes. From this analysis, they were able to identify key professional learning principles that impacted positively on student outcomes.

A key aspect of these best practice principles for professional learning is that they are intricately woven together, one cannot stand alone, it is the interplay of them all working together that will improve the outcomes for learners (Timperley et al., 2007). Timperley et al., (2007) identify the cycle of inquiry and knowledge building as the framework that brings these principles together.

Fundamental to the inquiry approach is that students are in the center of the professional learning focus, using both qualitative and quantitative data to guide and inform the inquiry focus. Interrogating this data needs to be in collaboration

and at a school-wide level, and there is a strong body of evidence that supports the focus of collaboration and a shared vision by all (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; DuFour & Eaker 1998; Guskey, 2002, 2014). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) share a cautionary note, reminding educators that there are students that sit behind this data and therefore they must ensure it is kept human.

Teachers' commitment to inquiring into their own practice is a crucial part of the inquiry process. This is about being discerning, able to unravel the complexity of what they do and need to change, while simultaneously identifying their needs as learners (Timperley, 2008). This can be a difficult task and requires a culture that provides appropriate and timely support and encourages honest and deep reflection (Robertson & Timperley 2011).

Deepening professional knowledge and skills is the next phase of this inquiry process (Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Timperley, 2008; Timperley & Parr 2010). This requires being discerning about what constitutes worthwhile knowledge. Guskey (2014) cautions the profession of the importance of identifying research-based new knowledge that provides valid evidence that it improves student outcomes. He states, " We must be particularly cautious of popular instructional innovations that are actually more opinion based than research based" (2014, p. 14).

Importantly, it is not only about developing new knowledge and skills but also developing an understanding of theoretical basis that underpins this knowledge. Having a kete of strategies or skills is not enough, Timperley (2008) emphasizes that teachers need a deeper understanding allowing for better decision making, designing and planning of tasks, adaptation and evaluation of impact.

Putting this new learning into practice forms the next phase, engaging students in new learning experiences crafted to accurately respond to their needs. The inquiry framework supports a learning in action approach, encouraging on going

planning, experimenting, trialing and reflecting on the impact that changing teacher practice is having on student outcomes (Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Timperley 2008; Timperley & Parr 2011).

This cycle of learning provides teachers with multiple opportunities to learn, being able to revisit strategies that may have not been fully understood and to explore new knowledge in different ways (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Timperley et al., 2007). This is about learning just in time, not learning just in case, latter a prevailing trait of traditional education practice. Respectfully acknowledging that as we have increased our understanding of how humans learn, our focus has shifted from bombarding learners with knowledge to exploring and learning in a more timely and relevant way.

Despite educational leaders being guided by extensive body of research on leading effective professional learning and building professional learning communities, challenges still exist in bringing about sustainable change in practice. The next section identifies some the challenges identified in the body of literature reviewed.

Challenges for leaders

Educator responses to professional Learning

In the research conducted by Timperley et al., (2007) the diversity of teacher responses to professional learning experiences was analysed. Emerging from the analysis were three main responses. Firstly that, teachers rejected new theory and practice, discounting any evidence that may be presented to support the change. The second response was when teachers continued with their current practice but believed that they had changed as a result of the professional learning experience. And thirdly, when teachers felt a sense of accountability and/ or obligation to engage in the new practice, they would adapt and modify to suit their style, and 'tick' it off when completed.

This research highlighted that these professional learning experiences had not created transformation shift for the learner, it had not engaged them to think differently about how they knew what they knew. Developing a greater understanding of the developmental diversity of adults and creating developmentally responsive learning experiences enables such transformation to take place. This is one of the main aims of this research project.

Engaging in the inquiry process

In 2012, the Education Review Office conducted an evaluation on the status of Teaching as Inquiry in New Zealand schools. This review was carried out in conjunction with scheduled education reviews of schools throughout New Zealand. This review reported that: “20 percent of teachers were using the process very well, 37 percent of the teachers were either using inquiry minimally or were not using it at all” (2012, p.27). Recommendations included improving teacher understanding of the inquiry process, ongoing review and clearer guidelines and expectations. It also recommended that leaders needed to improve their own level of understanding of the inquiry process and the capabilities required to support colleagues in effective implementation.

Adult Learning

Several researchers identified a need for greater focus on adult learning and support cognitive growth. Requiring leaders to have a deeper understanding of how adults learn and how the learning designs can therefore, create transformational learning experiences. A common theme identified by these writers is that current professional learning has a greater emphasis on informational learning (Bolstad, 2012, Bolstad & Gilbert, 2012; Bull & Gilbert, 2012; Garvey Berger, 2007; Gilbert & Bull, 2014; Robinson et al., 2009; Timperley et al., 2007).

Informational learning focuses on learning experiences that build skills and knowledge, increasing what we know. This type of learning helps us to deal with the technical challenges of our work, for example, how to interpret student

achievement data. Conversely, transformational learning changes how a person knows, how one make sense of information and experiences. This type of learning increases our cognitive, affective, interpersonal and intrapersonal capacities, enabling us to deal with complex challenges in more adaptive ways. (Drago-Severson, 2009, 2012; Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004). An example of a complex challenge would be the development of a student behavior strategy, where the problem is difficult to define and there is no one simple solution.

Responding to complexity

In the pilot project work of Bull and Gilbert (2014) they aimed to explore what was required to equip 21st Century educators to cope with the complexity and changing demands of education today. From the pilot it was reported that participants felt that the opportunity to explore the ideas around complexity and adult developmental theory provided them, “with a stronger foundation from which to lead change- in their schools, and their wider communities” (2014, p14). The researchers also reported that there appears to be little opportunity for school leaders to be exposed to professional learning opportunities in New Zealand that explore transformational learning, nor is there expert professional knowledge to facilitate these learning experiences (Gilbert & Bull, 2014).

These researchers suggest that New Zealand school leaders need to lead in new ways that build and support transformational learning opportunities for themselves and other adult learners. They highlight the importance of responding in different ways to the complex challenges that face leaders in education today and in the future (Gilbert & Bull, 2014).

The international research reflects a similar trend, the complexities of leadership and the adaptive demands requires leaders to develop new skills that focus on transformational learning not only for others but themselves (Drago-Severson & Blum-Destefano, 2013, 2014; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004; Snowden, 2002).

Creating the conditions

Developing sustainable and effective professional learning communities continues to challenge leaders. Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) in their research discussed one example that highlighted the negative impact that learning communities can have when they are imposed and driven from the top down for the purpose of implementing a 'programme'. These communities struggled to gain momentum as there was little evidence of shared ownership or purpose relevant to the learners and although a great deal of work took place it was not sustainable over time, resulting in neutral impact on student achievement.

Other challenges included learning communities that failed to engage external support that could provide new perspectives and challenge existing assumptions and beliefs. These professional learning communities operated in a manner that reinforced existing assumptions and where deficit theorising was the norm (Timperley et al., 2007).

In Bull & Gilberts (2012) pilot project they reported seeing little evidence from their investigations of teachers working in learning communities that supported deep reflective thinking that produced transformational growth.

In considering some of the challenges that exist for leaders leading learning I hope to build on existing best practice and explore new ways to strengthen professional growth of educators. The next two sections explore some of these new ways.

To begin with we need to investigate the theoretical base with which this new approach to leading learning is underpinned. It is this theoretical base that research argues, has the potential to more effectively equip leaders to lead in these complex times and support transformational growth.

Constructive Developmental Theory

As individuals we interpret experiences, interactions and conversations in many different ways. How we each respond to situations of conflict, grief and work pressure is diverse and illustrates how we individually make meaning of the situation and the scope of the perspective we take. Our interpretation of these experiences is determined by our current developmental capacity (Drago-Severson, 2009, 2012; Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano & Asghar 2013; Garvey Berger, 2007, 2012, 2014; Kegan, 1980, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

One of the prominent scholars and researcher in the area of developmental theory is Robert Kegan. His area of expertise is adult development and describes himself as a constructive developmental theorist (1980), defining the term as “the study of the development of our constructing or meaning making activity” (1980, p. 373). He confers that we construct our worldview through our discovery of it, and as we develop greater awareness of our own perspectives and the perspectives of others our own meaning-making capacity develops, grows and changes over time (Kegan, 1994).

In his work, Kegan (1980, 1994, 2009) constructed a developmental framework not assigned to age or phase of life, but one that describes the stages of meaning making through the lifespan. This constructive developmental theory takes in to account the cognitive, interpersonal, intrapersonal and affective domains and how these intersect in an individual’s meaning making process (Drago-Severson, 2009, 2012; Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Kegan, 1980, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

This framework is built on concepts that incorporate the work of renowned constructive developmental theorist Jean Piaget, his work initially focusing on childhood to adolescent cognitive development (Drago-Severson, 2012). Kegan’s theoretical framework describes five different stages of development that focus on perspective taking, making sense of the world and the ability to cope with complexity in adulthood (Garvey Berger, 2007, 2012).

These developmental stages, broadly defined below, provide a guide in understanding the meaning making systems of individuals, and can guide us in reflecting on our own ways of making meaning. Garvey Berger (2012) emphasizes that as people grow developmentally they become more equipped to understand diverse perspectives of others and, take into account these perspectives. They are also able to take greater responsibility for their cognitive, affective, intrapersonal and interpersonal domains (Drago-Severson, 2012; Garvey Berger, 2012).

Developmental Stages.	Key strengths	Preoccupying concerns
Self Sovereign	Straightforward job is important then they are in their element. Likes clear images of right and wrong, good & bad that can be reinforced through external rules and rewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on following rules • Is most concerned with concrete consequences • Decisions based on what the self will acquire and on following the rules
Socialized	Able to take on others expectations for good performance. Loyal to the group, idea or organization with whom they identify- so loyal that they will subordinate their own interests to the interests of that group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depends on external authority for values and judgments about self • Self is defined by important others' judgments • Acceptance, approval from important others, and affiliation are of primary importance
Self authoring	A clear sense of personal mission that can be extended to organisation. Can hold on to many different perspectives and make an informed decisions that takes competing perspectives into account but is driven by their own sense of mission or values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ultimate concern is with ones own performance and competence • Conflict is viewed as a natural part of life • Self generates and replies to one's own internal values and standards.
Transformational	Able to see connections everywhere. Able to look at an issue from multiple sides and see the ways that different perspectives overlap.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed to self exploration • Conflict is seen as natural part of life and enhances thinking • Is able to understand and manage tremendous complexity • Is substantively less invested in own identity and more open to others perspectives

Figure 1: Adapted by Phillipa Woodward. Sourced from Drago-Severson, E. (2012); Garvey Berger, J. (2012). Kegan (1980, 1994, 2009).

Our underlying thought structure is developmentally orientated, and is defined by what we can take responsibility for. It is described by Kegan (1980, 1994, 2009) as the *subject- object* balance, and as we developmentally grow this balance changes. To define more specifically, subject is what *runs us*, as we are unable to see it as it is part of us, therefore, we can't take responsibility for it.

By definition object is opposite of subject meaning that *object* we have and we are responsible for. An example here would be that at the self-sovereign stage

(first stage of Kegan's framework) the individual's own concrete needs and interests control (subject) the way they interact, think about things and relate to others. When considering perspective (object) they can only consider their own, and find it difficult to understand that other people have their own perspectives, different from theirs (Drago-Severson, 2012; Garvey Berger, 2012).

As we increase our capacity to able to reflect and question aspects of our world and the assumptions we have about it, moving more things from the *subject* to *object*, we begin to developmentally grow and cope with complexity with greater ease. As explained by Garvey Berger (2012) "...a move from subject to object is when the entire meaning-making system moves from that which unquestionably runs me to that which I can actively take charge of and control" (2012, p182).

Engaging in this developmental work is not to define one stage as better and bigger than the other (Garvey Berger, 2012) or to marginalize a position that an individual may hold on the developmental scale (Kegan, 1980). Its purpose is to assist us in understanding developmental diversity, gain greater understanding of how an individual is making meaning and as leaders be able to appropriately challenge and support for future development growth (Garvey Berger, 2007; Drago-Severson 2012).

Leadership that creates transformational learning

This next session builds on the constructive developmental theory and explores the literature that suggests possibilities for leaders to lead in new ways. These new ways require leaders to consider more deliberate practices that focus on creating both the conditions and opportunities for transformational learning to take place. This transformational learning space engages the learner in understanding not only what they know, but also how they know what they know. Firstly, we consider the current nature of the schooling system today.

Schools are becoming far more complex systems as a result of increasing demands to adapt to 21st century; higher expectations, increasing diversity of learners, social, political, economic and cultural pressures are among the key influences (Bolstad & Gilbert, 2012; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2013; Robinson et al., 2009). Education is experiencing a paradigm shift and is being challenged to re-orientate towards system of education that is far more responsive to all learners, requiring leaders to make fundamental changes to the system itself (Bolstad & Gilbert, 2012; Claxton, 2008; Drago-Severson, 2012; Facer, 2011, Helsing, Howell, Kegan & Lahey 2009).

In the writings of Garvey Berger and Johnston (2015) on leadership and complexity (2013), they talk of these recent times as volatile ambiguous, complex and unpredictable for schools. They go on to say that in order for leaders of today to flourish and grow their capacity and that of others, they need to think and lead in new ways (Garvey Berger & Johnston, 2015). This view is further supported by Drago-Severson (2013) in her research work of twenty years with leaders and educators, in which she describes this new way as a learner –orientated leadership approach.

With this escalating complexity, schools are experiencing greater demands on how they are adapting to the challenges of an unpredictable future (Fullan, 2005; Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Robinson, 2011). Placing increasing adaptive challenges on leadership capabilities (Drago-Severson, 2012, 2013; Heifetz & Linsky, 2004).

Scholars agree that these new leaders will be fundamental in bringing about the type of change that is required in education today. However, such leaders are a rarity according to Kegan et al., (2008). Research that he conducted in the United States concluded that between half and two thirds of the adult population had not fully developed self-authoring (stage three) capacities. Meaning that these leaders did not actually have the mental complexity to deal

with the challenges and demands their leadership position required of them (Kegan et al., 2008; 2009).

It is the self-authoring stage and beyond that research indicates leaders need to be at to effectively lead today (Drago-Severson, 2009, 2012; Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Garvey Berger, 2007, 2012, 2014; Kegan, 1980, 1994, 2008; Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Kegan says that, “The expectations upon us...demand something more than mere behavior, the acquisition of specific skills, or the mastery of particular knowledge. They make demands on our minds, on how we know, on the complexity of our consciousness “ (Kegan, 1994, p. 5).

To begin with, these leaders demonstrate a commitment to their own transformation; they have an understanding of the theory and their own form of mind. They are continually growing their own sense-making capacity, with a focus on being the biggest, best versions of themselves (Garvey Berger, 2012). This requires ongoing learning and inquiring in to their practice, taking the time for deep reflection and growing through and with others (Drago-Severson, 2012; Kegan & Lahey, 2009).

Through this transformational mindset, these leaders have the psychological capacities to lead in more adaptive ways (Drago-Severson et al., 2013; Garvey Berger & Johnston, 2015; Kegan & Lahey, 2009). These adaptive leadership practices, as defined by leading scholars in this field, Heifetz & Linsky (2004), “...involves challenging people to live up to their words, to close the gap between their espoused values and their actual behavior. It may mean pointing out the elephant sitting on the table at the meeting – the unspoken issue that everyone sees but no one wants to mention” (2004, p. 33).

These leaders flourish in unpredictable times, they are at ease with not providing solutions but encourage collaborative safe to fail experimentation and opportunities to learn. They have the ability to stand on the balcony and capture the wider view, appreciating the multiple perspectives that exist, observe

emerging patterns and the interconnectedness of organisational systems (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997). As expressed by Heifetz and Laurie (1997), “The dynamics of adaptive change are far too complex to keep track of, let alone influence, if leaders stay only on the field of play” (1997, p. 126).

As the research literature suggests these rare leaders are focused not only on their own growth but also supporting the growth and transformation of others through their work as leaders (Drago-Severson, 2007). There is an understanding and appreciation of the developmental diversity of colleagues and the need to offer different kinds of support and challenge for growth (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2014).

In creating the space for transformation, researcher and theorist agree that adult learning experiences need to be developmentally oriented (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2014; Garvey Berger, 2012; Helsing, Howell, Kegan & Lahey, 2008). Leaders provide professional learning that not only builds on informational learning such as curriculum knowledge it also focuses on transformational learning.

This transformational learning, succinctly defined by Garvey Berger (2012), as learning that changes the form of what you know, looking at what you already know in new and different ways. This requires leaders to intentionally attend to the different ways individuals interpret and make meaning of the professional learning experience, ensuring that the learning design provides both challenge and support responsive to the developmental needs of the learner (Drago, 2007; Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2014; Garvey Berger, 2012; Helsing et al., 2008). The ultimate goal is to provide high-quality learning opportunities that grow educators.

Creating the conditions for this transformational learning and development to occur is pivotal for leaders. In the longitudinal study conducted by Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2014) they investigated leadership practices that

support adult developmental theory, termed as a 'holding environment'. The key elements included teaming, providing leadership roles, collegial inquiry and mentoring. With each of these elements they explored the strategies that could be used to support the different developmental stages of adults. The research provided promise for future practice in supporting developmental approach to learning.

In summary, it is through the deliberate act of focusing on transformational learning that will enable us to become those adaptive leaders. Being adaptive in the way we lead requires us to have a deep understanding of our own meaning making system and how we make sense of the world from multiple perspectives.

By bringing together the theories of adult development and adaptive leadership we become far better equipped to cope with the complex world in which we work.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will outline the methodology used for this research project. It will begin with providing a description of the theoretical framework I have chosen, the context in which the research was conducted and the recruitment of participants. The methods used to best gather the data to examine the research questions will then be outlined along with justification for the use of the tools selected to gather this data. The data analysis will be discussed including consideration of the trustworthiness and validity of the elicited data. Finally the ethical concerns will be considered in relation to the contextual relevance of this research.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is defined as the structure that supports the theory of the research study, providing set of ideas that will guide the data gathering and interpretation (Atkins & Wallace, 2012). This theoretical framework should provide as Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) articulates: the 'best fit for purpose' (2007, p. 308), ensuring that the theory adopted is appropriate and provides a robust platform to illuminate and justify the research findings.

Through educational research we hope to discover and create new knowledge, explore and challenge existing theories with the authentic intent to improve student outcomes. As a practitioner embarking on research I need to be mindful of my ontological assumptions, how I interpret and define the reality of social phenomena; the nature of being and becoming. And how, subsequently this can influence my epistemological assumption, how knowledge is then created. These philosophical viewpoints guide the research design and methods (Cohen, et al., 2007).

In social research there are three dominant paradigms. These paradigms guide and influence the theoretical viewpoint that researcher consider when designing

their research methodology. These distinctive paradigms include; positivism, interpretive and critical (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007; Denscombe, 2010).

For the purpose of this research a critical paradigm had been adopted. This project aimed to explore and highlight the diversity that existed within adult learners and the need to support transformational change and subsequently how this can influence leadership practices. As defined by Cohen et al., (2007) the critical paradigm aims to interrogate taken for granted assumptions, seeks to critique existing ideologies with the aim to emancipate – challenge the status quo.

Critical research aims to engage participants through collaboration and empowerment recognising the significance of context and endeavoring to give the participants voice (Cohen et al., 2007). Action research provides the appropriate research design and as eluded by Marshall & Rossman (2011) “blurs the distinction between researcher and participants, creating a democratic inquiry process” (2011, p. 23).

The action research process has a critical component to it, requiring the participants to engage in critical reflection of one’s own practice as they progress through the inquiry process. It is through the process of analytical, critical and challenging talk that transformational learning can occur (Cardno, 2006).

Research Context

This was a small-scale research project with a timeframe of approximately five months from initial engagement to gathering of final data. The research took place in a co-educational secondary school in the eastern region of the north in New Zealand. The school has a student population of approximately 900 and 60 teaching staff. The Deputy Principal has been in the school for approximately

five years, and held this leadership position since her arrival. Within the senior leadership team there is the principal and four deputy principals.

The researcher worked with the Deputy Principal (Key Leader) responsible for leading the group of Learning Area Leaders (middle leaders) in the implementation of a school-wide curriculum change initiative. This group of middle leaders each had leadership responsibility for their learning area and their leadership experience ranged from 15 years to six months. The group had been working on this change initiative for a year prior to this research project beginning in the school.

Research Focus

The focus for this research was to investigate whether leadership practices could be strengthened when the leader took in to consideration the adult developmental stages of the team members they were working with. It was hoped that using the constructive developmental theory to inform leadership practices it may strengthened the learning experiences of the team and subsequently all of the teaching community in the school over time. These leadership practices required the Key Leader to build their own knowledge of constructive developmental theory and consider how this strengthened their own leadership capacity and then how it could be used to inform the leaders practices in order to support the growth of the team the leader was working with.

Research Question (s)

Main Question

What impact could a constructive adult developmental theory approach have on leadership practice and professional learning experiences?

Additional Questions

How might leaders adopt a differentiated learning approach that takes in to account the developmental needs of adult learners?

How could professional learning and development be refocused to support personal and professional growth?

How might a differentiated professional learning approach that takes in to account the developmental needs of the adult learner, influence their learning experience?

Recruiting participants & obtaining informed consent

The Key Leader (Deputy Principal) was invited to join the research project and information was shared in regard to the scope of the research and data gathering requirements, timeline and commitment required of the Key Leader. An initial meeting provided the opportunity to clarify the research focus and answer any questions regarding the research project. The Information Sheet, which outlined the research question and process was shared at this point. Appendices A – E.

The principal and Key Leader met with all participants and went over the research brief and the researcher was available to answer any questions or queries. Consent forms were signed and returned to the researcher. All members of the Leaders of Learning group (middle leaders) agreed to be part of the research.

Research Design

This research project aimed to explore how new knowledge could impact on changing practice of a leader and in turn influence the practice of those being led. Action Research provided a framework that could support the experimental nature of this project, being cyclical in nature allowing for ongoing adaption and

refinement over time (Cohen et al., 2007; Efron, 2013; Forrest, 2007; Kemmis, 2009; McNiff, 1984, 2010).

Action research is grounded in the philosophy of social justice and social action with the focus being on bringing about transformational change in someone's thinking and action (Atkin & Wallace, 2012; Forrest, 2007; Kemmis, 2006). Kemmis (2010) argues that action research can make significant contribution to improving lives, "action research should not just nurture our understandings or our theories; it should help us actually live well, in our own lives and in the collective human history of which we are part of" (2010, p. 419).

This project intended to explore leadership practices that would support professional learning and growth of educators in these complex and unpredictable times, ultimately with the goal to improve outcomes for student learners. Providing experiences for adult learners that would respond more authentically to their needs as they engage in a school-wide change initiative, showing genuine interest and care for them personally and professionally.

To elaborate further, the goal of action research is not just to change one's practice, as Kemmis (2006, 2009, 2010) conveys, it is about changing the situation in which one practices as well as their understanding, resulting in transformational change. Furthermore, Forrest (2007) argues that action research is not only about action but it must engage researchers and participants in exploring the links between what knowledge they hold (epistemological) and the realities of what exists (ontological) in shaping research and the related practices.

The action research model combines theory and practice, involving a cycle of inquiry that is intentional, systemic and collaborative in its implementation and collection of evidence (Avison, Lau, Myers & Nielsen, 1999; Cohen et al., 2007; Efron, 2013; McNiff, 1984, 2010). This research design provided the scope for me to work alongside the deputy principal (Key Leader) as she worked with the team

of Leaders of Learning planning and implementing their school-wide change initiative. We were active partners, exploring adult developmental theory within an authentic real life setting, trialing, reflecting and co-constructing the learning. Action research supported the developmental nature of this work, engaged participants in reflective feedback and modeled a cycle of inquiry.

A key element within the action research cycle is self-reflection, the ability to analyse your actions, beliefs, assumptions and think critically about ones practice and future possibilities (Cohen et al., 2007; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003). This type of self reflection required is described by Atkins and Wallace (2012) as reflexivity, requiring the researcher to probe deeply and “discussions of the issues it raises is one of the ways in which the integrity and reliability of the research can be demonstrated” (2012, p. 127). Reflexivity plays a vital role in knowledge creation (epistemology) as it requires the researcher to ensure all participants’ experiences and reflections are considered and not clouded by the researcher own espoused theories (Cohen et al., 2007).

As eluded by Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin, & Lowden (2011). et al., (2011), action research can provide a powerful model in which to bring about sustainable and effective change within the educational context. It is through this model of inquiry that authentic and valuable insights can be gained as researcher practitioners experiment, explore new possibilities and build on current practice. With the ultimate aim, to improve outcomes for all learners (Avison et al., 1999; Menter, et al., 2011).

Unlike the traditional model of research whereby research is done on participants, this approach is in partnership with those being researched. This project focused on engaging in a collaborative inquiry with the researcher and leader, in partnership co-constructing the next steps. As defined by Atkins and Wallace (2012) “the action is the research tool and the research is on the action” (2012, p. 133). There are cyclical phases to the research design of; plan, act and observe, and reflect.

Research Process

This was an action research project that spanned a five-month period in the school, engaging the Key Leader and I in an ongoing cycle of plan, act and observe, and reflect. The figure below, illustrates the three key phases within the research timeframe, with each phase informing the next steps.

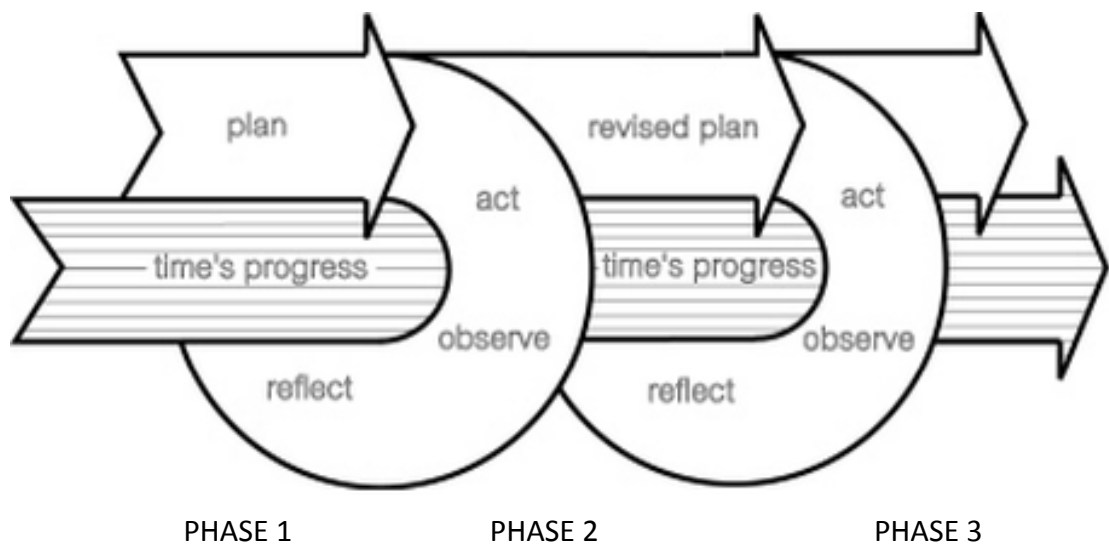


Figure 2: Action Research Cycle, Carr & Kemmis (1986)
(Source: <http://www.professionallearningteams.com/key-related-ideas.html>)

Phase One:

At the commencement of this phase I sent the Key Leader (Deputy Principal) a selection of articles and reflective questions based on complexity and adult developmental theory. I believed the articles and accompanying reflective questions would provide a baseline from which to begin our exploration into adult developmental theory and leading change, by generating questions of curiosity and possibility.

The initial data was gathered through semi-structured interviews. These were conducted with the Key Leader, followed by two, small group semi-structured

interviews with the middle leaders (Leaders of Learning). The interviews focused on exploring the perceptions and understanding of participants in relation to; adults as learners, leadership practices, complexity, and implementing change. A team meeting was also observed and video-recorded digitally.

During this phase I met face to face with the Key Leader on five occasions, met via Skype and communicated through Google Docs and email. Guided by the data and the ongoing meetings with the Key Leader, we identified and co-constructed relevant learning and reflection activities for the Key Leader and middle leaders. It was through a reflective brainstorming process that the next steps were developed, including activities to be implemented during team meetings and strategies for the Key Leader to explore relating to her own leadership practice.

Phase Two:

As action research is a cyclical process the phases merge and are shaped by the actions and subsequent reflection of what has been before.

Again, I met face to face with the Key Leader on five occasions and conducted one Skype meeting. This phase was marked by the second cycle of the data gathering through a semi-structured interview with the Key Leader and a video-recorded observation of a team meeting. I attended a Teacher Only day and one Tuesday morning professional learning workshop.

The evidence gathered through the semi-structured interview with the Key Leader and team observation assisted in guiding our next actions. These again were co-constructed and further planning took place of the possible next steps. I worked in collaboration with her through the action research process, focusing on her leadership role with the team and exploring knowledge around adult developmental theory.

Phase Three:

This marked the final phase of the action research cycle. The third team meeting was video-recorded and the semi-structured interviews were conducted again with the Key Leader and middle leaders.

This phase engaged the participants to reflect retrospectively on their practice and on what changes may have resulted. They also considered and discussed implications for the future.

Action Cycle	Phase One	Phase Two	Phase Three
Plan	Initial data gathered Planning & sharing: Developmental theory & stages Complexity	Mid point data gathered Planning & sharing: Consultation Developmental stages & questioning	End point data gathered Consultation
Act & Observe	Team meetings Professional Learning Series Self Reflection & Team feedback	Team meetings Teacher Only day Self Reflection & Team feedback	Team Meetings Self Reflection & Team feedback
Review	Self reflection Feedback	Self reflection Feedback	Self reflection Feedback

Figure 3: Brief summary of actions within each phase

Action research provides scope for exploration into contemporary educational issues and practices by its very nature of being conducted in real life situations alongside practitioners as they engage in their everyday work (Kemmis, 2006). This research project was exploring adult developmental theory and what impact this theory could have on leadership practices and subsequently the professional growth of the leader and those being led. This required elements of risk taking by the leader and required her to challenge some of her own leadership beliefs and practices. It also created opportunity to explore multiple perspectives relating to professional learning and leading change in the school.

Finally, it is hoped that this project will generate new knowledge that will inform leadership practices for the future. As McNiff (2007) argues action research should go beyond providing professional development aimed to improve practice, it should also be "...offering explanations for how and why the practice has improved, how the validity of any knowledge claims is demonstrated, and how the potential significance of the research for future practice and theory can be communicated" (2007, p. 223).

Data Gathering Methods

This section outlines the methods used to illicit relevant and rich qualitative evidence relevant to the research design. This includes: semi-structured interviews, observations, reflective journaling and reflective continuums.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interview method was chosen for this research project as it provided an excellent format to gain insights in to the research participants understanding and experience of adult developmental theory within their leadership and schooling context. It has the potential elicit valuable qualitative data when well planned and conducted and is seen as a valid data-gathering tool in action research.

Through the semi-structured interview the researcher is able to explore the interviewees understandings of the topic and due to the semi-structured nature, is not bound by a set script. This allows the researcher to probe more deeply, exploring different possibilities in a flexible and responsive manner. Through conversation the researcher is able to gain more insight into interviewee's attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and perceptions around the topic being studied (Menter et al.,2011).

Robinson and Lai (2006) concur that there is a degree of skill required in designing interview questions and conducting the interview. With semi-structured interviews the researcher needs to be able to respond to interviewees

with appropriate exploratory questions that can unravel the espoused theories versus what one actually does (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Robinson & Lai 2006). Also as mentioned by Menter et al., (2011) researchers need to be able to follow the conversation and probe appropriately rather than ignore potentially rich opportunities to gain more understanding into real life experiences of participants.

As semi-structured interviews are less formal than structured interviews, the success in generating data relies not only on asking the right questions but also creating the environment that supports and encourages positive and inclusive social interaction.

Building trust and credibility are crucial for this process; the researcher needs to ensure they reinforce the purpose of the research and ethical parameters. It is also important to establish a rapport, showing a genuine interest in the subject and participants, and modeling active listening skills throughout the process to ensure the emergence of purposeful conversation.

The semi-structured interview method was used as one of the data gathering tools for this research project as it provided scope to explore current understandings and practice and provide dialogic space to gain insights. The data gathered from the initial interviews informed and guided the question design for the semi-structured interviews that would be conducted later on during the research project (Menter et al., 2011).

The Key Leader was interviewed three times during the research timeframe, beginning, mid and endpoint. As the Key Leader was the main research subject for this small project I believed it was important to capture these narratives as the action research project progressed.

The team members were interviewed at the start and endpoint of the project in two groups. These groups had been working together for some time on this project and as stated by Cohen et al., (2007) when such groups exist there is

potential for rich and valuable discussion to take place that can elicit diverse responses through this interview process. There was also practical reasons for this to take place, as they were a team of ten people, it was more manageable to interview them in two groups of five rather than one whole group or individually (Denscombe, 2010).

Potential issues that need to be considered when interviewing as a group, they include; domination by one or two participants, some participants not engaging, potential conflict between participants or myself, talkative individuals. Being aware, prepared and vigilant as a researcher was crucial, gauging people's body language, tone of voice and engagement all assisted in ensuring the interviews created the dialogic spaces and generated rich and productive conversations.

It is important to note that there are potential limitations to semi-structured interviews as a method of gathering qualitative data. Establishing trust and rapport with interviewees is important as participants may be sharing sensitive information; therefore researchers need to ensure questions are appropriate, that participants have the right to refuse to respond if they so wish. At all times the researcher must be sensitive and respectful in their interactions with participants and avoid the temptation to give advice or question in ways that influence responses (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Atkins and Wallace (2012) identify power relationships as a potential limitation so it was important that participants were put at ease and that the environment was conducive to interviewing. It was also for the reason of potentially perceived power relationships that I chose to conduct this research in a school other than the one I hold Deputy Principal position in.

All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. I chose to record as I felt it was less intrusive than video recording and more accurate than taking notes of participants responses. Cohen et al., (2007) argues that by not

visually recording you can miss the non-verbal cues such facial expressions and body language. As I was focusing on what was being said, perspective taking and meaning making I was interested more in what was said rather than how the messages were being delivered.

Observations

Observations conducted in the field provide a unique opportunity for researchers to capture 'in the moment' real life social interactions of participants as they go about their normal work. The data illustrates what is actually happening in that moment and provides first hand authentic evidence gathered in a natural setting (Cohen et al., 2007; Denscombe, 2010; Menter et al., 2011).

Gathering data from a visual perspective can potentially provide a holistic view of the participants functioning as a team and the interplay of the relationships. The non-verbal and verbal cues that are portrayed within the relationships, the type of dialogic conversations that exist, the ways in which meaning is made, and the values that are held by the group and individuals and the level and depth of participation of individuals within the group (Denscombe, 2010; Menter et al., 2011; Robinson & Lai, 2006).

The decision to use observational method to gather data was seen as relevant to the research foci in that it could capture the interactions that took place between the participants in this study as they engaged in their team planning meetings with the Key Leader. Exploring how the leader over time engaged the team, questioned, viewed and responded to perspectives, modeled, set challenges and created tone were all key elements of the research foci that could be captured visually.

There are several ways in which a researcher can observe. I elected participation as an observer whereby the teams were aware of my presence; I did not contribute or play any part in the meetings purely sat as an observer alongside the team (Denscombe, 2010). The rationale behind this was that I was

shadowing the Key Leader in this context over a period of time and observing how events evolved and changed over time (Cohen et al., 2007).

These meetings were captured digitally as it allowed me as a participant to be 'present' in the meeting but not distracted by note taking. The ability to replay these observations allowed me to more accurately observe the dynamics, conversations and structures that exist. By video recording these meetings it ensured that the data was more accurate than taking field notes and also address some potential biasing that may influence the field notes recorded by the researcher (Denscombe 2010). The video recordings took place after the initial semi-structured interviews on three different occasions and care was taken to ensure the small digital device was unobtrusive, causing no disruption.

This observation tool complimented the semi-structured interviews (Menter et al., 2011) and provided me with feedback on the action research process, emerging ideas and issues. I was able to triangulate the data, using the semi-structured interviews completed over the research period with the Key Leader and team members, reflective journaling and these observations (Menter et al., 2011).

There are of course potential limitations and they include sensitive issues arising during observation, all measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and appropriate use of the recordings through the ethics approval process and informed consent process. Potential equipment failure can pose as a limitation so to ensure this did not occur I had two back up devices I could use. My presence may influence or distort the data being gathered, I was mindful of the importance to consistently clarify my role and ethics protocol and ensure I had established a rapport with each participant.

Reflective Journaling

Reflective journaling is a method of data collection that allows the researcher and participants to record reflections during the research process. This includes

thoughts, challenges, inspirations, ideas, questions, next steps and can provide the opportunity to move those taken for granted assumptions inside of us to the outside for greater scrutiny (Drago-Severson, 2012).

Journaling can be either structured with pre-determined questions and categories that guide the reflective process or unstructured, free writing that captures reflections in the moment (Menter et al., 2011; Robinson and Lai, 2006). For the purpose of this project reflections were unstructured but were guided by open-ended prompts that would provide me with data that could inform the action research process and provide data for analysis.

The reflective process is a key element of action research, as stated by Cohen et al., (2007) "action research develops through the self-reflective spiral.." (2007, p. 300). Therefore, it seems purposeful that reflective journaling be part of the data gathering process. A reflective journal was completed throughout the research project, and reflections were captured from the Key Leader at intervals during the project.

The use of this reflective journaling goes beyond examining and reflecting on how the researcher has impacted on the research to the depth of reflexivity. Importantly to need to the researcher to consider how her past experiences, own values and beliefs, assumptions and perspectives can impact on the research (Atkins and Wallace, 2012). Used in conjunction with other data collection methods it can provide transparency and increase validity by exposing any potential bias (Cohen et al., 2007).

Reflective Continuums

Continuums were developed for a dual purpose. Firstly as a reflection tool aimed to assist participants in the semi-structured interview process (Robinson & Lai, 2006). Secondly, to generate data that could visually represent any shifts in

participant's perceptions relating to their knowledge and practice. The Key Leader completed the continuums at phase two and three of the research project and the middle leaders completed at phase three.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is about how the researcher can make sense of the data. Marshall and Rossman (2011) define the data analysis phase as "the process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to a mass of collected data is messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative and fascinating" (2011, p. 207). The analysis requires a transparent and systematic approach that will illuminate for the researcher valid answers to their research question, creating new perspectives (Robison & Lai, 2006; Winter 1998).

By the nature of action research all actions are evidence based and interpretation of this evidence must be reasonable and grounded, so next steps must be based on reflections of what has happened and how this influences the next actions (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Avison et al., 1999). This highlights the importance of ongoing and rigorous analysis and reflection throughout the research project by the researcher.

Analytical strategies were employed to examine the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). To begin with the data was prepared and organized for analysis. There was a great deal of data generated from the semi-structured interviews, video recordings of team meetings, reflective journal and field notes. All seven semi-structured interviews were transcribed in full and formatted to allow annotation, 'analytical memos' and easy access to excerpts (Menter et al., 2011). The video recordings were analysed using an unstructured approach, reflecting the purpose of the observations as an exploration in to what was happening (Descombe, 2010; Menter et al., 2011).

As outlined by Marshall & Rossman, (2011) immersion in the data is an important part of the initial analysis; the researcher needs to become very

familiar with the data to enable greater depth in the analysis. The transcripts were read and re read, line-by-line and video recording viewed several times. Through this process I was able to begin to see re occurring themes and concepts emerging from the data. The literature review also provided a guide on the potential themes and concepts on which to guide the analysis (Cohen et al., 2007; Menter et al., 2011).

It is also important, as mentioned by Menter et al., (2011) that a critical perspective is taken whilst reading the data, looking behind the words. These insights and ideas were recorded on the transcripts and provided further guidance in the analysis process. In addition, Cohen et al., (2007) argues that these reflections can legitimately serve as a secondary data source if “reflexivity is part of the data analysis” (2007, p. 469).

A thematic approach, an approach that draws on grounded theory was used in the analysis of the data. Colour codes were developed for the complete data set and used to draw out key phrases, words, behaviours and researcher insights (Menter et al., 2011). From here the emergence of patterns, clusters of ideas were identified and grouped in to broader themes (Denscombe 2010; Marshall & Rossman 2011; Menter, et al., 2011). These themes assisted in generating a set of analytical questions that allowed for further analysis (Drago-Severson, 2013). Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggested the use of analytical memos during the data analysis process. These memos serve the purpose of recording thoughts and ideas as the data was coming together, assisting in the creation of the analytical questions as used by Drago-Severson (2013) in her research.

Further analysis involved the identification of major and minor themes and the interrelatedness of these themes, the commonalities and differences. Interpretation of the findings were summarised under each theme, with a clear account of how research bias was avoided. These summaries formed the basis for the final report.

Issues of trustworthiness

Qualitative researchers as described by Atkins & Wallace (2012) “base our argument on ‘weight of evidence’ rather than conclusive proof or incontrovertible evidence” (2012, p. 210). This qualitative evidence tends to be generated through the interpretative process, whereby a researcher brings her personal perspectives, background, experiences, bias and beliefs (Cohen, et al., 2007). Therefore issues of trustworthiness need to be addressed.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, social researchers need to be mindful of potential bias in the generation and interpretation of their findings. Robinson and Lai (2006) argue that researchers need to be aware of the ladder of inference, a tool developed initially by Argyris (1990) (as cited in Senge et al., p.68). This tool enables the researcher to address potential fallibility by identifying potential bias, hence ensuring records are accurate and clear, use triangulation and seek feedback on the draft conclusions (Robinson & Lai, 2006). This tool informed and guided this research project.

One way to help ensure the data analysis is valid and credible is for the researcher to triangulate their data (Cohen et al., 2007; Denscombe 2010, Robinson & Lai, 2006). This process allows the researcher to see more than one perspective or view of their data, improving accuracy and providing a bigger picture view (Denscombe 2010). Triangulation involves the use of more than one piece of data to highlight research findings, it provides a way to check validity by comparing other data generated through different methods, providing different view points for the researcher (Cohen et al., 2007; Denscombe 2010, Robinson & Lai, 2006).

Ethical Considerations

The process of gaining ethical approval was sought prior to the commencement of this research project. This was granted through the University of Waikato, Faculty of Education Ethics Committee.

Outlined in the following section is a summary of the key ethical considerations for this research project. Other considerations, not outlined here included: potential conflict of interests, access to participants, procedure for resolution of disputes and cultural and social considerations

Informed consent

It is commonly understood in Human Research Ethics applications that informed consent to participate must be gained from all participants involved in the research work. This informed consent must provide a comprehensive outline of the aims, purpose of research project, how the information will be gathered and used. This consent process must also be responsive to the potential deviations that may occur during the research timeframe (Robinson & Lai 2006; Menter et al., 2011; Snook, 2003).

Prior to the research project commencing all invited participants, as well as the Principal were provided with an information sheet, which outlined the nature, purpose and use of the research. In Appendix A is the Information Sheet for the Key Leader and in Appendix B is the Information Sheet for Team Members . All those involved were entitled to ask questions and raise concerns at any stage during the research and all participants had the right to decline or withdraw from the research.

In Appendix D is the Letter of Consent for Team Members and Appendix E is the Letter of Consent for the Key Leader. All participants in the research were required to sign consent forms. This would indicate that they had read and understood the information provided and that they agreed to participant in the research. All participants were given a photocopy of their signed consent form and the information sheet.

Anonymity/ Confidentiality

All researchers are ethically bound to protect the anonymity of participants and must ensure that in both gathering and storing of data confidentiality is paramount and at the forefront of researchers practice (Snook, 2003; Cohen et al., 2007).

Every effort was made to ensure anonymity would be kept. However, this can not be absolutely guaranteed. All data that was generated from this research was treated as confidential and only be accessible to researcher and supervisor. The Key Leader had access to their transcripts for reviewing and amending.

Every effort was made to provide and maintain anonymity by using pseudonyms for the participants and description of the school involved was broad, only identifying the school type i.e., co-educational secondary school and general location. All details that identified participants such as names, addresses and the school's name were stored in a locked cabinet at the researchers home office.

The pseudonym of Mary is used to represent the Key Leader and the 'middle leader' title is used to represent the Leaders of Learning.

Potential harm to participants

Potential harm could include:

- Misunderstanding of the role of the researcher
- Participants feeling their character or personalities are being judged
- Participants feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed because of comments made during the team meetings or semi-structured interviews.

In order to reduce the potential harm as summarized above all participants were given the research information sheet. Prior to the commencement of the project the researcher went over their role as a researcher within the group and purpose of the research, answering any questions that arose from the participants. The ethical conduct of the researcher will also be outlined regarding participants

right to withdraw, confidentiality and the how the data would be gathered, stored and used. All participants completed a formal written consent form.

As this research explores adult developmental theory there was the potential that participants felt they were being evaluated against a set of developmental criteria. In order to mitigate any potential harm, all data was kept confidential, team members did not receive any evaluation of their developmental stage as observed by the researcher. The developmental stages of individual team members were only be discussed with the Key Leader for the purposes of planning and delivering relevant learning experiences and coaching support to the team members. This was strictly confidential between the Key Leader and researcher. No information gathered from this research was used for the Performance Management/Appraisal purposes.

All teachers are required to engage in professional learning experiences and reflective practice in New Zealand secondary schools and participants in this project were not involved in any processes that were markedly outside of this acceptable practice.

The researcher observed team meetings and the conversation were recorded. During these meetings there was the potential risk that comments may be made regarding other members of the school community, there may be potential conflicts within the group or issues raised beyond the scope of this research. In order to protect all participants from potential harm all data was treated as confidential, transcripts and written notes were securely locked away. No discussions took place between the researcher and participants that was not directly linked to the research purpose and intent.

This research project did not involve any deception and the researcher endeavored to ensure that harm was minimized or eliminated during all stages of the research project. Every effort was made to protect the anonymity, confidentiality and privacy of the participants.

Participants' right to decline to participate and right to withdraw/withdraw data

Participants had the right to decline to take part in this research project. Once the research project had begun and participants had agreed to participate they were still entitled to withdraw or withdraw any information. Participants were reminded of this right at the commencement of the research and transcript confirmation phase. Once the Key Leader had confirmed their transcripts it was no longer possible for them to withdraw these transcripts.

If participants chose to withdraw from the project, they were required to notify the researcher of their withdrawal either formally in writing or verbally. No participants withdrew from the research project.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This action research project investigates the leadership work of a deputy principal as she progressed through a major school-wide change initiative, with a team of middle leaders in a secondary school. I explored what impact a constructive adult developmental theory approach might have on leadership practice and professional learning experiences for the deputy principal and potentially the team of middle leaders she was working with.

The pseudonym of Mary is used to represent the Key Leader and the 'middle leader' title is used to represent the Leaders of Learning within these following chapters.

Chapter Introduction

In order to guide and inform the action research process I needed to gain insight into what the Key Leader and team's existing knowledge, understanding and practice was regarding leading school-wide change and what this meant in relation to adult learning. As outlined in the methodology the initial data was gathered through conducting semi-structured interviews with the Key Leader and middle leaders and observing a team meeting.

These findings are presented in three phases that reflect the action research process in chronological order. Each of the three phases is analysed and discussed separately and within each phase are three sub-themes. These themes reflect the key ideas that emerged over the research process, informed by the literature review and the research experience. This initial data guided and informed the steps of the action research project and these subsequent actions are outlined in these findings with my justification for these actions.

These three themes of complexity, learning community and leadership practices are interconnected; each playing a pivotal role in creating new ways of leading that are more responsive to the complexity of education today.

Through this action research process I was aiming to identify what new ways of thinking, engaging and acting could support this leader in strengthening the growth and transformation of her colleagues and importantly herself. How could professional learning and development be refocused to support personal and professional growth?

Phase One

Phase one of this research project commenced as the school was into their second year of preparation for the implementation of school-wide curriculum initiative that had a planned launch date of February 2016.

During 2014, the team began the initial scoping and planning, some had visited other schools that had implemented similar school-wide curriculum change, and some had explored relevant research and exemplars. This research project entered the school at the time the team was beginning to develop and facilitate school-wide professional learning related to this change initiative.

Complexity in Education

To begin with I wanted to explore the participants understanding of complexity within the context of their school and the change initiative they were engaged in. I wanted to determine whether they felt the change initiative was complicated or complex. As my research focused on the role adult developmental theory played within the complex domain, I believed this was an important entry point.

In order to facilitate this I needed to provide an explanation of what the difference was between the complex and complicated domain. The renowned researcher in the area of complexity and leading Snowden (2007) defines these domains in the following way: within the complicated domain the relationship between cause and effect can be discovered with a possibility of more than one answer, decisions are made based on fact and there is an understanding of known unknowns. Whereas complexity is defined by its unpredictability, it requires greater experimentation and innovation as there is no one right answer

and requires an approach to leading that, seeks to explore and reflect on emerging patterns (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003; Snowden, 2002; Snowden & Boone, 2007).

All participants defined this project as complex. They felt that what they were embarking on was uncharted ground, requiring them to look at new ways to deliver the curriculum and challenging the status quo about how they worked. There was uncertainty about what the future held and this posed a big challenge for a majority of the middle leaders. For those middle leaders that were comfortable in this uncertain place believed that you could not prepare to deal with uncertainty in any case.

The middle leaders also expressed some concerns about the staff and how they were dealing with the complexity and uncertainty of the project's outcomes. One middle leader articulated staff concerns of the uncertainty in this way:

"There are an awful lot of worried people out there because of the unknown".

Another stated:

"There is still a whole lot of concern about how we do this when we are not yet doing it".

The uncertainty of the project's success was one of the concerns expressed by Mary, fearing a sense of failure if it did not work. She also believed that if this project did not succeed the responsibility would have to be taken by the senior leadership team. Mary stated that:

"At the end of the day, if this fails, this is because we haven't done what we needed to do to put it in place, or we weren't ready for it as a school, and that comes back to us too".

However, she did go on to mention that the risk was worth it in relation to student success.

Mary also expressed how complex this work was in regard to the flood of ideas and at times it felt like she was unpicking a web, and what added to this complexity was that many of these ideas did not fit together and she felt she had to make decisions in order to keep the momentum of the project going.

Learning community

A learning community is one that authentically models learning and growth with an unrelenting commitment to challenge the status quo, with the courage to explore new possibilities.

The school was embarking on a complex change initiative that required teachers to embrace new ways of thinking and doing, so it was important to explore how Mary and the team of middle leaders viewed adult learning and how they were supporting the learning of their colleagues and themselves.

Both Mary and the middle leaders shared the belief that not all teachers saw themselves as learners and that some staff were not prepared to learn and change. Several of the middle leaders stated that adults were more resistant to learning and would at times prefer to be told what to do rather than self initiate learning experiences. Mary felt adults would make choices as to what they would learn stating:

“Very selective learners and probably from survival. If you are not an early implementer or you are someone who...there’s a lot of wait and see. And with adult learners you have to be prepared to keep going while the wait and see is there until you get enough people slowly coming on board, and this is what I believe kills most change things.”

Mary thought that much of the resistance to learning was the constant push for teachers to change, the amount of change they have experienced over time and the sense of being overwhelmed by these demands. She explained the staff response to change in this way:

“They are being asked to question all the time why they do things the way they do, and how they do things, and can they change? And we keep saying change is hard, but when you actually look in schools, sometimes we are asking teachers to make 3-4 major changes at any one time, and so they feel, “Well, we cant. I don't know if I can do that many changes. And so I will just sift through and see which one's are the most important, and which one are they actually going to judge me on””.

The middle leaders were responsible for the planning and delivery of the professional learning related to this change initiative. They felt they were being responsive to the diversity of the staff by offering a range of professional learning experiences that related to staff knowledge and expertise. They collectively felt that the professional learning was going well, acknowledging that sometimes it didn't go to plan but felt confident about how this was addressed.

The middle leaders all agreed that the staff were very diverse, how they defined the diversity was based mainly on the behavior of staff, how they were responding to the change initiative and related outcomes. They also defined diversity in relation to the range of knowledge and skills that staff possessed.

These are two quotes from middle leaders about the diversity:

“Some of it [staff participation] looks like lots of enthusiasm, lots of excitement, lots of anticipation. Some of it looks like backs up to a wall”.

“Its difficult – it's that change thing, the letting go of that, what I know, and what's the point? Why do I need to change? What I do is good”.

When asked as a group how they were responding to diversity their responses reflected how they were dealing with staff and resistance to change. The views varied from supporting those that were struggling to ignoring and moving on. They felt that working with such diversity was a real leadership challenge now and could be in the future and they were unsure how this could be addressed. One middle leader felt that future professional learning needed to focus on those that wanted to move.

Mary also acknowledged the diversity of the staff, believing the middle leaders were not as diverse however. She defined this diversity in a similar way to the middle leaders and, included age and length of service. Mary explained how she responded to this diversity:

“Go slower..... It can be just as frustrating for the person who wants to move quickly, or is there quickly, as it is for the person that does not want to move at all. You can differentiate the learning for the individuals within a group and where they are going to, but the pace that the actual group is going can never quite suit everybody, and I think it's managing that frustration for some people and sense of discomfort for others”.

Collectively Mary and the team of middle leaders saw themselves as learners and they felt it was vital that they modeled this in all they did. However, Mary had conflicting views about the middle leaders and felt that not all of them saw themselves as learners. External pressure from other colleagues not to conform, and the fear of being ridiculed if they did, was seen as a reason for them not to engage actively in learning.

Time to reflect individually and collectively was explored with the middle leaders, as it is an important part of being a learner and in leading a change initiative. As a team they have not had dedicated reflection time, with only a couple stating

they take time for self reflection, one middle leader stating that it happened each evening.

The middle leaders felt that they were a learning community by providing support and guidance to one another and there was a commitment to explore new knowledge and understanding in a collaborative way. One middle leader explained how their learning community was supporting their own growth:

“I think that informal conversation has been really useful for me because I think in the beginning there was that holding on to what is yours and that fear that you are going to lose what’s yours. And having those conversation makes your realise, well actually we are all trying to help each other through that process, and it’s okay now. I think that we will support each other to achieve our own goals, if you know what I mean”.

In regards to having opportunities to participate in relevant professional learning as a team they stated that at the beginning of the change initiative there had been some professional learning but since then, there had not been. They did feel that it would be worthwhile to explore further learning related to this change initiative.

Leadership practices

When exploring the vision and purpose of this change initiative it was clear that the senior leadership team were instrumental in initiating this direction and setting the foundations. It was shared with the middle leaders and consultation ensued with this group, involving further shaping of the vision and initial planning for its implementation.

The middle leaders all understood the vision and could consistently articulate it, although one middle leader felt that it was not their vision, but rather one that had been imposed upon them. Although this was not a shared view, the team all

agreed that staff had had the opportunity to contribute initially but the planning so far involved only the middle leaders and senior leadership team.

Collectively the middle leaders all agreed that the opportunity to lead this school-wide change initiative provided an exciting challenge for them. It was evident that they felt supported by the senior leadership team resulting in a sense of empowerment and trust. One middle leader expressed that:

“They’ve (Senior Leadership Team) relinquished a lot of the power and control”.

In dealing with resistance to change, the views varied amongst the group of middle leaders. Some felt that the team needed to support those that were struggling with the change and to appreciate that some may be fearful. Others felt that they needed to keep moving and should not allow those struggling to slow them down and believed it was about people changing their attitudes.

Mary

In her role as a leader of this change initiative Mary expressed a very clear and genuine commitment to ensure that the middle leaders were given the autonomy as well as support to lead this change initiative. She appreciated the fact she couldn't lead alone and felt that collaboration was very important. Mary also felt that having these middle leaders take on a significant leadership role in the change initiative would assist in building a bridge between senior management and the teaching staff. She articulated in this way:

“They really are I think, now, offering a bridge between teachers and senior leadership where there is honest flow of dialogue of where the powerful differential is taken out.”

She felt that the middle leaders were beginning to develop some strong leadership practices, with some taking on more responsibility than others but

being supported by others to do so. Mary felt that they had developed a safe place to speak with honesty and openness and they were all prepared to listen and be open to the opinions of others. Building trust within the group was very important to her and she genuinely valued the input of others and strived to ensure people felt listened to. She made mention that often she would check in with members of the team individually to ensure they are feeling happy about the progress or express any concerns.

When reflecting on her own leadership practices she believed that at times she has been too forceful and needed to pull back. When feeling that progress was too slow, or the team had gone off track Mary felt she became dogmatic and at times forceful. She made this point on several occasions and explained she was trying very hard to step back and think before she spoke, it worried her that at times she may have hurt people. This comment illustrated some of these concerns:

“I’ve probably hurt people sometimes and had to have discussions, and realized that I haven’t listened hard enough to what they are saying and the reasons why they are saying it. And when you think about some of the conversations, and you have them once then you have them twice and then again, and maybe I’ve been pushing a little too hard”.

In leading this team Mary did think it was important to have very clear lines in the sand, boundaries that would assist in the decision making process. It was also evident that Mary had a very clear goal in mind and would provide answers and solutions when she felt it was required. She also clearly articulated to the team on several occasions her role in the team in supporting them and acting on their behalf if there were situations that needed resolving, or there were challenging conversations to be had.

Mary did express several concerns for the future implementation of this initiative. For example, not all staff had engaged in the Initiative to date and she

was unsure whether middle leaders had developed sufficient capacity to cope with the challenges ahead.

Middle Leaders

All members of middle leader team articulated that they had come to learn a great deal more about one another and the work they engaged in their subject areas. The group acknowledged that up until the formation of the team, approximately a year ago, they knew very little about each other's work and felt they were very much in their own curriculum silos. They now had a clearer understanding and appreciation of the diverse knowledge, experiences and opinions that each of them brought to the team.

Being involved in the change process meant they had developed a strong commitment towards one another and the work they were involved in. Several of the middle leaders expressed a real change in dynamic between them and that their relationships had strengthened over the time they had been working on this change initiative. All of the team felt that it was safe to challenge and be challenged, and that there was a greater willingness to take on board others' opinions and ideas.

Since the start of the initiative in 2014, they had been working together a great deal, brainstorming ideas and developing a shared view of what the change initiative outcomes could look like, but more recently the team had split. The split was a result of different structural requirements of the core subjects and option subjects. All of the middle leaders were comfortable with this and viewed it as a predictable outcome due to the different objectives for the two areas. One of the groups justified the split by collectively stating they were responsible for a larger part of the change that would subsequently result in greater change for their area of responsibility.

However, as an outcome of this split some middle leaders that felt that they were out of the loop and did not feel they had an overview of all that was happening as the change initiative progressed.

One member expressed it this way,

“The sad part is – I don't know if I speak for the others but I'm a little bit, feel as though I am missing out on a lot of the stuff going on. But it's a time thing; it's a real; time thing of everybody getting the time that they need to work on things”.

Collectively the middle leaders felt they all shared the leadership in moving the school forward through the changes. However, there was a clear indication from the interview and observing one of the team meetings, that some were taking a more prominent role in the planning and leading.

The middle leaders identified several leadership challenges at this point of the change initiative. This included a shared concern about what jurisdiction they held when it came to dealing with conflict amongst staff that related directly to this change initiative. Two of them felt that they still were not equipped to engage in difficult conversations with colleagues, both had mentioned that they hoped to attend a professional learning workshop on this topic.

When thinking about the future it was clear the middle leaders did not, at this stage, feel they had spent enough time building their collective capacity to deal with future challenges and risks.

Discussion

Through the gathering and analysis of this phase one evidence I was able to gain greater insight in to the change initiative progress to date and reflect on what could be the initial steps for this action research project.

When discussing the concept of complexity with both Mary and the middle leaders it was apparent early on that this terminology, although not new, meant different things. So I needed to define what complex and complicated looked like relevant to this research project before I continued. I was not surprised that the group had not explored this concept in any depth, nor the potential implications as leaders. They could articulate how they defined the change initiative as complex but it did not seem evident that they needed to approach this complex work in new ways or even consider how this might influence the way they lead the change initiative.

It was interesting to note that some of the leaders, including Mary, were trying to lead the change through the complicated domain; there were several references to their endeavors to identify all the unknowns, with a focus on attempting to mitigate them. The team were genuinely concerned about potential failure and I sense that this is the reason why they tried hard to identify all the potential pitfalls and have plans in place to address them.

In addition there were several comments made by Mary relating to a need to keep the team on track and bring them back, she appeared to feel constrained about the bottom line that had been mandated by the senior leadership team. Adding to this Mary appreciated all the great ideas that the middle leaders generated but felt they needed to fit together in some way, resulting in some frustration at times, as they were so divergent.

Attempting to pre-empt potential unknowns could stifle an opportunity to explore and experiment collaboratively, create new knowledge, encourage open discussion and take creative risks. This provided a great opportunity to explore in partnership with Mary some the ideas and practices around leading in complex times and engaging the middle leaders in some experimentation.

There was evidence within the middle leaders' team of some adaptive features in how they were leading and responding to the complexity of the change

initiative, for example one middle leader explained their willingness to go with the flow and adapt as the process unfolded. This highlights potential strengths of some of the leaders in dealing with the complexity and perhaps could be utilized at a later stage.

When reflecting on the learning community theme it appeared there were diverse views on what constituted an effective learning community, some felt they were a learning community, but this was not a view shared by all. Mary's feedback also conveyed this. Their justification for what constituted a learning community varied focusing mainly on working together and providing support. I wanted to investigate in more detail the idea of a learning community and how they viewed themselves as learners and those they worked with.

It was difficult to elicit from the middle leaders distinct examples of what learning meant to them and what they understood about how adults learn. There were some clear ideas about adult learners with a majority of the team believing that the reason colleagues did not engage in the professional learning was because they were resisting the change.

As they were responsible for leading the professional learning I believed it would be really worthwhile to explore with Mary the work around adult learning and constructive developmental theory, with the idea that this could be seen as a potential learning focus for the middle leaders if Mary believed it worthy of further exploration.

In addition I was interested in the responses to my question about learning diversity and how they were addressing diversity within their colleagues when delivering the professional learning experiences. I was surprised at the responses; they viewed diversity as a measure of their colleague's response and engagement to the change. So planning professional learning was geared to respond to the level of progress each person was making through the change initiative. I was expecting a different response, perhaps similar to how we would

describe the diversity of the learners in our classroom, such as the different past experiences a young person brings with them or the diversity of culture.

This further highlighted, in my opinion, the need to explore adult learning in order to avoid addressing some of the assumptions that were being made about their colleagues and learning. This is important as these middle leaders had the responsibility to lead the professional learning for the duration of the change initiative.

When considering how the change was being implemented across the school, it was exciting to see the ownership and engagement of the middle leaders. They clearly felt supported and empowered to drive the change, feeling an element of autonomy as they planned and implemented this work. I was interested to find out how they reflected and reviewed their progress as a team. It appeared from the feedback that little time had been spent on critical reflection. This provided some possibilities for the team in the future and I was eager to explore with Mary what opportunities might exist for individual and collective reflection on their progress to date. I thought this had the potential to provide some insight and guidance in next steps for the team at an individual and professional learning level, especially in the area of professional learning and how adults learn.

When reflecting on her own leadership practices Mary provided some very honest and insightful comments. I appreciated her openness to share the successes as well as some of the challenges she had had and continued to face through this change process. It was obvious she had a high level of trust within the team and had been deliberate in ensuring that a collaborative and open culture had been created and maintained. When observing the team in action it was evident that all members had a voice and there was an openness, and directness that enabled some productive debate to take place.

What I did find interesting was Mary's tendency to provide answers and solutions when problems were discussed within the team. In the interview she also stated that she was often very direct, having a clear goal in mind and would provide answers so that things could move on. She articulated early on that she had become frustrated at times about the slow pace of progress and she wished it would move faster. Mary also felt that at times, because her directness, she had failed to listen to what was really being said.

On reflection I believed this insight was worthy of further exploration and if directed towards adult learning what this could mean for her personal growth and the growth of the team. It may also provide some strategies and new thinking about how to create opportunity for more co-construction and shared learning, and in turn how this could support the individual growth of each team member.

The team appeared to work really well together, they had a shared vision, history together and had created a space that encouraged and supported collaboration and collective planning. However, more recently it appeared that the team of ten had split as a result of the two groups having a slightly different outcome within the change initiative. I saw this as a potential long-term risk as they progressed through the change initiative. It had been articulated by several middle leaders that they felt out of the loop and were unsure about what was happening. I was keen to discuss this with Mary and check in with her and insights she may have regarding how this could be dealt with, but only if it was a concern for her.

Next Steps

Prior to conducting the first semi-structured interview with Mary I had sent her three readings that focused in the area of adult developmental theory (Drago-Severson, 2008; Garvey Berger, 2012; Johnston, Coughlin & Garvey Berger, 2014).

I felt that these were significant readings, providing Mary with some relevant background on complexity, developmental theory and habits of mind. Accompanying these readings were a collection of reflective questions for Mary to consider.

Arising from the data were several key areas that I believed were worthy of further exploration and investigation collaboratively with Mary.

To begin with I thought it was important to discuss and share some ideas about the concept of complexity. It was apparent that the change initiative was complex and was creating some apprehension within the team as to how they could manage the unpredictability and uncertainty of the change initiative outcomes. At this point I shared some of the research with Mary from David Snowden (2002, 2003, 2007) on complexity theory and the Cynefin framework that he had developed.

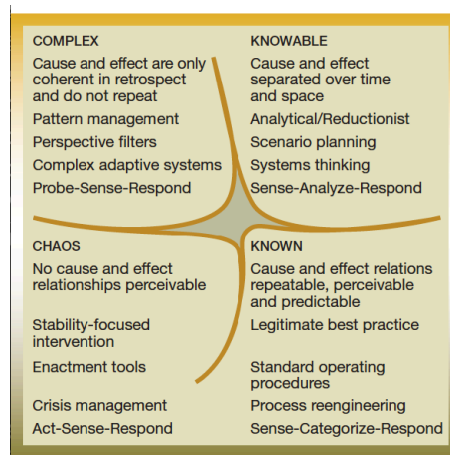


Figure 4: Cynefin Framework. From *The new dynamics of strategy: Sense-making in a complex and complicated world* by C.F. Kurtz and D.J. Snowden, 2003

Developing an understanding of complexity and potential ways to exist within the complex space I believed could enhance Mary's leadership practices through building a more adaptive leadership approach. In particular, feeling more comfortable about not having the answers or solutions to issues as they arose. In addition, by being more adaptive in how she led, I thought she might feel less apprehensive about failure and encourage more experimentation within the

team. The focus on strengthening the adaptive features of leading formed one of the key elements of this action research project.

Exploring adult developmental theory formed the next stage of this action research. I wanted to explore alongside Mary some of the research around adult developmental theory and implications for leaders leading change. I felt from the evidence to date that there was a valuable opportunity to investigate some of existing assumptions the team had around adult learning, as well as how they could support the growth of their colleagues in new ways.

Through this deeper exploration of adult developmental theory it could possibly provide her with a deeper understanding of her team. This would include sharing some of the key strengths and blind spots of the different developmental stages with Mary, along with areas for growth and strategies around questioning that could elicit greater understanding.

I also wanted to explore a little further with Mary some of the research and current practice around creating conditions that support developmental growth in adults, with a particular focus on the research of Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2014).

Finally, I was eager to investigate further with Mary how she felt the team was progressing and whether she considered it worthwhile to engage in some critical reflection with the team about their progress to date. By providing the opportunity for some critical reflection I believed it would provide rich feedback and insight on the learning progress of the team and identify future possibilities. It could also provide the opportunity for her to gain deeper insight in to how each of the team created meaning and perspective through their responses.

These next steps, drawn from the reflective process, informed the planning and actions for phase two of this research project. These phases are not clearly

defined by a start and end-point, as it is a cyclical process where reflection, planning and action are ongoing.

Phase Two

During this phase the Key Leader and I met face to face and via Skype. These meetings provided an opportunity to reflect on the progress of the change initiative in relation to her leadership practices and the impact of her actions. The evidence gathered through the semi-structured interview with the Key Leader and team observation assisted in guiding our next actions. These again were co-constructed and further planning took place of the possible next steps.

This phase was marked by the second cycle of the data gathering through a semi-structured interview with the Key Leader and a video-recorded observation of a team meeting.

Complexity in Education

When reflecting on her current understanding of complexity Mary felt that her understanding had grown a great deal. She had come to realise that as she progressed through the change initiative the complexity grew along with an appreciation of what she didn't know. She felt that:

“I think I understood that it was complex but I didn’t understand how multilayered the complexity was going to get and how much more I was going to need to understand, to understand the complexity”.

In addition she also believed there had been a shift in her thinking about how she worked through the change process now that her understanding of complexity had grown. In reflection Mary felt that in the past she had tried to have clear steps, focusing on cause and effect, now it was about exploring one step and at time and discovering what possibilities unfold, adapting at each step.

Mary felt she had begun to develop some key skills in dealing with complexity these included listening more deeply to what was being said and being in tune with what was sitting underneath these conversations, and being more open to listening to the dissenting voices. She also felt it was important to slow down and as a leader to be confident in allowing the pace to slow, in the past she had been very focused on driving forward. She explained some of the changes this way;

“I think one of the skills is also to be able to use the dissenting voice positively to be able to move forward, and I think another one of the skills is the ability to slow down and to have to confidence to slow down and that’s ok to do so”.

There was also evidence in both the interview and team observation that Mary was being a great deal more explicit in talking about failure being okay and that through experiencing failure there was opportunity to learn. It was also clear that Mary had begun to feel more comfortable about not knowing the unknowns and more at ease about not providing the answer. She explained it this way:

“Like, I think before we started this I would have said, “yes lets put down what we think the problems could be”, now I am more comfortable with “I don't think we are going to know”, I think we could spend a lot of time planning for things that don't happen”.

When reflecting on the middle leaders and their understanding of complexity she did feel that they had made some shifts in their understanding but that there was still a long way to go. She felt there were several leaders that were at ease working in the complex domain, but that some of the middle leaders were struggling and still expected there to be clear-cut solutions to issues that arose.

In addition, Mary also felt that many of the middle leaders thought this initiative was just about system change and merely required the leaders to address the

related technical challenges such as timetables, staffing and assessment. However as the middle leaders became more immersed in the change initiative, it became apparent there were new demands on their leadership practices such as addressing staff resistant. Mary believed they were beginning to develop skills to deal more effectively with the complexity of the change, as Mary explains in the following quote:

“I don't think any of us really understood how complex things are for change..... I do think we have made movement on the understanding that how this is led and how inclusive we are, and listening, is going to make a big difference”.

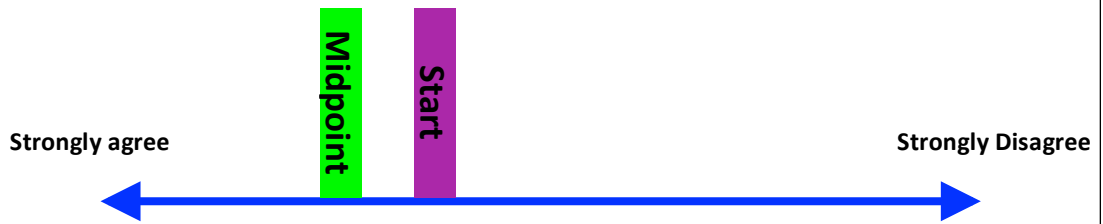
As Mary articulated clearly in her reflections, the importance of taking time to view the wider perspective of change was important for herself and the middle leaders. The ability to see systems and develop a system thinking mindset will be an ongoing challenge for the team.

As part of the semi-structured interview process, Mary was asked to reflect on her current knowledge and practice and that of the middle leaders, and indicate on the following continuum any shifts that may have occurred between phase one and phase two.

These continuums are also used through phase two and three, with Mary and the middle leaders. They were used as a reflection tool and catalyst for conversation and provide a clear illustration of the perceived shifts in knowledge and practice of the participants.

Theme: Complexity

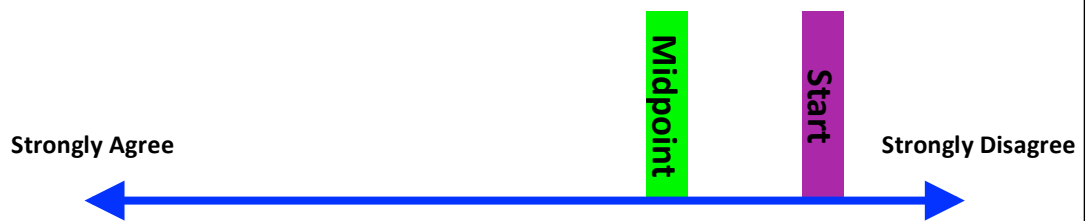
I understand complexity in education



I understand what skills are required to address complexity in education



The Leaders of Learning understand complexity in education.



The Leaders of Learning understand what skills are required to address complexity in education.

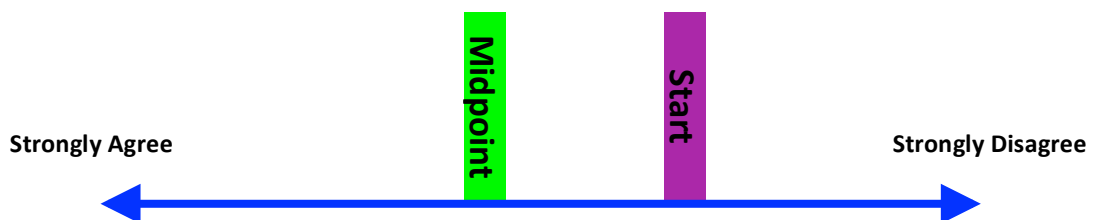


Figure 5: Mary's reflection on Complexity at phase 2

Learning community

On revisiting the theme of learning community, it was evident that Mary had made shifts in her own thinking around adult learning, also how this shift in thinking influenced her leadership practices within the learning community space.

When talking about how she perceived her colleagues, Mary believed she now viewed them in new ways, with a greater appreciation of their diverse needs and perspectives as learners. When reflecting on her own practice she felt that although she had an appreciation of how individuals respond to change, she had not considered how individuals make meaning of change in dissimilar ways. This is how she articulated the shift:

“So I think I had positioned people and I think what the readings and the discussions that we’ve had have kind of made me think about being more open to the fact that it’s okay to process information, to be a little kinder to my colleagues in the way I would be to students. As perhaps that adult learning is different but when you’re involved with them, you have to have the same empathy and compassion in wanting to move people as you do with students in your classroom. I need to be perhaps reminded of that”.

When questioned further clarified what she meant by the term ‘processing’:

“Well, how they make sense. So whether they go straight into that, “What this means to me therefore that’s what it means to everybody.” Or whether they are able to move in and out of seeing other people’s perspectives; whether they actually just need more time to process it, and how much do they need to know that they have been validated”.

Mary also talked of her shift in thinking about differentiation. She believed that in the past she viewed differentiation as a measure of how one responds to

change and the subsequent skill development and repertoire a colleague may possess. Her understanding had shifted to viewing differentiation in relation to individual developmental needs. She explained:

“I think I would have voiced that as important to differentiate, that it was important to offer different things, but I’m wondering if I was still seeing that as around skills rather than developmental for people”.

This new perspective about differentiation was highlighted further when Mary discussed her work with the middle leaders. When asked if she now viewed the team in different ways she stated:

“Yes, absolutely. I think I had some idea of some of the... you know, I had read some things but I don’t think I had pushed myself to really think about the group of people I was working with, and how I positioned them was not, “Oh maybe they are like this and that’s the reason why, and that’s okay.” I think..... I think the leaders of learning need to think about it and look at their learners in a different way too”.

Mary had spent time introducing some initial ideas around adult developmental theory, focusing on how individuals make meaning in many different ways. Mary was keen for the middle leaders to start considering how they were delivering professional learning experiences across the school in light of this new learning. She felt it would be important to explore these ideas in more depth with the middle leaders by providing targeted professional learning experiences for them. She expressed a concern that the team spent little time on their own professional growth with more focus being on planning professional learning for others. There was strong evidence from Mary that she was committed to increasing the knowledge and understanding of the team around adult developmental theory in order to support the professional growth across the school.

“I think we need to look at those leaders of learning meetings as some of the time being about them understanding adult development theory, about talking about that, and then them talking about how that impacts on what they are offering. But I think I’m going to have to spend time just introducing adult development theory before we start talking about, What does that mean, for the way that you do it”.

When discussing the professional learning approach in school Mary shared her views on some of the existing tension, she expressed it as *“a balancing act”*. She believed that many staff when engaging in professional learning were looking for strategies they could take away and use, rather than developing a deeper understanding of the learning process that sits underneath the strategy, how we make meaning of the learning to bring about transformational change in teaching practice. Mary explained it as follows:

And how do you balance that, especially since one of the things is that for some people they struggle, um... “I just want something to take away.” “I just want something to use,” and I think it’s about having the confidence to say, “Look, actually the research says that having something to take away isn’t going to help you at all. What we need to discuss is why or how we can support you to move forward”, and offering different ways to do that. And I think this bit, I’m hoping, will become more and more what I discuss with the leaders of learning so that it transfers into a different approach for staff as they are leading their learners”.

When reflecting on Mary’s own learning around adult developmental theory and leading change she expressed that although she had been exposed to some of the theory previously, it had not influenced her practice. It was only through this research project that she had begun to consider in more depth how a developmental approach to adult learning could positively impact on the growth of herself and others. She explained it as follows:

"I think I had some idea of some of the theory, you know, I had read some things but I don't think I had pushed myself to really think about the group of people I was working with, and how I positioned them was not, "Oh maybe they are like this and that's the reason why and that's okay"".

Mary went on to say:

"I've always valued growth and learning, developmental growth as a leader. I think probably I saw learning again as around stuff, learning stuff, and I think developing my own ability to see and hear different perspectives and to understand how I make sense, I can understand that that's having an impact on how I treat other people."

During the semi-structured interview Mary mentioned on three separate occasions the importance of having the mentoring support from someone external to the school. She felt that having the opportunity to explore new learning and be exposed to other viewpoints created a shift in her own leadership practice and had contributed to her personal growth. She reflected on the experience in this way:

"I think what it has outlined for me is that education needs to invest more in allowing people to have mentors outside of their organisation. You don't see things yourself. When you are asked to see them, when you are asked to think differently you have a lot more aha moments and you are able to move forward more quickly than when you are trying to work through it in it."

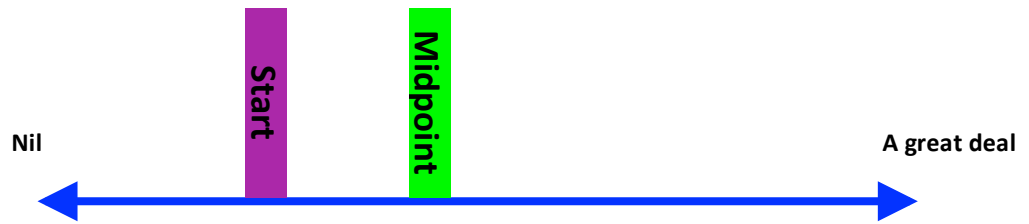
Mary believed it had created an opportunity to see inside the team in new ways, and give her the confidence to consider different ways of leading the change initiative and responding to the team. This is how Mary described it:

“So, unless you are being pushed yourself by someone, I don’t know that you are as good at pushing the group, especially when you have been in an organization for a while. Because you become... you look at people and what they are saying as sort of what they do, until you’re pushed to think, why are they doing that? What is the way they are processing what’s happening? And how are you reacting to that? And are you disregarding what’s being said because of the way you position?”

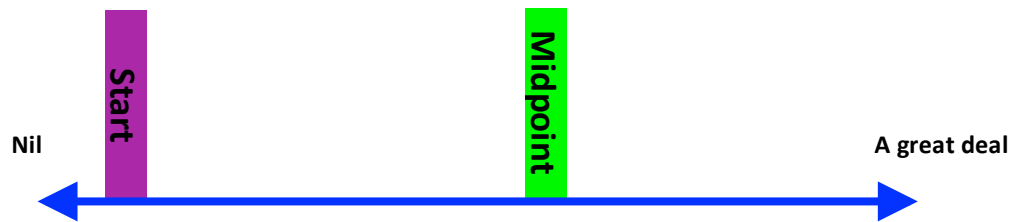
This highlighted for Mary, the importance of being a critical practitioner and taking time to consider her own actions and perceptions. She showed a genuine commitment to being open to learning and engaging in conversations that pushed her to the edge of her own understanding. She was also clearly determined to pay closer attention to how and what she listened to.

Theme: Adult as Learners

What is your understanding of adult developmental theory?



What impact has the theory of adult development had on your practice?



How important do you consider taking a developmental approach to professional learning?.



Do you think about the learning diversity of your colleagues when planning and leading professional learning?.



Figure 6: Mary's reflection on Adults as Learners at phase 2

Leadership Practices

Mary.

When exploring her leadership practices as this project evolved, Mary spoke of a changing focus in relation to building the capacity of her middle leader team. She expressed a commitment to plan targeted professional learning opportunities that focused on adult learning, expressing a desire to support the team in understanding colleagues in new ways, and was eager to explore how this could be done. Mary stated:

*“Well, if I’m thinking about it and it’s changing how I’m thinking about...”
I think the leaders of learning need to think about it and look at their learners in a different way too..... Well, how am I going to continue to grow these people?” And you know, the question you asked me, really I didn’t have a lot of idea. I think where I’m going... they need to understand the people they are working with if we want to continue this change. And we need to not get too bogged down on learning around the change. We need to keep pushing the learning around how we keep the change going. And I think that’s quite a big shift. And I think that is about understanding adults”.*

Further insights shared by Mary illustrated her belief that she needed to be more deliberate in her approach to growing the team’s leadership capabilities and take a more adaptive approach to the way she led. She felt that she no longer needed to be the one to provide the solutions or answers, shifting her focus from ‘managing’ the change process to adopting leadership practices that were more adaptive. She explains below.

“That my job was to fix things and keep everybody working together, so that we could move forward. I feel a little bit more now like, okay, we need to talk about these ideas but I do have a role in making sure that I’m developing the leaders of learning and their understanding of adult learning, and their understanding of how people develop and change, so

that it's better for the staff. So I actually feel more purposeful in that yes, I need to support all this stuff but this is how. This is one way that I can actually support leaders of learning, that I can open discussions around things and hopefully in that way it's going to be better for the staff and kids."

When reflecting on her own practice Mary identified some key skills she felt she needed to develop further in order to provide a space for greater growth for herself and that of the middle leaders. This included improving her ability to listen to the voices of others and to broaden the scope of those she was listening to. In addition she also believed she needed to build on her repertoire of questioning skills to enable her to gain greater understanding of her team and their developmental capacity.

"There's got to be room for more opinions. And we have got to deal with those opinions and not just want to shut them down. And if they are becoming really loud, there might be a reason for that. Instead of getting frustrated or upset about that, listen in the way that you would listen in your classroom. I think it's coming back to that. I would have said, "Oh, it's very, very important to create the right environment so that people can positively change and move ahead," but I'm not sure I would have been thinking of more than those who want to or are keen to listen and come on board."

Mary indicated a commitment to engage in school-wide consultation that could elicit valuable evidence on the impact of the change to date and how this could inform the next steps for the team as they navigated their way through this change initiative.

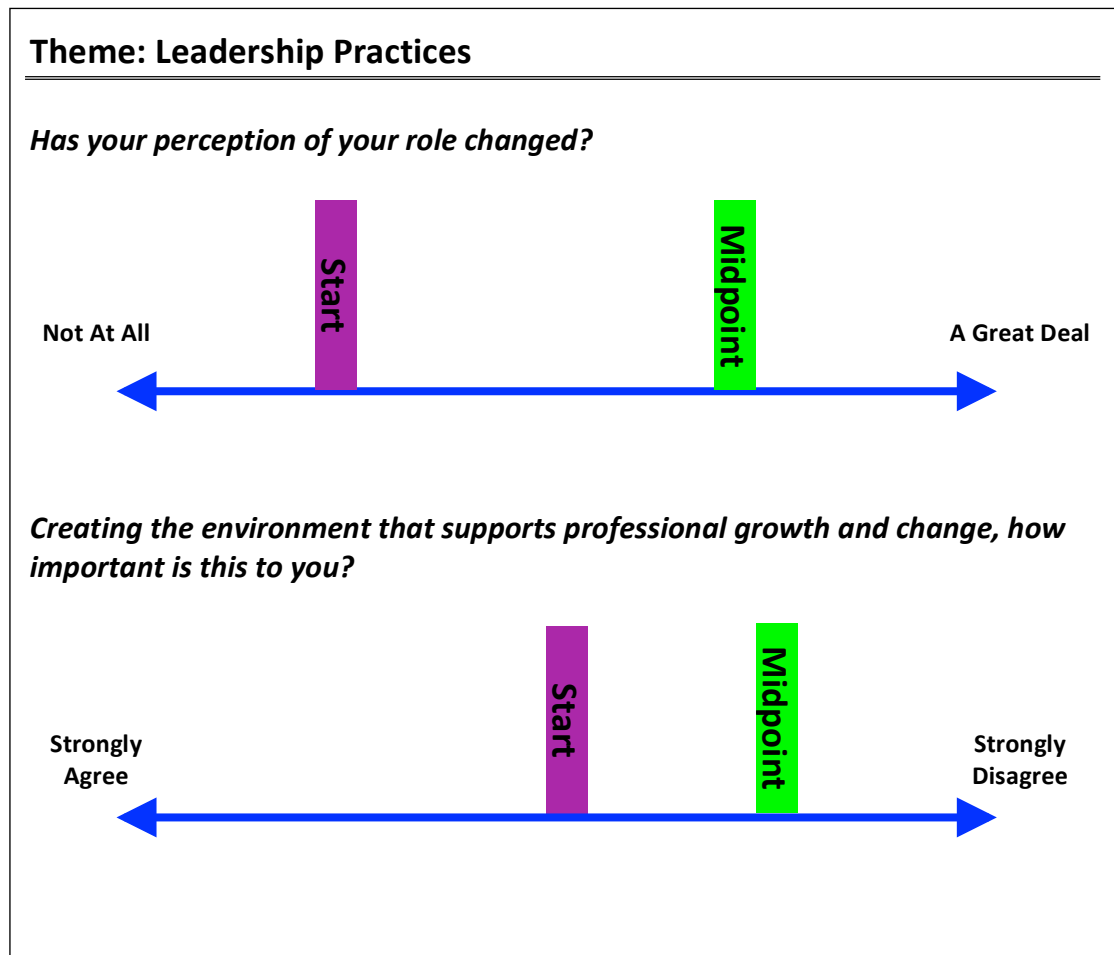


Figure 7: Mary’s reflections on Leadership Practices at phase 2

Discussion

In reviewing the evidence generated from the semi-structured interview with Mary and the video-recorded team meeting observation, there appeared some shifts in how Mary perceived her role as a leader and her leadership practices.

To begin with she was responding to the complexity of this work in different ways by approaching new challenges with a more relaxed mindset, feeling more at ease about not providing the answers. Mary was able to articulate this to the team, requiring a great deal of courage and she appeared to occupy this space with ease and self-assurance.

I appreciated that the middle leaders understanding of complexity and required skills to this complexity was still emerging. However, what was encouraging was that these middle leaders were developing greater insight in to the complexity of

the change process and appeared to be more open to the possibilities of the unknown. The ongoing reassurance articulated to the team by Mary, I believe contributed to this openness and greater sense of ease.

One of the most significant shifts at this phase was the increased commitment and attention by Mary to further explore adult developmental theory. There was clear evidence to indicate that Mary saw value in developing both her own understanding and that of the team in this area and that could have significant impact on the success of this change initiative. It was exciting to note her enthusiasm and engagement when exploring what possibilities could emerge.

There was also evidence of a shift in how Mary interpreted the concept of differentiation and what the implications were for professional learning in the future. She acknowledged that the current model of professional learning focused on building instructional knowledge with limited opportunity to create opportunities for transformational growth. Understandably Mary's commitment to reshape learning experiences for colleagues was more immediately focused on the middle leaders.

When considering Mary's leadership practices it appeared that she was endeavoring to be more adaptive in her response to challenges and emerging problems. She spoke of trying really hard to not provide answers or solutions when working with the team, she had become more conscious of her tendency to do this in the past. When observing Mary in the recorded team meeting during this phase it was apparent that this was difficult for her.

Building a repertoire of strategies to understand and support the developmental growth of the middle leaders was an important focus for Mary. We had explored collaboratively a range of questions that aligned to the relevant developmental stages and Mary had been endeavoring to practice these at the team meetings. As observed in the recording of the team meeting and through her reflections, she was finding it difficult to put it to practice. It highlights again how hard this

work is and the importance of taking time to build understanding, and having multiple opportunities to put in to practice.

Next Steps

Through our ongoing work together, from the middle leaders review and Mary's reflections we agreed that Mary needed to continue to build on the understanding of adult developmental theory with her team and explore with them ways to strengthen their leadership practices. Mary was also keen to continue to develop her own questioning and listening skills and begin to consider what ongoing support she could provide other members of the senior leadership team.

Mary also wanted to carry out a school-wide review of the change initiative. She felt that to date they had not been open to the voices of everyone, and she was keen to explore the potentially diverse perspectives that colleagues may hold regarding the change initiative. This in turn could assist the team in considering possible next steps in building the capacity of their colleagues, and creating structures that could support the ongoing implementation of this initiative.

Phase Three

Evidence for this final phase of the project was generated through semi-structured interviews with Mary and middle leaders, the completion of the reflective continuums by all participants and video-recorded observation of a team meeting.

Complexity in Education

The ability to understand and respond effectively to complexity was an important concept within this research project, as it provided the catalyst for placing greater emphasis as a leader on growing the capacity of self and others to cope with this increasing complexity.

The evidence gathered at this point indicated that Mary and the middle leaders understanding of complexity had grown, as well as the way in which they responded to the challenges of this complexity.

Mary felt that her understanding of complexity in education had increased although not to the extent that her understanding of the skills required had. She talked about having a more relaxed approach to the unknown and attributed this to her increased understanding of the concept. She stated:

I'm moving all the time towards understanding the complexity in education and perhaps I am more relaxed about the fact the complexity is such that you never know what is going to hit you, and that's what the complexity is."

When reflecting on their own understanding of complexity and the related skills, the middle leaders felt they had made shifts. They talked about how they responded to complexity in different ways now, describing that instead of believing things were impossible they now viewed them as interesting possibilities. As noted previously they felt Marys' leadership had allowed the space for them to respond in this new way.

However, when discussing with Mary about the middle leaders understanding of complexity in education and the required skills, she felt that many of them were still grappling with how complex the change initiative was. And although there was evidence that some middle leaders were responding in adaptive ways, Mary felt that:

"I still think there are a number of them who still see this as a job that needs to be completed and ticked off."

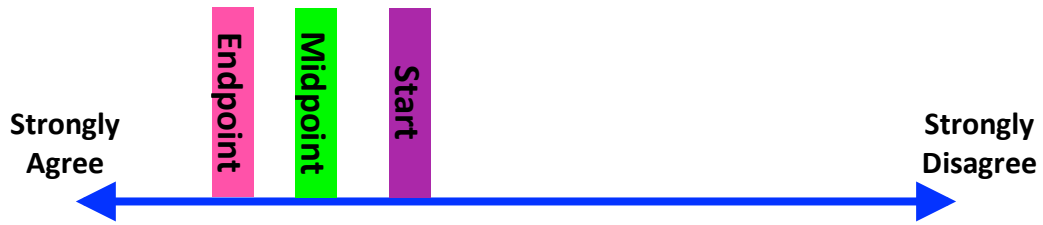
Mary goes on to say:

“I think there are some who are more relaxed than others, but I still think there is a long way to go for them to take it away from the job that they are doing to the type of thinking and ability to manage change.”

Mary acknowledges the challenges that exist in supporting the middle leaders in building strategies to cope with complex change. But she feels within her practice she is able to model strategies to the group that ultimately may impact on their practice as leaders. Metaphorically speaking, she is hoping to move them off the dance floor, up to a greater more expansive view of the change initiative.

Theme: Complexity

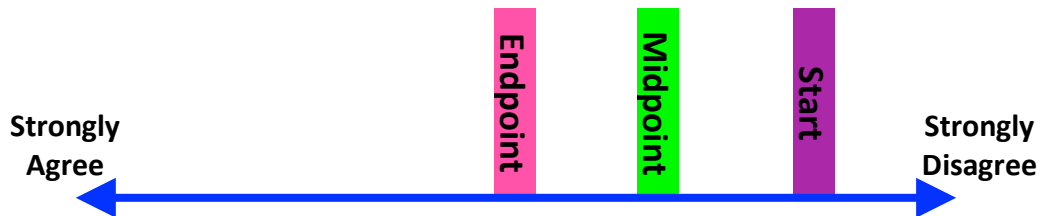
I understand complexity in education



I understand what skills are required to address complexity in education



The Leaders of Learning understand complexity in education.



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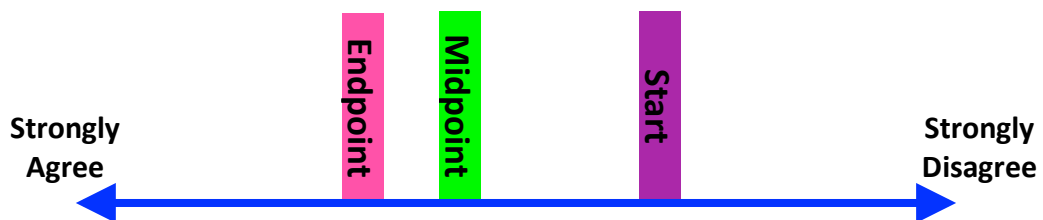


Figure 8: Mary's reflections on Complexity at phase 3

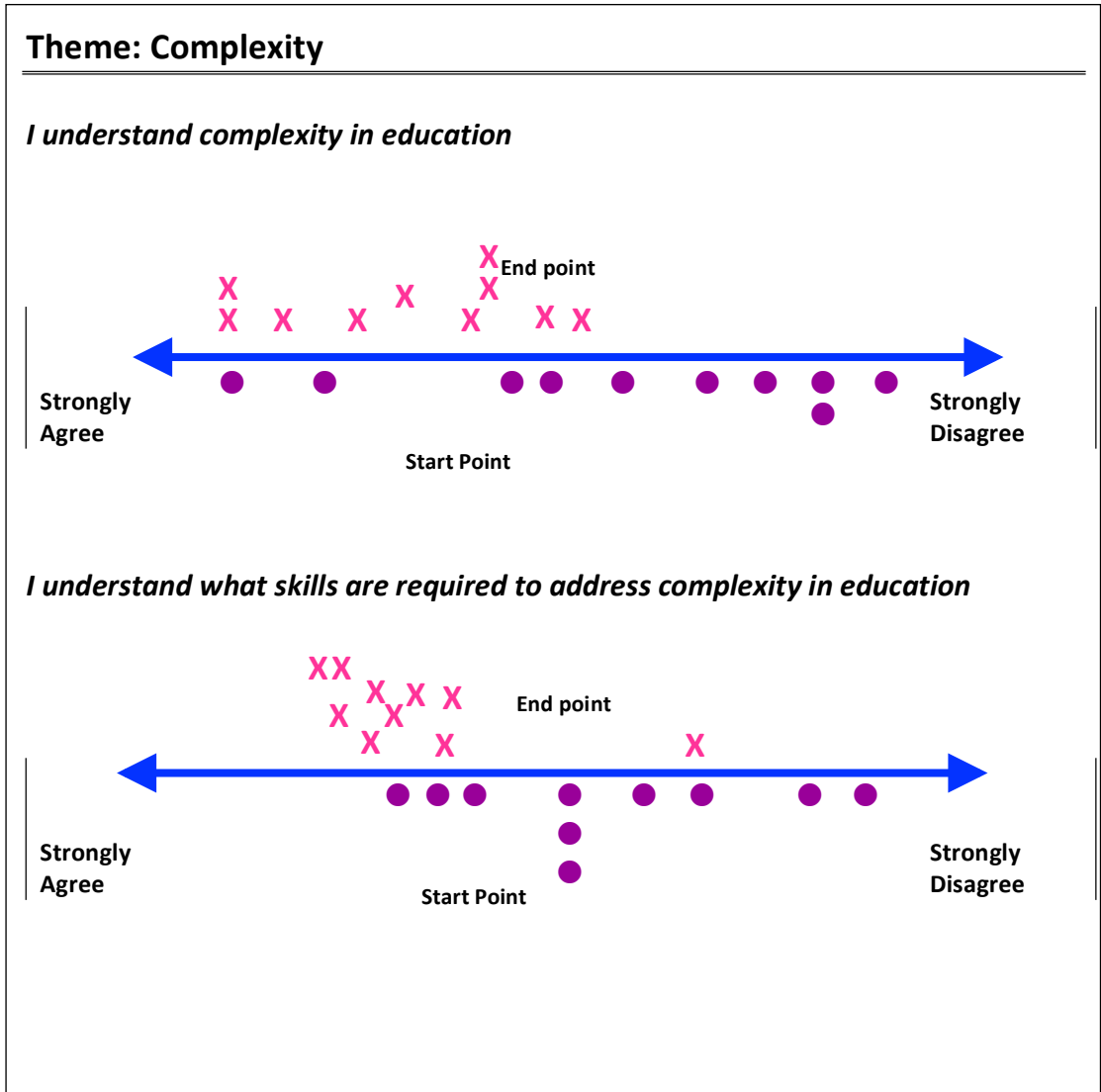


Figure 9: Middle Leader’s reflections on Complexity at Phase 3

Learning Community

The influence that this action research project had on Mary’s understanding of adult developmental theory, and her subsequent leadership practices, was seen as pivotal in supporting sustainable change in complex times.

When reflecting on her understanding of adult developmental theory at this endpoint, Mary concluded that she had made quite substantial shifts from where she was at the start of this research project, but still felt she had a long way to go.

She talked of the importance of paying attention to her own developmental growth and again mentioned the value in having a mentor coach to support her. Mary felt that having external support provided a non-judgmental perspective that could challenge, offer new ways of seeing and an opportunity to bounce around ideas and possibilities. As she explains:

“I think for me, it’s that ability to talk through what’s happening, and what I think happened, what they think they saw; putting an idea out, shaping it up, feeling confident with it and then giving it a go.”

Mary expressed a commitment to model this learning process with colleagues and felt that she had begun to explore new skills in her practice as a leader and was feeling more confident in this work. One of the significant shifts she believed was how she understood her colleagues in new ways. This was evident in this final interview when discussing the middle leaders and their contribution to the change initiative.

Instead of seeing people as the problem, she now had a greater appreciation of the diverse perspectives that others held and felt a commitment to gaining a deeper understanding of their capacity to deal with change. She believed she viewed people differently now as she explains:

“What it does is make you less likely to see people as problems and more likely to think about people’s capacity and where their capacity is. And that’s really healthy because when you think of people as problems, it’s easy to dismiss them. When you think of their capacity and it’s actually your role to build that capacity, it changes the way you interact with them.”

What Mary was finding challenging about this new insight was that required her to question and engage with colleagues in different ways and this took time and focused effort. She felt that she still had to consciously think about her practice,

it had not become second nature to her. She expressed confidence in how she questioned colleagues in one on one situations but found it very hard in a large group setting. She stated that:

I think I'm better at it one-on-one than I am in a large group. I think I almost get flustered in a large group conversation, especially if you feel like you are running the meeting. I actually find that extremely challenging, to think about, this person's talking and how do I ask a question, and then how do I...? That's really complex for me. I find that really challenging.

Mary also felt that often the need to get work done and complete administrative tasks got in the way of supporting her own skill development and her focus on adult learning.

Supporting the growth in understanding of adult developmental theory amongst her colleagues continued to be an important focus for Mary. She felt that she had made some progress with the middle leaders and there was an emerging understanding of adult developmental theory and its potential impact on change and learning.

Mary also expressed commitment in the future to support her fellow senior leaders in building their understanding of adult developmental theory. Suggesting in the future that these senior leaders engage in targeted professional learning and begin to consider their role in supporting the developmental growth of others. Mary did however see this as a potential challenge as she explains;

"I think the biggest obstacle is if you haven't got people working with you and your SLT, who are open to it. It can't be, 'this is Mary's little thing that she does. She does this adult learning thing every now and again."

She was confident that the middle leaders saw value in this work, but its ongoing success and implementation would depend on the support and collective voice of the senior leadership team. Mary believed she had the support of the principal but was unsure if there was total support from the senior leadership team to commit to this change in practice and role.

When exploring the ideas of adult developmental theory with the middle leaders and what impact this had on their own thinking and practice, the views varied. Many of them felt they had a greater appreciation of the diversity of their colleagues and the range of perspectives that could exist amongst them. One middle leader expressed her new learning this way:

“When you talk about that thing of perspective, and different people’s perspectives, for me that’s been a huge thing. Because I haven’t always seen that and I haven’t understood why it is important to see that. And I guess I’m getting to see that a lot more now and having to step back and think. “Okay, what’s their perspective?””.

The middle leaders acknowledged that their understanding of developmental stages was still emerging but the majority believed that this new understanding was important to consider in relation to leading in the future and provided new insights in how professional learning could be shaped.

There was a consensus that this was challenging work but the middle leaders appeared eager to build on their understanding and felt it had potential to strengthen their ability to lead sustainable change. They believed they had a role in building the developmental capacity of others and supporting members of their department to grow in their understanding of others, but the timing was not right at this stage.

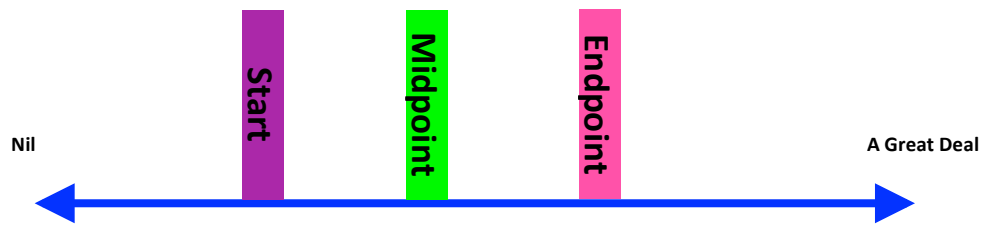
The middle leaders expressed a genuine desire to explore adult developmental theory in more depth. They felt as their roles had become far more focused on leading learning that they needed to strengthen their leadership practices. There was a sense that their professional growth had been sacrificed and overlooked as they were more focused on leading this school-wide change initiative. One of the middle leaders explained:

“We have sacrificed a lot of time for the common good of everybody, but for us learning more of the developmental theory in leadership, we have missed out. We have experienced it and we’ve applied it and we have read about it, but it would be nice to have a little more time for us where we are not forever taking from here and distributing down there.”

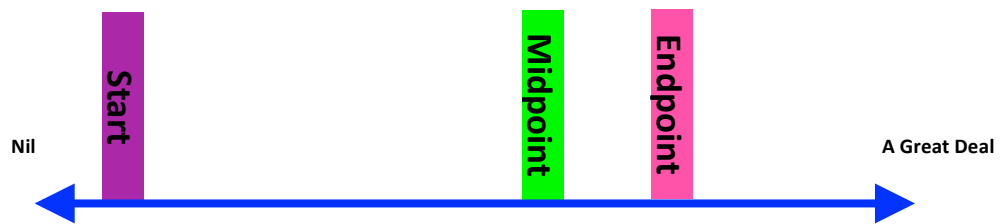
It was clear that the middle leaders did see value in building their own knowledge and expertise in the area of adult developmental theory, as they saw it had potential. The challenging aspect was accessing the resourcing to ensure a focus on their growth could also become a priority.

Theme: Adults as Learners

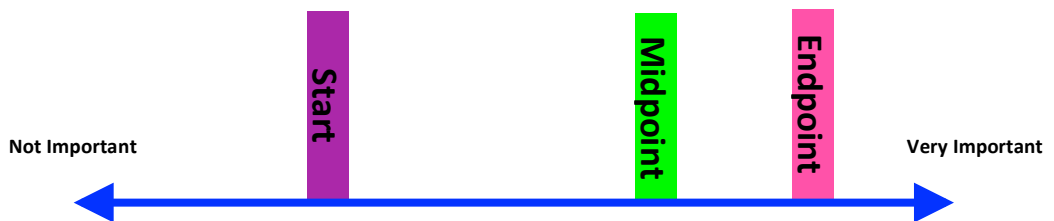
What is your understanding of adult developmental theory?



What impact has the theory of adult development had on your practice?



How important do you consider taking a developmental approach to professional learning?



Do you think about the learning diversity of your colleagues when planning and leading professional learning?

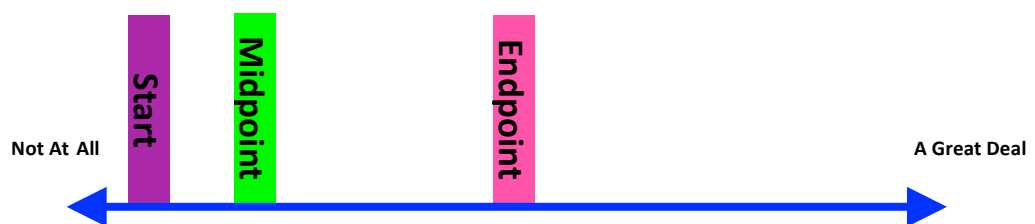
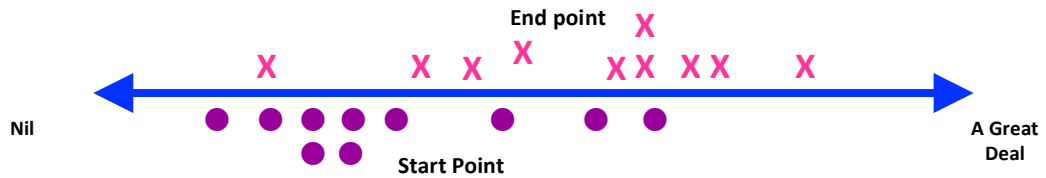


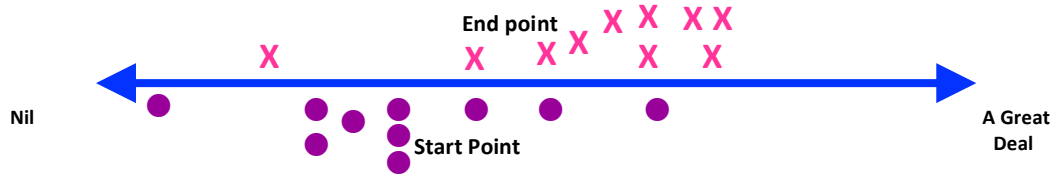
Figure 10: Mary's reflection on Adults as Learners at Phase 3

Theme: Adult as Learners

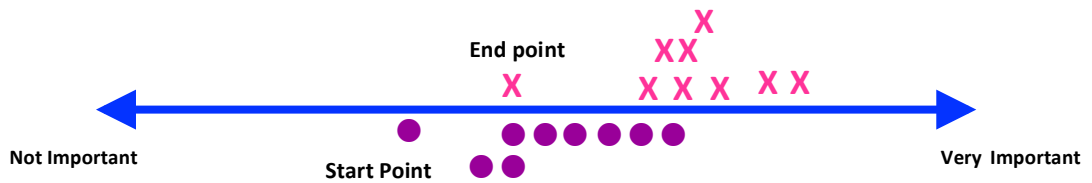
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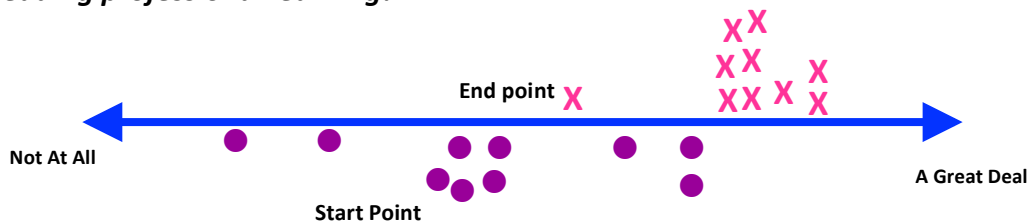


Figure 11: Middle Leader's reflections on Adults as Learners at Phase 3

Leadership Practices

Mary

Throughout this research project Mary has continued to articulate how she felt her role had changed as a leader.

Mary spoke of a greater appreciation of the skills required to lead within the complex space, and her attempts to develop these skills within her practice. She spoke of being more at ease when faced with potential problems, and did not feel a need to drive and solve everything, nor to allow herself to become disheartened when unable to preempt what happened next. When asked about what it meant for her as a leader she stated:

“I think for me, the complexity is less about trying to plan for problems and more about building the capacity to deal with the problems across more people in the organisation.”

The importance of growing the capacity of others was mentioned numerous times during this final interview with Mary. She expressed a commitment to providing the opportunity and space for the growth of others, citing one example where she had resisted the practice of trying to provide answers and placate the discomfort created. Mary encouraged the team to experiment with their ideas and reassured them that if it didn't work that would be acceptable. More importantly she wanted them use it as a learning experience to guide them in future actions. Link to role shift more now as a coach

There was a cautionary note shared by Mary when reflecting on her changing leadership practices. She talked of situations when feeling under pressure that she could feel herself reverting to her old practices of providing solutions, talking more than listening and giving statements instead of questioning. Mary felt confident that she was becoming more in tune with these tendencies, explaining it in this way:

I think it's something I still have to consciously think about. I think at times I think to myself, "Shhhh, don't give a solution here," because it is a natural thing to still give the solution."

When reflecting on how she viewed change, she felt she had developed a totally new perspective. She felt that she was far more equipped to lead change because of her growing understanding about complexity and adult developmental theory. Mary felt that this would influence her in the future and that she would approach leading change quite differently. This quote captures this shift:

I don't think now I would be prepared to undergo any change in a school without first analysing, where do we need to build capacity in our staff to spread the leadership for this? Because if you try to do it as an SLT, you will fail. And if you try to push it through as an SLT, you will fail. So the first step before any change is, where do we have to build capacity? And that's even more important than the change you want to make, almost.

Mary reflected on how she had previously viewed her role in leading professional learning experiences and felt she had made a significant shift in her understanding. Previously she had believed that professional learning needed to provide activities for staff to engage in. Now Mary feels professional learning needs to provide opportunity for transformational growth, more than just providing information and skills, it is about acknowledging the diversity of colleagues, building in reflection and crafting questions that can grow individual capacity. She acknowledged that her understanding of how to deliver developmentally orientated professional learning was still developing but she also expressed confidence in how to create the space and the evidence to support why it needed to happen in this way.

There were several leadership challenges that were highlighted by Mary during the final interview. She felt that these challenges did need addressing in the

near future to ensure the ongoing success of the change initiative. This included having the time and space to explore this new learning with targeted professional learning opportunities and ongoing external support for herself, the middle leaders and senior leadership team.

Mary also identified time as a challenge in this work. She felt there had been occasions during this research project where she did not feel she had given the time required and found it hard to get her head in to the right space. Mary viewed this work as very important but often the administrative expectations got in the way and limited her time to engage in more depth.

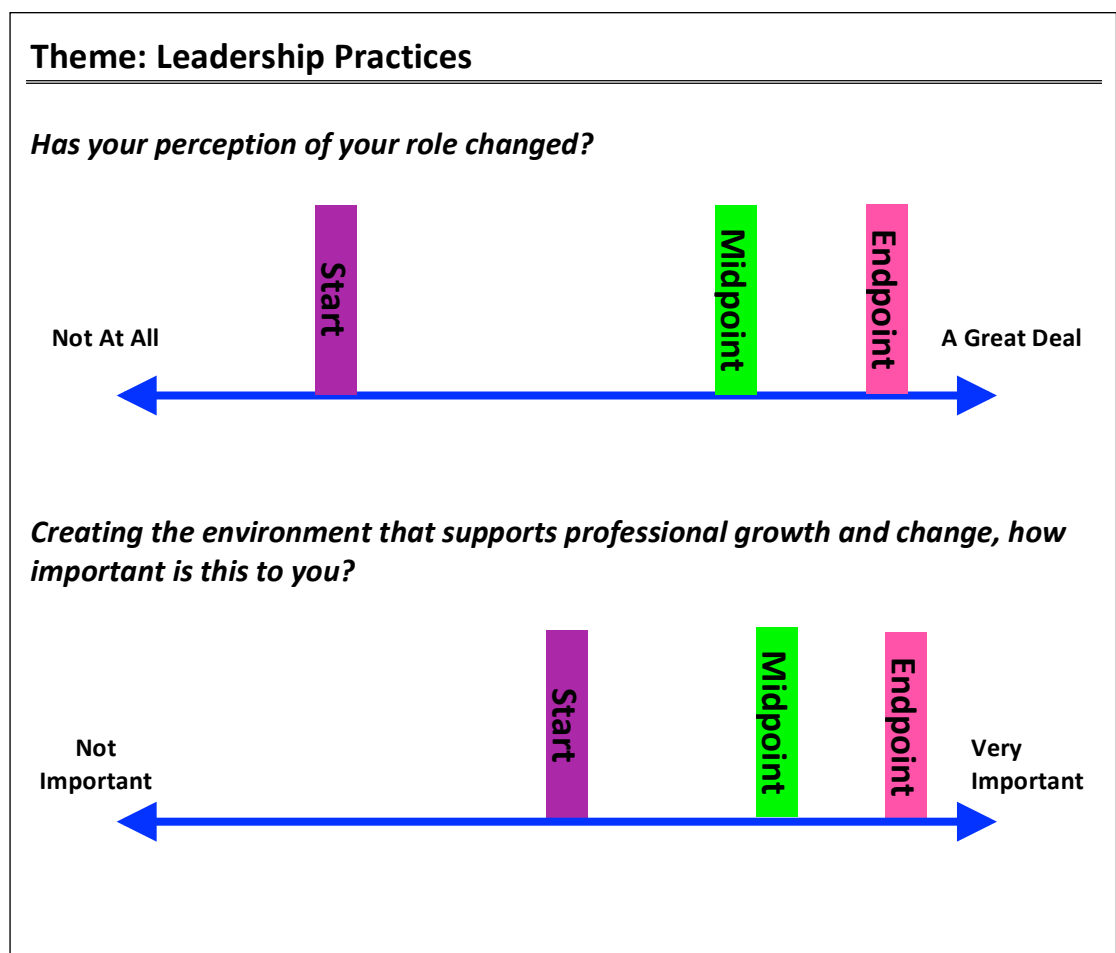


Figure 12: Mary's reflection on Leadership Practices at Phase 3

Middle Leaders

It was at this final point of the research project that evidence was gathered to gauge what impact Mary's changing practice had on these middle leaders. And if any, what impact it had on the way they were now leading within the school-wide change initiative.

It was evident that the middle leaders saw a significant change in how Mary led, they had felt a greater freedom and support to experiment with ideas than in the past. They felt that Mary had become a great more comfortable about the unknown and was actively reassuring them that it was okay to have failures along the way. They also believed that this had had positive spin offs for the rest of the staff by reassuring them that it was important to explore many options and look at multiple opportunities to respond to ongoing challenges of this change initiative.

One leader stated:

"Mary said, about the fact that, 'don't be afraid if it's not going to work'. And so that makes it a little bit more accepting. It's not a panic; it's one of those occasions where we are going to have to rethink this rather than a panic situation."

Another middle leader expressed this shift in the following way:

"...well if this doesn't work, we will just move on and so the next thing, and feeling okay about that. Whereas I don't think in the past there was the sense that it would be ok if it didn't work, or if it failed..."

It was clear through both the interviews and reflections that these middle leaders perception of their role had changed. They considered that the Head of Department role focused more on managing systems and directing their teams, now as leaders of learning that felt they had greater influence around learning and change. One leader stated that:

“As a Head of Department I didn’t have to lead anybody. I just did it. But now I have to lead.”

They spoke of the ongoing support and trust modeled by Mary and her genuine commitment to support their growth as leaders. The middle leaders felt that Mary genuinely listened to their concerns and they had appreciated that Mary had made a genuine attempt to respond to their review feedback. They felt she had allowed them to take a more prominent role in the decision making of late, as expressed by this middle leader:

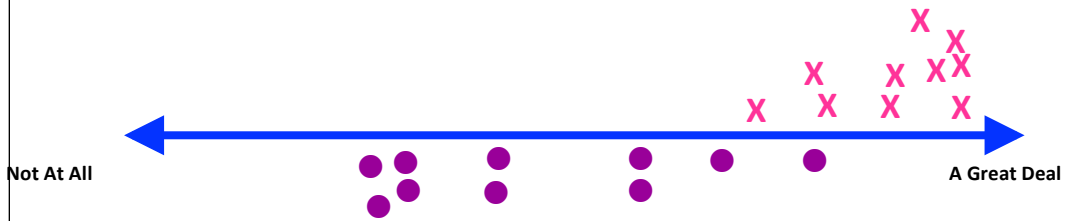
“She has always been at the front and now she has stood at the back and let us run things.... I think that must take a lot of trust.”

There was clear evidence that Mary had provided pathways and opportunities for these middle leaders to take ownership of this change initiative within the safe boundaries of Mary’s support and trust.

When discussing the culture that existed within this middle leader team, all members spoke the strong sense of loyalty and collegial support they gave one another. They felt they could safely challenge each other, openly share ideas and concerns, and when they did strongly disagree, could move on respectfully acknowledging the divergent perspectives. They attributed this growing strength of the team to the deliberate actions of Mary, in the way she engaged them in discussion and collaborative solution seeking. And her genuine attempts to engage in conversations that explored the different perspectives within the team. One middle leader spoke of how ‘she gets me’ acknowledging that he can be incredible stubborn and challenging within the context of this team, but Mary always engages with authenticity and genuine interest.

Theme: Leadership Practices

Has your perception of your role changed?



Creating the environment that supports professional growth and change, how important is this to you?

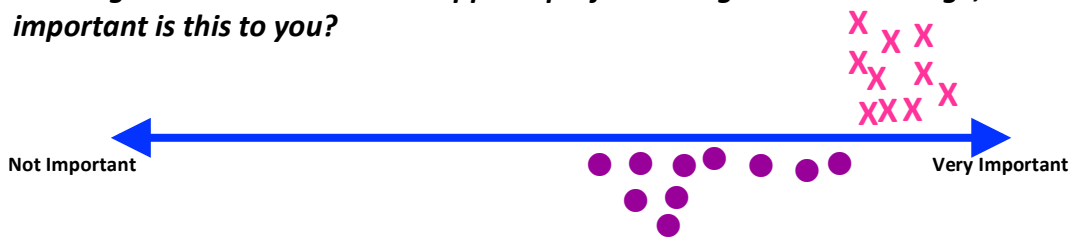


Figure 13: Middle Leaders continuum placement at the completion of Phase 3

Discussion

Developing a deeper appreciation and understanding of complexity, as it exists within a school setting is key to leading change in new ways. It was clear that Mary's understanding of complexity and how to work within a complex space was evident in both the conversations and practices of Mary. This understanding had grown over the time of this research project.

However, it appears from the data generated through the observation and semi-structured interviews that the middle leaders understanding of complexity is still developing. They are able to acknowledge that the work is complex but it appears from their definitions and examples that their definition of complex does not reflect the theory and concepts that underpin this work. An example of this would be when one of the middle leaders stated that complexity was something that needed to be solved.

The feedback gathered from Mary also indicated that she felt their understanding was still emerging. However, what was interesting within the data generated from the reflective continuums was that both Marys' perception and the middle leaders perception were similar when it came to the middle leaders understanding the skills that were required. As previously noted it may be as a result of the modeling by Mary of those leadership practices that embrace complexity.

It appeared obvious that Mary had developed some effective strategies in dealing with complexity that they collectively faced. Her shift from fearing potential failure to embracing it illustrated that she had developed leadership practices that could engage the team in collective experimentation free from the constraints and fear of failure. These were, adaptive strategies that had some positive spin offs for the team and the wider teaching staff. It was apparent through the conversations and observations that there was an emerging culture that begun to encourage the notion of safe to fail experimentation. This has the potential of creating some exciting innovations into the future.

Mary continued to build her own understanding of adult developmental theory and was genuinely committed to supporting the growth and understanding of the middle leaders. There also appeared a developmental shift in how Mary was making sense of others, she had become a great deal more open and genuinely interested in the diverse perspectives of others. She admitted she still had a great deal to learn when it came to developing new ways of questioning and building her understanding of systems thinking. Despite this there was some rich examples of how Mary had genuinely attempted to lead in new ways that could support the growth of her own understanding and ways of seeing.

The progress was a little slower with the middle leaders, but it appeared that a majority of them saw value in engaging in these ideas and were eager to build their understanding and skills that would enable them to lead in ways that would

support the growth of themselves and others. Time was a huge factor, Mary and members of the middle leader team talked of the time constraints and external factors that had limited their time to learn together.

In addition, I am unsure that the middle leaders had drawn the connection between complexity and adult developmental theory. Mary understood that working within the complex domain required leaders to have the developmental capacity to do so, but the middle leaders appeared to see these two concepts in isolation.

The delivery of professional learning fell under the responsibility of the middle leaders, and although there was glimmers of hope in regard to them building truly differentiated learning experiences, the shift had not been obvious. Mary had moved a great deal in her understanding of differentiation and professional learning delivery but understandably this new learning had not yet impacted on the middle leaders practice, nor would it be expected within the time frame of this research project.

As signaled by Mary this was work in progress and she believed that as the middle leaders developed their own understanding and were exposed to new possibilities around developmentally orientated professional learning it would be at this point that change could be expected.

Through the three phases of this action research process, the analysis and resulting discussions have identified some significant shifts, insights and potential challenges. The following chapter provides the conclusion to this research project along with potential limitations and implications for the future.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This research project set out to explore what impact a constructive adult developmental theory approach might have on leadership practices and professional learning experiences within the context of a school-wide change initiative.

The aim was to investigate how a more focused attention to the developmental capacity of educators and the practices to grow this capacity is crucial in education today as leadership in schools it increases in complexity. This thesis contends that in order to lead change effectively leaders need to think, act and lead in new ways.

This chapter will provide a synthesis of the key findings of this research project and issues raised in the discussion section.

Firstly, one of the key findings in this research project was how little was known amongst this team of leaders relating to the concept of complexity and the skills required to lead within this domain. Although Mary and the middle leaders felt they understood the term, as we explored it further it became apparent that many did not fully understand its conceptual underpinnings. The teams' understanding of complexity and what that meant within the context of this change initiative grew over time, more significantly for Mary than the middle leaders as a whole. As her understanding grew it was apparent that this began to influence the way in which Mary led the team resulting in a more adaptive approach that encouraged greater experimentation and emergence of new possibilities.

As Mary demonstrated she was becoming more comfortable working in this adaptive space, this increased sense of ease and accepting of the unknown unknowns (Snowden, 2002) had a positive impact on the middle leaders. Although they were still grappling with developing a deeper understanding of

complexity and what this meant for them as leaders, they were feeling the positive spinoffs of Mary's changing approach to deal with the challenges of the change initiative (Bull & Gilbert 2014).

What was exciting about working with this leader was her engagement and commitment to exploring new possibilities as a leader and the transformational shifts that resulted from this exploration. Being prepared to abandon some previous held beliefs about leading required courage and trust in this newfound knowledge.

Such a willingness to engage in new possibilities needs to be part of our practice as leaders. Understanding and acknowledging the existence of complexity is the foundation to this change (Garvey Berger, 2012; Garvey Berger & Johnston, 2015; Snowden, 2002). It goes beyond the terminology, as highlighted in this small research project and requires us to engage in conversation and reflection about how we perceive our role as leaders and the ways in which we lead. Building an understanding of complexity and how to respond can be challenging work (Snowden 2002) as illustrated in this project.

Schools are now far more complex than ever before and this experience has reinforced my belief that we cannot lead successful change in schools if we continue to try and approach it in a cause and effect way, one that is linear and seeks only one answer as the solution. This linear approach hinders the opportunity for experimentation, creativity and most importantly collaboration, as often the solution is expected to come from those that lead. Such an approach can only effectively respond to the technical challenges that exist within the school setting (Heifetz & Linsky, 2004; Snowden 2002). So what this requires of leaders is the ability to interpret the different contexts and have the skills and strategies to respond more effectively to what confronts them.

Also fundamental in working in the complex space is the need for us to develop a system thinking mindset, crucial when working in the context of the complex

domain as it requires us to understand that a system is greater than the sum of its parts (Garvey Berger, 2012; Senge et al., 2000). Highlighted in this small research project, that the ability to understand systems can be incredibly challenging for many, our tendency is to dabble with parts of the system, discounting the interconnectedness and unknowns within the system, hence resulting in unsustainable change. As the team of leaders' understanding of complexity and system thinking was still emerging, there is the potential for ongoing challenges to continue in to the future.

The second key finding from this research project was the role adult developmental theory could play in leadership and leading change. As previously discussed, an individual's developmental capacity will influence how they respond, work and lead within the complex domain. I believe this project illuminated the link between developmental capacity and leading complex change, providing possible answers as to how leaders can build more sustainable leadership practices (Drago-Severson, 2012; Garvey Berger, 2007, 2012).

Through developing deeper understanding of adult developmental theory, Mary was able to appreciate diversity in new ways. Firstly, she began to reflect on her own developmental capacity and how she interpreted and responded to her team. It highlighted the importance for her to take multiple perspectives, being able to acknowledge that there are many ways others can interpret and make meaning. Developing a deep understanding of the developmental diversity of those we work with and lead enables us to respond and support in more meaningful and significant ways (Garvey Berger, 2012; Drago-Severson, 2012), resulting in deeper learning and developmental growth.

With Mary's increased understanding of adult developmental theory it appeared her own developmental capacity grew. There was evidence of a shift in not only what she knew, but also how she knew. This growth was observable in how she viewed her role as a leader, her relationships with the team, and how she

responded to the ongoing challenges of the change initiative. Both Mary and the middle leaders viewed these as positive shifts.

Paying closer attention to our own developmental capacity through building a deeper understanding of the related theory and practices, can arguably strengthen leadership capacity in complex times, enabling us to cope with the unpredictability it brings. As the evidence indicates, it requires openness to learning and a commitment to being nudged to the edge of our understanding. These experiences can create a sense of vulnerability and dissonance, but this is how we build our developmental capacity (Garvey Berger, 2012; Kegan, 2009).

This research project did highlight how challenging this constructive adult developmental theory work is (Garvey Berger, 2012). As the ideas and concepts are very abstract it takes time to build meaning and understanding, requiring time for reflection and practice. As Mary's feedback indicated, there were times she struggled to focus and immerse herself in the learning conversations. She felt she had come a long way in her understanding and practice, but there was still a great deal of learning to be done.

As the evidence suggests, when we begin to build our understanding of our own developmental capacity we start to consider what this means for those we lead. Prevalent in this study was the shift in how this leader engaged and responded to the team. What was created was a new way of understanding each individual and an appreciation of their developmental diversity. Although still building the skills to illuminate this knowing, it appeared that there was a genuine commitment to grow her own understanding of how to best support their growth and learning.

Fundamental to this focus on growth was how professional learning could be shaped to respond to the developmental diversity of the team. Taking a more developmentally orientated approach to professional learning that focuses on transformational growth is challenging and takes a great deal of time. Mary had

been able to make some shifts at the team level in regard to their learning but this had not impacted on the school as a whole. Mary and the team appreciated that the school-wide professional learning needed to be reshaped, but these ideas and practical application were still emerging and had not yet become common practice.

The third key finding in this research was the importance of creating the conditions for transformation to take place, where people could developmentally flourish and grow in capacity (Drago-Severson, 2012; Drago-Severson et al., 2013). There already existed within the team a strong collegial culture, that encouraged open and transparent conversations (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Du Four, 1998). However, what was a notable shift was the way in which Mary interacted with the team. She had become less directive and driven, being more relaxed and accepting of the time it was taking. The deliberate acts of leading were more focused on creating a space that was reflective and responsive to the teams diversity, encouraging dissonance and opportunity for the team to move forward respectfully.

Creating the environment that supports developmental diversity and growth becomes a greater challenge when considering school-wide leadership and practice. As articulated by Mary the importance of having the support and commitment of the whole senior leadership team would be crucial in the years ahead to ensure the ongoing success of a more developmentally orientated approach to leading.

The positive impact that an external person can have in supporting the professional growth and development of a leader was another key finding in this project. There were numerous references made by Mary regarding the value of having such support. She felt it had provided the opportunity to explore new ideas, engage in dialogic conversations, and provide non-judgmental perspectives that could safely challenge. Engaging the support of external expertise has the potential to increase the effectiveness of learning

communities, providing theoretical and practical expertise as well as challenge existing assumptions (DuFour & Eaker 2014; Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Timperley et al., 2007).

Finally, engaging in an inquiry process through the action research methodology highlighted the value of working in a collaborative inquiry process with another leader (Robertson & Timperley, 2011; Timperley, 2008; Timperley & Parr 2011). This process enabled both Mary and I to explore collectively the impact that adult developmental theory could have on our own leadership practices as we engaged in our specific roles. The opportunity to explore possibilities and co-construct next steps, engage in action, gather evidence and reflect enabled us to build on our own understandings and practice. This authentic experience of inquiring impacted on our collective and individual growth as leaders that was extremely collaborative, safe and developmentally orientated.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge any potential limitations relevant to the research conducted. These limitations may not directly impact on the quality of the research but could in some way influence the scope of the research.

To begin with it is important to acknowledge that although I have conducted many small, school-based research projects, I consider myself a novice researcher within this context, which could be considered a limitation. Therefore it has been of paramount importance that I have engaged deeply in building my knowledge and understanding in research methodology and sort the advice and guidance of my supervisor throughout the duration of this research project.

Additionally, by the very nature of action research, there is an ongoing inquiry into one's practice not only of the participants but also the researcher. Therefore as a researcher engaging in process of reflexivity, new knowledge is discovered, questioned, explored further and responded to. This could be seen

as a potential limitation within this research project due to the unpredictability of the inquiry process.

This research projects methodology focused on the generation of qualitative data that was then analysed through an interpretive and analytical paradigm. This could be considered a limitation as it is through the lens of the researcher that interpretation is made. It is hoped that through the triangulation of the data, the integrity and credibility of the findings have been validated.

Another limitation of this research project was the sample size; this was a small-scale project involving one leader and a team of ten middle leaders. Also to be considered was the relative short time span of five months to conduct the action research. Therefore in considering these two points, it is acknowledged that generalisations cannot be made from the evidence gathered. Nonetheless as there is currently limited research conducted in New Zealand on this topic, it does have the potential to highlight key findings that warrant further research. It also gives insights into current leadership practice, particularly at the school.

Implications and recommendations for the future

Importantly this research project provided invaluable insight into implications for the future, not only for the research topic but also for those participants within the research itself and for the school, and more tentatively for educational leadership in general.

When considering possible implications for the Key Leader it became apparent there was an enduring commitment to continue building her expertise in adult developmental theory. However, Mary felt that she would need to ensure she engaged in targeted professional learning and sought the support of an external mentor with expertise in this area to support her ongoing growth.

As Mary has since successfully gained a new position, in another school, there would be potential implications for the future success of the middle leader team. Within the team, as previously discussed, there were members that had developed a deeper understanding of complexity and the importance of growing developmental capacity. However, this was not across the team and would require a new leader that valued and had expertise in this area of work for the momentum and growth to continue.

From a school-wide perspective, supporting the new leader and continuing the work of Mary is a potential implication for the future. It would require the school leadership to deliberately seek external expertise in the area of adaptive leadership and adult developmental theory, or provide the resourcing to support the growth within the existing leadership team. This would ensure momentum would be maintained and provide the necessary support in creating leadership that supports transformation growth.

There are several implications emerging from this small research project that are relevant to my own practice as a leader and as a novice researcher. This research experience has highlighted for me the importance of continuing with this work.

From the perspective of my own growth, I have been able to explore in depth the literature and research related to adult developmental theory, proving the catalyst for me to interrogate my own practice, reflect deeply and consider ways that I can support my own transformational growth. At a leadership level it has reinforced my commitment to engage in further investigation and research into adult developmental theory and leading in complex times within my current setting.

This research experience has reaffirmed my resolve that as leaders we need to lead in transformational ways and create the space for those we lead to experience developmental growth. As leaders of learning we need to pay closer

attention to the developmental diversity of our colleagues, ensuring their experiences provide the greatest opportunity for learning to be transformational. This requires us to engage with greater ease and comfort within the complex domain and use adaptive leadership practices that are more attuned with leading in these times. As leaders we need to be more discerning about acting, engaging and thinking in new ways.

This was a small-scale research project that aimed to investigate adult developmental theory and how this could influence the way leaders approach the task of leading school-wide change and professional learning within a secondary school context.

Further research into this subject area is needed, as many of the issues analysed in this thesis have not been explored fully in New Zealand academic literature. Acknowledging the limitations of this research in regard to the sample size it would be of great benefit to educational leaders if a larger research project could be undertaken involving a greater number of leaders within a diverse range of schools.

My hope is that this research may provide leaders with new possibilities in leading and learning.

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APPENDICES:

Appendix A - Key Leader information sheet

Research Project: A Changing perspective: an examination of differentiated professional learning

Date:

Kia Ora,

You are being invited to take part in a research project. This information sheet is to provide you with an understanding of what the research will involve and how it will be used, so you are able to decide whether or not to take part.

My name is Phillipa Woodward and I am currently completing a Masters of Educational Leadership at the University of Waikato. This research is for my thesis. The research project has been approved by the University of Waikato's Faculty of Education Ethics Committee and the research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Nigel Calder.

The purpose of the research is to investigate the ideas of constructive developmental approach to professional learning within a secondary school setting. Through this research I hope to be able to answer the research question: How might a differentiated professional learning approach that takes into account the developmental needs of the adult learner, influence their learning experience? It is hoped that this research gives scope for educational leaders to re-think how professional learning is delivered to colleagues, and will benefit leaders who are seeking new ways of thinking about systems, about learning and the complexity of change.

If you are willing to be a participant in this research this is what is required:

- Be available to commit approximately 30 hours towards this research project.
- To keep a reflective diary during the research timeframe and this will be shared with the researcher on a regular basis via a Wiki.
- Be available to work alongside the researcher to build their knowledge and understanding around adult developmental theory and transformational learning.
- Participate in three semi-structured interviews at the start, midpoint and endpoint of the research project (June-November 2015). These will be audio-recorded and transcribed.

- Allow me to observe you as the Key Leader of the Learning Leaders' team at three of your regular team meetings. These will be video-recorded and used by the researcher post meetings to complete the observation template.
- Review transcripts for accuracy, making amendments where required.

The recordings of the interviews and meetings will be transcribed, and copies will be provided to you for checking and to inform me of any part that needs alteration, and for signing as a true record. You can withdraw permission to use any part of the transcript up until it is signed. If you wish to hear the recording I can provide a copy.

A digital copy of the thesis will be stored permanently at the University of Waikato, Research Commons and therefore will be accessible to the public to read. It is also possible that the findings in this research may be written up as an article for an academic journal or provide material for presentations after the thesis has been completed.

It is important that you know that I will be interviewing and observing you as a researcher, therefore I will not in any way be judging your character or personality.

You will not be personally identified in the study, nor will the school. Every effort will be made to ensure anonymity, however this cannot be completely guaranteed. Pseudonyms will be used for the participants and description of the school involved will be broad, only identifying the school type i.e. co-educational secondary school and size. All research data will be kept under password protection on my home computer, and hard copies will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at my home for five years after the completion of the research project.

If you agree to participate you will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. Even if you consent, you can withdraw your participation at any time. However, any data you have contributed can only be withdrawn up until the transcript has been signed. You may inform me verbally or formally by a letter.

If you have any questions about the research please contact me, my details are below.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you choose not to participate please be assured there will be no negative repercussions.

Phillipa Woodward

Contact Details:

Researcher: Phillipa Woodward

Phone: 0275554661

Email: p.woodward@eol.co.nz

Supervisor: Dr Nigel Calder

Phone: 07 5578753

Email: n.calder@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix B - Team Members information sheet

Research Project: A Changing perspective: an examination of differentiated professional learning

Date:

Kia Ora,

You are being invited to take part in a research project. This information sheet is to provide you with an understanding of what the research will involve and how it will be used, so you are able to decide whether or not to take part.

My name is Phillipa Woodward and I am currently completing a Masters of Educational Leadership at the University of Waikato. This research is for my thesis. The research project has been approved by the University of Waikato's Faculty of Education Ethics Committee and the research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Nigel Calder.

The purpose of the research is to investigate the ideas of constructive developmental approach to professional learning within a secondary school setting. Through this research I hope to be able to answer the research question: How might a differentiated professional learning approach that takes into account the developmental needs of the adult learner, influence their learning experience? It is hoped that this research gives scope for educational leaders to re-think about how professional learning is delivered to colleagues and will benefit leaders who are seeking new ways of thinking about systems, about learning and the complexity of change.

If you are willing to be a participant in this research this is what would be required.

- Be able to commit approximately 5 hours towards this research project.
- Be part of a Focus group of Learning Leaders participating in two semi-structured interviews at the start and endpoint of the research project (June-November 2015). These will be audio-recorded and transcribed.
- Allow me to observe you as a member of the Learning Leaders' team at three of your regular team meetings. These will be video-recorded.

All recordings will be transcribed. Due to the collective nature of the focus group interviews, transcripts are unable to be amended, however you can view the transcripts on request.

A digital copy of the thesis will be stored permanently at the University of Waikato, Research Commons and therefore will be accessible to the public to read. It is also possible that the findings in this research may be written up as an

article for an academic journal or provide material for presentations after the thesis has been completed.

It is important that you know that although I will be interviewing and observing you as a researcher, I will not in any way be judging your character or personality.

You will not be personally identified in the study, nor will the school. Every effort will be made to ensure anonymity, however this cannot be completely guaranteed. Pseudonyms will be used for the participants and description of the school involved will be broad, only identifying the school type i.e. co-educational secondary school and size. All research data will be kept under password protection on my home computer, and hard copies will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at my home for five years after the completion of the research project.

If you agree to participate you will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. Even if you consent, you can withdraw your participation at any time. However, any data you have contributed can only be withdrawn up until the transcript has been signed. You may inform me verbally or formally by a letter.

If you have any questions about the research please contact me, my details are below.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. If you choose not to participate please be assured there will be no negative repercussions.

Phillipa Woodward

Contact Details:

Researcher: Phillipa Woodward

Phone: 0275554661

Email: p.woodward@eol.co.nz

Supervisor: Dr Nigel Calder

Phone: 07 5578753

Email: n.calder@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix C - Introductory Letter and Permission Form for Principal

Date:

To the Principal [Name] High School/College

Kia Ora, my name is Phillipa Woodward. I am currently completing a Masters of Educational Leadership at the University of Waikato. I am writing to request formal permission from you, as the Principal and representative of the Board of Trustees, to carry out a research project in [Name of School] in the 2015 academic year. The main purpose of this research is for the use in a thesis for this masters qualification. It is also possible that the findings in this research may be written up as an article for an academic journal or provide material for presentations after the thesis has been completed.

The research project has been approved by the University of Waikato's Faculty of Education Ethics Committee and the research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Nigel Calder.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the ideas of the constructive developmental approach to professional learning within a secondary school setting. Through this research I hope to be able to answer: How might a differentiated professional learning approach that takes into account the developmental needs of the adult learner, influence their learning experience? It is hope that this research gives scope for educational leaders to re-think about how professional learning is delivered to colleagues and will benefit leaders who are seeking new ways of thinking about systems, about learning and the complexity of change.

My research design requires me to work alongside a leader in your school whom has the responsibility for the delivery of professional learning that is linked to a change initiative in the school, the identified person is Sheena Millar. I will be a participant in the research and provide coaching and facilitation support as she progresses through the change initiative with her team.

During the course of the research I will be using the following data tools:

- The Key Leader will keep a self-reflection diary for the duration of the project, approximately 6 months.
- Semi-structured interviews with:
 - The Key Leader at start, midpoint, and endpoint (June, August and November).
 - The team members – 'Leaders of Learning' at start and endpoint (June & November)
 - These semi-structured interviews will be audio-recorded for transcribing.
- Observation of three team meetings, these will be video-recorded (June, August and October 2015).

- It is estimated the time required for this research to be conducted would be;
30 hours for the Key Leader
5 hours for the team members

No person at the school will be identifiable in any way and only a broad description of the school will be given. This research is guided by the University's Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations (2008).

Every effort will be made to ensure anonymity, however this cannot be completely guaranteed. Pseudonyms will be used for the participants and description of the school involved will be broad, only identifying the school type i.e. co-educational secondary school and size. All research data will be kept under password protection on my home computer, and hard copies will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at my home for five years after the completion of the research project.

Once the research project has begun and participants have agreed to participate they are still entitled to withdraw or withdraw any information. Once the Key Leader has confirmed their transcripts it will no longer be possible for them to withdraw the transcripts. The team members will not be able to amend the focus group transcripts however they do have access to all material gathered that is relevant to them.

A digital copy of the thesis will be stored permanently at the University of Waikato, Research Commons and therefore will be accessible to the public to read.

If you have any further questions, please contact me using the details below. Please be aware that if you chose not to grant permission for this research to be carried out in your school, there will be negative repercussions.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this request.

Kind regards

Phillipa Woodward

Research Project: A Changing perspective: an examination of differentiated professional learning

I/we agree to the research as outlined in the introductory letter, to be conducted in [Name] High School

I/we would like an electronic copy of the thesis, once it is completed. YES/NO

_____ Researcher	_____ Date	_____ Signature
_____ Principal	_____ Date	_____ Signature

Contact Details:

Researcher: Phillipa Woodward

Phone: 0275554661

Email: p.woodward@eol.co.nz

Supervisor: Dr Nigel Calder

Phone: 07 5578753

Email: n.calder@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix D - Consent Form – Team Members

You are making a decision whether or not to participate in the research project as outlined on the information sheet. Your signature indicates that you have decided to participate in the research project.

Research Project: A Changing perspective: an examination of differentiated professional learning

Researcher: Phillipa Woodward, Masters of Educational Leadership student, University of Waikato

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the research project above and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I agree to take part in the research project outlined on the information sheet.
- I agree to being audio-recorded and video-recorded at the times outlined in the information sheet and I understand that the recordings will be transcribed.
- I understand that I will not be able to amend the focus group transcripts.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. However, I understand the focus group contributions cannot be withdrawn.
- I agree that my data gathered in this study may be used for future research publications, and/or presentations, and that under no circumstances will names, identities or any personal details be shared with anyone else.
- I understand that if I have any concerns about the research I can contact the researcher Phillipa Woodward in the first instance, or Dr Nigel Calder.
- I give permission for direct quotes to be used under a pseudonym.
- I understand that every effort to ensure anonymity will be kept, however, this cannot be guaranteed.
- I understand if I wish to obtain a digital copy of the thesis I can access this through the University of Waikato, Research Commons and that it is accessible to the public to read.

Researcher

Date

Signature

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Contact Details:

Researcher: Phillipa Woodward

Phone: 0275554661

Email: p.woodward@eol.co.nz

Supervisor: Dr Nigel Calder

Phone: 07 5578753

Email: n.calder@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix E - Consent Form – Key Leader

You are making a decision whether or not to participate in the research project as outlined on the information sheet. Your signature indicates that you have decided to participate in the research project.

Research Project: A Changing perspective: an examination of differentiated professional learning

Researcher: Phillipa Woodward, Masters of Educational Leadership student, University of Waikato

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the research project above and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I agree to take part in the research project outlined on the information sheet.
- I agree to being audio-recorded and video-recorded and the times outlined in the information sheet and I understand that the recordings will be transcribed.
- I understand I will be given a copy of the transcript and that I may add, delete, or have things changed.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. I also understand that data can only be withdrawn up until transcripts are signed.
- I agree that my data gathered in this study may be used for future research publications, and/or presentations, and that under no circumstances will names, identities or any personal details be shared with anyone else.
- I understand that if I have any concerns about the research I can contact the researcher Phillipa Woodward in the first instance, or Dr Nigel Calder.
- I give permission for direct quotes to be used under a pseudonym.
- I understand that every effort to ensure anonymity will be kept, however, this cannot be guaranteed.
- I understand if I wish to obtain a digital copy of the thesis I can access this through the University of Waikato, Research Commons and that it is accessible to the public to read.

Researcher

Date

Signature

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Contact Details:

Researcher: Phillipa Woodward

Phone: 0275554661

Email: p.woodward@eol.co.nz

Supervisor: Dr Nigel Calder

Phone: 07 5578753

Email: n.calder@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix F - Self-Reflection Diary

The researcher and Key Leader will complete their individual self-reflection diary at the conclusion of discussions that take place during the study. It will contain some general guiding questions that assist in the reflective process and will provide me with data that can inform the action research process and provide evidence for analysis.

Possible reflection prompts:

- Was my listening active?
- Did I attach my own meaning to their words instead of listening to what the other person means?
- Was I able to see beyond the content of the conversation and consider the structure of the participants' perspective making?
- Did I ask questions in such a way that required participants to go to the edge of their understanding? How responsive were my questions?
- What sense do I make of the learning space? Is the learning environment supporting transformation?
- Am I keeping an open mind here?
- What did I learn?
- How am I going to put that learning in to practice?
- Where did I struggle?
- What am I thinking about for next time?
- What do I need now?

Appendix G - Semi-Structured Interviews

This research requires participants to be part of an experiential process by the very nature of action research so their interpretation and meaning making contributes to the data being gathered. For that very reason I have opted to use semi-structured interviews at the beginning (to form the baseline), midpoint, and at the conclusion of the study with the Key Leader, and baseline and end point with the team members.

The interviews will be semi-structured and therefore the questions below are initial questions only, but are indicative of the types and tones of questions that might be used. Prompts will also be used to follow up the participants' responses.

Areas of Exploration

- Adults as learners
- Leadership practices
- Transformational learning environments
- Transformational learning – shift in what someone knows (informational learning) and a shift in how someone knows (transformational learning)

Initial Questions: *(italics are additional questions may use)*

KEY LEADER

- What is your team purpose and vision?
(What are the roles and responsibilities?)
- *Is this work Complicated? Complex?
Predictable/Unpredictable?*
- Do you consider your team to be a 'learning community'?
Outline some of the features that support your thinking around this?
- What does a 'learning community' mean to you?

What about the environment – holding environment – how could it be described

*Is this a diverse group of leaders? Why do you say this?
How are you responding to this diversity?*

- Thinking about our professional growth -what insights do you have about adults as learners? (Adult learning theory? Adult Developmental Theory?)

- How has the learning been for you so far? What have you been learning?
What has this meant for your
- What leadership practices are you using to support professional growth?
(Are they different now than before? Is there a need to change how leaders lead in to the future? – Future Oriented leaders) How do you know this?
- What are some of the things that are going well for you and the Leaders of Learning team?
- What are some of the things that aren't going so well for you and the Leaders of Learning team?
- What do you hope for – individually and collectively?
- Has there been times recently when you have been overwhelmed by circumstance, there seemed to be no right answer at all? What was that like? How did you navigate these waters?

Initial Questions: *(italics are additional questions may use)*

MIDDLE LEADERS

- What is your team purpose and vision?
(What are the roles and responsibilities?)
- *Is this work complex? Complicated?*
- What does a 'learning community' mean to you?
- Do you consider your team to be a 'learning community'?
Outline some of the features that support your thinking around this?

What about the environment – holding environment – how could it be described

*Are you a diverse group of leaders? Why do you say this?
How are you responding to this diversity?*
- Thinking about our professional growth -what insights do you have about adults as learners? Adult learning theory?
- How has the learning been for you so far? What have you been learning?
- What leadership practices are you using to support professional growth?
(Are they different now than before? Is there a need to change how leaders lead in to the future? – Future Oriented leaders)

What leadership practices are being used by [Key Leader] to support your professional growth?

- What are some of the things that are going well for you and the Leaders of Learning team?
- What are some of the things that aren't going so well for you and the Leaders of Learning team?
- What do you hope for – individually and collectively?

DOWN THE TRACK QUESTIONS – complexity

- What challenges/obstacles are you facing as you strive to support adult development?
- How do you support yourself and others to reach for a more experimental way of being? A safe to fail experimental way of being and be patient with others
- What gets in the way?
- Is there a group of people you aren't listening to?
- Which people aren't you listening to and learning from?
- What keeps you from that?

QUESTION BANK:

- How might understanding adults different ways of knowing be of help to them and enable them to better support the growth of the teachers they are coaching?
- How might they employ developmental ideas in to their work with teachers to help them grow?
- How might employing the pillar practices of teaming, collegial inquiry, engaging in leadership roles and mentoring help them to support the growth of individual teachers.
- How might these ideas help them understand what they, themselves, needed to grow & develop

Appendix H- Observations

By observing teams in action a researcher can gain great insight in to the dynamics of the group, the interplay of relationships and the values that are held by the group and individuals (Menter et al., 2011; Robinson & Lai, 2006). This observation tool compliments the semi-structured interviews (Menter et al., 2011), and provides me with feedback on the action research process, emerging ideas and issues. It will also provide rich reflections that will inform and shape my practice.

I have elected to carry out participant observations, capturing digitally three team meetings, approximately one hour in length at the beginning, midpoint and end of the research project. I have chosen to capture these meetings digitally as it allows me as a participant to be 'present' in the meeting not distracted by note taking and the ability to replay these observations will allow me to more accurately observe the dynamics, conversations and structures that exist.

Key aspects being observed: *Draft observation template*

Features	Detail	Notes
Listening skills	Authentic – not telling, accurate paraphrasing, evidence structure is more important than content, no judgment, gains meaning Active – body language, verbal cues	
Questioning	Responsive to developmental needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self sovereign-exploring others perspectives, thinking beyond their own needs & for interests of others • Socialised – exploring a distinction between what experts think and what participants think, possibilities for own ideas and vision • Self authoring – reflecting on own sense making, challenge assumptions, explore complex viewpoints • Self transforming- building on complexity, exploring multiples perspectives 	
Feedback	Responsive to developmental needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self sovereign - thinking beyond right & wrong, abstract thinking • Socialised – reflect on own beliefs, explore constructive ways to deal with conflict • Self authoring • Self transforming 	
Learning Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogic allowing for wondering, choices, insight, vulnerability, wholeness • Collaboration – teaming, questioning, problem solving, challenge perspectives/assumptions • Shared leadership roles • Collegial inquiry – shared exploration & learning • Coaching – support & challenge 	

Appendix I – Reflection Continuums: Key Leader

Semi-Structured Interviews: Key Leader

Continuums

Key: * at start
0 at midpoint
X at endpoint

Theme: Complexity

1. I understand complexity in education.

Strongly agree _____ Strongly disagree

2. I understand what skills are required to address complexity in education.

Strongly agree _____ Strongly disagree

3. The Leaders of Learning understand complexity in education.

Strongly agree _____ Strongly disagree

4. The Leaders of Learning understand what skills are required to address complexity in education.

Strongly agree _____ Strongly disagree

Theme: Adult as learners

5. What is your understanding of adult developmental theory?

Nil _____ A great deal

6. What impact has the theory of adult development had on your practice?

Nil _____ A great deal

7. How important to you consider taking a developmental approach to professional learning?

Not important _____ Very important

8. Do you think about the learning diversity of your colleagues when planning and leading professional learning?

Not at all _____ A great deal

What are your thoughts about this adult developmental theory?

Strengths /challenges

Will this theory influence your leadership practices when working with others in the future?

What sort of support would assist you in the future?

Theme: Implementing change

9. Being equipped to lead change, where do you rate yourself?

Not equipped _____ Well Equipped

Theme: Growth & Transformation

10. How important do you consider your own developmental growth as a leader?

Not important _____ Very important

11. How important do you consider an adult developmental theory approach to supporting the professional learning and growth of others?

Not important _____ Very important

Additional Question

Have you made any new discoveries about yourself?

- about leading?
- about others?

How do you know this?

How if at all, are you applying theories of adult developmental theory with LOL?

Is it different now than before?

How do you know this?

Is there a need to change how leaders lead in to the future?

Theme: Leadership Practices:

12. Has your perception of your role changed?

Not at all _____ A great deal

13. Creating the environment that supports professional growth and change, how important is this to you?

Not important _____ Very important

Additional Questions:

1. What aspects of this project have supported your leadership development?
Can you share some examples?
2. What have been some of the challenges in this project?
3. What challenges/obstacles are you facing as you strive to support adult development?
 - What could support you even more?
4. How might understanding adults different ways of knowing be of help to LOL and enable them to better support the growth of the teachers they are supporting?
5. How if at all are LOL applying adult developmental theories to their leadership practice?
6. What challenges/obstacles did they encounter in their efforts to support adult developmental? How are they dealing with these challenges?
7. What kind of supports would help them do this work even better and in ways that would feel more satisfying? From whom would they like to receive this support?
8. Any other feedback you would like to share?

Appendix J – Reflection Continuums: Middle Leaders

Semi-Structured Interviews: Leaders of Learning

Continuums

Key: * at start
X at endpoint

Theme: Complexity

Frame in regard to unpredictable work they are involved in

1. I understand complexity in education.

Strongly agree _____ Strongly disagree

2. I understand what skills are required to address complexity in education.

Strongly agree _____ Strongly disagree

What about Sheena do you think she understands complexity and the skills required?

Theme: Adult as learners

3. What is your understanding of adult developmental theory?

Nil _____ A great deal

4. What impact has the theory of adult development had on your practice?

Nil _____ A great deal

5. How important to you consider taking a developmental approach to professional learning?

Not important _____ Very important

6. Do you think about the learning diversity of your colleagues when planning and leading professional learning?

Not at all _____ A great deal

Tease out if their understanding of diversity and differentiation has changed since start of the year?

What are your thoughts about this adult developmental theory?
strengths /challenges

Will this theory influence your leadership practices when working with others in the future?

What sort of support would assist you in the future?

Theme: Implementing change

7. Being equipped to lead change, where do you rate yourself?

Not equipped _____ Well Equipped

How do you know this?

Other comments- highlights/challenges ahead?

Theme: Growth & Transformation

8. How important do you consider your own developmental growth as a leader?

Not important _____ Very important

9. How important do you consider an adult developmental theory approach to supporting the professional learning and growth of others?

Not important _____ Very important

What is your definition of differentiation now?

Theme: Leadership Practices:

10. Has your perception of your role changed?

Not at all _____ A great deal

11. Creating the environment that supports professional growth and change, how important is this to you?

Not important _____ Very important

Additional Questions:

What leadership practices has Sheena been using to support your leadership growth?

Are they different now than before?

Have you made any new discoveries about leading?
Yourself? Others?

What do you hope for?

Any other feedback you would like to share?