THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

Secondary Head Teachers as leaders for learning:

perceptions and practices of leadership focused on learning and teaching.

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Moray House School of Education
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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where states otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Candidate's Signature

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Abstract

The key rationale behind this primarily instrumental case study (in three Scottish secondary schools) was the need to comprehend more clearly the scope, nature and influence of secondary Head Teachers' leadership for learning. This is generally understood as leadership that is directed at the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers. Crucially, it is also concerned with influencing the conditions that nurture and support these. Leadership for learning underpins the Scottish *Standard for Headship* (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012), designed to support the learning and self-evaluation of Head Teachers. Within existing literature there is a need for more information on the practice of leadership for learning, particularly around what it is that Head Teachers actually *do* in practice that is focused on improving learning and teaching (Kalman and Arslan, 2016; Hitt and Player, 2018; Nuemerski, 2013). This study provides a more detailed understanding of the *how* of leadership focused on learning and teaching.

This study explored how three Scottish secondary Head Teachers conceptualised their role as leaders for learning in their schools, their perceptions around the operationalisation of this role and the scope and nature of this leadership according to teachers. Using a qualitative interpretivist approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Head Teachers and teachers from three very different state schools. Each Head Teacher was selected on the basis of evidence which indicated that they were both very knowledgeable about leadership for learning and also that it was a key focus of their practice. Head Teacher perceptions were sought through two interviews each, one at the start of the research process in each school and a final one, conducted on completion of all the teacher interviews. A total of 19 teachers were interviewed and data from these interviews, and the Head Teacher interviews, were analysed thematically. Teacher respondents were representative of roles across the school: unpromoted teachers, middle leaders and Depute Head Teachers. In addition, emails from several interviewees following the interview process were added to the data base. Documentation was also gathered in the interest of providing context to help make sense of some of the data

A number of key and overlapping themes were identified from the interviews. An emerging theme from all participants' testimonies was the identification of each Head Teacher as a leader with improving learning and teaching as their key priority, particularly through an inclusive focus on meeting the needs of each and every pupil. The development of a shared whole school vision about what effective learning and teaching meant in practice was prioritised in all three schools, with particular examples of each Head Teacher's actions in this area. This was supported by a Head Teacher focus on growing capacity and capability across the schools through a variety of mechanisms including: supporting teacher learning, collaboration and engagement; engaging the middle leader structure; and endeavouring to ensure coherence across concurrent developments. A marked feature of each Head Teacher's work was ensuring that all of these were focused in the service of improving learning and teaching.

Four themes arose from the interviews which appear particularly significant to the way each Head Teacher led developments in learning and teaching, themes that are either under-theorised in the educational leadership literature or are areas of contention. These were: i) Head Teachers' frequent engagement in reciprocal dialogues with teachers around learning and teaching matters; ii) each Head Teacher staying in close proximity to the practice of learning and teaching in a number of significant ways; iii) the important role of each Head Teacher's knowledge and understanding about learning and teaching; and related to this, iv) the Head Teacher's role as lead learner in the school. This study found that all four underpinned each Head Teacher's leadership for learning, thinking and practice.

In the present Scottish policy climate, where Head Teachers are expected to be leaders for learning, this study provides timely empirical evidence of how some Head Teachers are putting this into operation with, and through, the colleagues for whom they have leadership responsibility. Using the perceptions of both teachers and Head Teachers, this study adds to knowledge by providing deeper understanding of Head Teacher leadership for learning practice in the Scottish secondary context. It provides detailed analysis of particular key practices, highlighting the importance and enactment of some key reciprocal relationships focused on learning and teaching that each Head Teacher had with teachers.

Lay Summary

This PhD study was undertaken to find out more about the leadership of Scottish Head Teachers in secondary schools. Specifically, it was interested in how Head Teachers practise leadership that is focused on improving the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers. This includes how they influence the conditions in the school that support and improve learning and teaching. Head Teachers in three secondary schools in different areas of Scotland were interviewed along with a total of 17 teachers across the schools. The Head Teachers were asked about how they made sense of their role in improving learning and teaching and in what ways they did this. The teachers were asked what actions their Head Teacher took in terms of supporting and improving learning and teaching and what were the particular features of these actions. The data from all the interviews were analysed and themes and practices were identified.

The study found that the Head Teachers made sense of, and practised, leadership focused on learning and teaching in similar ways. Improving learning and teaching was their priority, particularly meeting the needs of each and every pupil. With their teachers they developed a shared vision of what effective pupil learning and effective teaching meant in practice in classrooms. Each Head Teacher worked to improve the conditions in the school to support learning and teaching, attending to issue of developing capacity and capability. They prioritised teacher learning around more effective teaching, developed opportunities for more teacher collaboration and sharing, and enabled opportunities for teachers to influence developments in the school beyond their classrooms. They supported their middle leaders, who were responsible for class teachers, to work to improve learning and teaching in the subjects.

Four features of the Head Teachers' approach to learning and teaching were particularly important in how they enacted their leadership. These were:

- they had frequent conversations with their teachers around learning and teaching matters;
- they stayed in close touch with the practice of learning and teaching in a number of significant ways;

- their knowledge and understanding about learning and teaching; and,
- their role as lead learner in the school.

A marked feature of each Head Teacher's leadership was how they worked to bring together a number of different, developments, functions, practices and structures in a coherent way in order to maximise the impact on learning and teaching

Using the perceptions of both teachers and Head Teachers, this study contributes to knowledge in the field of school leadership by providing deeper understanding of Head Teacher leadership for learning practice in a Scottish secondary context. This research is particularly timely as Head Teachers' practice focused on learning and teaching is a priority at national policy level in Scotland. This study makes a number of recommendations for Head Teachers' practice, professional learning programmes, policy and further research.

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Finally, my thanks are due to my wife Anne who provided unremitting support so patiently as I disappeared into my studies. Also to my mother Sheila, who always believed I could and would accomplish this thesis.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my grandchildren, Dylan Kit Man Thomson and Isobel Choi Man Thomson, and to all the teachers and Head Teachers who will guide and nurture their learning and well-being as they journey towards adulthood.

Acronyms

BGE   Broad General Education

CfE   Curriculum for Excellence

CL   Curriculum Leader (middle leader role in secondary schools)

CLPL   Career Long Professional Learning

DHT   Depute Head Teacher

ELT   Extended Leadership Team

FTE   Full Time Equivalent (number of school teaching staff including senior leaders)

GTCs   General Teaching Council Scotland

HT   Head Teacher

INSET   In-service day (a number of these days occur in the school year where teachers come together for collaboration and professional learning while the school is closed to pupils)

NIF   National Improvement Framework

OECD   Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PR&D   Professional Review and Development

RIC   Regional Improvement Collaborative

SED   Scottish Education Department

SIP   School Improvement Plan

SLT   Senior Leadership Team

SfH   Standard for Headship

SIMD   Social Index of Multiple Deprivation

Chapter 1: Introduction
Context, Purpose and Layout of Thesis

1.1 Introduction

This thesis provides an account of three Scottish secondary Head Teachers' leadership, and its relationship to pupils' learning and teachers' teaching, as well as the conditions that nurture and support these, such as the importance of teacher learning. The aim was to explore Head Teacher leadership for learning from the perspectives of Head Teachers and teachers within three schools. This was achieved through an exploration of the perceptions and understandings of the Head Teachers and nineteen of their colleagues.

School leadership centred on learning and teaching has become a focus of both scholarship and policy in recent years. In the Scottish context, where schools are under various pressures to improve learning and teaching, the Head Teacher is perceived as a critical agent in this process of improvement. This context provides the rationale for this study: the need to comprehend more clearly the scope, nature and influence of secondary Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice.

This chapter provides background to the research, outlining its focus, specific contexts and organisation. It will firstly address my interest in the topic as well as the aims and purpose of the study. Particular features of the Scottish context are highlighted, including historical and current policy developments. The significance of study and delimitations are then addressed. Finally, I provide a brief summary of the key issues discussed in each of the chapters

1.2 My Interest

How secondary Head Teachers enact their leadership focused on the learning of pupils and teaching of teachers is a key interest for me. As a former secondary Head Teacher and local authority Head of Service, with responsibilities for school improvement across many schools, I have first-hand experience of the complexities and challenges that secondary schools face in improving learning and teaching. This can be particularly challenging for all Head Teachers given the 'myriad other pressures and everyday 'busyness'' (MacBeath and Townsend, 2011: 8) they face

in their working day. In my role as a secondary Head Teacher this 'busyness', if I was not careful, could divert my energies and focus from learning and teaching improvement into the many demands of administrative work and daily problem solving.

Like all Head Teachers I had responsibility for the quality of the teaching and learning across the school, an area of work that was gaining a sharper focus at a national and local level in Scotland while I was a Head Teacher. For instance, Head Teachers are tasked in the latest edition of Education Scotland's *How Good is Our School?* (Education Scotland, 2015: 7) to 'ensure educational outcomes for all learners are improving.' This publication provides a framework both for school inspections and school evaluation and improvement. Yet how Head Teachers understand and translate policy documents like this into practice, especially with regard to learning and teaching issues, will vary and have different effects. Head Teachers' perceptions of their role are important as these can affect the enactment of their leadership (Torrance and Humes, 2015).

This variation was apparent in 2003 when I took a 14 month secondment from my Head Teacher post to the *Teachers' Agreement Communication Team* (TAC Team) set up by the Scottish Executive and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to help support the delivery of the recommendations from A *Teaching Profession for the 21ˢᵗ Century* (Scottish Executive, 2001)*.* This was designed to reform the pay, conditions and working practices of teachers. The role involved visiting schools, both primary and secondary, throughout Scotland and talking to Head Teachers and teachers about their leadership. While these conversations focused on issues such as new management structures and teacher professional learning, discussions also extended to matters related to improving teaching and learning and the opportunities the changes might create. It appeared that some Head Teachers were closer to the practice of learning and teaching in their schools than others and more engaged in activities designed to improve both. This was reflected by one primary teacher, in her first year of teaching, who talked about conversations that she had with her Head Teacher that had helped her transform her teaching. This particular conversation caused me to reflect deeply on my Head Teacher role in relation to improving learning and teaching and my effectiveness in my own secondary school. While the secondary context is very different from primary

schools (Southworth, 2011a; Leithwood, 2012), and in the primary context 'the exercise of leadership for student achievement appears to be much easier' (Louis, Dretzke and Wahlstrom, 2010: 330), this conversation and others like it acted as a catalyst in my thinking around secondary Scottish Head Teachers' leadership focused on pupils' learning and teachers' teaching. In my Edinburgh University roles, firstly as Director of the Scottish Centre for Studies in School Administration (SCSSA), running professional learning leadership programmes both at home and abroad, and my current role, delivering Master's leadership courses, I have had similar conversations with Head Teachers and other leaders with whom I work. While there appears to be a greater awareness of the importance of learning and teaching in relation to their leadership role, compared to my time in the TAC Team, there are still very different interpretations of what is means and how it should be carried out. This is particularly the case with secondary Head Teachers. This has added to my intense curiosity around how secondary school Head Teachers conceptualise and enact their leadership role in relation to effective learning and teaching, as well as the perceptions of teachers around this role.

1.3 Aims and Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to develop deep understanding of leadership for learning as practised by three Head Teachers in Scottish secondary school settings. Specifically this is about comprehending more clearly the scope, nature and influence of secondary Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice through a collective case study (Stake, 1995), primarily instrumental in purpose but also exploratory (see section 4.3), focused on the perceptions of both Head Teachers and teachers in three secondary schools.   The Head Teachers were selected because they were identified as being both knowledgeable about, and actively involved in, leadership practices focused on the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers. Particularities such as these and indeed the nature of the case study approach itself restrict any claims to generalisability that I might make as my case study schools do not have representativeness (Connell and Burgess, 2016). However, generalisability was not my target. Rather I was looking for transferability (Erlandson *et al.*, 1993; Shenton, 2004) where the themes and practices arising from this study may have relevance to schools in similar circumstances, to Head Teachers elsewhere focused on improving learning and teaching and to academic

understanding. The following research questions guided my research into the leadership for learning practice of the Head Teachers:

1. How do secondary Head Teachers conceptualise their role as leaders of learning and teaching in their schools?
2. How do Head Teachers perceive their operationalisation of this role?
3. According to teachers, what is the scope and nature of this leadership?

1.4 The Context of Research

The past twenty years have heralded a period of unprecedented change and upheaval in Scottish schools, often both complicated and ambiguous (Priestley, Minty and Eager, 2014). Changes in teachers' conditions of service through the national agreement, *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* (Scottish Executive, 2001), obliged each teacher to undertake an additional 35 hours per session for professional development based on their needs but *also* with regard to school and national priorities. This professional development had to be agreed with their line manager (Scottish Executive, 2001), and for most unpromoted teachers in secondaries this meant their middle leader, the head of department who now had a new and potentially significant role in affecting the professional learning of their colleagues (the issue of teachers' professional learning is developed in greater detail in section 3.3.2). Moreover, the national agreement's job sizing for all promoted posts initiated a reconsideration of the traditional head of department role, where a promoted middle leader was normally in charge of just one subject area. As a result, a growing number of Scottish secondaries restructured their middle leaders' roles, reducing dramatically the total number of posts and moving to a new middle leadership role of Curriculum Leader with responsibility for more than one subject team, often with whole school responsibilities. This has been challenging for a Scottish secondary school culture with strong traditions of the independent subject led by a lone head of department. However, one of the few studies to investigate this development in a Scottish secondary context found that the new faculty structure of several subjects under one middle leader resulted in 'narrowing the gap between middle and senior management and distancing the role from classroom practice and the subject.' (Priestley, 2011: 16).

Alterations to teacher conditions were matched by curricular change designed to place a central focus on pupil learning through the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), initiated in 2004 (Scottish Executive, 2004). This national reform concentrated on achieving greater curriculum cohesion, improving pupil motivation, health and well-being and developing a range of skills for lifelong learning (Humes, 2013; Priestley and Minty, 2013; Thorburn, 2017). It envisioned a more inclusive curriculum focused on pupils' individual needs built around four capacities highlighting 'successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.' (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2005: 2). It moved the focus from a centrally prescribed curriculum (Priestley and Humes, 2010) to one emphasising teachers' freedom to adapt curricular advice to their own contexts (Drew, Priestley and Michael, 2016; Education Scotland, 2013; Priestley and Humes, 2010). The formal implementation of CfE in schools started in 2010 (OECD, 2015), initiating a period of unprecedented curricular upheaval in secondary schools. This saw secondary staff adapting and developing new programmes through the Broad General Education (BGE) (from the early years to the third year of secondary school) and implementing new National Qualifications from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) in the senior phase (the last 3 years of secondary school). All of this occurred at a time of restricted resourcing across Scottish local authorities (Black *et al.*, 2016).

Central to these curricular developments has been the role of leadership, explicitly couched in policy documentation in terms of its importance to pupils' learning and teachers' teaching. For instance, the Scottish Government report, Teaching Scotland's Future (Donaldson, 2010: 2), known as the Donaldson Report, states that:

> The two most important and achievable ways in which school education can realise the high aspirations Scotland has for its young people are through supporting and strengthening, firstly, the quality of teaching, and secondly, the quality of leadership.

Policymakers' interest in school leadership, both in Scotland and internationally, has been stimulated by the belief that the Head Teacher's leadership, and more widely distributed forms of leadership throughout the school, can have significant effects both in improving learning and teaching in general (Chen and Ke, 2014) but also in reducing educational disparities between different pupil groups (Robinson, Lloyd

and Rowe, 2008; Kaparou and Bush, 2016). This issue of disparity is the focus of *The National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education* (NIF) (Scottish Government, 2016a), an ambitious set of Scottish Government priorities. NIF aims to bring down the gap in attainment between the most and least disadvantaged pupils, as well as addressing a number of other outcomes, with the Head Teacher conceptualised as crucial to the process through establishing effective learning and teaching (Scottish Government, 2016b).

Yet 45 years earlier, this focus on the role of the Head Teacher in Scotland on learning and teaching was not so clear. A 1971 Scottish Education Department report (SED) (SED, 1971), then the national organisation in charge of state education, highlighted a study of 44 secondary schools showing the work of secondary Head Teachers was dominated by administrative duties. The report made few references to the needs of children, only one reference to teachers and no references at all to the terms leader, leadership and learning. At this stage the link, in policy documents at least, between the secondary Head Teacher and pupil learning and teachers' teaching was tenuous. From the 1980s onwards a number of Scottish educational policy documents were making connections between effective leadership and management, though still primarily management, and the effective learning of pupils (HM Inspectors of Schools, 1984; 1988; 1989). A 1984 inspectorate report, *Learning and Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools: School Management* (HM Inspectors of Schools,1984: 18), states that management teams in Scottish secondary schools 'require knowledge of the practice current in the school in the learning areas – classrooms, workshops, laboratories…'. While this highlights an increasing focus on learning and teaching, it is not clear as to whether the knowledge being referred to means simply knowing what is happening across the school or rather needing to have a deep understanding around pedagogy. However, the specific role of the Head Teachers' work is cautiously described as follows, 'to the extent that they make it their business to undertake close study of teachers and pupils at work, they judge the effectiveness of the learning and teaching process.' (HM Inspectors of Schools, 1984: 24).

Over 20 years later the policy message is much clearer, with a plethora of national initiatives and policy documents focusing and describing the role of Head Teacher much more closely in terms of leadership for learning. Head Teachers are expected

to provide 'appropriate vision, leadership and direction to ensure high standards of education for all the children and young people in their care so that they can become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.' (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2005: 2). This represents an increasingly cohesive approach within policy documentation between learning and teaching *and* expectations of the role of Head Teachers, with leadership for learning becoming a cornerstone of Scottish educational policy (Forde, 2011). The Scottish education inspectors' publication *Leadership for learning: The challenges of leading in a time of change* (HMIe, 2007: 50) reflects this, stating that 'leadership for learning means putting learning and learners at the centre of the agenda and remain focused on that'. This publication offers two questions that school leaders should ask of their work:

> Where can I intervene to make the most impact on learning?
> What are the 'high-leverage activities' that will make the most difference?
>
> (HMIe, 2007: 81)

Its guidance, in regards to answers to these questions, includes: classroom observation and feedback to teachers: rigorous use of data to inform action priorities; tackling of pupil progress; support for teachers in teams to develop provision; and professional learning for teachers targeted at improving learning and teaching. While this does not help Head Teachers in *how* they address each of these areas, it provides a level of specific detail around the functions of leaders focused on learning that was notably absent in a number of SED publications in the 1970s. Moreover, coming from the hugely influential Scottish inspectorate, this had the potential to significantly influence both policy and leadership practice in Scottish schools. As is shown in the literature review chapters 2 and 3, these specific areas of guidance from the inspectors reflect key issues arising from the leadership for learning literature.

In recent years, the role of the Head Teacher has become critical to the Scottish Government's drive to improve the learning of all pupils in general and, in particular, those pupils who face poverty related issues that restrict their learning and achievement (Scottish Government, 2016a; Scottish Government, 2017). John Swinney, the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Education, in a 2017 speech, argued

that 'it is vital we invest in our head teachers and support them to deliver superb schooling for children in Scotland.' (BBC News, 2017). This purpose is reflected in the *Standard for Headship* (SfH) (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012: 21) which outlines a pivotal function of the Head Teacher as a leader for learning, directed towards improving the learning of pupils by developing 'pedagogic practices across the school.' This standard puts values for leaders at its core, values that 'drive an unswerving personal commitment to all learners' intellectual, social and ethical growth and well-being.' (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012: 6). This is a wider conception of learning for a Head Teacher than one focused on exam and test results. Yet standards like the SfH are themselves, open to interpretation (Rigby, 2014), illustrating a tension inherent in both national and local policies. Head Teachers are under considerable pressure in Scotland through the NIF to close the attainment gap. In striving to meet the needs of disadvantaged youngsters there is a danger that Head Teachers will reconstrue what is a social justice agenda as 'closing the performance gap on high-stakes standardized tests.' (Wrigley, Thomson and Lingard, 2012, 20). This is an approach that Forde and Torrance (2017: 112) are concerned leads to a focus on exam support for identified pupils rather than a 'fundamental change in the curriculum, teaching and learning processes and the wider culture that shapes the lived experiences of learners in schools'. These tensions reflect the wider context of globalisation influences on the education policies of countries around the world, influences from which Scotland is not immune (Lingard and Sellar, 2014; Mowat, 2019). Mowat (commissioned monograph in preparation) describes a neo-liberal agenda driving much education policy at the international level, which both impacts on the Scottish education system in general and influences schools in particular. This agenda emphasises performativity, focused on the demands 'of competition, efficiency and accountability' (Edwards Jr., 2015: 413). The National Improvement Framework reflects this performativity with dominating discourses around 'outcomes, standards, 'excellence' and quality, 'robust and consistent evidence' (informed by data to be collected and evidenced by those at the chalk face) and the introduction of Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) administered to children as young as five-years old.' (Mowat, commissioned monograph in preparation:19).

Globalisation influences are encapsulated by studies that make performance comparisons between different countries' schools systems (Forde and Torrance,

2017). These include the two Mckinsey reports (Barber and Mourshed, 2007; Mourshed, Chijoke and Barber, 2010) and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) sizable scale standardised testing 'to measure and compare educational achievements within and across nations' (Maddox, 2019:1) through, for example, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2014). As Smith (2016:9) suggests, 'testing as a policy tool has become legitimized within international educational development to measure quality in the vast majority of countries worldwide'. The international emphasis on 'measurable data from performance testing' (Maddox, 2019:1) significantly influences individual national education systems, whether their national educational policies or the assessment, curricula and teaching practices in schools (Smith, 2016). An open letter from academics across the world in 2014 (Andrews *et al.,* 2014: np.) to Andreas Schleicher, director of PISA, highlighted the negative effects of the PISA performance comparisons between different countries such as the increasing practice of standardised testing in different countries and included:

> … a shift of attention to short-term fixes designed to help a country quickly climb the rankings, despite research showing that enduring changes in education practice take decades, not a few years, to come to fruition.

Moreover, for Labaree (2014) this testing regime is focused on measuring the skills that are determined to be important economically, those that pupils require to contribute to economic growth.

The importance of the economic dimension to testing is reflected through Scotland's engagement in the 2012 round of PISA sampling. Here, the then Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, in a video for Scottish pupils entitled *PISA 2012 - Representing Your Country*, urged pupils to do their best in the test for Scotland. In the video the Cabinet Secretary argued that this would result in improved investment in the country and better job prospects for them. This prioritising of the economic benefits reflects a human capital conceptualisation of school education (Harris and Jones, 2015), envisioning the importance of pupil learning in terms of a nation's economic success (Zaida, 2018). Saunders (2010: 54), writing in the context of Higher Education, describes this latter issue as 'meeting the needs of the market, technical education and job training, and revenue generation...' The challenge here is not that linking education to economic growth is

inherently a negative thing but rather that this is at the expense of what should be other important drivers for pupil learning. The international academics open letter to Schleicher (Guardian, 2014: np.) makes clear the concerns in this regard, highlighting that:

> By emphasising a narrow range of measurable aspects of education, Pisa takes attention away from the less measurable or immeasurable educational objectives like physical, moral, civic and artistic development, thereby dangerously narrowing our collective imagination regarding what education is and ought to be about.

As regards the Scottish context, similar concerns were highlighted in 2017 by the International Council of Education Advisers (2017b: np.), a panel of experts appointed by the Scottish Government, who argued that in the Scottish context 'there was a risk that education policy was moving away from the "whole child" approach of CfE towards a more specific, measurable approach as required by the NIF'. The advisers made another telling comment from their observations on Scottish education, arguing that there were three key areas central to reform success, improving pedagogy, expanding leadership capacity and delivering increased collaboration at all levels in the education system. These areas will be absolutely crucial if Scotland wants to achieve the ambitions it has to create a world class education system.' (International Council of Education Advisers, 2017a: np).

In spite of a period of sustained focus on learning, teaching and leadership in Scottish schools, it seems much still needs to be done. Moreover, the 1971 SED concerns (SED, 1971) around Scottish secondary Head Teachers being too focused on administration still remain an issue. A report from the OECD (OECD:2015) highlighted that Scottish Head Teachers were experiencing increasing difficulties through the addition of more executive duties as well as new responsibilities around children's services with negative impact on their ability to focus on both pupil and teacher professional learning. In this context, John Swinney (BBC News, 2017: np.), the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Education, expressed the wish in 2017 that Head Teachers should 'not be chief administrator of their school', proposing measures to reduce this burden and provide Head Teachers with increased 'power over decisions on learning and teaching.' This tension between the role of the Head Teacher as leader for learning as opposed to chief administrator will be dealt with in further detail in chapter 2.

1.5 Significance of Study

Through enabling Head Teachers to talk about their leadership focused on learning and teaching, the reasons for their actions and descriptions of what they do, this study makes an important contribution to the field of educational literature. The lack of qualitative studies using evaluations from Head Teachers on how they operationalise their leadership for learning (Kalman and Arslan, 2016) indicates that a more detailed understanding on the *how* of leadership for learning is required from this perspective. Importantly, it also listens to the voices of the teachers who are affected, evidencing their perceptions of what their Head Teachers do in practice. This is especially important as there is a lack of research on 'what ways the key stake-holders view effective school leadership.' (Odhiambo and Hii, 2012: 233). These perceptions, from both teachers and Head Teachers, help develop deeper understandings of Head Teachers' leadership for learning as practised across three particular secondary school contexts. For example, through exemplifying how Head Teachers create a collective vision around effective learning and teaching by being both directive and collaborative, and the perceptions of teachers within this process along with their sense of ownership. Understandings such as this are not drawn out by the *Standard for Headship* which lacks elaboration and development (Torrance and Humes, 2013).

A lack of elaboration is found in other key policy documentation. For instance, *How Good Is Our School?* (Education Scotland, 2015), underpins school inspections and is a quality assurance document that Head Teachers are expected to use as they focus on issues to do with learning, teaching and school improvement. Yet, while highlighting the importance of developing a collective vision it provides little or no guidance for Head Teachers on how to achieve this or how to negotiate the challenges of working with a diverse range of staff colleagues in the particular contexts of their schools. This study gives a range of insights into processes such as this as they relate to leadership for learning. The diagram below, figure 1, provides some examples of these insights from my research findings which will be developed in greater detail in chapters, 5, 6 and 7.

Figure 1.1 : Head Teacher leadership for learning practice diagram

Each of the boxes below highlights particular and overlapping aspects of the three Head Teachers' thinking and practice emerging from the findings. A focus on learning and teaching underpins Head Teachers' practice and their work around building capacities and coherence. Proximity to learning and teaching practice and the use of open two-way dialogues help ensure each Head Teacher develops coherence across different leadership for learning activities. This coherence is designed to ensure maximum impact on learning and teaching.
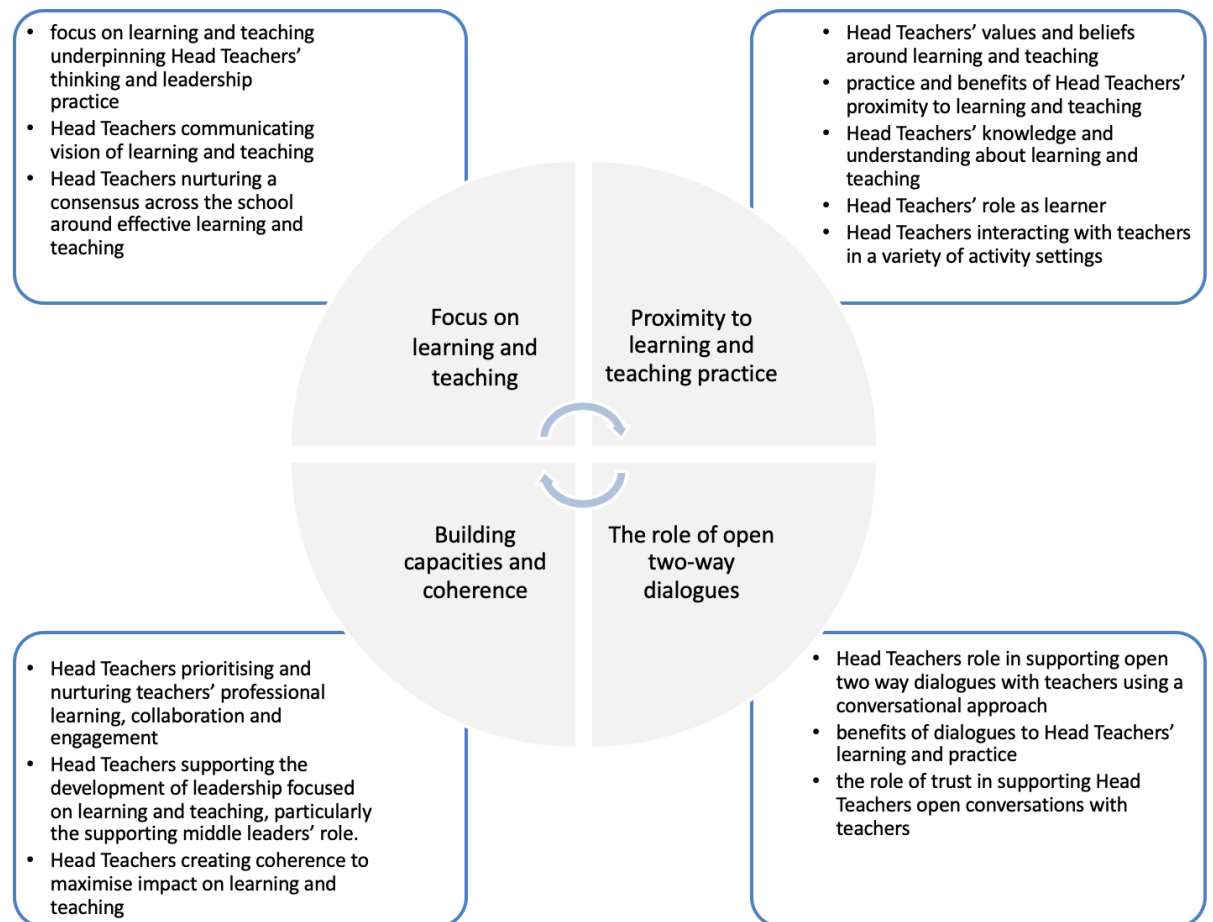
These insights are of importance as there is still only a limited understanding around what Head Teachers actually *do* in practice that is focused on improvements to learning and teaching (Hitt and Player, 2018; Nuemerski, 2013; Southworth, 2011; Spillane, 2006; Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008) in true-to-life settings (Simons, 2009). According to Wahlstrom and Louis (2008: 464) there is only a 'limited amount of research that directly links policies and practices of leaders at the school level to

high-quality instruction in the classroom' and Nuemerski (2013: 336) is able to say that 'our knowledge of instructional leadership in relation to teaching and learning is in its infancy'.

This study provides timely empirical evidence on how some secondary Head Teachers are enacting leadership for learning at a time when there has been increased policy pressures on leaders in this area. Moreover, recent pronouncements by the OECD (2015), the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (BBC News, 2017) and reports from international advisers (International Council of Education Advisers (2017a, b), all highlight the importance of leadership focused on learning and teaching, but impart a sense that much more needs to be done. This study provides deeper understanding of Scottish secondary Head Teacher practice through detailed analysis of particular leadership for learning behaviours, describing the benefits and processes involved in a range of Head Teacher reciprocal relationships with teachers focused on learning and teaching. With the research limited on how this crucial role is specifically enacted by Head Teachers (Hitt and Player, 2018), especially in the Scottish context, my detailed qualitative case study approach addresses the *how*, developing fresh insights around leadership for learning as practiced by three Head Teachers in a secondary school context. This adds greater specificity and understanding to key areas of existing research and literature, with implications for both practice and policy in a Scottish context and beyond.

1.6 Delimitations of Study

There are a number of delimitations concerned with this study. Firstly, while there is a range of similar terms, explored in chapter 2 (2.4.1), to describe a Head Teacher's leadership focused on learning and teaching, I use the term leadership for learning, a term widely used in the Scottish context. My working definition that I use in this thesis to describe leadership for learning, is leadership that is focused on the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers as well as, crucially, influencing the conditions that nurture and support these. These conditions are crucial and include attending to the learning not just of the pupils, but all those who support pupil learning; teachers, leaders and parents (Dempster, 2009), and even the institution itself (MacBeath, 2009). This is at the centre of leadership for learning principles developed by the *Leadership for Learning: the Cambridge Network,* a research

programme originally involving school practitioners and researchers across eight countries (Dempster *et al*., 2017; MacBeath *et al.*, 2018), where the focus is on supporting the right 'conditions for learning for everyone.' (Swaffield, 2011:1062). The Cambridge principles are explained in greater detail in section 4.4.3 and the role of the Head Teacher as learner is developed in section 3.2.1. However I am mindful that the term leadership for learning can be used to mean different things in both the literature and policy. For instance, early conceptions of instructional leadership, a precursor to leadership for learning, focused narrowly on the teaching of teachers (see section 2.4.1) as opposed to wider conceptions of learning that included the importance of the professional learning of teachers (see section 3.3.2). Another example of how leadership for learning can mean different things is highlighted in the discussion in section 1.4 which outlines some of the tensions around which learning is prioritised by schools, one with a concern over measurable results from tests and exams or one concerned with a broader range of learning as envisioned by the CfE. The issue of what pupil learning will be returned to in section 2.4.4. As will be seen in later chapters (6.2 and 7.2) all the Head Teachers shared a particular conception of learning.

Secondly, there are issues around terminology. I use the term Head Teacher to cover a range of terms that are used in the literature such as principal or administrator. However, the field is dominated by literature, especially from the North American sector, where principal is the preferred term. While I use the term Head Teacher interchangeably for principal, there are occasions where the term principal is used, where the context demands its use or it is contained in a quote. In addition, I use the term teachers to include both unpromoted teachers and promoted teachers such as Curriculum Leaders (CL), a middle leadership role, and Deputy Head Teacher (DHT), a senior leadership role. Where the context demands, I specify particular roles and in chapters 5 and 6 I use the following notations: unpromoted teacher (T); Curriculum Leader (CL) and Deputy Head Teacher (DHT).

Finally, the important role resourcing plays in terms of improved pupil learning has been identified in the literature Robinson (2007). Yet this issue was not prominent during the interviews with Head Teachers and staff, and as a result, while touched upon, is not addressed in depth in my literature review. A similar situation arises with parental engagement around their children's learning. This will briefly be

addressed in the literature review but did not emerge as a key issue across the interviews.

1.7 Outline of Thesis

In this chapter I have described the aims and the context to the research, outlining the policy context in Scotland, both historical and current, as it pertains to leadership focused on learning and teaching. Finally, I described the significance and delimitations of the study.

Chapter 2 is the first of two literature review chapters and addresses broad issues in order to provide an overview of leadership for learning; its key themes and key practices with which it is associated, along with some contentious issues. The chapter examines leadership as a process of influence and highlights a number of general leadership theories. The implications of a leadership for learning focus for a Head Teacher's practice are interrogated along with issues arising from the use of different terminology describing leadership focused on learning and teaching. Leadership practices identified from research as core to a leadership focus on learning and teaching are examined, along with a discussion on differing conceptions of pupil learning. Finally, I demonstrate how a Head Teacher's leadership focused on learning and teaching is a complex and challenging process.

Chapter 3 explores literature in response to particular issues arising from the data and is more focused on exploring leadership practices in detail. I evaluate three areas in which there are gaps or a lack of detail in the literature. Firstly, the problematical concept of Head Teacher as lead learner. Secondly, the role of open dialogues that Head Teachers have with teachers. As will be demonstrated both have implications for how a Head Teacher practices leadership focused on learning and teaching. Thirdly, I examine the contentious issue around the level of knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching needed by a secondary Head Teacher to be an effective leader for learning. Capacity building activities are examined that include collaborative and distributed leadership approaches, professional learning support and the role of data. Finally, conceptions of cohesion and alignment are discussed.

Chapter 4 outlines and justifies the research design adopted for my study. The chapter justifies the use of a qualitative interpretivist approach within a collective

case study, primarily instrumental in purpose. The rationale for the semi-structured interview approach and the selection of participants is described as well as the processes of data analysis, providing a clear audit trail of evidence and thinking within the research design. Discussion also focuses on issues to do with reflexivity and positionality, ethical considerations and trustworthiness. Finally, some key limitations within this study are highlighted.

Findings are presented in chapters 5 and 6 and cover all three of the research questions. Running through both chapters is a narrative of how the Head Teachers in each of the schools develop and achieve coherence across different activities in order to ensure maximum impact on learning and teaching.

In chapter 5, several themes from my findings are organised under three separate, but overlapping, sections: a focus on improving learning and teaching across the school; monitoring of pupil progress and evaluation of learning and teaching; and building and nurturing capacities and capabilities across the school. Prioritising learning and teaching emerged from participants' testimonies as a key priority of each Head Teacher, with each Head Teacher communicating this through a variety of forums. This priority led to the development of a shared whole school understanding about what effective learning and teaching meant in practice. Head Teacher practice was characterised by both collegial and directive behaviours and a focus on monitoring and evaluation to support learning and teaching. Capacity building was also a feature of practice, with particular themes emerging from the findings of the Head Teacher's role in supporting leadership capacity across the school, including engaging the middle leader structure and prioritising teacher professional learning and collaboration.

Chapter 6 examines particular practices of each Head Teacher through examples of behaviour, functions and operations associated with learning and teaching. It addresses the beliefs and values of each Head Teacher around supporting learning and teaching improvement, for instance through an inclusive focus on meeting the needs of each and every pupil, and the various ways they ensured close proximity to the practice of learning and teaching. The benefits of each Head Teacher's proximity to learning and teaching, enacted in different ways, were accentuated by the open and trustful conversations they had with colleagues using a conversational

approach. These conversations were closely linked to the Head Teacher's role as learner and both had major benefits.

Chapter 7 presents a discussion of the key issues arising from the findings and analysis in chapters 5 and 6. This shows that each Head Teacher's conceptualisation of learning and teaching as their key purpose permeated the nature and practice of their leadership. The discussion highlights each Head Teachers' involvement in an interactive process of engagement with colleagues in their schools around issues of the learning of pupils and the teaching practices of teachers, characterised in a number of cases by open two way dialogues. The interactions each Head Teacher had with colleagues were not only significant in affecting teachers' thinking but in turn were highly influential on that of the Head Teachers. This discussion presents a more nuanced view of vision-making focused on learning and teaching than is found in much of the literature, showing the recursive nature of the process, the critical role of the Head Teacher and the reciprocal effects of the process upon the Head Teacher. Underpinning each Head Teacher's leadership for learning practice was a clear moral purpose, a commitment to the learning of all pupils, one that translated into a focus not only on academic needs but a broader conception of learning, and one that was tailored to meeting the individual needs of each and every young person. The important role of each Head Teacher's knowledge and understanding about learning and teaching and related to this, the Head Teacher's role as lead learner in the school are also explored, both under theorised areas of the educational literature. All the Head Teachers focused on developing capacity and capability across the school in order to improve learning and teaching, with each Head Teacher supporting teachers' professional learning, collaboration with colleagues and engagement at a whole school level. A key aspect of each Head Teacher's strategy was engaging the middle leader structure to focus more effectively on learning and teaching. This chapter ends with an analysis of how each Head Teacher endeavoured to ensure coherence across a range of concurrent developments all focused on learning and teaching.

Chapter 8 provides the conclusion to the thesis. This brings together the introductory chapter, the more theoretical chapters 2 to 4, and the empirical findings and analysis in chapters 5 to 7. In order to address both the aim of this thesis and

the research questions, several key issues arising from the research are examined and the significance of the study is described. A summary of key issues pertaining specifically to each of the research questions is provided. The contribution this study makes to knowledge is highlighted. In particular the detailed information on the *how* of Head Teachers leadership for learning practice in particular secondary school settings. This provides a high level of specificity around particular leadership for learning behaviours and characteristics of the Head Teachers such as:

i)   a focus on learning and teaching underpinning their thinking and leadership practice and their role in both communicating a vision of learning and teaching and nurturing a consensus across the school around this;

ii)   building capacities through developing leadership throughout the school to support learning and teaching, particularly the middle leaders' role, prioritising and nurturing teachers' professional learning and collaboration and creating coherence to maximise impact on learning and teaching;

iii)   using their role as learner to stay in close proximity to, and interacting with, the practice of learning and teaching in a variety of settings through their role as learner, and the interrelationship of this with their values, beliefs, knowledge and understanding about learning and teaching;

iv)   engagement in, and support for, frequent open, reciprocal and trustful dialogues around learning and teaching matters with consequent benefits to their learning and practice.

This study found that all four were closely inter-related and underpinned each Head Teacher's leadership for learning thinking and practice. Recommendations for Head Teachers' practice, professional learning programmes and courses and policy are also discussed.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined my interest in this area of research, motivated by a curiosity to know more about Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice in a secondary setting. It is particularly relevant, given the Scottish policy focus on Head

Teachers' leadership and the need for more comprehensive understanding of the practice of Head Teachers' leadership for learning in the context of the literature. I now turn in the next chapters, 2 and 3, to a more detailed examination of the relevant literature, both theoretical and empirical.

Chapter 2

2.1 Introduction

In this literature review I focus on what Yukl (1989: 253) called the 'complex multifaceted phenomenon' of leadership and its relationship with the characteristics and practices of school-based leadership for learning. I examine a range of empirical and theoretical literature relevant to the research questions that underpin the aim of this thesis: to explore Head Teacher leadership for learning from the perspectives of Head Teachers and teachers within three schools.

This literature review is set over two chapters. In this chapter I evaluate broad issues arising from the leadership for learning literature in order to provide an overview of leadership for learning and its key themes, along with the practices with which it is associated and some contentious issues. I also evaluate a number of issues raised in chapter 1 in the context of the wider literature. In contrast, chapter 3 explores specific issues arising from data and is more focused on exploring in this context particular leadership practices in detail.

In section 2.2 I explore what is meant by leadership and contrast this with managerial conceptions. In 2.3, I briefly review a number of general theories of leadership. In the ensuing section 2.4 I explore leadership that is focused on learning and teaching, followed by a review in section 2.4.1 of the differing terminologies along with some of the resultant tensions. Section 2.4.2 highlights the relationship between leadership for learning, school improvement, transformational leadership and the importance of context. In section 2.4.3 key practices associated with leadership for learning are identified from a brief review of the literature. In the following section 2.4.4, I evaluate differing conceptions of what is meant by pupil learning and explore the implications of a focus on the learning of pupils for a Head Teacher's practice. Finally, in section 2.4.5 I highlight some of the key challenges and complexities associated with the Head Teacher's role as a leader for learning.

2.2 Setting the Scene: What is Leadership?

There are many different definitions of leadership (Yukl, 1989). However at the core of most is the issue of influence (Bush and Glover, 2002), where the leader's role is

to engage people towards achieving mutually shared goals (Northouse, 2016). Yukl (1989: 253) describes this process as 'influencing task objectives and strategies, influencing commitment and compliance in task behaviour to achieve these objectives, influencing group maintenance and identification, and influencing the culture of an organization.'

The *Standard for Headship* (SfH) (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012: 4) exemplifies this process of influence, defining leadership as the ability both to 'develop a vision for change' and to 'mobilise, enable and support others to develop and follow through on strategies for achieving that change.' This involves the leader ensuring a vision that inspires colleagues to move the organisation from where it is now to a different state in the future (Kotter, 2013). In this context, leadership is a 'developmental' (Fairholm, 2014: 588) process, with leaders engaging, interacting and communicating with people (which in the school context includes teachers), around the process of change in order for them to accept the need for change and therefore take an active part in shaping it. This process of interaction is central to the SfH (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012: 18), which states that 'Head Teachers collaborate with staff, learners, parents and the wider school community and networks in identifying, agreeing and implementing improvement priorities'. This is very different from a traditional conception of leadership residing only in the hands of one leader (Hallinger and Heck, 2010a) and represents a mutual two-way process (Northouse, 2016) involving leaders, such as Head Teachers, affecting colleagues and in turn being affected by them (Groysberg and Slind, 2012, a, b) where leadership is accessible to all (Northouse, 2016). This does not rely on the leadership of the Head Teacher alone, but is rather focused on more collaborative approaches to ensure a capacity for leadership of improvement across the school (Hallinger and Heck, 2010a).

In this situation, the leader's influence is based less on the authority of position (Beatty, 2007; Weinstein, Raczynski and Peña, 2018) but rather personal authority (Wrong, 2002) built around issues of relationships, expertise, trust and respect (Louis and Murphy, 2017; Macleod, MacAllister and Pirrie, 2012), that contribute to 'a relationship of social influence' (Spillane, 2006: 10) between Head Teachers and their colleagues. Spillane gives a very precise definition of this process when he says:

Leadership refers to activities tied to the core work of the organisation that are designed by organisational members to influence the motivation, knowledge, affect or practices of other organizational members, or that are understood by other organizational members as intended to influence their motivation, knowledge, affect or practices.

(Spillane, 2006: 12-13, italics in original)

As my research progressed, these four areas of leadership influence - the motivation, affect, knowledge and practice - offered a useful lens and interpretative structure with which to explore the leadership for learning of Head Teachers and the perceptions Head Teachers and their teachers have of this.

This leadership is very different from management, which Kotter (2013: n.p.) describes as 'a set of well-known processes, like planning, budgeting, structuring jobs, staffing jobs, measuring performance and problem-solving, which help an organization to predictably do what it knows how to do well'. The emphasis here is on creating predictability, control and coordination of key routines (Fairholm, 2014). The Head Teacher's role was dominated through most of the twentieth century by 'scientific images of business management' (Murphy and Shipman, 1999: 215), which focused on the Head Teacher's work as an effective manager of the schools, applying 'generic leadership' (Robinson, 2006: 72) skills rather than nurturing and developing the conditions that lead to effective teaching and learning. This prioritising of the management role meant that Head Teachers 'were judged routinely on their effectiveness in managing fiscal, organizational, and political conditions in their schools' (Firestone and Riehl, 2005: 2) utilising a set of leadership skills common to any other type of establishment (Robinson, 2006). In the Scottish context this is illustrated by a 1971 study of 44 Scottish secondary schools (Scottish Education Department, 1971), highlighted in chapter 1, which showed that Head Teachers' work was dominated by administrative duties, including sole responsibility for the school tuck shop in a quarter of the schools.

Leadership is often painted in positive terms compared to management, and from the middle of the 1980s there was a trend in the literature to highlight its exceptional nature, and demonising management (Gronn, 2003). Yet effective management is still important and the Scottish Standard for Headship (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012) has a significant focus on management in the service of the Head

Teacher's leadership of change, describing management as 'the operational implementation and maintenance of the practices and systems required to achieve this change.' (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012: 4). This describes a dependent relationship, where effective management is essential to leadership focused on influencing change. In the next section I briefly explore leadership from the perspective of different leadership theories.

2.3 General Theories of Leadership

The many-sided phenomenon of leadership is complex and full of ambiguity (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011; Yukl, 1989). It encompasses a myriad of specific leadership theories, most of which assume it is a positive thing, addressing issues such as 'improved productivity, ensuring quality, driving innovation, building morale and delivering strategies.' (Alvesson and Spicer, 2011: 8). These include: transactional leadership (Barnett and McCormick, 2004); transformational leadership (Leithwood and Sun, 2012); ethical leadership (Yasir and Mohamad, 2016); contingent leadership (Silins and Mulford, 2007); and adaptive leadership (Heifetz, 2009). Another particular leadership theory is *distributed* leadership (Bush, 2001), which shares characteristics with very similar theories such as *shared* (Marks and Printy, 2003) and *collaborative* (Hallinger and Heck, 2010a) leadership. These have emerged as significant areas in educational research (Hallinger and Heck, 2010a; Harris, 2009; Portin and Knapp, 2011) and are integral to a view of leadership for learning. They will be dealt with in greater detail in sections 2.4.3 and 3.3.2.

Transactional leadership is concerned with leaders motivating through reward and sanction, praise and reprimand (Muijs,2011) with the leader commanding and controlling developments (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2013). While Leithwood and Jantzi (1999: 454) regard this approach as vital to 'organizational stability', it can lead in a school situation to interactions between a Head Teacher and teachers that are 'episodic, short-lived and limited to the exchange transaction.' (Miller and Miller, 2001: 182). In contrast, a transformational leadership approach involves the leader working closely with colleagues. As will be shown section 2.4.2, this plays an important part in a Head Teacher's leadership for learning practice encompassing 'facilitative, collaborative, adaptive [and] informed' (Robertson, 2011: 221) approaches to change and improvement. Another key transformational leadership

practice is inspiring colleagues around the need for change, and working with them as they become engaged in work 'associated with values in which they strongly believe - or are persuaded to strongly believe.' (Leithwood and Sun, 2012: 388). This reference to persuasion is problematic as it implies unidirectional influence from leader to follower. On the one hand, while the role of the leader is a transforming one it can enable a two way process whereby 'the motives of the leader and followers merge.' (Miller and Miller, 2001:182). On the other hand, not all leadership arises from ethically minded behaviours (Spillane and Coldren, 2011) and self-serving influence from leaders is not always in the best interests of colleagues (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Similarly, Glatter (1999: 253) has concerns that Head Teachers are perceived as 'conduits of government policy' with Bottery (2016) scathing of what he describes as 'corporate implementers', leaders who focus on teachers as an instrument of policy mandates. This circumscribes teacher agency, defined as people's ability to make an 'active contribution to shaping their work and its conditions' (Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2015a: 624) emphasising instead duties of compliance on the part of teachers through a top down approach (Bottery, 2016).

In contrast ethical or moral leadership (Yasir and Mohamad, 2016) is concerned with fairness and honesty, with leaders adopting an ethical stance that characterises their activities and engagement with colleagues and others. In this context, leaders model a duty of care for their colleagues and, as will be developed further in section 3.2.2, they engage in two way conversations with them (Brown, Treviño and Harrison (2005). A similar concern with a duty of care to colleagues is taken by servant leadership, which highlights the role of the leader in the service of others (Qiu and Dooley, 2019, Stewart, 2012).

With contingent leadership (Silins and Mulford, 2007), effective leaders will be flexible and use different approaches to suit the issues they face in different contexts. This is challenging for leaders as they need to have expertise over a number of leadership approaches where their 'mastery" of these will determine the effectiveness of their influence (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999: 15). Adaptive leadership makes even greater demands on leaders' expertise, calling on approaches for which there is no obvious solution. In complex, challenging situations, adaptive leadership needs actions from leaders beyond their 'current

toolkit or repertoire [consisting] of a gap between aspirations and operational capacity that cannot be closed by the expertise and procedures currently in place.' (Heifetz, 2009: np.).

All of the leadership theories examined in this section have relevance for a school context. The next section will examine a particular leadership approach that has arisen from school settings, namely leadership for learning. Leadership for learning has the object of its focus built into its name and the implications of this for the Head Teacher will be explored in the following section.

2.4 Defining the Leadership for Learning Focus

Leadership for learning can be characterised as an 'umbrella term' (O'Brien, 2011: 87), describing school leadership approaches and practices focused on ensuring the conditions are in place to 'maximise student development and learning.' (O'Brien, 2011: 87). As was shown in chapter 1, this is leadership that has the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers as its key focus as well as affecting the conditions that support these. This stems from a belief that school leaders such as Head Teachers make a difference to pupil outcomes (Bush, 2007).   This is supported by research indicating that leadership is important to pupil learning (Leithwood *et al.*, 2006; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005; Sebring and Bryk, 2000; Silins and Mulford, 2007; Suppovitz, Sirinides and May., 2010). The research highlights that the two most significant school-based influences on pupil learning are what happens in the classroom and leadership (Bossert *et al.*, 1982; Coelli and Green, 2012; Kaparou and Bush, 2016), with leadership ranked 'second only' to teaching as a key influence on pupil learning (Leithwood *et al.*, 2004: 5).

A defining feature of leadership for learning is a clear and unremitting focus on 'the core technology of schooling' (Murphy *et al.*, 2006: 3) which includes pupil learning, teachers' teaching, curriculum and assessment, all central aspects of the current Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (Education Scotland, 2019). Conceptualising the role of the Head Teacher as tightly focused on learning and teaching, Terosky (2014: 16) uses the term 'learning imperative', which she understands as the obligation of a Head Teacher 'to prioritize, attend to, and act on matters of learning'. Writing specifically of the Scottish context, Forde, McMahon and Dickson (2011: 67) use a similar term, arguing that a focus on learning and teaching is about re-

asserting 'the importance of educative dimensions of leadership'. A leadership for learning stance entails Head Teachers instilling their everyday leadership practice with educational meaning (Marks and Printy, 2003): focusing the work of the school around learning; attending to the cooperative and individual learning of both pupils and adults; and influencing classroom and school conditions. This both influences the specific nature of a Head Teacher's leadership practice and is itself the prime focus for that practice (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009). Whilst school leaders have in the past prioritised things like communicating or monitoring, the challenge from a leadership for learning perspective is to do these in a way that leads to improvements in both the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers (Robinson, 2006).

Leadership for learning moves the centre of a Head Teacher's work from that of being primarily managerial to one whose priority is learning. This is central to how the role of the Head Teacher is conceived in the Scottish Standard for Headship (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012: 2) with its 'focus on leadership for learning' involving Head Teachers working with others to ensure the development of teachers with the necessary capabilities and capacities to ensure effective learning and teaching. This represents a culture shift both in how leadership is conceptualised at a national level but also in how it is expected to be practiced at school level. Moreover it reflects an evolution in understanding of what is expected of the Head Teacher's role, especially in a policy context where the requirement internationally 'for high performing schools has become a political imperative.' (Forde, 2011: 355).

The twin themes of learning and teaching are at the heart of leadership for learning, and in more specific terms this is about leaders who:

(a)   … stay consistently focused on the right stuff - the core technology of schooling, or learning, teaching, curriculum and assessment and;

(b)   … make all the other dimensions of schooling (e.g. administration, organization, finance) work in the service of a more robust core technology and improved student learning.

<div align="right">(Murphy et al., 2007: 179)</div>

This is not, as King (2002: 62) suggests, 'anything that leaders do to improve teaching and learning', but is rather purposeful leadership activity (Marsh, 2015; OECD, 2016; Witziers, Bosker and Krüger, 2003). It involves Head Teachers in 'targeted actions' (Terosky, 2016: 312) and one of these is to ensure on ongoing, persistent and public focus throughout the school on improving learning and teaching (Chapman and Harris, 2004; Knapp, Copland and Talbert, 2003). This is about Head Teachers:

- Making it central to their own work.
- Consistently communicating that student learning is the shared mission of students, teachers, administrators, and the community.
- Articulating core values that support a focus on powerful, equitable learning.
- Paying public attention to teaching.

<div align="right">(Knapp, Copland and Talbert, 2003: 14)</div>

A key way a Head Teacher's role imbues the work of the school around learning is through vision making (Murphy and Torre, 2014), creating and institutionalising a focus on improving learning and teaching throughout the school (Sebring and Bryk, 2000). This vision making process is not done in isolation, but rather is simultaneously complemented by other developments where the benefits of leadership for learning develop from a combination 'of intensive organizational focus on instructional improvement with a clear vision of instructional quality.' (Supovitz and Poglinco, 2001: 3–4). While the Head Teacher is central to the creation of a whole school vision it cannot be done by the Head Teacher alone. The Scottish Standard for Headship (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012: 21) is very clear about this and calls on Head Teachers to 'build a shared vision to support the improvement of teaching and learning and set consistently high expectations for all in the school community and improvements in teacher professional practice.' This is about creating a school culture which has improving learning and teaching as its focus. However there appears, ostensibly, a tension in both the literature and Scottish policy between the role of the Head Teacher as a vision maker and driver of learning and teaching improvements while at the same time being the architect of a shared and collaborative vision making process. This tension is addressed in greater detail in chapter 7 (7.2).

The picture of the Head Teacher as an effective leader for learning that emerges from the literature is of someone who is personally involved with, and keeps in close contact with, learning and teaching (Robinson, 2007). Head Teachers who focus on learning and teaching allocate a substantial amount of time to learning and teaching (Murphy *et al.*, 2016) and ensure a regular presence in classrooms (Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008). These Head Teachers value learning and teaching and model the importance of it through their actions, in effect they 'walk the talk' (Ofsted, 2009: 3). This high profile appears important and for Day *et al*. (2010: 3) 'Headteachers are perceived to be the main source of leadership by key school staff. Their educational values, reflective strategies and leadership practices shape the internal processes and pedagogies that result in improved pupil outcomes'.

The work of a Head Teacher focused on learning and teaching should not be construed as being contradictory to their work focused on sound administration and management. As highlighted in section 2.1, the SfH (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012) views effective management as essential to successful leadership of improvement. While school leaders will still be busy on a range of administrative and managerial tasks, a leadership for learning focus entails engaging these in the service of improving learning and teaching (Murphy *et al.,* 2006) in a range of interdependent processes (Cuban, 1998; Bush and Glover, 2014). This is a symbiotic relationship, where 'school leaders should not only run efficient, safe and caring learning environments - they should also be leaders of teaching and learning.' (Robinson, 2006: 62). Leadership for learning is not the only term used to describe leadership that is focused on improving learning and teaching, and a number of other terms are explored in the following section.

2.4.1 The use of different terminology: key issues and tensions
While my research focuses on the term leadership for learning, the field is marked by a range of similar terms within what is a 'relatively new' (Robertson and Timperley, 2011: 4) strand of research. These include instructional leadership (Elmore, 2000; Townsend *et al.*, 2013), learning centred or learning focused leadership (Knapp *et al*., 2010; Southworth, 2003), pedagogical leadership (Grice, 2018; Macneill, Cavanagh and Silcox, 2005; Salo, Nylund and Stjernstrøm, 2015) and leadership for learning (Hallinger 2012; Hallinger and Heck, 2010b; MacBeath, Frost and Swaffield, 2008). In the face of a multiplicity of terms some authors do not

distinguish between them at all. For example, Timperly (2011) interchangeably uses the terms instructional leadership, pedagogical leadership, learning-centred leadership and leadership for learning. In addition, Swaffield and MacBeath (2009) consider leadership for learning is similar to moral leadership, with Hallinger (2011), saying that it encompasses aspects not only of instructional leadership but shared and collaborative approaches' to leadership.   These highlight two further characteristics of leadership for learning, that it is fundamentally moral and collaborative in conception. Both of these will be explored in greater detail in section 2.4.4 (moral conception) and in chapter 3, section 3.3.1 (shared and collaborative conception).

On one level, the plurality of terms around leadership focused on learning might not matter, often simply reflecting different national contexts. For instance, instructional leadership is North American in origin and is used extensively in the USA and Canada, leadership for learning is associated with the UK and pedagogical leadership is widely used in Scandinavia (Salo, Nylund and Stjernstrøm, 2015). What is common to all the terms is that they are focused on improving the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers, as well as influencing the conditions that nurture and support these. Yet, there have been particular criticisms of instructional leadership with Hallinger (2003) highlighting perceptions that it is overly located in the role of the Head Teacher. Moreover, Swaffield and MacBeath (2009) are concerned that the nomenclature of instructional leadership is limiting, too focused on teaching instead of learning, where instruction is the vehicle for something that is not specified in title.   Another of their misgivings is that within instructional leadership 'learning is measured by testing pupils and assumed to be telling indicator of teachers' effectiveness' (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009: 33), as opposed to wider conceptions of pupil learning. Issues of both narrow and wide conceptions of pupil learning are addressed in section 2.4.4. Some criticisms of instructional leadership are perhaps unfair, as instructional leadership has evolved and developed from the early years of its inception in the second half of the twentieth century (Hallinger and Wang, 2015). During this period it was dominated by attention to the hierarchical role of the Head Teacher (Portin and Knapp, 2011) narrowly focused on supervising and evaluating teachers' teaching (Sheppard, 1996). However, early iterations of instructional leadership represent a first step away from a narrow managerial conception of school leadership, providing the

historical starting point for wider conceptions of leadership centred on learning and teaching, including leadership for learning, and expanded conceptions of instructional leadership such as 'shared instructional leadership.' (Marks and Printy, 2003: 371). These wider conceptions embraced more collaborative forms of leadership, issues to do with teacher agency and developing teacher capabilities and capacities (Hallinger and Wang, 2015). The collaborative and shared nature of leadership for learning is explored in greater detail in section 3.3.1.

Whatever the terminology, the idea of leadership for learning emerged in the early part of the 21st century (Murphy *et al*., 2006) and by 2012, Hallinger (2012: 2) was able to say that 'instructional leadership has morphed into a new term leadership for learning and become a new paradigm for 21st century school leadership'. While this might be overly optimistic (MacBeath *et al*., 2018), as instructional leadership is still a dominant term internationally (Kaparou and Bush, 2015), it does show the importance of the term leadership for learning. For Boyce and Bowers (2018: 161) 'leadership for learning is the conceptual evolution of 25 years of diverse instructional leadership research.'

2.4.2 Leadership for learning, school improvement and transformational leadership
Another area of overlap for leadership theories focused on learning and teaching is with leadership of school improvement. Knapp *et al*. (2010) equate leadership for learning, learning-focused leadership and learning-centred leadership, under an overarching theme of school improvement. Similarly, Murphy, Elliott, Goldring and Porter (2007) do not distinguish between instructionally focused leadership and leadership for school improvement. This merging of leadership theories focused on learning and teaching with school improvement highlights the key relationship between leadership for learning research and school improvement research. Hopkins (1998: 1036) describes this research as informing 'a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change.'

Leadership of change is regarded by Murphy *et al*. (2006) as transformational leadership, focused on improving school productivity through '*setting directions, helping people, and redesigning the organization.*' (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005: 180, italics in original). In this context, transformational leadership can be construed

as something different from leadership theories focused on learning and teaching, but working in tandem with them (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005; Murphy *et al.*, 2006). This literature postulates, for instance, that instructional leadership is focused on the learning, teaching and the classroom, for example by a Head Teacher observing a lesson with a view to giving feedback. In contrast, transformational leadership is conceptualised around addressing the key surrounding conditions to support this process, for instance, through creating a collaborative vision of change. Yet, leadership for learning as an umbrella term can encompass both of these, avoiding partitioning 'aspects of leadership which must be integrated.' (Robinson and Gray, 2019: 4). In this respect issues around, for example, the communication and creation of a convincing vision of change, transformational leadership features, must be implemented through an integrated approach in the service of pupil learning (Robinson and Gray, 2019). It is the explicit focus on pupil learning, and the means and conditions to support this that defines Head Teacher leadership for learning practices and makes use of other leadership theories, such as transformational or transactional leadership, in the service of this goal.

As the contexts that school leaders face vary (Clarke and O'Donoghue, 2016; Murphy, 2013), they need to use an assortment of leadership approaches, a number of which were highlighted in section 2.3, making use of a 'palette that offers an array of options.' (Bolman and Deal, 2013: 21). This is not about Head Teachers applying one particular approach over another, but rather selecting, merging, discarding and recombining aspects of various leadership approaches as necessary, tailored to the particular needs of their own school context (Day, Gu and Sammons, 2016). This reflects the contingent nature of leadership practices highlighted in section 2.3. and far from relying on any one approach, leadership for learning is pluralistic in its conception, driven by the exigencies of the context to tailor leadership practice to the learning needs of children and teachers. This reflects Griffith's (1997: 372) concept of 'theoretical pluralism' where '[s]ome problems are large and complex and no single theory is capable of encompassing them, while others, although seemingly simple and straightforward, can be better understood through the use of multiple theories.' These multiple theories underpin the leadership for learning practices of Head Teachers.

The contextual nature of leadership for learning requires each Head Teacher to be sensitive to their school's particular situation and needs, and entails adapting and responding to circumstances and situations that alter with time (Hallinger and Wang, 2015: 14). The particular contexts that each school faces, shape both the character and the practice of leadership for learning. This involves school leaders in a process of:

> (a) diagnosing the status of potentially powerful learning conditions in the school and classroom,
> (b) selecting those learning conditions most likely to be constraining student learning in one's school, and
> (c) improving the status of those learning conditions.
>
> (Leithwood, 2012: 46)

This is similar to the 'backward mapping' process advocated by Robinson (2006) who argues that research into school leadership should start with best evidence of what constitutes effective teaching and work back to what school leadership can do to support this. The following section explores some key practices that have been identified from the literature that Head Teachers can tailor to their particular contexts.

2.4.3 Leadership practices focused on learning and teaching

Since the 1960s, research on leadership for learning has developed and progressed substantially (Hallinger, 2011) with the identification of 'an increasingly common set of core practices' (Leithwood, Sun and Pollock, 2017: 13) focused on capturing the key elements of leadership focused on learning and teaching. In this section I examine some of these, tracing the development towards a less managerial approach, one more clearly focused on learning and teaching and creating the conditions to support these. The following examples have been selected for review because they have been significant in generating further research and commentary and also because they represent some of the key scholars in this area. Moreover, they highlight a range of practices from the literature that have come to characterise leadership that is focused on supporting learning and teaching.

In a study of ten elementary principals, Hallinger and Murphy (1985: 220) described three broad dimensions of leadership:

- defining the school's mission;
- managing the instructional program;
- and promoting a positive learning climate.

This was one of the first studies to map out areas of leadership practice focused on learning and teaching, providing broad guidance indicating key areas where a Head Teacher's activities could make a difference. In terms of mission this involved the Head Teacher in establishing vision, direction and shared purpose with teachers, along with clear goals around learning and teaching. Managing the instructional programme was focused on the Head Teacher working with teachers around coordinating learning, teaching and the curriculum to ensure effective development of pupils along with the monitoring of their progress. A positive climate was addressed through establishing clear expectations and standards for staff and pupils, addressing teachers' attitudes and beliefs and support for professional learning. This process involved a high profile, modelling and clear communication from the Head Teacher. The leadership dimensions and practices highlighted by Hallinger and Murphy (1985), sometimes expressed in different terms, became a feature of many subsequent studies on leadership for learning (Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Murphy *et al.*, 2016).

In a later study, Waters, Marzano and Mcnulty (2003) provided specific detail on some of the actual activities that Head Teachers undertake in enacting leadership for learning. They conducted a meta-analysis of over 70 research studies focused on Head Teacher leadership, and found 21 broad areas of responsibilities 'significantly associated with student achievement.' (Waters, Marzano and Mcnulty, 2003: 2). For instance, communication was identified as a key area with an emphasis on Head Teachers establishing with both pupils and teachers 'strong lines of communication.' (Waters, Marzano and Mcnulty, 2003: 4). Other practices included the Head Teacher establishing clear learning and teaching objectives, frequently going into classrooms and being knowledgeable about learning and teaching. However, Waters, Marzano and Mcnulty (2003) do not tease out in detail how much or what sort of educational knowledge around learning and teaching is needed in order for a Head Teacher to be an effective leader for learning. This is a contentious issue within the literature, particularly in the secondary context, and will be discussed in more detail in section 3.2.3.

The work of Hallinger and Murphy (1985) and Waters, Marzano and Mcnulty (2003), represent attempts to describe the practices of Head Teachers related to learning and teaching. However, Hallinger and Murphy (1985: 238), aware of the limitations of their study, call for future research to concentrate on incorporating 'qualitative methodologies to generate richer descriptive reports' of Head Teacher work around learning and teaching. In essence, while Hallinger and Murphy (1985) provide broad areas of activity that are relevant to learning and teaching, this does not provide clear guidance or insights for leaders in terms of what they specifically might do in practice within the identified areas. A similar critique can be made of Waters, Marzano and Mcnulty (2003). For instance, if Head Teachers' frequent visits to classes are important, as Waters, Marzano and Mcnulty (2003) indicate, then what are they doing when they are in classes? Who are they affecting and what exactly are the specific benefits to pupils, teachers or even the Head Teachers themselves? Robinson (2006) is similarly critical of educational research which highlights generic leadership approaches for Head Teachers at the expense of inculcating these approaches with educationally relevant insights and understanding. For example, she argues that Waters, Marzano and Mcnulty's identification of the importance of communication is not of practical use for school leaders as it is not instilled with educational relevance, saying that their reference to 'the generic 'strong lines of communication' requires to be integrated with educational knowledge about what needs to be communicated in order to advance particular educational goals.' (Robinson, 2006: 67).

Robinson (2007: 8) herself identifies five key evidence-based leadership practices from a meta-analysis of research that have a positive and significant effect on pupil learning outcomes:

- promoting and participating in teacher learning and development;
- establishing goals and expectations;
- planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum;
- strategic resourcing;
- ensuring an orderly and supportive environment.

The emphasis here on an orderly supportive environment includes not only issues to do with pupil discipline but also ensuring that staff conflict is minimised. From my

own experiences working with and within schools, when relationships break down between teachers, learning and teaching suffers. While Robinson's approach (2007) is useful in identifying key areas in which Head Teachers can focus their leadership practice, the practices highlighted are 'expressed at a level of abstraction that does not fully explain the processes responsible for their particular effects.' (Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008: 669). Addressing this abstraction through providing detail and specificity around particular leadership for learning processes of Head Teachers in practice is one of the purposes of this thesis. Both the identification and comprehension of these processes are vital if leaders, such as Head Teachers, are to be effective in their leadership for learning practice (Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008). Indeed, Leithwood and Sun (2012) argue that rather than concentrating on broad descriptive representations of leadership focused on learning and teaching, there should be a greater focus on the particular leadership activities that have impact.

Another practice-based approach has developed from the *Leadership for Learning: the Cambridge Network*, a research programme originally involving school practitioners and researchers across eight countries (Dempster *et al*., 2017; MacBeath *et al.*, 2018). This is based on five interchangeable 'umbrella' leadership practices or principles (Frost, 2008: 71) and include:

- maintaining a focus on learning as an activity
- creating conditions favourable to learning as an activity
- creating a dialogue about leadership and learning
- involves the sharing of leadership
- involves a shared sense of accountability.
(MacBeath, Frost and Swaffield, 2008: 302)

The importance of a shared sense of accountability for learning and teaching moves the frame from a Head Teacher attempting to ensure compliance around teaching performance standards from teachers (MacBeath *et al*., 2018), a characteristic of early conceptions of instructional leadership, to one which is more mutually accountable between teachers and the Head Teacher. While teachers can still be held accountable within this process, it is done so in ways that support trust, dialogue and the enrichment of learning and teaching (MacBeath *et al*., 2018). This is not necessarily easy for schools facing huge accountability challenges at national and local levels to improve results on a number of indicators, and can lead to Head

Teachers translating these external pressures into top down demands on their teachers (MacBeath *et al.*, 2018). Implications of accountability pressures on Scottish schools will be explored in the next section. The emphasis on sharing leadership (MacBeath, Frost and Swaffield, 2008) is mirrored by Suppovitz, Sirinides and May (2010) who highlight the importance of creating a collaborative trusting environment throughout the school. Using data from teacher surveys and pupils' achievement from an American district, Suppovitz, Sirinides and May (2010: 38) also identify a clear focus on learning and teaching and 'the development of mission and goals.'

As the development of theories focused on learning and teaching is traced, it becomes clear that issues to do with collaboration, trust, sharing and participation start to assume a higher profile and Leithwood (2012) adds to this by highlighting the importance of relationships. His literature review (Leithwood, 2012: 6) identified five domains of practice:

- Setting Directions;
- Building Relationships and Developing People;
- Developing the Organization to Sustain Desired Practices;
- Improving the Instructional Program;
- Securing Accountability.

The juxtaposition of relationships with developing people is interesting, as it suggests that not only do Head Teachers need to focus on supporting the development of the skills and expertise of their teachers, they require to do this in a way that ensures positive relationships are in place between teachers, and between teachers and the Head Teacher. This is very different from the traditional administrative conception of the Scottish Head Teacher's duties highlighted in chapter 1 and involves the Head Teacher working more closely with people where, as is shown in sections 3.2.1, 3.2.2 and 3.2.3, supporting and developing relational social capital is a priority. This links to the importance Leithwood (2012) places on building the capacity of both the school and teachers. Similarly, a key finding from Hitt and Tucker's (2016: 542) systematic review of 14 years of empirical research was that 'building professional capacity' and 'creating a supportive organization for learning' are essential.

Issues of capacity underpin a Head Teacher's leadership for learning practice and are dealt with in greater detail in section 3.3, particularly as regards distributed, shared and collaborative forms of leadership. Shared and distributed approaches to leadership are inherent to the *Leadership for Learning: The Cambridge Network* research programme, highlighted earlier in this section. Research by Leithwood *et al.* (2010: 616) found that levels of distribution differed depending on which leadership for learning functions were being addressed, highlighting that '"developing people" and "managing the instructional program" are more likely to be distributed, whereas "setting directions" and "redesigning the organization" are functions most frequently carried out by those in formal hierarchical leadership roles'. This suggests that greater clarity is needed in both policy documents and the literature to understand more clearly which roles are most appropriate for teachers, given their range of commitments, and which roles are best suited to the particular role of the Head Teacher.

Collaborative leadership approaches are also inherent within the *Standard for Headship* (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012) where all Head Teachers are expected to promote collaboration, build leadership capacity across the school and commit to collegial practice. Yet how Scottish Head Teachers do this is not specified and the range of terms themselves are open to interpretation. Torrance (2013: 179) points to the multitude of terms used in policy documents in Scotland with interchangeable use of 'collegiality, distributed, distributive and shared leadership'. She considers that this can be a recipe for confusion.

While the list of practices in this section provide a guide for Head Teachers focused on influencing learning and teaching, they do not take into account the contingent nature of this leadership as highlighted in the previous section. In effect, Head Teachers' leadership requires to be contextually responsive to the particular situations in which it is practiced (Hallinger and Wang, 2015; Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999). For instance, a Head Teacher may have to focus first on creating the conditions for an orderly environment before addressing issues to do with teacher learning (Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008). Similarly, in a school facing challenging circumstances, a Head Teacher may have to persuade staff around their own vision as opposed to collaborating with them on it in order to address immediate needs. In this context, Leithwood *et al.* (2006: 43-44) suggest that 'if

your school has been labelled as "failing" you are more likely to have to sell your vision to staff than developing it collaboratively – so you can get on with your turnaround mission.'   However, this section has highlighted broad areas of relevance for Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice. While some of the examples focus on clear domains, such as establishing direction, developing people and sharing leadership, others foreground particular processes such dialogue and communication.   These processes thread their way through various leadership areas focused on learning and teaching (Murphy *et al*., 2016). Several of these key processes, such as dialogue (see section 3.2.2) will be addressed later as further consideration is presented of the actions of Head Teachers within a leadership for learning perspective. The various depictions of leadership focused on learning and teaching invariably have areas of concurrence, indeed Leithwood, Sun and Pollock (2017: 13) argue that 'the labels … are often more distinct than the practices they include'. Yet, common to all of them is that they are in the service of pupil learning and this area will be discussed in the next section.

2.4.4 What pupil learning?

The core rationale of leadership for learning is supporting the learning of pupils (Dempster, 2009; MacBeath *et al*., 2018; Murphy *et al*., 2006). Indeed, statements about this focus on pupil leaning abound in both the research literature and Scottish policy and guidance documents. For instance, the Scottish inspectors' publication *Leadership for learning : The challenges of leading in a time of change* (HMIe*,* 2007: 6) is very clear that 'Leadership for learning means putting learning and learners at the centre of the agenda'. Yet there are problems with what is meant by learning, with many publications using the term generically without any detailed interpretation. Spillane (2015: 278) is uneasy in this regard, concerned about what he calls 'fuzzy conceptualizations' around phrases like 'pupil learning', arguing they can 'contribute to a false sense of agreement among practitioners and policymakers as they use the same words … to denote distinctly different understandings of these phenomena'. There are confusions, contradictions and tensions in the literature between narrow definitions of pupil learning, such as attainment or a narrow focus on 'cognitive or academic matter' (Spillane, 2015: 279) and wider more holistic perceptions that include items such as civic engagement and pupil learning focused on improving pupils' life chances (Terosky, 2014).

As was seen in chapter 1, Scottish Head Teachers are under pressure to raise attainment from a plethora of national policy initiatives such as the *National Improvement Framework* (Scottish Government, 2016a) with, among other things, targeted improvement in areas such as literacy and numeracy. In a statement to the Scottish Parliament in 2017, John Swinney, the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, defined this as 'Headteachers will be the leaders of learning in their schools, responsible for raising attainment and closing the attainment gap.' (Scottish Parliament, 2017: 48). This seems to equate leadership for learning with attainment, redolent of the earlier criticisms from MacBeath and Swaffield (2009) as regards instructional leadership, and reflects the intense accountability pressures school leaders are under around the learning of their pupils (Firestone and Riehl, 2005; Gupton, 2010). This puts pressure on Head Teachers to improve exam and test results, with a narrow emphasis on performance (Mowat, 2019; Mowat and McMahon; 2018), that may result in too much 'focus on ways of enhancing marks and grades rather than focusing on the learning that tests are supposed to assess.' (MacBeath *et al*., 2018: 43).

A narrow conception of learning appears to be at odds with wider definitions of learning such as those at the heart of the Curriculum for Excellence's (Education Scotland, 2019) four capacities: successful learners; confident individuals; responsible citizens; and effective contributors. In this context, while pupil academic learning is important, conceptions of learning are much wider, encompassing a broad range of pupil well-being needs and preparation for the diverse challenges beyond school (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009; Day *et al*., 2010). This reflects strong traditions in Scotland of a 'commitment to all learners' intellectual, social and ethical growth and well-being.' (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012: 6). This focus goes beyond the classroom, extending into spaces such as the canteens, corridors and after school activities (Spillane, 2015). Spillane (2015: 279) argues that learning is 'also fundamentally about social, emotional and affective matters. It involves how children's ideas and ways of being are treated inside schools'. Conceptions of children's learning such as these seem to go beyond a narrow focus of learning and teaching driven by tests and exams (Terosky, 2014).

While Head Teachers are subject to a number of pressures from policy at national and local level this does not mean that they are subservient to them. Dwyer (1984:

34) quotes one Head Teacher who, highlighting the tensions between school learning and teaching community needs and district pressures, says 'we must do both and be true to ourselves'. This represents a balancing act for leaders for learning where, while applying policy, they also remain true to their moral conceptions around the learning needs of each child (Schley and Schratz, 2011). This strong moral conception underpinning the Head Teacher's leadership for learning (Dempster *et al.*, 2017; Jacobson, 2011; Starrart, 2007) is characterised by a deep and visible commitment to the learning of each and every pupil (Day *et al.*, 2010; Dempster *et al.*, 2017; MacBeath *et al.*, 2018). According to Knapp, Copland, and Talbert (2003b:12) the essence of leadership for learning is about 'creating powerful, equitable learning opportunities for students, professionals, and the system, and motivating or compelling participants to take advantage of these opportunities'. While this appears to construct the leader's role as both influencer and enforcer, it also highlights another key feature of leadership for learning, its emphasis on an inclusive approach to schooling which is about meeting the particular learning needs of all learners. Inherent in this is a focus on social justice that entails a responsiveness from Head Teachers to those pupils who have traditionally been marginalised without their learning needs being met (Murphy, 2005). In this context, Firestone and Riehl (2005: 2) state that because of the 'growing expectations that leaders can and should influence learning, it is important to understand how leadership, learning, and equity are linked.' (Firestone and Riehl, 2005: 2).

The emphasis on social justice encompasses the importance of pupil voice. While this is about consultation with pupils, it is much more than this, and means involving them as active participants with teachers in their own learning (Frost, MacBeath and Møller, 2009; Shields, 2004). Pupil involvement as active participants in their own schooling has the potential to improve learning (Wlodkowski and Ginsberg, 1995), supporting the development of their 'engagement and motivation for learning' (Ferguson, Hanrady and Draxton, 2011: 55). In contrast, the ignoring of pupil voice results in pupil hostility towards their learning (Smyth; 2006).

Shields (2004:124) argues that pupil voice is essential to supporting a democratic education for pupils, one that empowers them 'to participate in, and take responsibility for, their own learning', and demanding that teachers prioritise listening to pupils. Angus (2006) regards pupil voice as a moral imperative for

school leaders, entailing school leaders building the conditions for this to flourish where 'an educational orientation to social justice and democratic community requires pedagogy forged with, not for, students to permit them to develop meaningful and socially constructed understandings.' (Shields, 2004:115). This is about ensuring that the needs of marginalised pupils are heard and addressed (Shields, 2004).   Yet in spite of a rich amount of evidence highlighting the importance of pupil voice, 'student perceptions regarding their learning environment are still seldom considered a valid source of data by school leaders or even teachers.' (Ferguson, Hanreddy and Draxton, 2011: 56).

The importance of pupil voice is mirrored in the significant role of parents in their children's learning.   MacBeath *et al.* (2018: 50) argue that while leadership for learning involves a learning focus for everyone in the school it also includes 'the centrality' of the role of parents in the learning of their children. This goes beyond simply ensuring that parents are involved with the school and focuses on schools supporting parents' active engagement in their children's learning (Goodall and Montgomery, 2014). This envisages parents as participants in the learning of pupils along with teachers (Frost, MacBeath and Møller, 2009), and entails the school in ensuring that leadership roles extend beyond the school to parents themselves (Dempster, 2009) as partners with the school (Dempster and Bagakis, 2009). To be effective this requires school teaching staffs to ensure trusting relationships with parents (Bryk and Schneider, 2003; Day *et al*., 2010).

Goodall (2017:27) suggests that parents' involvement with their children's learning provides 'the best lever to narrow the achievement gap'. Schools that successfully support parental involvement in their children's learning 'develop a two-way relationship with parents based on mutual trust, respect and a commitment to improving learning outcomes'. (Harris and Goodall, 2007: 5.) Active engagement of parents in their children's learning, along with their interactions with school staff around this, has major benefits both in terms of feedback to teachers about their teaching but also in terms of improving parents understanding of the learning of their children (Dempster and Bagakis, 2009; Goodall, 2017). Despite the importance of schools effectively engaging with parents around their children's learning, this was not prominent during the interviews and is not reflected in my findings. However, it will be addressed as one of my recommendations for further study in section 8.7.

While this discussion has focused on the learning of pupils, a leadership for learning conception of the Head Teacher's role involves a much wider conception that addresses the learning of teachers themselves, an issue that will be explored in section 3.3.2. Ensuring all pupils receive equitable opportunities to learn and thrive, while simultaneously establishing the right conditions for teacher learning, are indicative of the widening remits of Head Teachers compared to earlier and narrower managerial conceptions of their work. The following section addresses some of the increasing challenges and complexities involved in the Head Teacher's role as a leader for learning.

2.4.5 The challenges and complexities of the Head Teacher's role as a leader for learning

Internationally, school leaders are facing a multitude of demands, challenges and problems (Crawford, 2012; Drago-Severson, 2016). The raising of standards is a key focus of many countries' policy agendas (Chapman and Harris, 2004) with schools under increasing pressure to innovate and change and meet the needs of all their pupils on a variety of indicators. There have been radical changes in public sector policy based on 'the discourses [of] excellence, effectiveness and quality.' (Ball, 2006: 10). Muijs *et al*. (2011:1) postulate that 'demands for ever higher levels of achievement, intolerance of failure and, in some countries at least, concern over the remaining inequities that characterise the system mean that schools too are set demanding goals requiring innovation'. Similarly, Robertson (2011: 213) outlines the complementary pressures such as 'a rhetoric of collaboration … the lateral sharing of knowledge through coaching, networking and professional learning communities, as well as calls to keep the child and the family at the centre of practice across public services'. Drago-Severson (2016: 59) provides a useful list of the key challenges facing American and other school leaders:

- meeting students' diverse needs,
- closing the achievement gap,
- working effectively and collaboratively in an era of high-stakes accountability and standards-based reform,
- finding enough teachers to teach in certain regions of the world,
- adhering to mandates from external forces,
- improving instructional leadership,
- enhancing instructional quality,
- building communities of practice,
- leading fiscal management and oversight

- and keeping pace with shifting certification requirements and new standards*.*

From my experience working with Scottish Head Teachers these look remarkably relevant to the Scottish context. In effect, the challenge for Scottish Head Teachers is to address a widening range of needs and demands while ensuring for pupils 'a more complex and demanding educational experience than ever before.' (Murphy and Shipman, 1999 : 215). It is perhaps not surprising in this context that some Head Teachers can find it simpler to focus on managerial duties rather than engaging in leadership for learning (Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009). Research in Scotland suggests that Head Teachers are still spending considerable time addressing issues of a managerial nature, including pupil discipline issues (Forde and Torrance, 2016). Moreover, improving learning and teaching and meeting the variety of pupil needs is an inherently complex one for Head Teachers (Grissom and Loeb, 2011).   It involves the Head Teacher working in a primarily indirect role through teachers and various organisational conditions, what Hallinger and Heck (2011a: 8) describe as 'moderating and mediating variables', to affect the learning of pupils (Hallinger and Heck, 1998; Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Robinson and Gray, 2019).

At a more basic level there are challenges for Head Teachers in terms of the many demands on their time (Murphy *et al*., 2016). A national study into headship in Scotland (MacBeath, O'Brien and Gronn, 2012) found 78% of Head Teachers indicating concern with the many things they had to address, including demands from national and local government. Young and Szachowicz (2014: np., italics in original) highlight the plethora of policies with which principals have to cope, saying that while this has always been the case, 'never have there been *so many* mandates being implemented simultaneously'. They indicate that the problem is that not only are principals implementing new policies but they are still addressing earlier ones in what is 'a mighty challenge for even the most seasoned principals' (Young and Szachowicz, 2014: np.). In effect the demands of the role have become 'bigger, broader and more demanding.' (MacBeath, O'Brien and Gronn 2012: 422). There is also a tension between the demands of management and administration versus the core focus of Head Teachers in learning and teaching, with a 'pattern of management responsibilities overwhelming pedagogical leadership.*'* (Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009: 212). In this regard, Goldring *et al*. (2008: 348) state that:

For decades the field has been calling for school leadership to focus on instructional leadership. However, research tends to suggest that principals are not 'doing' enough instructional leadership and that many principals continue to be fragmented and pulled between managerial and leadership activities and functions.

Amidst the many complexities of the Head Teacher's role is the issue of gender. This has been a key focus of scholars over a number of years (Hallinger, Dongyu and Wan, 2016; Shakeshaft, 2006). For instance, Eagly, Karau and Johnson (1992: 92) found, in a meta-analysis of 50 studies, that female principals were more likely to adopt a participative and collaborative style than male principals and that they 'may encounter role expectations that are especially congenial with their own gender role'.   This raises the whole issue of Head Teacher leadership characteristics that can be defined as feminine or masculine. For instance, a masculine style might be associated with an autocratic, competitive, discipline orientated and individual approaches compared to more feminine ones of caring, participative, collaborative and encouraging approaches (Faizan Nair and Haque, 2018; Fuller, 2010; Gray, 2018).

Coleman's study (2005: 4,) using survey materials from Head Teacher's self-perceptions in primary, secondary and special schools, found male and female Head Teacher perceptions were similar as regards their styles of leadership with both groups regarding 'themselves as collaborative and people-centred leaders, incorporating a number of both "feminine" and "masculine" qualities, but tending towards the "feminine"'. However, Coleman (2005:44) also highlighted that 'a second style of leadership … which is directive and tougher and this more 'masculine' style is more common amongst the women headteachers'. In contrast, in a case study of the leadership perceptions of a female English secondary Head Teacher along with her colleagues, Fuller (2010: 380) found, using the language of masculine and feminine leadership, that the descriptions characterised a Head Teacher who demonstrated a range of leadership approaches, both male and female, where they often dovetailed in a 'plurality' of approaches. While this study explored the gender issue in the context of the general leadership of the Head Teacher, Hallinger, Dongyu and Wan (2016) approached the issue from the specific context of leadership for learning. They conducted a meta-analysis of 28 studies over three countries using the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS), a scale to measure the perceptions of both principals and teachers as

regards the principals' leadership for learning activities and behaviours focused on three broad dimensions of leadership from the work of Hallinger and Murphy (1985), highlighted in section 2.4.3:

- defining the school's mission;
- managing the instructional program;
- and promoting a positive learning climate.

Their findings highlighted 'small but statistically significant gender differences' (Hallinger, Dongyu and Wan, 2016: 587) and they suggest that in comparison to male principals, female principals are likely to be both more inclined towards, and actively engaged in, leadership for learning activities. However, Hallinger, Dongyu and Wan (2016: 592) offer caveats to this, arguing that the identified 'gender-related differences in instructional leadership' can only be fully understood when the relationship between gender and leadership is examined in the context of key and dependent variables such as 'teacher efficacy, teacher learning, teaching and learning quality, teacher commitment...' The authors highlight the need for further studies taking account of these variables, and others, such as the principals' experiences of teaching. Variables such as these seem significant and show the importance of context, as highlighted in section 2.3, in shaping Head Teacher's responses and particular leadership behaviours, a context that Reay and Ball (2000: 156) suggest is 'downplayed'. This characterised the leadership of the female Head Teacher in Fuller's case study (2010: 380), who displayed a 'shifting gendered headship' where 'feminine' and 'masculine' leadership behaviours were used for particular contexts and often coalesced.

Finally, a study by Shaked, Glanz and Gross (2018) highlighted differences between male and female principals around the source of their authority as leaders for learning. Female Head Teachers felt that this arose as a result of their learning and teaching experience and expertise whilst male Head Teachers emphasised their expertise in decision-making as well as their formal Head Teacher authority role. However these gender differences may be explained by the fact that the majority of female respondents were overwhelmingly primary based, whereas the majority of secondary principals were male. Leihwood (2012:8) suggests, regardless of gender differences, that there are compelling reasons for differences in elementary and

secondary leaders' knowledge of learning and teaching, not least the complexity of the secondary curriculum where there is a 'greater range of pedagogical knowledge' demanded in contrast to the primary one, necessitating the secondary Head Teacher working though subject specialists. In sum, Leithwood's study suggests that the primary Head Teacher may require to be more knowledgeable about learning and teaching than is required for the secondary Head Teacher. Shaked, Glanz and Gross (2018:427) also consider that:

> Whereas the high school level requires more specific content knowledge, the elementary level content knowledge is more general. Thus, elementary school principals' content knowledge may more easily create the impression of instructional expertise.

Shaked, Glanz and Gross (2018: 430) further highlight the possible issue of gender inequality resulting in female leaders taking longer to get promotion, resulting in a 'greater number of years as active teachers tackling everyday classroom challenges before being appointed as principals may result in their possessing more in-depth first-hand knowledge about teaching and learning'.

The role of the Head Teacher is an inherently complex one with multiple demands on their time and expertise. How Head Teachers navigate these demands while simultaneously developing the knowledge, understanding and skills to cope with them is an ongoing challenge in a leadership for learning context. The following chapter addresses key issues that appear particularly important in the context of Head Teachers' developing this necessary expertise.

2.5 Conclusion

This review has explored a range of leadership theories, both general and those specifically focused on leadership and teaching. While there is a great deal of consensus in the literature on the broad areas of leadership for learning activity, there are concerns at the abstract nature of descriptions of leadership practices and the lack of focus on the precise activities that influence learning and teaching. This review highlighted the insufficient guidance for Head Teachers on what they might do exactly in practice within particular areas of leadership for learning. I have identified a number of dilemmas and tensions for the role of Head Teacher in practicing this leadership. Policy agendas make ever increasing demands around

attainment, putting pressures on Head Teachers who have wider more holistic views of learning. There are tensions between the demands of management and administration, pulling Head Teachers away from what has been defined in the literature as their core business, learning and teaching. These pressures, exacerbated by the increasing expectations being placed on schools, mean that Head Teachers' time can become squeezed between many competing demands.

In the next chapter, chapter 3, I analyse literature on some of the particularities of leadership for learning practice, exploring how Head Teachers might actually practice leadership focused on the needs of pupils' learning and teachers' teaching.

Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction.

While chapter 2 explored a number of broad themes and issues arising from the leadership for learning literature, in contrast, this chapter focuses on significant issues that emerged during data analysis. In the opening sections I appraise three areas: the Head Teacher as lead learner (3.2.1); the role of dialogue as a key process in a Head Teacher's leadership (3.2.2); and issues around the level of comprehension of learning and teaching required by a secondary Head Teacher in order to be an effective leaders for learning (3.2.3). As I demonstrate, there are gaps or a lack of detail in the literature within aspects of all three of these areas Central to conceptions of leadership for learning are capacity building activities and these are evaluated in sections 3.3.1, 3.3.2 and 3.3.3, addressing respectively: collaborative and distributed leadership approaches; the importance of professional learning; and the role of data. These all play an important part in conceptions of cohesion, a relatively new area of research (Lindvall and Ryve: 2019) which is introduced briefly in section 3.3.4 with a more detailed discussion in chapter 7.

3.2 Shaping the Head Teacher's Learning: The Role of Learner, Dialogues and Knowledge

In this section I examine extant literature which shows how the following factors shape and characterise leadership for learning:

  i) the Head Teacher as learner;
 ii) dialogue;
iii) Head Teachers' knowledge around learning and teaching.

All three emerged from my analysis as having particular significance in terms of the characteristics of Head Teachers' leadership for learning.

3.2.1 Head Teacher as learner

A central theme from the literature is that if school leaders are to support effectively improvements to learning and teaching then they should focus on their role not only as leader but also as *learner* (Fullan, 2014; Gold *et al*., 2003; Matthews, 2009; Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008). This combined role is described by Fullan

(2014) through terms such as *lead learner*, *learning leader* and *leading learner,* and Hattie (2002: 8) challenges each school leader to be 'as great a learner as your teachers.' Yet explanations are scant in terms of what it means for Head Teachers in practice and vary as to why this is important in terms of impact.

As learner it appears that the role of the Head Teacher will be characterised by behaviours and actions not normally associated with a traditional top down managerial approach. Some of these are highlighted by Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) from a meta-analysis of leadership effectiveness studies focused on the relationship between leadership and pupil outcomes. They found that leaders supporting and taking part with teachers in professional learning activities and situations, both formal and informal (through for instance interactions on particular teaching issues), make a significant difference to pupil outcomes. The Head Teacher's participation appears crucial within this, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008: 667) suggesting that he or she can take part with individuals and groups of teachers 'as leader or as learner or indeed both'. Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008: 665) argue that this 'provides some empirical support for calls to school leaders to be actively involved with their teachers as the "leading learners" of their school'. It appears that in the learner role the Head Teacher is able to become an active participant with teachers in their learning.

This begs the question, why is the active involvement of the Head Teacher as learner so significant? One answer appears to be that the Head Teacher is modelling a learning stance. The *Standard for Headship* (SfH) (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012: 8) highlights that all leaders practice the role of 'leading learner' around modelling their own commitment to professional learning and that this encourages the learning of other colleagues. This fits with Southworth's (2011) view that leaders should be example setters, positively influencing teachers through modelling their own learning. However, the Head Teacher's participation as learner during professional learning programmes, designed to improve learning and teaching, appears to have much deeper implications than modelling the role of learner alone. Leaders' involvement with teachers in their professional learning enables them to develop a keen appreciation of the circumstances that need to be in place for teachers to develop sustainable improvements (Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008). It provides insight into the effectiveness of teachers' learning. In

effect, the Head Teacher is learning about the learning of teachers. This produces vital information in terms of supporting the professional leaning of staff (Matthews, 2009: 3) aiding Head Teachers to create an effective learning environment for adults focused on improving learning and teaching (Robertson, 2011; Southworth, 2011). Understanding the learning needs of teachers (Stein and Nelson, 2003) helps Head Teachers become more adept at coordinating for teachers 'the interactive social environments that embody the right mix of expertise and appropriate tasks to spur learning.' (Stein and Nelson, 2003: 426).

Equally important is the effect of the process of being a learner on the knowledge and understanding of the Head Teacher around learning and teaching. If improving learning and teaching is the goal, then 'school leaders need to take a strong and sustained interest in student learning and be prepared to learn about learning.' (Timperley, 2008: 547). Taking part in teacher learning as a learner, through formal and informal situations, may be a significant source of new knowledge and understanding for the Head Teacher about learning and teaching in a situation where 'it is no longer helpful to assume that it is only classroom teachers who need to learn about teaching and learning.' (Robinson 2006: 72). As Head Teachers listen and actively engage with the ideas and views of teachers they are building up their own pedagogical knowledge and understanding. In this context they are simultaneously developing their knowledge of teachers' learning needs and 'about teachers-as-learners and about effective ways of teaching teachers.' (Stein and Nelson, 2003: 426). This conceptualisation moves a Head Teacher's focus from that of the learning of pupils to one which is also concerned with the learning of teachers. This seems to indicate that the Head Teacher who involves himself or herself in teacher learning and links this to the effective teaching of teachers may be in a better position to lead improvements in learning and teaching than Head Teachers who do not (Nelson and Stein, 2003; Spillane and Louis, 2002; Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009). As Spillane and Louis (2002: 97) argue, 'without an understanding of the knowledge necessary for teachers to teach well … school leaders will be unable to perform essential school improvement functions such as monitoring instruction and supporting teacher development.'

Fullan (2014: 5) regards the role of learner as vital to the leader's effectiveness around change and improvement. He reflects that the principal who only addresses

issues such 'as establishing a vision, acquiring resources for teachers, working to help individual teachers, and other similar activities does not necessarily *learn* what is specifically needed to stimulate ongoing organizational improvement.' (Fullan, 2014: 5, italics in original). He believes that for learning to happen the principal has 'to be present as a learner' (Fullan, 2014: 5) and argues that:

> Principals who do not take the learner *stance* for themselves do not learn much from day to day, no matter how many years of "experience" they may accumulate, as little of that prior experience was really aimed at their own *learning*. Thus, principals need to chart their own learning and be aware of its curve from day one if they are going to get better at leading. And they do this best through helping teachers learn.

Yet how principals 'seek to learn' (Fullan, 2014: 5)*,* what they are actually doing and how they are better able to apply their learning to assist teachers is left unanswered. The role of Head Teacher as learner represents a radical shift in the way leadership is conceptualised and practiced (Murphy, 2002). Yet the concept of learner, when applied to Head Teacher, is problematic. Barth (1986: 296) poses the simple question 'How can principals become active learners when learning implies deficiency?'. While this may seem an overly negative comment in an institution like a school dedicated to leaning, Barth was writing in 1986 in an American context where the prevailing normative assumptions were of principals displaying 'strong leadership' (Barth, 1986: 296), where any sign that the leader did not know the answer might be assumed to be a display of weakness. Certainly, the role of learner radically changes conceptualisations of the Head Teacher from a top down model to one which is much more democratic (see section 3.3.1). In this regard, 'being the leading learner requires principals to have humility, to value learning, to understand how to learn, and to develop the skill of finding learning opportunities in their school.' (Brookhart and Moss, 2016: 17). Yet, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe's (2008: 667) findings about school leaders participating in professional learning sessions or discussions with teachers in a combined role *'*as leader, learner, or both' appears challenging, even for the most experienced of Head Teachers. Moreover, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) do not explore what is involved in the practice of leaders in the role of learner during these discussions. In trying to understand the practice of the leader as learner in greater depth I found McLaughlin and Mitra's (2001) study of American elementary and middle schools introducing theory-based reform projects particularly helpful. They found that projects were only successful

when the principal actively engaged in them, with teacher respondents reporting that this included listening and interacting with teachers, providing the necessary support and also motivation. The key conclusion from some of the successful schools was that principals themselves were learners, with one teacher describing everyone as equal in a project team that included teachers and Head Teacher. Evidence from teachers such as this help elucidate Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe's (2008) conception of the Head Teacher behaving as both learner and leader. Yet this study and the two key studies that Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) used to derive their conclusions about the importance of Head Teachers participating in professional learning situations as leaner with teachers (Bamburg and Andrews, 1991), were based on American elementary schools and neither provide a depth of detail on the actual practices of the Head Teacher as learner. To better understand the Head Teacher's role as learner it is necessary to look at the important role dialogue plays in conceptions of leadership for learning and it is to this that I now turn.

3.2.2 Dialogue

A key finding highlighted in much of the literature is the importance of the interactions Head Teachers have with teachers through talk and discussion (Adams and Olsen, 2017; Blasé and Blasé, 2017; Riehl, 2000). These are dialogues focused on the practice of learning and teaching (MacBeath *et al*., 2018) in what has been described as 'the cornerstone' (Blasé and Blasé, 1999: 359) of leadership for learning approaches.

The use of the term dialogue assumes an open and frank conversation, one that entails 'reciprocal interaction in the pursuit of shared meaning' (Swaffield, 2009: 313), and this meaning making has at its heart learning. This can be problematic for Head Teachers. My experience of working across different schools, both as a Head of Service and as Director of the *Scottish Centre for Studies in School Administration*, indicates that hierarchical school structures can inhibit this process, with teachers wary of being honest and frank with senior colleagues, particularly the Head Teacher. A number of researchers have addressed this challenge by highlighting approaches to support more open conversations (Blasé and Blasé, 2017; Dempster *et al.*, 2017; Earl and Timperley, 2008; Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009). For instance, in order to support teacher reflection around learning and teaching Blasé and Blasé (2017: 256) emphasise Head Teachers 'making

suggestions, giving feedback, modelling, using inquiry and soliciting advice/opinions, and praising'. These are designed to facilitate more open conversations, using particular behaviours to engineer responses to help the teacher become more reflectively effective. A similar but somewhat different approach is used by Dempster *et al.* (2017: 44), who, in what they describe as a 'disciplined dialogue' approach, have the Head Teacher anchoring discussions with teachers around learning and teaching data using the following three questions:

1. What do we see in these data?
2. Why are we seeing what we are?
3. What, if anything, should we be doing about it?

This emphasis on the pronoun *we* highlights a conception of a dialogue around data that is framed less as a top down process, but rather one that encourages 'ownership and commitment rather than blame and defensiveness' (Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009: 268) from teachers. Moreover, it highlights Head Teachers supporting an evidence informed enquiry approach to teachers' learning around the effectiveness of their teaching practice (Timperley, 2011), entailing a focus on nurturing the conditions for 'reflective practice, critical inquiry, and meaningful and coherent activity'. (Mitchell and Sackney, 2011:52.) This can also be supported through Head Teachers nurturing teachers' capacities to engage in research-informed practice where 'using research means doing research' (Stenhouse 1979, in Elliot, 2001:570).

Research-informed practice involves teachers as much more than 'simply translators or interpreters of educational research done elsewhere.' (McIntyre, 2005: 357). Rather it involves them in a process of critical trialling of 'research-based suggestions in the context of their own practice' (McIntyre, 2005: 357) through the interactions between their teaching craft knowledge and the research. This entails teachers developing a 'researchly disposition' (Lingard and Gale, 2010 :23) where they are not only 'research-informed, but also research-informing' (*ibid.).* Moreover, Head Teachers themselves require to be involved in the process of engaging and learning from research. Timperley *et al*. (2007) highlight the role of a New Zealand Head Teacher in a large secondary school reading up on research together with a middle leader, and using their discussions and joint learning to initiate a new

restorative justice programme for pupils. This raises issues about the degree to which the thinking and practice of Head Teachers in Scottish secondary schools are research informed. Saunders (2017:np.) suggests that teachers' engagement in research furnishes them 'with exposure to ideas and concepts they might not ordinarily come across and this enhances their breadth and depth of understanding.' (Saunders, 2017: np.). The same might equally be applied to school leaders.

Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009: 190) also found that school leaders who engage in 'open-to-learning' conversations with teaching colleagues used a variety of techniques, similar to those above, to improve teacher understanding *as well as their own*. This reflects the findings from Blasé and Blasé (2017) that in more open conversations the Head Teacher can solicit teachers' advice on learning and teaching matters, although what this advice might be is not explained. This frames the learning not just in terms of teachers' needs but also those of the Head Teacher, with Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009: 190) arguing that leaders, such as the Head Teacher, need to 'be open to reciprocal influence' that leads to new information and changed thinking. This entails leaders shifting to a more 'differentiated, responsive relationships' (Knapp *et al.*, 2010: 14) with teachers for whom they are responsible. This involves both formal and informal discussions about learning and teaching which keep leaders up to date with classroom practice (Knapp *et al.*, 2010: 15). Similarly, Groysberg and Slind (2012a) argue that where there are frank and genuine two-way conversations between leader and employee then the leader gleans 'information that might otherwise have escaped his attention' (2012a: 79) and where participants, including the leader, 'learn from each other' (2012a: 82). However, if conversations are to be rich, where teachers share concerns and challenges, then they need to be non-threatening, with the Head Teacher showing 'respect for others, personal regard for others, competence in role, and personal integrity' (Groysberg and Slind (2012a: 78). Respect is most easily demonstrated through listening 'to people's ideas as if they have value.' (Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd, 2009: 184). Without the necessary trust, so essential for organizational effectiveness (Moye and Henkin, 2005: 260), teachers will not engage fully in the open conversations that are so important to their learning and that of the Head Teacher.

While the literature highlights the importance of two-way dialogues between Head Teachers and teachers, the information on how they are practiced by Head Teachers is limited. Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009) highlight this gap in the New Zealand context in which they work, pointing out that there is not enough information on how leaders specifically support these dialogues or the effects on their leadership practice. This echoes McCown's view (2014), writing in a business context, that there is insufficient research around the dialogues senior leaders have with staff members. There is a similar lack of research around *how* Scottish secondary Head Teachers support dialogues between themselves and their colleagues around learning and teaching in order to support the learning of the Head Teacher, and what the specific effects of this might be.

Both the role of lead learner and the use of open dialogues change the conception of the role of the Head Teacher from that normally associated with a traditional top-down managerial approach to one that is more relational and open to both sharing and mutual learning. In addition, both the role of learner and dialogues based on trust appear to contribute to the Head Teacher's knowledge and understanding about learning and teaching issues with key effects on their leadership for learning. This will be addressed in the next section.

3.2.3 Head Teacher knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching
A particularly challenging issue within the research is around the level of a secondary Head Teacher's knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching. If the key role of the secondary Head Teacher is the 'guidance and direction of instructional improvement' (Elmore, 2000: 13) then a pertinent issue is, what sorts of knowledge, and to what depth, do secondary Head Teachers need about learning and teaching in order to be effective leaders for learning? (Robinson, 2006). There is broad agreement that some sort of knowledge is important, but a lack of agreement on how much.

Hallinger (2005:6) contends that 'expertise in teaching and learning' is vital for a Head Teacher and Leithwood (2011: 43) argues that effectively influencing the 'knowledge and skills of school staffs about the curriculum, teaching and learning' necessitates leaders who themselves are 'knowledge about the "technical core" of schooling'. Writing in the Scottish context, Forde, McMahon and Dickson (2011: 66)

state that 'leadership for learning has to be imbued with rich understandings of pedagogy'. As early as 1984, the Scottish inspectorate (HM Inspectors of Schools, 1984: 18) highlighted that management teams in Scottish secondary schools 'require knowledge of the practice current in the school in the learning areas – classrooms, workshops, laboratories – where the future welfare of the pupils is the ultimate goal'. This implies Head Teachers getting out of their offices and into classes. What is clear is that leadership focused on learning and teaching 'makes broad demands on principals' knowledge and skills with regard to both student and teacher learning.' (Bryk *et al.*, 2010: 62).

The importance of this knowledge appears to be in how it affects Head Teachers' leadership practices, with Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009: 175) arguing that leaders need 'not only to be knowledgeable about pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment, but also to be skilled in using this knowledge to make pedagogically sound administrative decisions.' In a study of an Australian all through school (primary and secondary), Marsh, Waniganayake and De Nobile (2013) found the principal's knowledge of learning and teaching had a key 'influence in articulating a shared vision for learning' across the school. In another Australian study in a primary setting, Head Teachers were given a professional learning opportunity in literacy teaching. The findings from this indicate that Head Teachers need enough knowledge about learning and teaching in order to be able engage in professional conversations around learning and teaching with their teachers (Dempster *et al.*, 2017). In this respect, Nelson and Stein (2003: 446) postulate that lacking 'knowledge that connects subject matter, learning, and teaching to acts of leadership, leadership floats disconnected from the very processes it is designed to govern'. This is more than being an administrator or manager, requiring that Head Teachers have an understanding and appreciation of the essentials of learning and teaching (Evans, 1998; Murphy, 2002) in order to be, as Rowan (1995: 116) says 'pioneers in the development and management of new forms of instructional practice in schools … [developing] a thorough understanding of the rapidly evolving body of research on learning and teaching that motivate these new practices.' This is about Head Teachers keeping in touch with research-informed pedagogy, ensuring it supports the professional learning of teachers, and also working to translate research to support school policy developments in learning and teaching (Timperley *et al.*, 2007). This also involves, as highlighted in section 3.2.2, Head

Teachers engaging closely with teachers around evidence informed practice and learning from this.

On a very simple level, Head Teachers who focus effectively on learning and teaching seem to allocate a substantial proportion of their time to it (Murphy *et al*., 2016) and are better at ensuring that other work does not distract from this (McDougall, Saunders and Goldenberg, 2007). Understanding of learning, teaching and the curriculum appears to support Head Teachers in meeting the professional learning needs of teachers more effectively (Nelson and Sassi, 2000; Stein and Nelson; 2003). In the context of lesson observation, Nelson and Sassi (2000: 574) argue that Head Teachers should have understanding of what is happening in classes as well as 'the intent behind the practices of the teachers that they observe.' Rigby (2014: 617) argues:

> How a principal conceptualizes the role of a teacher…is essential to how he or she goes about being an instructional leader. For example, a principal would make different leadership moves if he or she understood the role of a teacher as an implementer of a particular curriculum with fidelity versus a builder of classroom culture and curriculum based on individual student needs.

This implies that it is important for leaders to have a deep understanding of broad pedagogical issues. Yet for some, an even deeper knowledge and understanding of specific subjects and subject specific pedagogies is important (Nelson and Sassi, 2000; Stein and Nelson, 2003). Stein and Nelson (2003: 443) argue that the 'depth of subject matter knowledge and knowledge of how students learn those subjects does seem to give administrators a significant advantage as effective instructional leaders'. However, Stein and Nelson's research arises from a primary school context, and therefore it is open to question how much of it can transfer to the complex curricula that now characterise secondary schools. In any case, Spillane and Louis (2002: 97) argue that asking Head Teachers to have a depth of knowledge in each subject area is 'unrealistic', and in the context of the complexity of the secondary curriculum it would seem that Head Teachers cannot have a depth of knowledge across all subjects (Leithwood, 2012; Louis *et al*., 2010; Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009).

The importance of the Head Teacher having an understanding of broad pedagogical issues, while not having specific subject expertise, is illustrated by an elementary school study by Spillane, Diamond, Walker, Halverson and Jita (2001). This highlighted the attempts of one elementary principal to lead whole school change in science despite the fact she lacked expertise in this area. What was important here was her strong focus on, and understanding of, learning and teaching and her work to sustain the development of supportive relationships between teachers to enable them to interact and engage in dialogue around this. She depended upon and worked closely *with* her science experts in the school to develop change and improvement using a distributed leadership approach that included formal and informal leaders. This accords with a large American high school study by Portin and Knapp (2011) who found that the aspiration of many principals to have the necessary subject content and pedagogy expertise was challenged both by the extensive subject-based curriculum and the pace of curricular reform. However, to get around this the American principals, while continuing to search for ways to improve their expertise, focused their influence on team leadership of learning and teaching. The studies above outline that the way Head Teachers interact with their colleagues, develop their capacities and capabilities and use structures to support learning and teaching are significant in ameliorating any weaknesses in the Head Teachers' knowledge around learning and teaching.

Leithwood (2012) argues that secondary Head Teachers can enact their leadership for learning through subject specialists, particularly middle leaders, and therefore an in-depth knowledge of all subjects is not needed. Yet for Robinson (2006) this is problematic. She argues that the challenge for Head Teachers who do delegate leadership for learning to others is that their lack of in-depth of knowledge around particular subject areas restricts their ability to both recognise the skills colleagues require for this role and gauge their application (Robinson, 2006). While research emphasises the importance of the learning and teaching knowledge Head Teachers bring to their leadership, there is simply a lack of clarity around how much they need in order to be effective. There is a sense that they have to have the interest, ability and time 'to grasp content and pedagogical content knowledge in ways that enable them to support educating teachers.' (Spillane and Louis, 2002: 97). It is an area which would benefit from much more research, involving 'figuring out what sort of

content and pedagogical knowledge leaders will need to have in order to lead effectively.' (Spillane and Louis, 2002: 97).

This discussion has not resolved the question posed at the beginning of the section, around how much knowledge and understanding a secondary Head Teacher needs in order to be an effective leader for learning. While this issue is addressed further in chapter 7 (7.4.4), this section has highlighted a range of other key issues that need the attention of a leader for learning, primarily around how Head Teachers support the development of the capacities within the school and the capabilities of teachers. These are addressed in the next section.

3.3 Supporting Capacity and Capability.

Hallinger and Heck (2010a: 107) argue that the likelihood of sustainable success around school improvement is limited unless issues of capacity and leadership are simultaneously addressed in what they describe as 'a set of systemic relationships'. A focus on capacity is a key aspect of leadership for learning practice. This is about building 'the individual and collective power of the whole staff' (Day, 2009: 122) to address the needs of pupils. In this respect Fullan, Hill and Crévola (2006: 88) argue that:

> Capacity building involves the use of strategies that increase the collective effectiveness of all levels of the system in developing and mobilizing knowledge, resources and motivation, all of which are needed to raise the bar and close the gap of student learning across the system.

The following sections will address the key aspects of capacity building integral to leadership for learning that include: collaborative and distributed leadership approaches; the importance of professional learning; the role of data; and the development of coherence and alignment.

3.3.1 Leadership for learning as collaboration

A key characteristic of leadership for learning is how it moves our understanding from leadership focused on a particular role such as that of Head Teacher, to a more diffused view (Gurr and Drysdale, 2013), that of leadership as a property of the school where its practice 'flows through the network of roles.' (Ogawa and Bossert, 1995: 238). There are many terms to describe this sort of leadership

including distributed (Bush, 2001), shared (Marks and Printy, 2003) and collaborative (Hallinger and Heck, 2010a). While there can be differences in meaning, all are concerned with widening the leadership practice and influence of school staff (Hallinger and Heck, 2010a; Harris, 2009; Portin and Knapp, 2011).

Bush (2014), who perceives leadership for learning and instructional leadership as interchangeable terms, argues that as 'leadership is about influence, not formal authority, instructional leadership could emanate from many different sources.' (Bush, 2014: 3). This is in contrast to instructional leadership's early focus on the hierarchical role of the principal, and emphasises more distributed approaches to leadership involving a wider range of actors beyond the Head Teacher (Hallinger 2003; Lynch, 2016). While the wider range of actors might include teachers undertaking a range of 'lead roles' in the school (Education Scotland, 2015: 22), this is really about creating the conditions where staff members, promoted and unpromoted, can be sources of influence on each other (Harris, 2013). A distributed perspective to leadership entails Head Teachers actively engaging the leadership talents of staff across the school in order to create capacities for improvement (Harris, 2014: np.). Here leadership is a process open to everyone in the organization (Northouse, 2016) where 'leadership and learning are a shared, as much as an individual, enterprise.' (MacBeath, Frost and Swaffield, 2008: 301). Forde, McMahon and Dickson (2011: 64) describe leadership for learning 'as a layered and inclusive practice with teachers both working with and leading other teachers in the development of teaching and learning, and leading learning in their classrooms'. In the context of leadership for learning, everyone has the potential to influence where both leadership and learning are conceptualised as agential activities that are 'interdependent and contingent on one another.' (Frost, 2006: 19). This perspective moves the focus from traditional conceptions of leadership tied to the personalities and traits of individual leaders (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004) to a broader conception of the Head Teacher as one of many leaders. Here 'human activity is distributed in the interactive web of actors' (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004: 9) and enacted through the interactions these actors have with one another rather than in the specific actions they may take (Harris and DeFlaminis, 2016). Here individual members of school staff, in formal leadership roles and not, interact through activities with each other where influence is not dependent on role, and can be directed, as highlighted in 2.2, 'to influence the

motivation, knowledge, affect or practices of other organizational members.' (Spillane, 2006: 12-13).

i) Benefits

There are a number of arguments as to why a more collaborative approach is important in a leadership for learning context. Firstly, there is a perception that the increasingly complex challenges facing Head Teachers cannot be addressed by leaders on their own (Elmore, 2000; MacBeath, Frost and Swaffield, 2018). To successfully address these changes, it is argued that Head Teachers must develop leadership potential across their schools where they 'share the lead and the load' (Slater, 2008: 55) as part of a more collaborative leadership approach (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 1999; Spillane, 2006). However, this only makes sense in a leadership for learning context if it is focused on, or results, in improvements to learning and or teaching. Robinson (2008: 253) is critical of calls for distributed leadership approaches which seem to be ends in themselves, suggesting that:

> more democratic forms of school organisation and the importance of teacher empowerment are, in themselves, inappropriate grounds for advocating greater distribution of leadership in schools. They are inappropriate because the ethical imperative of school leadership is to do what is in the interest of children, not what is the interest of the staff.

Certainly the results from one large six year study of American elementary, middle and high schools (Louis *et al.*, 2010: 19) were positive, finding that '[c]ollective leadership has a stronger influence on student achievement than individual leadership.' However, the impact of distributed leadership approaches is a contested area and Robinson and Gray (2019: 20) conclude from their recent review of research that 'there is scant evidence about the impact of distributed leadership on student outcomes'.

A second perceived benefit is that a shared approach 'as opposed to leadership from the principal alone, may offer a path towards more sustainable school improvement' (Hallinger and Heck, 2010a: 107), with teachers both collaborating and taking part in the organisational change process. This involves Head Teachers in supporting the development of capacity of teachers to not only make a difference in their classrooms, but across the school and to influence fellow teachers (Frost, 2006). Input from the leader is vital for the development of capacity and Schley and

Shratz (2011) suggest that the lack of effective and sustainable reform in schools is often down to top down prescriptive approaches rather than those focused on building capacity. This still assumes both a willingness and ability on behalf of teachers to be involved in leadership as well as responsive colleagues (Robinson, 2008).

ii) Challenges and tensions

There is a tension in the literature and policy between a more collaborative leadership perspective and a traditional one, which posits the Head Teacher as directive and in control. While Head Teachers are expected to engage in consultation, support more shared leadership approaches and work collaboratively with teachers there are still strong pressures on individual directive Head Teacher actions and behaviours. A study by Portin and Knapp (2011: 519) found that a Head Teacher's leadership for learning was mainly 'a leveraged activity' involving working through the know-how of others. As the largest formal leadership group within secondary schools, middle leaders are a particularly significant group as regards this expertise. Yet Klar (2012) laments that not enough attention has been focused in distributed leadership research on the role of the middle leader. In particular he is interested in how this role can be supported by Head Teachers so that middle leaders can lead change through and with the teachers for whom they are responsible. This is more than a Head Teacher simply delegating a focus on learning and teaching on the part of middle leaders. Rather it involves the Head Teacher in what Portin *et al*. (2009:103) describe as a 'working partnership' focused on 'a collective learning improvement agenda.' My own experience working with Scottish schools highlights that this is not necessarily easy for some Head Teachers who find it challenging. Some Head Teachers may find that it is easier to simply be directive with colleagues rather than enter into a partnership with them to develop their capacity to lead (Lambert, 1998). While there is a huge potential for middle leaders to work with teachers on aspects of learning, teaching, the curriculum and assessment, middle leaders often lack support from Head Teachers to do this, with some more likely to simply attend to managerial issues (Gurr and Drysdale, 2013). As a result, the leadership potential of middle leaders is too often left undeveloped (Gurr and Drysdale, 2013).

Despite the rhetoric of collaboration, some Head Teachers still adhere to top down approaches. The perceptions of American principals in the study by Townsend *et al.*, (2013) showed them prioritising hierarchical approaches as the ones they perceived as most likely to effect improvement in pupil learning. The *Standard for Headship* reflects this dichotomy, with the Head Teacher being expected to be both collaborative leader, the 'leading professional', while at the same being held to account for enacting whole school strategic change and improvement as 'an officer in the local authority.' (General Teaching Scotland, 2012: 17). Moreover, formal authority is instinctive for some Head Teachers with an aversion to change, a position not helped by the lack of malleability of school structural arrangements (Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz and Louis, 2009). This is hardly surprising as Head Teachers are at the apex of a schooling structure that uses 'elements of a bureaucratic structure to organize the complex task of educating large and diverse groups of students - elements such as a hierarchy of authority, a division of labor, policies, rules, and regulations.' (Tschannen-Moran, 2009: 217). Distributed leadership approaches are inevitably tied in to issues of power and authority. The role of authority in leadership is vague or ignored, echoing the fact that is not well understood in general in schools (Macleod *et al*., 2018). Distributed leadership approaches are conceptually tied to words such as 'power, influence, co-ordination, collective decision-making and delegated authority.' (Gronn, 2008: 142). This is most marked in the essential role that Head Teachers play, using their privileged power and influential position to ensure the success of distributed leadership developments where 'planful and aligned forms of distributed leadership are unlikely in the absence of focused leadership on the part of the school's formal leader.' (Leithwood *et al*., 2007: 55). As argued by Day (2009: 121) while 'there may be many leaders in a school, the principal is the key to bringing about and sustaining successful change'.

Gronn (2008: 150) puts forward the argument for a form of hybridity with 'intermingling of both hierarchical and heterarchical modes of ordering responsibilities and relations'. Moreover, as others develop their influence throughout the school the Head Teacher does not suffer a commensurate loss of influence (Louis *et al*., 2010). Rather than seeing leadership focused on an individual, for instance Head Teacher, and distributed leadership as 'polarized alternatives' (Gronn, 2008: 143), Gronn argues that leadership can be both, with

'varying combinations and degrees' over time (Gronn, 2008: 199). Perhaps all of this is best summed up by the phase 'intelligent hierarchy' (Louis *et al*., 2010: 35) where the abilities and skills of all teachers are utilised towards whole school goals within a carefully managed and focused path. This expertise is something that calls for support and development, both in terms of teachers' engagement in leadership of change and improvement across the school and in terms of their knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching. The next section explores the important role that support for professional learning plays in leadership for learning.

3.3.2 Supporting teachers' professional learning

Teachers are central to pupil learning in school (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999) and as a result the role of teachers and teaching represents a significant aspect of leadership for learning (Bush and Glover, 2014). Research suggests that Head Teachers make the most significant impact on pupil learning through both supporting the professional learning of teachers and also taking part in this process (Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008). To ensure this impact Head Teachers require to connect the professional learning of teachers with the school's focus on pupil learning (Dolan, 2008).

The professional learning of teachers can range from formal professional sessions run in school or beyond, to action research with others or individually, to supporting teachers in research-informed practice, as highlighted in section 3.2.2, and to external courses. The role of communities of practice such as a Professional Learning Community (PLC) is also important to teacher learning. Stoll *et al.* (2006) define a PLC as a group of teachers who share and collaborate together to interrogate their learning and teaching practices in order to improve their own learning and classroom practice. Similarly, Hord (1997:6) defines professional learning communities in schools as ones where:

> … the teachers in a school and its administrators continuously seek and share learning, and act on their learning. The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals for the students' benefit; thus, this arrangement may also be termed *communities of continuous inquiry and improvement*.

Teacher learning can also be supported though collaborative enquiry processes like lesson study (Lewis, 2000), learning rounds (Philpott and Oates, 2015) and team teaching (Pedder, James and Macbeath, 2005). These collaborative and more

democratic forms of classroom observation can enable teachers' participation within communities of practice. When done well, they can help foster a climate for professional learning where, as in lesson study, teachers are involved in 'researching their own practice in school-based communities of inquiry' (Doig and Groves, 2011:77) with a focus on improving learning and teaching.

There are also other ways that teachers can learn, for instance, through developing with others the teaching of a new aspect of the curriculum or chatting and discussing informally issues of learning and teaching with colleagues (Fraser *et al*., 2007). Yet the informal learning of teachers as a field for Head Teacher activity is not so obvious, with Fraser *et al.* (2007: 166) suggesting that the 'nature, extent and role of informal incidental opportunities in teachers' professional learning are currently under-researched and therefore remain unclear'. What is clear is that there are real benefits when Head Teachers support the leaning of teachers through the development of 'a community of learners' (Matthews, 2009: 4). In this context of the school as a professional learning community, teachers collaborate and share around their teaching in order to improve the learning of pupils (Southworth, 2009).

Yet supporting teacher learning is challenging for school leaders and Timperley (2011: 118) highlights this by saying:

> Every day teachers face the challenges of introducing new curricula, assessment approaches and technologies into their classroom practices. In many situations they are also faced with changing student populations that do not necessarily respond to instructional practices in familiar ways.

The crucial role played by teachers in the learning of pupils and dealing with challenges like these focuses the role of Head Teachers on supporting and creating the conditions for teachers to make sustainable improvements to pupils learning. The onus is on Head Teachers to develop a clear understanding around the ways in which teachers' professional learning is linked to pupil learning (Bredeson, 2000) in what can be described as a 'pedagogy of professional development' (Ball and Cohen, 1999: 6). Without this understanding it is difficult for a Head Teacher to support the learning of a teacher to enable them in turn to support the learning of pupils. The challenge for Head Teachers is compounded by the fact that not enough is understood around how teachers make use of and apply professional

development experiences, or the effects on pupil learning (Timperley *et al*., 2007). This involves much more than reliance on 'one-off courses' (Timperley, 2011: 118) and Head Teachers need to ensure that the conditions are in place where teachers can work together in joint enquiry around improving their understanding of learning and teaching issues (Timperley and Alton-Lee, 2008). How Head Teachers might do this from a leadership for learning perspective is illustrated by an American middle school case study by Philips (2003). This describes a project focused on improving learning amongst pupils performing less well than expected. The project was successful in the positive impact it had on pupil learning and there are a number of key issues that arise from this.

Firstly, in the study by Philips (2003) teachers' leadership was prioritised. Teachers were given freedom by the Head Teacher to lead their own learning in three separate study groups, in which members chose an area of pedagogical interest unique to their group. This accords with earlier discussions in section 3.3.1 which highlight distributive approaches and the crucial role of the Head Teacher within them. Secondly, space and time were provided for teachers to learn together, often using research informed literature. This is an important aspect of Head Teacher's support for teachers' professional learning, as teachers talking about learning and teaching has been described as 'the engine room for improved practice.' (MacBeath *et al*., 2018: 147). Thirdly, teachers were provided with a very clear focus to their work, around the needs of particular underachieving pupils. This is not about Head Teachers letting teachers go off and do whatever they wish, but rather it is about providing teachers with 'the direction they need to practice' (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 2007:6) while at the same time ensuring freedom of professional identity and choice. Similarly, Amabile (1988: 81, italics in original) reflects that 'creativity thrives when managers let people decide *how* to climb a mountain; they needn't, however, let employees choose which one.' Finally, the Head Teachers provided vital support through ongoing and regular engagement with each of the groups. This is important, where Head Teachers commit to the challenging work of engaging with teachers in their learning and development rather than 'abdicate responsibility' (Timperley *et al*., 2007:166). Head Teacher support for professional learning through ensuring supportive conditions can lead to improved pupil learning (Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008; Timperley and Alton-Lee, 2008). What is not so clear is how Head Teachers do this. While Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) found

that support for and engagement in teachers' professional learning was *the* most powerful leadership factor in improving pupil learning, they lament that the research does not provide the necessary detailed information on how this is enacted by leaders. Yet this very information is vital if Head Teachers are to understand and implement effective support for teachers' professional learning. It is this gap in existing knowledge that this thesis, in part, aims to address (see for instance, 5.5.2.1 and 7.5.2) providing deeper understanding that can be applied to Head Teachers' practice.

3.3.3 Supporting self-evaluation
Another essential constituent of supporting improvement to learning and teaching is ensuring that leadership practice within the schools is informed by data (Chapman and Harris, 2004). There is a large amount of data and information available to Head teachers including observations of classroom learning and teaching, pupil outcome information on a variety of indicators, attendance returns, pupil views and teacher feedback (Education Scotland, 2015; Southworth, 2009, 2011).

Analysis of this data is essential (Potter, Reynolds and Chapman, 2002), and '*How good is our school?*' (Education Scotland, 2015: 11), a school self-evaluation document that also underpins school inspections, states that this analysis enables recognition of 'emerging issues and when specific interventions are necessary'. This is about using data to identify the strategic direction of the school as regards learning and teaching as well as particular instances of effective practice (Potter, Reynolds and Chapman, 2002) that can be shared or further developed, as well as areas of concern. The use of data is particularly important in terms of professional learning and the *Standard for Headship* (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012: 20) calls on Head Teachers to 'build systems to monitor the impact of professional learning on the culture of learning'. Evaluating the impact of teacher professional learning is essential if it is to be tailored to improving pupil learning. Yet caution requires to be exercised here. As highlighted in chapter 1, section 1.4, there is a rhetoric around data (re-enforced through the National Improvement Framework and Scottish Attainment Challenge) that pervades Scottish Government policy and documentation, one that places an emphasis on performativity and narrow attainment outcomes. This can pressurise Head Teachers into a narrow evaluative focus on results at the expense of the wider needs of children or the development of

engaging the self-evaluation of teachers themselves collectively around through, for instance, collaborative enquiry processes as highlighted in the previous section, 3.3.2.

While the role of the Head Teacher plays an important part in the process of evaluation, there are also tensions between the need to develop a shared sense of accountability between teachers and Head Teachers, as was highlighted earlier in section 2.4.3 by MacBeath *et al.* (2018), and practices that specifically involve Head Teachers in monitoring and evaluation, for example through the observation of a lesson and providing feedback to a teacher. From my own experience and discussions with teachers, Head Teacher lesson observation can be a contentious issue for some teachers in Scottish schools who regard the Head Teacher coming into a class as threatening. Southworth (2011: 76) acknowledges the quality assurance element regarding classroom observation, but regards the observation process as important to a leader's practice, believing that 'in the great majority of cases the goal is not to be inspectorial, but to make these processes as educative and developmental as possible for all concerned, including the leaders'. For Dempster (2012: 53) there should be regular discussions throughout the year 'about student performance, 'distance travelled' or improvement gained and the strategies which have contributed to achievement are the essential aspects of this dimension'. Conversely, he is critical of both the lack information about, and discussions on, 'the effects of particular approaches to teaching or particular learning experiences children encounter.' (Dempster, 2012: 53). This accords with my own observations through working closely with Head Teachers around Scotland, a caution expressed by some around raising issues with teachers about the quality of learning and teaching in their classes in case this leads to a breakdown of the relationship between Head Teacher and teacher. Section 3.2.2, on dialogue, highlighted some of the approaches used to circumvent this caution and support open and trusting dialogues with teachers and the issue of the role of dialogues will be returned to in the context of my case study schools in sections 5.4.2 , 6.4.1, 6.4.2 and 6.4.3. At the heart of these approaches were trusting relationships and this seems to indicate that the use of data has to be tied by Heads Teachers to a deep appreciation and respect for those to whom the data might have implications. In effect, it implies that in order for the use of data to have a sustainable impact it is necessary that Head Teachers integrate its use in tandem with other developments, such as trusting

relationships and less hierarchical approaches. The next section will explore the idea of a cohesive and integrated approach to leadership for learning.

3.3.4 Developing cohesion and alignment

Head Teachers, as leaders for learning, have as their key priority supporting the conditions for the effective learning, teaching and well-being of pupils. This focus entails Head Teachers to attend to 'the wider organizational conditions that enable, stimulate, and support those conditions.' (Leithwood and Sun, 2012: 413). The previous sections, 3.3.1 to 3.3.3, have highlighted several of these: shared and collaborative approaches including the role of middle leaders; the role of professional learning; and the importance of data. Various elements such as these require to be aligned to learning and teaching, and integrated and connected in order to maximise impact in what can be described as a coherent approach to development (Lindvall and Ryve, 2019). To ensure this coherence requires what St John (2002: np.) describes as an 'improvement infrastructure', where school policies, developments, processes and structures are brought together to support improvements to learning and teaching (Glennan *et al.*, 2004). This includes communication systems, learning and teaching policies and leader roles (Southworth, 2009). Day *et al.* (2010) propose that effective leaders are not afraid to restructure leadership roles where necessary in line with the direction of the school.

In order to achieve successful change and improvement around learning and teaching, Head Teachers must combine together a range of simultaneous, supportive developments. In this respect, King and Newman (2001: 87) argue that improvements in pupil outcomes are best addressed through firstly the quality of learning and teaching which itself 'is affected by how professional learning supports school capacity development'. This demonstrates the tight connections that are necessary for improvements to learning and teaching to be effective. However, the concept of coherence is a relatively new area of research, with only limited comprehension of its practice (Lindvall and Ryve, 2019). In chapter 7 (section 7.6) I discuss the importance and practice of coherence to the case study Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice and this is an important area of knowledge to which this thesis contributes.

3.4 Conclusion

This review has discussed and explored a range of pertinent issues that are bound up with conceptions of the Head Teacher's leadership for learning. This has as its focus the learning of pupils, the teaching of teachers and the development of the key conditions that will support these. This prioritises the learning of all involved in a school, not just the pupils, but teachers and even the Head Teacher. Yet conceptions of leadership for learning are not unproblematic and I have drawn attention to some of the dilemmas and challenges, for example, the role of the Head Teacher as lead learner which is returned to in section 7.4.2.

This review of the leadership for learning literature provides insights into some of the characteristics of leadership for learning in a field that is developing and evolving. From an early focus on the leadership of the Head Teacher it has expanded into wider conceptions of leadership as a property found throughout the school. From narrow conceptions of learning focused on test scores and exam results it has widened to embrace the learning of pupils on a wide range of measures. Head Teachers, however, remain under enormous pressure from policy demands and increasing accountability for pupil progress and exam results.

While this review highlights a range of germane issues there still remains the question as to the scope and applied nature of Head Teacher leadership for learning in a Sottish secondary school context. These issues are addressed through the findings in chapters 5 and 6, and the discussion that follows in chapter 7. In the following chapter 4, I outline and discuss the research design that I have developed for this study in order to address the research questions posed in chapter 1.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In chapters 2 and 3 I examined key issues associated with leadership for learning, particularly in the context of the Head Teacher's role. As was highlighted in chapter 1, this is defined as leadership that is focused on the learning of pupils, the teaching of teachers, and influencing the conditions that nurture and support these. While the review of the literature analysed a great deal of robust research, highlighting the broad areas of Head Teacher practice that have positive impacts on pupil learning and wellbeing (for example, Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe, 2008), commentators still have concerns as regards the lack of specific information on how Head Teachers and other leaders implement these in practice (Nuemerski, 2013, Southworth, 2011; Spillane, 2006; Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008). In this chapter, I outline and discuss the research design that I developed for this study in order to meet the aims of this thesis. The following research questions[1] were designed to guide my research into secondary Head Teachers' leadership for learning practices:

1. How do secondary Head Teachers conceptualise their role as leaders of learning and teaching in their schools?
2. How do Head Teachers perceive their operationalisation of this role?
3. According to teachers, what is the scope and nature of this leadership?

This chapter outlines the methodological approach that I adopted to address these questions. The research questions determined my decision to adopt a qualitative research design using collective case study, and in sections 4.2 and 4.3 I justify my use of this approach. In 4.4, I describe the selection of the three case study schools, negotiation of access to them and the selection of individual participants. In 4.5, I explain my use of interview as the main data collection instrument and in section 4.6 provide an outline of my use of documentation. This is followed in 4.7

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[1] As is usual in research of this kind of the research the questions developed as the study progressed and my interest became more refined. Some earlier iterations of these research questions appear in supplementary material included in Appendices.

with an account of the data analysis processes in terms of 'making sense of, interpreting and theorizing' (Schwandt, 2007: 6) the data. Finally, in sections 4.8-4.11, I address issues of reflexivity and positionality, ethical considerations, trustworthiness and limitations of the study.

4.2 Paradigmatic Assumptions and Research Design

Understanding secondary Head Teachers' leadership in the service of improved learning and teaching is inherently complex. To achieve a deep understanding of the processes involved requires exploring the meanings and interpretations that different actors place on both their own and others' thinking and activities. Often the 'busyness' of school life can mitigate against a deeper understanding of why actions are taken and their consequences for learning and teaching. For these reasons, this study uses an interpretivist paradigm to explore and interpret the leadership for learning practices in three Scottish secondary schools. Interpretivism involves the researcher viewing a situation 'through the perceptions and experiences of the participants' and using the data from this to develop understanding.' (Thanh and Thanh, 2015: 215).

This qualitative interpretivist approach focuses on subjects' (Head Teachers and teachers) perceptions (Hindmarch *et al*., 2017), around the scope, nature and effects of secondary Head Teachers' leadership focused on learning and teaching. My interest was in participants' interpretations, constructions and meanings (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016), and through my analysis of these to generate a deep sense of how Head Teachers and teachers understand and experience leadership for learning. This revealed Head Teachers' and teachers' conceptions and impressions of the nature of the Head Teacher role, including the processes involved in the enactment of its influence.

My assumptions around the socially constructed nature of reality (Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012) acted as a signpost for my research pathways (Hathaway, 1995) through the processes of collecting, identifying, understanding and interpreting participants' different realities (Andriopoulos and Slater, 2013). My interest was in the sense making of participants, both Head Teachers and teachers, through their real lived experiences (Spillane and Coldren, 2011). Consequently, this study explores the similar and different meanings that participants construct through their

contextually located interactions (Andriopoulos and Slater, 2013: Bassey, 2010; Cronin, 2017; Merriam, 2009:13).

4.3 Case Study Rationale

In this section I outline the qualitative collective case study design, primarily instrumental in purpose but also exploratory, that I used to answer my research questions. This was designed to effectively address all three of the research questions in order to develop understanding of the situations (Yin, 2003) faced by both Head Teachers and teachers from their points of view (Cronin, 2017: 58) and using their language (Lincoln and Guba, 1990).

My decision to use a case study approach was determined by a number of factors. While the use of a survey across a large number of schools has advantages, not least in terms of time and a sample size that might enable possibilities for wider generalisation (Babbie, 2013), I felt that it was limiting in terms of generating the depth of understanding (Thomas, 2011) that I wanted to achieve. Moreover, on a personal level I wanted to speak to participants and develop, though my presence, a sense of their 'total life situation.' (Babbie, 2013: 287). As a result I judged a case study approach, using interviews, as the most suitable approach.

Case study is designed to more effectively understand a key issue or phenomenon (Thomas, 2016; Stake, 1995), in this case Head Teachers' leadership for learning in a bounded secondary school context. Case study provided me with an in-depth research approach (Crowe *et al.*, 2011; Merriam, 1998; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Simons, 2009) designed to establish a 'multi-faceted understanding' (Crowe *et al.*, 2011:1) of the complexities of leadership for learning *in* and *of the* real life contexts (Cronin, 2017; Simons, 2009; Yin, 2003). The inter-relationship between issue and context is central to case study (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2004; Stake, 1995), enabling a researcher like myself to preserve 'the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events.' (Yin, 2003: 2).

In this study, the 'design frame' (Thomas, 2013: 138) takes a collective case study (Stake, 1995) approach to the study of Head Teacher leadership in three separate secondary schools, each an example of the phenomenon (Hentz, 2017). This is not an intrinsic study, where the case is of interest for its particular characteristics in its

own right (Stake, 2006). In contrast, this is an instrumental case study (Stake, 1995), where the case is selected as a vehicle for studying or exploring a particular issue in order to develop deeper understanding (Simons, 2009). The three schools were instrumentally selected as a result of being identified as having Head Teachers specifically characterised as being actively involved in leadership for learning. The selection of the schools was in the service of exploring the object of the study where the phenomenon or issue is of prime importance and case study is used 'to understand something else' (Stake, 1995: 3). The phenomenon of Head Teachers' leadership focused on learning and teaching can be very effectively researched using a collective case study approach where 'the researcher is interested in the same issue in different situations, or to understand a particular situation from different perspectives.' (Jacelon and O'Dell, 2005: 45). The focus in this study is on exploring and gaining a wider understanding of the issue through the concurrent collective study of three cases. Stake (2006: 6) uses the term 'quintain' to describe the use of several cases focused on 'an object or phenomenon or condition to be studied'. In his analysis the quintain is the 'collective target' (Stake, 2006: 6) and the study of the individual cases is in the service of the understanding the quintain, the 'collection of categorically bounded cases.' (Demuth, 2018: 79).

To study the quintain effectively involves deep analysis of each case, and each case can pull researchers in different directions. As Stake (2006: 7) himself admits there is a dilemma here, where the researcher ends up simultaneously trying to study the individual cases as well as studying the group, where 'the quintain and the cases become more worthy of study as fast as they are studied'. I certainly found this a challenge during the interview process and at the data analysis stage. For instance, finding myself on occasion asking questions in an interview that had no bearing on leadership for learning but were rather designed to satisfy my curiosity about an interesting feature of school life within a particular case. I had to regularly manage this dilemma by focusing on the need to pursue promising and relevant lines of enquiry along with the need to regulate carefully the time involved. In essence, I endeavoured to maintain a disciplined research focus on an instrumental study of the individual cases in the service of understanding the quintain (Stake, 2006). Here the emphasis was on understanding Head Teachers' leadership for learning across the three cases, through first deep analysis of the individual cases, where, as

Demuth (2018: 79) outlines, 'data are integrated and analyzed as a whole rather than as separate sets'.

While the terms collective case study and multiple case study are used interchangeably in much of the literature (Chmiliar, 2010; Thomas, 2016), I use the term 'collective case study' as it represents to me a clearer boundedness, fitting more effectively the collective nature of my study around the phenomenon of leadership for learning. I was interested in the whole, and, in creating a deeper understanding of the issue than could be provided through one case (Chmiliar, 2010).

A central characteristic of the case study approach is its bounded nature (Smith, 1978: Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1998; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016), what Miles and Huberman (1994: 25) describe as 'a phenomenon of some sort occurring within a bounded context'. This study is bounded by its specific focus on Head Teachers' leadership for learning, the object of the study (Hentz, 2017; Stake, 1995), in the very specific 'social context' (Hentz, 2017: 6) of secondary schools. This boundedness is further exemplified by each school which, as suggested by the work of Grima-Farrell (2016), is itself a unique and individual setting, with groups of particular staff and their own experiences relevant to the phenomenon being studied. This narrow, clearly delineated focus, so typical of case study (Hentz, 2017) is about providing 'deeper understanding of specific instances of a phenomenon' (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2004: 685).

This collective case study is also exploratory (Streb, 2010), in nature, with its purpose to better understand the phenomenon of Head Teacher leadership for learning, largely unexplored in the setting of Scottish secondary schools. I am interested in exploring the *how* of Head Teachers' practice though their interpretations and interactions, along with the perspectives of their colleagues, around 'how particular processes and dynamics unfold.' (Carr *et al*., 2018: 27). Exploratory case study research is particularly useful for studying 'social phenomena in their original context' (Streb, 2010: 373) and over the three case studies this is about building up a deep picture of the phenomenon in order to 'to know it well … what it is, what it does.' (Stake, 1995: 8). To know it well involves developing information 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973: 6) where my key researcher

role is to assemble an 'illuminating description of and perspective on a situation that is based on and consistent with detailed study of that situation.' (Schofield, 2002: 174). This '*richly* descriptive' (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016: 17, italics in original) approach is ideal in situations where there is limited research on the phenomenon being studied (Laws and McLeod, 2004: 5).

4.4 Case Selection

I was keen to identify 'information rich cases' (Patton, 1990: 169), a purposive sample designed to provide a wealth of precise detail which would aid transferability (Erlandson *et al*., 1993). I used a number of key criteria from the early literature review to identify Head Teachers who it could be assumed had the necessary knowledge, involvement and experience with leadership for learning. These criteria included such things as evidence of a vision for effective learning and teaching, engagement with classroom learning and teaching issues and a focus on the learning needs of all children. At a very basic level I wanted to identify Head Teachers who were noted for their focus on learning as the key part of their role. Another selection criterion was that the Head Teacher should not be known to me personally and this will be discussed in section 4.10 on ensuring trustworthiness.

At the very beginning of the process to find good examples of Head Teachers who met these criteria, I spent time looking at recent school inspection reports across twelve local authorities out of a total of thirty two, within easy travelling distance of my home base in Edinburgh, and that would not involve an overnight stay. Where Head Teachers were identified I cross referenced this information with the school websites, looking in particular at documents like the School Improvement Plan. I also looked at school websites using my own knowledge of schools. I complemented this process through discussions with university colleagues and local authority officers working extensively with secondary education. Their recommendations were in turn cross referenced against school websites and documents. From a list of around 20 schools I managed to reduce this further to a small group where there appeared to be clear evidence that the Head Teachers concerned were focused on learning and teaching. From this group, I identified three particular Head Teachers in schools which potentially offered rich learning opportunities (Stake, 1995) and met my identified criteria, 'instances that are likely to produce the most valuable data.' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018: 17).

Within this purposive sample (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Thomas, 2017), each Head Teacher displayed key characteristics of leadership focused on learning and teaching, 'the central phenomenon or key concept being explored in the study.' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018: 176). For instance, all three were perceived by the local authority officers and university colleagues that I contacted to have a key focus on learning and teaching and a high profile within their schools around this. In order to increase the transferability of the findings I was keen to establish wherever possible a degree of diversity (Stake,1995) to ensure that there were differences in the schools' sizes, location and local authority. Each school was selected from a different local authority: one set in the suburbs of a city; one in a former industrial town; and one in a small town with large surrounding rural catchment area. In the latter, most pupils are bussed to school. Where common leadership for learning features were identified across the three schools, differences between the three schools help add to the transferability of the findings. While a degree of diversity was important, I only selected from publicly funded schools, wanting to focus on a sector that was more subject to national policy and was contained within local authority control, thus achieving a measure of homogeneity. Table 4.1 below provides an anonymised summary of the details of each school and participants. All are state schools set in a different local authority. Each school has been given a pseudonym, with members of staff allocated gender neutral pseudonyms, in order to minimise possible identification from people working within the schools. While the Head Teachers were a mix of male and female, the gender of each has not been highlighted in this study in order to preserve anonymity. While issues to do with gender were explored in section 2.4.5, the small scale of this study along with the particular focus, mitigates against a deeper understanding of the issue of gender, and no significant patterns of leadership for learning behaviour related to gender arose from the findings.

Table 4.1: School Profiles[2]

1 School	2 School Roll	3 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) teaching staff	4 School Personnel Interviewed	5 Role[3]	6 Proportion of pupils who live in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland	7 Location Details
Burnett Academy	1200 - 1400	90	Addison Adrian Aiden Alex Archer Ashton Aspen Avery	T DHT DHT HT T T T CL	5 - <10%	A city school set in suburbs
Hume Academy	600-800	60	Jamie Jay Jesse Jo Jordan Jude Jules	DHT CL T HT CL CL T	0 - <5%	Set in a small town with large surrounding rural catchment area.
Watt Academy	800-1000	70	Rani Ray Remy Regan Ricky Robin Rowan	DHT HT T CL CL DHT T	10 - <15%	School set in former industrial town.

The eventual decision to build the quintain around three schools was taken for a number of reasons. A key influencing factor was time. Originally, I had planned to include four schools and, indeed, had engaged with the first three schools while still considering my fourth option. However, when I contacted the fourth, I found that this Head Teacher was coming to the end of a secondment with the school's local authority. While this Head Teacher was very keen to be involved, I felt the long absence from school was detrimental to the research process. The school had

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[2] Data in columns 2, 3 and 6 from September 2017 in Scottish Government (2019) *Attainment, leaver destinations and healthy living: summary statistics* Available at: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/Datasets/contactdetails (viewed 11th September 2019). In order to prevent easy identification of the schools concerned, the column 2 roll figures have been placed within a 200 pupil band and the column 3 FTE numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10.

[3] The following notations are used in this column: T for Teacher; CL for Curriculum Leader (a middle leader role); and DHT for Deputy Head Teacher.

experienced an acting Head Teacher in post and the most recent developments around learning and teaching had not involved the substantive Head Teacher. This I felt might possibly introduce complications to the interview process with teachers. In the end, I judged that researching three schools would generate sufficient data to allow me to meet the aims of the research in the time available, with Goddard (2010) suggesting it is a minimum for a collective case study. By selecting three schools, I felt that I would be able to generate potentially rich data that had not only depth but some limited breadth, covering a range of schools with similar and also very different characteristics. In addition, there were practical considerations in terms of arranging and making multiple visits to interview individuals across the different research sites. For instance, visiting one of the schools involved a train journey and two bus journeys. As Patton (1990: 184) argues, in the context of limited time and resources, there is a 'trade-off between breadth and depth' and I increasingly felt that to select more cases would have entailed a compromise on the depth that this study demanded.

4.4.1 Negotiating access and selection of interviewees

I contacted all schools by phone and each Head Teacher immediately indicated that they would like to be involved. We agreed to meet and discuss in more detail the research focus and the implications of the project for them and their teachers. After this telephone conversation I sent a letter confirming the date of the meeting and providing brief details of what the research entailed (appendix 4.1). I followed this with a more detailed letter (appendix 4.2) along with a Head Teacher information and consent form (appendix 4.3) which they signed. At each of the introductory meetings I outlined what was involved in the research and we arranged a date for the first interview.

My original intention had been to select a 'stratified sample' (Thomas, 2017: 142) for interviews with staff members within each school based on characteristics such as length of service, age, gender, subject background and role. However, during discussion with the first Head Teacher it became clear that much of this information was held in confidential records. The alternative was to rely on the Head Teacher choosing staff for me based on my criteria. This opened up issues around possible bias on the part of the Head Teacher leading to a biased sample and would have involved extra work for the school. As a result, I decided to simply request

volunteers as the easiest approach to take and this was the approach I used across all three schools.

Through a letter to all staff requesting volunteers for interview (see appendix 4.4) I achieved six volunteers each in two schools and nine in the third. I was particularly keen to have a selection covering the roles of teacher, the middle leader role of Curriculum Leader (CL) and Deputy Head Teacher (DHT) and was fortunate to receive this in each school, alongside a balance of teachers across subject areas. There were key advantages to this, as the roles, subject areas and closeness of working relationships might affect the perceptions of the Head Teachers concerned. Moreover, I did not want my choice of participants to be 'skewed towards one group or another.' (Muijs, 2012: 143). However, by the time of the interviews taking place there were role changes for two respondents: Jordan, a CL in Hume, had been made an acting DHT a week before the interview (although Jordan had started engaging in parts of the role prior to the start date); and Aiden, a CL, had been made substantive DHT in the months leading up to the interview. Both had volunteered for interview when still CLs. However, far from being a drawback, each furnished information from both a middle leader's standpoint and a senior leader perspective.

In addition to each of the Head Teachers, the final list of interviews included six each from both Hume and Watt, and seven from Burnett. These numbers enabled both coverage of roles and subject areas, and the addition of a seventh in Burnett was simply due to a clerical oversight on my part. Where I had more numbers than required, I thanked colleagues for volunteering and kept them on a reserve list. Six or seven staff members per school was not an absolute target. Rather in order to achieve a balance across role and subjects Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 127) make the point that the number of interviewees is not the issue but rather that it is 'the potential of each person to contribute to the development of insight and understanding of the phenomenon'. I was keen to achieve representation across roles and subject areas in order to achieve a full picture in which all the opinions of 'different informants' (Jones, 2015: 136) could be used to deepen understanding of each of the Head Teachers' leadership for learning.

4.5 Data Collection: Interviews

Within a qualitative case study such as this, where the perceptions of Head Teachers and teachers are central, the use of semi-structured interviews as a means of generating data is an ideal approach. Use of interview can be very effective in uncovering the many 'descriptions and interpretations' (Stake,1995: 64) of the case study subjects, in effect key 'witness information' (Hammersley, 2007: 297) from those who are at the centre of the context (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Seidman (1998: 10) argues that the meaning people construct of their experiences affects how they enact these experiences and that the interview process 'allows us to put behaviour in context and provides access to understanding their action'.

Head Teacher perceptions and understandings were sought through two interviews each, one at the start of the research process in each school and a final one, conducted on completion of all the teacher interviews. I was keen to have a second interview with each Head Teacher at the end of all the interviews in each school in order to clarify the various themes that had arisen from both teachers and first Head Teacher interviews. Particular ethical issues this raised are discussed in section 4.9.

The interview process took place over a period from February 2017 to June 2018. I used semi-structured interviews which began with each of the Head Teachers from February 2017, then moved to their colleagues and ended with final interviews with the three Head Teachers by June 2018. I established structure across all the interviews through a flexible interview schedule of broad headings with a range of specific questions, contextualised for the different groupings of head teachers and teachers. I piloted a draft interview schedule in two schools, both with a reputation from local authority sources and my own knowledge as having Head Teachers focused on learning and teaching. As there is a perception that Primary Head Teachers are considered to be closer to learning and teaching than their secondary counterparts (Leithwood, 2012), I felt that a Primary Head Teacher would, despite the different context, be in a position to help me develop my questions on the topic of leadership for learning. As a result, I trialled my draft interview firstly in a primary school. This proved highly useful, leading to a refinement of some questions to achieve greater clarity. The second pilot was in a school from my original list of

possible Head Teachers to research. However, this Head Teacher was personally well-known to me and as a result I felt that this colleague's inclusion on the list might have compromised the objectivity that I wanted to bring to my research and was removed from the final selection. Yet there were major advantages of conducting a pilot with a well-known colleague as we were able to have an open and frank discussion after the interview to go over the clarity of the questions. What this particular interview showed, replicated in the feedback from all three Head Teachers in the case study schools, is that the questions caused the colleague to think deeply about practice and that it was perceived as a really good experience. This echoes the views of Homfray (2008: 8) that social research can provide a valuable opportunity for respondents 'to express their own views, and thinking through their own position.'

From both pilot interviews I refined the interview schedule to ensure flexibility to let interviewees talk openly about their context. The pilot process also highlighted how important supplementary questions were in order to elicit further understanding, enabling both 'researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of the participants' responses, and the investigator can probe interesting and important areas which arise.' (Smith and Osborn, 2003: 57).

The final interview designs for both the first Head Teacher interviews (see appendix 4.7) and the teacher interviews (see appendix 4.8) facilitated support for the open-ended nature of the semi-structured interviews. This provided me with 'discretion to follow leads' (Bernard, 2006: 212) and develop 'probes to explore and gain a deeper understanding of issues' (James and Busher, 2006: 406) as necessary. This fitted neatly with my collective case study approach enabling me to explore along with participants particular issues from different angles, situations and perspectives (Jacelon and O'Dell, 2005). This ensured that each interviewee was not a passive subject within the interview process or, as Holstein and Gubrium (1995: 8) prosaically say, a 'vessel-of-answers'.

The first Head Teacher interview in each school, in line with research questions one and two, provided me with a deep understanding of how each Head Teacher conceptualised and perceived they practiced their role as leaders focused on

learning and teaching. This established a solid base of information from which to conduct interviews with teachers, not least in identifying some of key whole school developments that were common around particular aspects of each school's learning and teaching practice. However, I was mindful of the need to keep an open mind through each of the teacher interviews. Moreover, nothing was raised with teachers that could in any way compromise each of the Head Teachers. This issue will be discussed in further detail in section 4.9 on ethics. The teachers' interview was focused on research question three around their perceptions of the scope and nature of each of their Head Teachers' role as a leader of learning and teaching in their schools. It covered the same broad areas as the Head Teachers' schedule. However, understanding of the context set by the Head Teachers in their first interview meant that within the teachers' interviews probing questions were more tailored to the school context, and in the case of some, to specific roles, e.g. the role of faculty leader. Moreover, where similar questions were asked of the teachers, middle leaders and Depute Head Teachers, the contexts of each group meant that replies were qualitatively different in certain areas. For instance, middle leaders and Depute Head Teachers could evidence a closer working relationship with the Head Teacher concerned than could be shown by a number of teachers.

The second and final Head Teacher interviews were completed after the teacher interviews and were informed by the thematic reviews of each Head Teacher's interview 1 and those of the teachers. While each of the Head Teacher interviews had differences, the broad themes that I explored were the same across all three of the interviews (see appendix 4.9). The semi-structured nature of the interviews enabled further and deeper exploration of key themes that had arisen from both the first Head Teacher interviews and teacher interviews, such as the importance of professional learning focused on learning and teaching.

Interviews are not without their problems where 'the interviewer-respondent interaction is a complex phenomenon.' (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016: 130). The interview situation is not part of the Head Teacher and teacher respondents' normal activity (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). In addition, my former roles, as Head Teacher, Head of Service in a local authority and director of SCSSA, had potential implications in terms of the power dynamics between interviewer and interviewee. Possible perceptions of authority from interviewees towards interviewer might inhibit

open answers and restrict shared approach (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009). The implications of the effects of power dynamics were considered carefully throughout the conduct of all the interviews. The richness of the data that an interviewee provides is partly a result of the relationship that is developed between interviewer and interviewee (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009). While mindful of my powerful role as a researcher during the interviews, directing the interview focus on the key qualitative research aim of ensuring my contribution to research knowledge and understanding (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009), I endeavoured to mitigate some of the possible negative power dynamic effects on the interview process. This involved attending to the importance of the respondent's voice and needs, and being mindful of putting respondents at ease at the beginning of each interview session. Despite time limitations I ensured there was a brief period before each interview started for informal chat, to ensure that the conversation was between two equals as much as is possible (Groysberg and Slind, 2012a). Nevertheless an interview is a contrived situation, one which I am 'framing and shaping' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018: 321) through my particular researcher perspective. I did endeavour to make interview questions very clear, avoiding ambiguity and also, where necessary, being very specific about the context of a particular question. To improve the process of my understanding I often paraphrased interviewees' answers back to them to check for accuracy. While throughout the interview process I felt that that interviewees were open, honest and candid, I was conscious that they themselves may have had ideas and observations about which I remained unaware. As Anyan (3: 2013) suggests, in spite of 'the interviewer's deliberate attempt to shed off power to appear less powerful, the interviewee may perceive the interviewer as possessing a greater power.'

I also adopted a highly reflexive approach, as will be explored in greater detail in section 4.8, throughout the interviews as:

> … increased awareness of the power relations in interactions may be one way of counteracting expectations related to the dominant discourse. For example, as an interviewer, one can strive to avoid presenting symbols related to a dominant discourse, such as styles of dress and academic language.
>
> (Aléx and Hammarström, 2008: 174)

To this end I worked hard to ensure an easy going and informal discussion process was established, dressing informally for all interviews and ensuring that the language used was easily accessible to interviewees. I was deeply appreciative of each interviewee's agreement to be involved and endeavoured to ensure that this appreciation was communicated throughout all interviews. Ultimately, however, regardless of issues of power dynamics, I respected each interviewee's potential and right to contribute to the conversation through 'a genuine respect for individual perceptions and experiences.' (Karnieli-Miller, Strier and Pessach, 2009: 286).

4.6 Other Sources of Data

I did consider at the outset the possibility of using documentation as a separate source of data and to analyse it systematically. While I did collect documentary evidence, the rich data being generated through my interviews made this less important. On looking closely at the documentary evidence I was gathering it was clear that it was not adding significantly to my understanding of the Head Teachers' leadership for learning. This is understandable as Head Teacher leadership is an interactive and dynamic process enacted in relationship with teachers, which may be harder to see from a number of school documentary sources. However, as I was interested in building up a rich thick description of the case, I did continue to collect documentary evidence and where this helps highlight, illustrate, extend or confirm what I have obtained from the interview analysis then I have included it in my research, e.g. a whole school learning and teaching statement. However I did not use documentary analysis (Fitzgerald, 2102; Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012) with a separate data set to be analysed systematically. In addition to collecting documentary evidence, I also emailed two participants seeking further clarification of points arising during the interviews. Where information is used from their replies in the findings chapters, chapters 5 and 6, it is clearly marked.

Finally, in the original letters that went out to each Head Teacher following telephone contact, I had envisioned administering a survey to all teacher to explore whether the themes coming up in the interviews with the teachers were also present in the wider teaching staff. However, as soon as the wealth of evidence started to develop from the interviews I made the decision to concentrate on the use of interview alone.

4.7 Analysis of Data

I used thematic analysis to aid the process of developing meaning from the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994) where salient issues, 'both derived from the literature and emerging from the data-set' (Crowe *et al.*, 2011: 7) could be identified. Boyatzis (1998) outlines 5 purposes of thematic analysis as ways of: seeing; discovering relationships; analysing; systematically observing; and quantifying qualitative data. This process involved reading the interview data, analysing it and transforming it through a process of meaning making (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2003). I found Braun and Clarke's (2012) six phases of coding a useful guide to structure this process. These phases involved me in a process of: familiarising myself with the data; identifying early codes; looking for themes; reviewing themes; defining and refining themes in a process that Braun and Clarke (2012: 92) describe as capturing the 'essence' of the theme; and producing the report.

The process of thematic analysis was greatly aided by the use of transcripts. All interviews were digitally recorded and allocated an identification code to protect the anonymity of respondents. Although they were then transcribed by a professional transcription service, I listened to each recording with the transcription to check for sense and accuracy, mindful that even minor grammatical issues, such as a misplaced comma, can affect sentence meaning (Di Cicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). While this initial listening process helped highlight several promising themes, it was more important as a process of familiarisation with the wealth of gathered data prior to starting thematic coding. It certainly prepared the ground for the more challenging process of what Patton (1990: 371-2) argues 'is to make sense of massive amounts of data, reduce the volume of information, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal.' However, as Crang and Cook, 2007: 132) argue, this data is not 'raw' but rather is itself the result of such things as my research questions, the choices I made as regards methods and decisions about which Head Teachers to interview. Repeated reading of individual transcripts enabled deeper understanding of the '*implied* meanings' (Denscombe, 2007: 291, italics in original) contained in the texts and led to the categorisation of early codes (see appendices 4.10, 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13) and the eventual grouping of them into themes that were regularly revised (Braun and Clarke, 2012). While my early engagement with the thematic analysis process was not necessarily a precise exercise (Maxwell, 1992) (see appendix

4.14), what eventually emerged in the findings in chapters 5 and 6 was the result of a process of rigorous and systematic analysis of the case data (see appendices 4.15, 4.16, 4.17).

I started the thematic coding process from a position of having read relevant literature on leadership for learning and I brought this focus to my coding activities. Yet my approach was also inductive (Lapadat, 2015) arising from the data in what proved to be a messy and iterative business through a process of 'constant comparison' (Thomas, 2016: 205). From this emerged a range of ideas and themes (see appendix 4.18), some reflected in the literature and others where I had to go back to the literature to make sense of them (Crang and Cook, 2007). Some issues, such as the important role of dialogues in Head Teacher's learning, led me to access literature not associated with school leadership, for example Groysberg and Slind (2012).

Thematic analysis is a useful way of unravelling the 'experiences, meanings and the reality of participants.' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 81). However, making inferences from transcripts around what respondents themselves say (Hammersley, 2006) is not an infallible process and requires care and attention where meaning is filtered through the researcher's interpretation (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I took a great deal of care in my coding and identification of themes to ensure that my interpretation was at least justified by the data. However, as Braun and Clarke (2006: 81) outline, 'any theoretical framework carries with it a number of assumptions about the nature of the data, what they represent in terms of the "the world", "reality", and so forth'.

In the initial stages of data collection, I had intended to present the data in three separate chapters, one for each school, enabling me to illustrate and understand leadership for learning in three different contexts. To this end, in the initial phases of coding each school was examined as an entity in its own right. On completion of this process I examined the codes and themes across all these schools through cross-case analysis (Chmiliar, 2010). It became apparent at the end of this data analysis stage that there were key overarching themes which were common to all three schools. In order to do these justice, I felt that it was more appropriate to present my findings under these themes, integrating and analysing the information

as a whole rather than separately (Demuth, 2018). This pulling together of the findings enabled a holistic presentation of the data from the case schools. As highlighted in section 4.3, my study of the individual case study schools was in the service of understanding the quintain (Stake, 2006). This meant that with the identification of significant and shared themes across **all three** schools it was not only appropriate and logical to presenting my findings thematically, this itself aided the process of understanding Head Teachers' leadership for learning across the three cases.

While I established a clear purpose and aims, supported by specific research questions, I was aware that my approach was very much 'a work in progress' (Robinson and McCartan, 2015:146) and that there would be opportunities to adapt as the research progressed. As Robson and McCartan (2015) suggest, this leaves open a level of flexibility to enable relationships to emerge and comparisons to be drawn. In many ways this flexibility was driven by the exploratory nature of the study, which was, as stated in section 4.3, focused on better understanding the phenomenon of Head Teacher leadership for learning in the largely unexplored setting of Scottish secondary schools. In this situation, as Robinson and McCartan (2015:146) suggest, 'trying to get some feeling of what is going on in a novel situation where there is little to guide what one should be looking for, then your initial approach will be highly flexible.' If I had kept a rigid view of presenting the case studies separately, I feel that this would have restricted the rich analysis that I achieved in chapters 5 and 6.

4.8 Reflexivity and Positionality

The interactive process between myself as researcher and the interviewees, as well as the data generated from the interviews, was a key feature within the research process. This highlighted issues of reflexivity, the need to attend to the effects and impact of my role as researcher on the research process itself (Reynolds *et al*., 2011). As Malterud (2001: 483-484) argues 'a researcher's background and position will affect what they choose to investigate, the angle of investigation, the methods judged most adequate for this purpose, the findings considered most appropriate, and the framing and communication of conclusions.'

My epistemological perspective (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017) underpinned my approach to the interviews. This did not involve a simple case of uncovering knowledge, but was rather a process of engaging in interactive meaning making with participants, where I had a central role as 'researchers do not "find" knowledge, they construct it.' (Merriam, 2009: 9). Working within an interpretivist paradigm my wish was to access and interpret the situated knowledge (Thomas, 2017) within the case schools where my positionality affects both 'the nature of the observations and interpretations.' (Thomas, 2017: 152).

My positionality was particularly affected by my role as a former teacher and Head Teacher, a form of insider (Berger, 2015; Corbin and Buckle, 2009), where I brought both knowledge and experience to the study along with sets of philosophical beliefs around effective leadership in Scottish schools. There are advantages here, giving me a deep understanding of the context, something not readily available to a researcher without this background (Kacen and Chaitin, 2006). In this respect, Crang and Cook (2007: 20) highlight that not all research is brand new but rather arises out of 'already-existing memberships of social groups and/or access to particular spaces'. This insider status conferred a degree of 'proximity' (Ganga and Scott, 2006: n.p.), with past membership of both the groups being interviewed (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016), and I found it enabled me to engage more easily with respondents over key issues. Perceptions of my role as an insider (Kacen and Chaitin, 2006) did affect some of the interviews, especially with Head Teachers. All three perceived that I had an appreciation of their role and one said, in reference to a staff issue, '*you know what I am at here.*' (Alex, HT Burnett, Interview 2). However, I had to exercise care with responses such as this as 'interviewing requires interviewers to have enough distance to enable them to ask real questions and to explore, not to share, assumptions.' (Seidman, 2006: 100). The frame of reference of insider can be problematic through encouraging a restricted view of the evidence that limits the development of 'new insights concerning what might still be hidden from understanding, yet needs to be uncovered.' (Kacen and Chaitin, 2006). Mindful of this, I endeavoured to keep an open mind when reviewing the data, and found that constantly returning to look at the data afresh was a useful process in developing new understanding.

My interest in, and knowledge of, the subject meant that my research was not 'neutral activity.' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018: 302). I brought 'not only values but also factual assumptions about the nature of the phenomena concerned' (Hammersley, 2007: 293) and with this the potential of unconscious bias both to the interviews and data analysis. Moreover, my selection of research questions, themselves underpinned by my research paradigm, guided both the literature review and my interview questions, both of which were part of an 'inescapably selective process.' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 55). Here, as Searle (1995: 6, italics in original) argues 'we will have to make some substantive presuppositions about *how the world is in fact* in order that we can even pose the questions we are trying to answer.'

Recognising that research is not neutral (Preissle, 2006: Sikes, 2006), I endeavoured 'to interrogate objectivity and subjectivity and their relationship to one another' (Preissle, 2006: 691), not least my own philosophical beliefs about what constitutes effective leadership for learning, prioritising 'the importance of reflection at all stages of data collection, analysis and representation.' (Ganga and Scott, 2006: n.p.). Reynolds *et al.* (2011: 8) describe this as maintaining an 'active methodological awareness'. Here reflexivity is an ongoing and recurrent process (Barry *et al*., 1999) characterised by 'an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge construction … at every step of the research process.' (Malterud, 2001: 484). Throughout the processes of interviews, data gathering and analysis, I used my theoretical assumptions, reading of the literature and own experiences to help guide the direction of the research while at the same time letting the data itself guide me in an iterative process of ongoing reflection.

4.9 Ethical Considerations within Research Design

Throughout this research I ensured an ethical approach focused on 'what researchers ought and ought not to do in their research and research behaviour.' (Cohen**,** Manion and Morrison, 2018: 111). This is about treating all participants involved in the research with respect through ensuring their sense of agency. Throughout the research process the guidelines from the *British Educational Research Association* (2011), along with the University of Edinburgh ethical protocols, were observed. Before engaging in the research I received ethical

approval from the School of Education's Research Ethics Committee, in line with the University of Edinburgh ethical research protocols (see appendix 4.19).

Central to my engagement with participants was a focus on not intentionally or unintentionally exploiting them in any way, endeavouring to ensure that the research process was enacted 'with' them rather than 'on' them (Pillow, 2003: 179). An overarching issue in this respect was to ensure clear communication with all participants, managing the 'rules of engagement' (James and Busher, 2006: 414) in a way that enabled them to understand all the implications of their involvement (British Educational Research Association, 2011). All participants were volunteers and were briefed on the purpose of the research and issues of confidentiality. In addition to the communication with Head Teachers, highlighted in section 4.4.1, all teachers received an initial letter seeking their involvement (appendix 4.4) and on receipt of their interest I sent an email with additional information requesting a suitable date to meet (appendix 4.5). All participants signed an information and consent form (see appendices 4.3 and 4.6) that explained that they could withdraw at any time in the process and that anonymised extracts from their interviews would be used as part of the research and may appear in future publications. This information was reiterated at the start of each interview. In addition to myself a professional transcriber had access to the data and this was made known to all participants.

In order to ensure greater confidentiality, names of all schools and individuals were anonymised. However, the small sample sizes involved could cause problems in terms of strict confidentiality. In each school involved, the final report may allow 'educated guesses' to be made by those inside schools as to the identity of particular participants. All hard copies of data pertaining to participants was kept locked in my office cabinet and my computer was encrypted for additional security.

Head Teachers knew that I would be talking to teachers about their leadership for learning and teachers were aware that I would be discussing themes with the Head Teacher that arose from my interviews with them. While the consent form to teachers made it clear that comments would not be attributed to any individual, it also outlined that the Head Teacher might be able to identify particular staff members involved. In the event, I ensured that that there were no questions

addressed to either teachers or Head Teachers that had a confidential aspect or could in any way compromise colleagues or produce concern. No ethical dilemmas for me as a researcher arose from the interviews although I did gain huge insights into the perspectives and practices of school colleagues beyond the scope of the research questions.

4.10 Ensuring Trustworthiness

My paradigmatic assumptions require different kinds of criteria from those used in quantitative research to establish rigour. Evidencing rigour in quantitative research is done through discussion of reliability, validity and generalisability, however these criteria are not appropriate for assessing the rigour of research conducted in the interpretivist paradigm (Cope, 2014). In my research the most appropriate criteria to evidence rigour are the qualities of trustworthiness which can be further broken down into the four aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba, 1981). Trustworthiness is a useful concept in enabling qualitative researchers 'to describe the virtues of qualitative terms outside of the parameters that are typically applied in quantitative research' (Given and Saumure, 2008: 895) such as validity and reliability (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017). While all of these overlap, where they are addressed together they provide the qualitative researcher with a powerful mechanism to address issues of trustworthiness.

Credibility is about presenting a true and honest account of the issue being investigated (Shenton, 2004) and supporting the conditions to achieve this. For Lincoln and Guba (1985 : 213) it is the 'major trustworthiness criteria', about ensuring a precise and rich representation of the phenomenon being studied (Given and Saumure, 2008). Credibility entails intentional effort on behalf of the researcher 'to establish confidence that the meaning of the data has been accurately interpreted.' (Carboni, 1995: 35). I endeavoured to achieve credibility through clear and open methods of data collection and analysis, a respect for participants and maintaining a highly reflexive approach to the implications of my role as researcher. This is about achieving congruence (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016) between participants' stated perceptions with my interpretations of them in what Guba (1981: 80) describes as demonstrating validity through the 'verisimilitude between the data of an inquiry and the phenomena those data represent'. Credibility was reinforced by the use of a number of participants across three schools representing different

roles where 'individual viewpoints and experiences can be verified against others and, ultimately, a rich picture of the attitudes, needs or behaviour of those under scrutiny may be constructed based on the contributions of a range of people.' (Shenton, 2004: 66). In terms of credibility, I ensured that I conducted my research in schools where the Head Teachers were not known to me. This, I felt, would reduce any tendency towards bias and ensure that teachers were more likely to be open with me if they perceived that I had no prior dealings with their Head Teacher.

Validating information through a second interview (Lincoln and Guba,1985) is another way to reinforce credibility and this was achieved through the second Head Teacher interviews which followed the interviews with teachers. In addition, the teacher interviews were themselves examples of 'investigator triangulation' (Thomas, 2017: 153). While this is not the sort of triangulation using different methods as described by Denzin (2012) it did enable Head Teachers' views to be triangulated against the views of their colleagues, adding not only credibility but confirmability (Guba, 1981).

I endeavoured to secure confirmability through data driven research findings rather than ones motivated by my personal beliefs or biases (Jensen, 2008), simultaneously maintaining a critically reflective stance when analysing the data (Shenton, 2004). For Guba (1981: 87), this is also about 'data from a number of perspectives … so that an inquirer's predilections are tested as strenuously as possible'. Certainly the use of three Head Teachers and nineteen teachers across three schools meets the criteria of a number of sources. However, while the use of an interview schedule in both the first Head Teacher and teacher interviews gave some consistency in approach, and therefore a measure of reliability (Jones, 2015), in reality all interviews were semi-structured, responding to interviewee perceptions and comments as well as building on previous interviews. This meant that uniformity of approach was compromised where, as Flick (2007: 64) indicates, 'interviews may be easier to compare if they are done in a consistent way'. However, he goes on to say that 'very good interviews always profit from the flexibility of the researchers to adapt their questions to the individual participant and to the course of the concrete interview'. The challenge of confirmability is about creating a trail that can be followed by someone else through 'illustrating the evidence and thought processes that led to its conclusions.' (Streubert and Carpenter, 1995: 26).

Dependability is very closely tied to credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In qualitative research the issue of dependability equates to the quantitative research issue of reliability (Jensen, 2008; Ponelis, 2017). Here a transparent account of the research process is essential (Andriopoulos and Slater, 2013; Flick, 2007). This includes detailed information on the design, how it was implemented in practice, specific information on how data was gathered *in situ* and a reflective evaluation of the project (Shenton (2004), where Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001: 534) indicate 'a self-critical attitude is imperative'. I have ensured that my thinking and the research processes involved, from the initial design, to the collection of interview data and the limitations have been made explicit (Shenton, 2004). This is about ensuring that all my study's research processes are 'reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results.' (Shenton, 2004: 71).

Transferability concerns the extent my findings can be applied elsewhere (Shenton, 2004). While my purpose is to provide both practical insights for use to the profession as well as contribute to the broader academic knowledge on the subject (Hammersley, 2005), there are limitations with the case study method. The small number of case schools and respondents, which are not necessarily representative of secondary schools across Scotland, means that any claims that I may make to generalisability (Creswell and Plano Clarke, 2018; Thomas, 2017), where I draw 'broad conclusions from particular instances' (Polit and Beck, 2010: 1451), will require to be both limited and cautious. As Connell and Burgess (2016: 178) suggest while 'case-study research can be illustrative and purposeful it is not necessarily representative'. I was seeking insights rather than generalisations (Thomas, 2017: 140), engaging with schools clearly identified by a range of evidence to be doing something very focused on leadership for learning and teaching, to provide rich data characterised by Flyvbjerg's (2006: 229) assertion that 'atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied'. Rather than replicability, I was respecting the 'integrity in their own right' (Thomas, 2017: 140) of each of the interviewees' perceptions and views, 'the uniqueness of individual lives' (Stake,1995: 36). I was looking instead for transferability, where the results may have application for other Head Teachers focused on improving learning and

teaching while at the same time deepening academic understanding of the issue and assisting 'in identifying issues and challenges that are likely to apply across workplaces.' (Connell and Burgess, 2016: 178). By developing insights from the case study schools I hope to develop understanding that can apply to any 'larger collection of categorically bounded cases.' (Demuth, 2018: 79). In this context the emphasis is not on validity so much as producing rich, rigorous and deep descriptions (Denzin, 2012), which may or may apply to comparable situations (Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012). Here the use of thick rich descriptions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), themselves the result of analysis (Thomas, 2016), allows the reader to decide on the level of applicability to their own specific context (Firestone, 1993; Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012) but does not imply generalisability across other settings.

While the data were analysed on a school by school basis they were also 'integrated and analysed as a whole rather than as separate sets.' (Demuth, 2018: 79) to enable more effective transferability. Here case study can provide an initial basis for theory development (Goeken and Börner, 2012) towards 'theoretical understanding and exploration' (Demuth, 2018: 79). However, it is not necessarily easy to chart a clear way between the different purposes of my research and this echoes the views of Schwandt (2007: 128) as regards the 'apparent paradox' inherent in qualitative research that concurrently wishes to emphasis the particular while maintaining a focus on the general. There are real challenges in identifying transferability from a research setting that is in many ways 'local, unique, and highly contextual.' (Misco, 2007: np.). While this may restrict applicability to external settings, Misco (2007: n.p.) argues that this is not unachievable with the researcher developing forms 'of "grounded understandings" ... tentative apprehensions of the importance or significance of phenomena and conceptualizations that hold meaning and explanatory power, but are only embryonic in their potential to generate theory.'

4.11 Limitations

Several limitations have been dealt with in earlier sections, such as the size sample and the limitations on transferability. The following highlights possible limitations in terms of the approach to selecting participants.

In spite of the careful selection criteria I used in identifying Head Teachers this was still based on what Palinkas *et al*., 2015: 539) describe as an 'assumption that they possess knowledge and experience with the phenomenon of interest'. In the event all three proved to have the necessary expertise. However, the selection of teacher volunteers was not subject to the same considered selection and instead, as was pointed out in section 4.4.1, I relied on the use of volunteers.

This raises issues of why respondents chose to volunteer. While I did not inform Head Teachers which of their staff had volunteered, there is always a possibility that some teachers might feel it would be useful to be seen to be involved by their Head Teacher. Moreover, volunteers do not always prove to be effective interviewees (Bernard, 2006), sometimes lacking the necessary expertise or knowledge that is important in a 'key informant.' (Jones, 2015: 193). However this was balanced by the fact that all respondents were both very focused on contributing and did provide a depth of knowledge in the key interview focus areas (Jones, 2015). While on two occasions, in two separate schools, volunteers expressed less assurance around what they could contribute, they both made significant contributions through their perspectives.

As a self-selecting group of teacher volunteers there was a positive attitude to all Head Teachers overall and this does raise issues in terms of representativeness (Jones, 2015). There is a high level of consistency between Head Teacher and teacher reports but, as I am not looking for generalisability but insights into leadership for leaning as enacted by Head Teachers, this self-selection is not problematic. However, what interviewees chose not to tell me is not apparent from an interview process where 'transparency itself is always subjective, partial and purposefully informed, where each way of showing is mirrored by a way of concealing, which may or may not be deliberate.' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018: 432). Finally, while the role played by teacher perceptions was useful in triangulating Head Teacher perspectives it is possible that perceptions of Head Teachers' practice may have been influenced by teachers' opinions of their Head Teachers (Suppovitz, Sirinides and May, 2010).

4.12 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the qualitative interpretivist approach of this research to understanding secondary Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice. This outlined the collective case study design, primarily instrumental in purpose that I used to answer my research questions. My interest in how participants make sense of their reality underpinned my decision to use this design and focus my data collection through semi-structured interviews. Throughout the data collection and analysis I was mindful of my experiences and perspectives from a career working in and with schools, and the influence of this on shaping data gathering and analysis. The need for a deeply reflexive attitude of mind throughout the research process was matched with ethical consideration for all participants to ensure their well-being. Through a range of procedures covering all stages of data collection and analysis I worked to ensure trustworthiness. The results of this process are presented in the following two findings chapters, chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter 5

5.1 Introduction

This is the first of two chapters in which I present my findings. While all research questions are addressed in this and the next chapter, a more detailed account of how my data answers all three research questions is presented in chapter 8. The following research questions guided my research into secondary Head Teachers' leadership for learning practices:

1. How do secondary Head Teachers conceptualise their role as leaders of learning and teaching in their schools?
2. How do Head Teachers perceive their operationalisation of this role?
3. According to teachers, what is the scope and nature of this leadership?

Throughout this chapter I show how my work builds on previous research, consolidating, developing and extending existing literature. Many of the findings from previous studies, from different policy contexts, and often reached through different methodological approaches, show levels of consistency with what I have found in the Scottish context. A detailed discussion of these findings in the context of this previous literature can also be found in chapter 7.

However, my findings provide a level of detail that generates new insights into how the three Head Teachers operationalise their leadership for learning. In this and the next chapter using the lens of Head Teacher and teacher perceptions I provide a clearer sense of the leadership for learning practice of Head Teachers in a Scottish secondary school context.

In this chapter several themes from my findings are presented under three separate sections:

- Focus on improving learning and teaching across the school;
- Monitoring of pupil progress and evaluation of learning and teaching;
- Building and nurturing capacities and capabilities across the school.

While these three headings capture the substance of the findings, there is an inevitable overlap between them. For instance, building and nurturing capacities and capabilities only makes sense in a leadership for learning context if it predicated by a focus on improving learning and teaching across the school. Moreover, monitoring and evaluation processes are themselves part of the focus on improving learning and teaching across the school and an integral part of capacities and capabilities development. Running through all headings, and into chapter 6, will be a narrative of how the Head Teachers each develop and achieve coherence across different activities, developments, processes and structures in order to ensure maximum impact on learning and teaching. The literature lacks detail on the specific ways that HTs interweave these various processes and practices to establish coherence and alignment over the schools' activities focused on learning and teaching. This and the next chapter illustrate and explicate some key findings of how each Head Teachers' leadership for learning behaviours come together in order to achieve coherence.

5.2 Defining the School Contexts

In this and the next chapter I present the findings from analysis of the six Head Teacher interviews (two per each Head Teacher), 19 teacher interviews, and additional email correspondence with two participants following interviews, as well as drawing on examples of documentary evidence collected during the school visits. As described in chapter 4, each school was selected as a result of evidence from a number of sources, using criteria I identified from the early literature review, indicating that the Head Teachers had the necessary knowledge, involvement and experience with leadership for learning. Criteria included, for example, a focus on, and engagement in, learning and teaching as the key part of their work in meeting the learning needs of all children. All three Head Teachers shared these characteristics and enacted leadership for learning in a number of similar ways. However, there were also differences, often quite subtle, around their approaches in particular contexts of their schools. The following brief details provide informal descriptions of each of the three participating Head Teachers. They are too short to be truly representative of each Head Teacher, providing instead a brief snapshot, designed to give a clearer context to the findings which follow in this chapter and the next.

Alex - Head Teacher of Burnett Academy (1200-1400 pupils, city school set in suburbs)**:** this was Alex's second headship role, who ruefully admitted that as a new Head Teacher '*you make so many mistakes.*' Alex (HT[4], I1[5]) was committed to meeting the learning needs of all pupils' learning, and believed that learning and teaching '*is our bread and butter*'. A non-teaching Head Teacher, Alex regularly covered classes for absent colleague, using the opportunity to find out about the learning of pupils. Ashton (T, Burnett) highlighted both Alex's awareness of learning and teaching around the school and that Alex was '*engaging with the actual teaching practice within the school*'. Alex was Head Teacher of the largest Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of five members. Described as both a creative thinker by Adrian (DHT, Burnett) and by Addison (T, Burnett) as a person with lots of ideas '*who really makes them happen*.'

Jo - Head Teacher of Hume Academy (600-800 pupils, set in a small town with large surrounding rural catchment area)**:** appointed within school, Jo was perceived as supportive of teachers, Jules (T, Hume) saying that '*the same nurture that* [Jo] *shows to the pupils, is shown to the staff as well*'. During the period of the interviews Jo faced the disruptive influence of the construction of a new school next to the campus, with the resultant and ongoing administrative issues, including transitioning of staff and pupils to the new site. Also during the interviews, Jo moved from a highly stable management team to one that was completely new. Until the disruption caused by the new building, Jo had kept up a subject teaching commitment of an advanced Higher class and this received plaudits from teachers. Focused on improving the learning of all pupils, Jo (I1) prioritised enabling provision for teachers to talk '*about learning and teaching and about the impact it has*'.

Ray - Head Teacher of Watt Academy (800-1000 pupils, school set in former industrial town - school with highest proportion of pupils who live in the 20% most deprived data zones): Ray was described as 'very much a people person' (Rami,

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[4] The following notations are used for roles within each school:
    T = Teacher
    CL= Curriculum Leader
    DHT=Deputy Head Teacher
    HT=Teacher

[5] Two interviews were conducted with each Head Teacher. The following notation is used for each of these interviews:
    I1= Interview 1
    I2= Interview 2

DHT), whose judgment Remy (T) believed could be trusted and was a person that 'will listen to my point of view'. The highly stable senior leadership team, with close working relationships, was supplemented by a small team made up of all DHTs and two CL members of the Extended Leadership Team (ELT), which was responsible for the school's planning around school improvement. Rowan (T, Watt) highlighted Ray's total commitment to improving the learning and opportunities for pupils. Ray (I1) believed that as the Watt Academy's 'core business is learning and teaching' the role of the Head Teacher meant being 'heavily involved in that'. Ray took a weekly pastoral class.

5.3 Focus On Improving Learning and Teaching Across the School

The three Head Teachers prioritised and maintained a constant focus on learning and teaching. Alex (HT, Burnett, I1) described supporting learning and teaching as the *'number one thing that we need to do'* and Regan (CL, Watt) highlighted that Ray (HT, Watt), in stark contrast to the previous Head Teacher, had put this '*centre stage*'. Jo (HT, I1) was very clear that the focus of the school's work, teachers and Head Teacher together, was the learning of pupils saying that, '*it is about the learning, the understanding of the process of learning, understanding of the importance of learning, and it is about planning the bigger picture of learning over a time period*'. This priority underpinned all Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice with Ray (HT, Watt, I2) arguing 'everything that we do should have some kind of impact, either direct or indirect on the classroom experience for young people'. A significant part of every Head Teachers' practice involved communicating a constant focus on, and vision of, learning and teaching across the school. This will be addressed in the next section.

5.3.1 Communicating a constant focus on, and vision of, learning and teaching across the school

Communicating a compelling vision of learning and teaching through a variety of forums and methods was a characteristic of every Head Teacher's leadership for learning practice. All regularly stood up at the front of whole staff meetings, with Robin (DHT, Watt) describing Ray (HT, Watt) as being '*right in the front of the staff space'* to communicate a vision of effective learning and teaching. This constant focus was applied in regular discussions around effective learning and teaching practice at CL, SLT and staff meetings, Alex (HT, I1) saying this is part of the

'*agenda items on every meeting that we have as a staff*'. Online opportunities were also used by all three Head Teachers. For instance, Jules (T, Hume) regularly accessed Jo's (HT, Hume) Twitter account to learn about '*new approaches to learning*', while Addison (T, Burnett) thought teaching practice was better informed because of the learning and teaching articles and research that Alex (HT, Burnett) regularly emailed to all teaching staff.

Jude (CL, Hume) described Jo (HT, Hume) as '*a passionate speaker about teaching and learning*', a statement that reflected teachers' testimony about all three Head Teachers. Whether in formal or informal situations, with groups or individual teachers, all the Head Teachers regularly articulated the importance of effective learning and teaching, Alex (HT, Burnett, I1) saying:

> *You have to be telling everybody … that the most important thing we do here is we teach. Teaching and learning has to be the best it possibly can be.*

Similarly, Jude (CL, Watt) highlighted that in the context of the various competing priorities, such as the disruption around the move to the new school and significant curricular change, Jo nevertheless regularly reminded staff that '*the heart and soul of our school has to be doing the best for our learners in terms of teaching*.'

While every Head Teacher could, and did, communicate about specific learning and teaching approaches, overwhelmingly the vision that they communicated was about what Alex (HT, Burnett, I1) described as the '*big ticket*' items such as the importance of effective pupil-teacher relationships and the vital necessity of engaging each and every child in their learning, both key priorities of Jo and Ray. For example, Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) argued this was not about specific teaching approaches, like active learning or sharing learning intentions, rather it was on broad areas such as successful learning being linked to relationships and the importance of supporting pupils to '*know where they are going*'. The key for Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) was that the specifics were worked out by teachers themselves within their faculties addressing the needs of their particular contexts. Ray (HT, Watt, I1) was clear that this entailed providing '*a clarity with regards the overriding main values and policies that sit within teaching and learning*' inside the school.

Every Head Teacher's regular and well-defined learning and teaching communications focused teachers attention on the key goals of the school while simultaneously instigating a set of expectations for teachers around this in what Adrian (DHT, Burnett) described of Alex (HT, Burnett) as '*verbalising … high expectations*' for teachers' teaching. What appears to be happening is that all the Head Teachers through their very public learning and teaching communications were involved in a process of sense making. For example, Regan (CL, Watt) highlighted that Ray created '*anchor*' points when speaking to staff, making sense of external policies and bringing these back to the importance of learning and teaching in the context of Watt Academy. Jay (CL, Hume) highlighted Jo's (HT, Hume) particular practice of using a questioning approach to interrogate a range of data with CLs and that this ensured clarity among them as regards their role in addressing emerging learning and teaching issues.

Similarly, Robin (DHT, Watt) described the high priority Ray (HT, Watt) put on '*contextualising*' issues to do with improving learning and teaching, using examples from research readings, school data and Ray's own experience. Robin felt that this created both '*coherence*' and a '*rationale*' in the minds of teachers: that they saw the links to the disparate activities taking place in the school; understood the absolute priority the Head Teacher placed on learning and teaching; and had a strong sense of their responsibilities in this regard. This coherence making (Robinson *et al.*, 2017) was a common feature of the descriptions of all three Head Teachers.

The effect on teachers of the Head Teacher communicating the importance of quality learning and teaching cannot be underestimated, with teachers across all schools highlighting the impact on their thinking and practice. Aiden (DHT, Burnett) pointed out that Alex's sharing of a vision around inclusion created '*a cultural shift*' in the school with the Head Teacher '*able to verbalise that vision at any opportunity*'. Similarly, Aspen (T, Burnett) outlined that by sharing a very clear vision and rationale of what learning should look like, the Head Teacher established clarity and direction that meant '*we are all working towards it*'. Aspen described how this filtered down into department meetings where teachers shared their practice around whole school priorities, preventing distractions and confusion with different initiatives.

While every Head Teacher was adept in regularly and clearly communicating a vision of effective learning and teaching, using what Groysberg and Slind (2012a) would describe as a top-down and directive approach, each was in contrast, as will be seen in chapter 6, also adept at utilising non-directive approaches. Moreover, while all used their role to publicly contextualise issues to do with improvements to learning and teaching, all were equally clear that a shared vision of this, as will be shown in the next section, could only be effective if shaped and developed with teachers themselves.

5.3.2 Creating a common understanding of learning and teaching
A central focus of all Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice was the establishment of a shared understanding of what constitutes effective learning and teaching *through* and *with* the collaboration of teachers. All ensured extensive and ongoing whole staff sessions, group activities and faculty discussions to engage teachers in addressing the question of '*what does excellent learning look like*' (Alex, HT, Burnett, I1). This was tied simultaneously into what effective teaching looks like, Jo (HT, Hume) saying of the Hume context:

> *… we started off that process of what good learning is from a teaching point of view and then asked "what makes a good learner?" taking the idea of, if this makes a good learner then what do we have to do to allow that to take place.*

For Jordan (Hume, CL) this was about '*developing a shared understanding of what we mean by high quality learning and teaching*', with all the Head Teachers endeavouring to establish throughout the school a '*pedagogical clarity.*' (Ray, HT, Watt, I1). This clarity was vital for Ray (HT, Watt, I1) in ensuring consistency in teaching, enabling teachers '*to underpin their lessons based on the vision and the values that are set within the school*', a vision that they themselves had helped create. For Alex (HT, Burnett) this was not only about developing a common understanding between teachers but, as importantly, ensuring an agreed conception of what makes effective learning and teaching between teachers and the SLT members, so vital in order to bring about effective school improvement through the joint working of teachers with the SLT.

This *collaborative process,* regularly referenced in research*,* involved Head Teachers, deputes, middle leaders and teachers creating an agreed whole school

cynosure around effective learning and teaching in each school, condensed in similar, but different, learning statement documents entitled – 'The Hume Academy Learning Model' (see figure 5.1 below), 'The Watt Academy Lesson' (appendix 5.1) and 'What does learning look like at Burnett Academy?' (appendix 5.2). The Hume Learning Model is highlighted below in figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: The Hume Learning Model

While each school prioritised and made use of these learning statements in different ways, all three emphasised active learning approaches, confronting a concern shared by each Head Teacher around overly didactic teaching approaches. In this respect the Burnett learning statement challenged teachers to 'activate learning' in pupils' thinking and to consider 'the difference between "I taught it" and "they learnt"'. Each statement represented a teaching approach which involved much more than teacher transmission of knowledge, with references in all three to skills development for pupils, pupil engagement and what the Burnett learning statement (appendix 5.2) described as effective learning for pupils 'through the learning experiences devised by their teachers'. All statements focused on wider roles for both teachers and pupils, reflected in the language of the Watt Academy Lesson statement (appendix 5.1) where the teacher's role was to '[f]acilitate discussions about the learning' with pupils, '[c]o-construct success criteria' with them, and engage 'pupils in leading learning.' Underpinning the Watt Academy Lesson statement were three concepts that Ray (HT, Watt, I1) described as:

> … it is about improving what our learners can do, it is about challenging our learners to think and it is about developing who they are as individuals.

This demonstrates a wider conceptualisation of learning as something more than exam results, a conceptualisation of learning that, as will be seen in chapter 6, was central to every Head Teacher's beliefs.

These documents were not ends in themselves, but rather abridged exemplars of what all the Head Teachers viewed as an ongoing collaborative process of staff learning about, and developing practice in, learning and teaching. Moreover, each document did not exist in isolation but was part of a wider range of documents, policies and processes that supported and helped develop staff understanding of effective learning and teaching. For instance, the Watt Academy Lesson statement was closely tied to the school's 'Our Learning and Teaching Statement' (appendix 5.3) and the Burnett learning statement linked closely to learning conversations that each teacher was expected to have with pupils about their progress, as well as an iPad programme in all classes throughout S1 to S4 designed to transform learning and teaching approaches.

All Head Teachers ensured that the ongoing process of creating a shared understanding about what makes effective learning and teaching, of which the statements were only a part, was designed as an opportunity for professional learning that teachers could *further develop* through the implementation of changed teaching practice. Ray (HT, Watt, I1) observed that from the Watt Academy Lesson statement '*we are now going to develop it to* '*what does this mean in practice?*'. Alex's (HT, Burnett) goal was also improved teacher practice led by teachers themselves, where teachers would situate and develop the shared vision. In this context, Alex (I2) said of teachers that 'they are the ones that come up with what does good learning look like in [Burnett and] … when they localise it to their own faculties or classrooms, then that is where they drive what the vision looks like'. This reflected the leadership for learning approach of all three Head Teachers. The statements were broad guides, *how* the shared vision was applied was very much left in the locus of both faculties and teachers.

The engagement of teachers in the process of developing a collective understanding of the components of effective learning and teaching was perceived as vital by all three Head Teachers. Jude (CL, Hume) described Jo's (HT, Hume) focus on the Hume Learning Model as wanting something that '*staff had ownership*

of' and for Ray (HT, Watt, I2) staff engagement in the Watt Academy Lesson statement created '*buy-in*', establishing teacher understanding that improving learning and teaching '*is core to their professionalism and as a school - this is what makes us tick*'. Certainly the perception of teachers was not of something done to them, but a collaborative endeavour, summed up by Remy (T, Watt) who said of the Watt Academy Lesson statement:

> *… because I have had ownership over it, and responsibility towards creating it, I feel more involved in wanting to get it to work …*

Remy demonstrates here a sense of empowerment, itself a direct result of the collaborative conditions that Ray nurtured and organised, and this sense of empowerment was reflected across the school respondents.

The collaborative professional learning nature of the process created *'a common understanding about what makes an excellent lesson'* (Ray, I2) and every Head Teacher utilised this shared vision to simultaneously underpin several concurrent and related developments in what Ray (HT, Watt, I2) described as a '*coherent approach that gets to the nub of the issue, which is the improving learning and teaching*'. For instance, in Hume Academy the production of the Hume Learning Model was regarded as, not an end in itself, but rather a vehicle with which to align a number of developments and structures around learning and teaching in the development of a coherent interlocking strategy. The following is a summary of Jordan's (CL, Hume) views on this strategy, highlighting that the Hume Learning Model:

- underpins observations of lessons;
- provides the basis for Professional Review and Development (PR&D[6]) discussions and teachers' professional learning;
- is used for staff self-evaluation and;
- provides the focus for faculty improvement time for teachers to work on improving learning and teaching.

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[6] This refers to the ongoing process of a teacher's professional learning. This process will normally involve teachers in regular discussions with their line manager, usually the middle leader, as well as an annual review of progress and next steps.

The linking of a collective understanding of learning and teaching, condensed in the learning statements, with whole school evaluation approaches through observation, the professional learning targets of individual teachers and faculty development was a hallmark of every Head Teacher's leadership for learning practice. In this context, Jo (HT, Hume, I1) argued that no one initiative on its own was the reason for improving learning and teaching but rather '*all of them coming together … I don't see them sitting separately*'. This will be examined further in section 5.5.2.2.

While the 'What does learning look like at Burnett Academy?' learning statement was important, it did not seem to occupy the same prominence as the learning statements did in the other two schools. While Alex (HT, Burnett) referenced the statement on occasion, when Alex talked about the school's agreed vision for learning this, more often than not, referred to a collective, organic and developing one, not necessarily the statement itself. Alex's use of the concept of a shared vison of learning and teaching encompassed a range of already agreed practices such as the learning conversations that teachers were expected to have with individual students or agreed teacher feedback approaches and so on. This seems to reflect, in part, Alex's (I1) view '*that vision can't just be in a policy, can't just be in a drawer, can't just be on your wall actually, it has to be lived reality*'. For Alex this was about teachers working together to put the vision into practice, and learning through the challenges of what works and does not work in an adaptive process to change. The 'What does learning look like at Burnett Academy?' learning statement was part of this ongoing and evolving process. However, both Jo and Ray also talked of a vision of effective learning and teaching that went beyond the statements, one that developed through classroom practice and teacher learning, and it is clear that they too were part of an evolving situation designed to support existing and emerging developments. What is clear from all three schools is that the development of a collective vision around learning and teaching acted as a loadstone around which to pin other developments such as focusing PR&D on learning and teaching, ensuring faculties focused on improving learning and teaching as a key priority and having a clear focus on pedagogy for lesson observation.

Central to the success of this process was the active engagement of teachers, middle leaders and SLT members, illustrated by Remy's (T, Watt) clear sense of

ownership of the process as a teacher. Yet at the same time, each Head Teacher's role was central. The next section will explore, and attempt to resolve, the apparent dichotomy in this.

5.3.3 Collegial versus directive approaches
Head Teachers' perceptions of the process of developing a common understanding of effective learning and teaching across the school, and teachers who commented on this, was that it was both highly consultative and collaborative. Yet every Head Teacher highlighted their key role in the process, each actively and significantly involved. As was shown in section 5.3.1, all Head Teachers were adept in communicating a vision of learning and teaching and this, from teacher testimonies, had a significant effect on them. In terms of the learning statements, both Jo (HT, Hume) and Ray (HT, Watt) respectively drew up the drafts of the 'The Hume Academy Learning Model' and the 'The Watt Academy Lesson' based on staff feedback which then went out for further consultation. Moreover, Jude (CL, Hume) described Jo initiating the process, both planning to '*ensure that staff had ownership*' while at the same time being directly involved in every step, constantly recapping to ensure that everyone was '*crystal clear of … why this is our priority and the importance of it*'. Moreover, Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) was clear that had the views of staff on what made learning and teaching effective through the 'What does learning look like at Burnett Academy?' learning statement not conformed to Alex's own views then '*we would have needed to have gone back to the drawing board'.*

These illustrate the inherent tensions between the need for a Head Teacher with a leadership for learning focus to have a very clear vision of effective learning and teaching alongside the, equally important, leadership for learning need to have a whole school learning and teaching vision jointly and authentically developed by all teachers. Regan (CL, Watt) described this as a '*tension between prescription and invitation, prescription and consultation'*. The Head Teachers appeared to manage these tensions, for the most part, through a series of specific actions and developments. For instance, Alex (HT, Burnett), along with the deputes, worked closely with staff over an extended time frame helping to develop a collective understanding of effective learning and teaching, itself arising from Alex's regular discussions with DHTs in a practice reflected by the other two Head Teachers. Alex (I2) was clear how the ground was prepared, saying:

I think you plant seeds. So we have a lot of catalysts come in to either speak to the staff or work with the staff, and you chose your catalyst based on your vision.

The planting of these *seeds*, also evident in both the work of Jo and Ray, involved a highly respected Head Teacher, according to teacher respondents, engaging regularly with staff around learning and teaching, and through this process discussing, suggesting and sharing ideas. When external and internal speakers were used, the *catalysts* that Alex highlighted, they reflected key aspects of the Head Teacher's and SLT members' philosophy around effective learning and teaching. Moreover, the process itself was supported and directed by the Head Teacher and senior leader colleagues. For instance, the staff session that started the development of the 'What does learning look like at Burnett Academy?' statement was itself led by a Depute Head Teacher who presented research on effective learning and teaching as a prelude to staff discussions on the statement's development. Similar approaches were used in the other two schools, Jo (HT, Hume, I1) using research on effective teaching, to encourage teachers to see things from a different perspective and asking '*are your views gut feelings, or are they based on any other evidence?*' (Jo, HT, Hume, I1). This structured support for the development of teachers' thinking and attitudes paved the way for the development of a collective view of effective learning and teaching and formulation of 'The Hume Learning Model' statement.

This does not negate the significant level of collaboration in all schools or the sense of ownership of the process as highlighted in the previous section by Remy's (T, Watt) clear sense of 'responsibility' in the formation of the Watt Lesson statement. Similarly, Jude (CL, Hume) described being at the forefront of the development of the Hume Learning Model in a process that was highly collaborative with 'different group activities coming together gradually to create the learning model'. While each Head Teacher's leadership for learning practice could be highly directive, each ensured staff engagement in key initiatives, and from my observations I was struck by how much respondents across all three schools felt that their voice mattered with a genuine desire to improve learning and teaching in line with a collectively developed school vision. However, when Head Teachers set the scene for a reform process such as the development of a collectively agreed vision around learning

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and teaching, regularly communicating its importance in front of staff meetings and elsewhere, they inevitably, it seems, have a significant level of influence, able to delineate what is addressed, focus interest and support outcomes (Ekman, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2018). As Ray (HT, Watt, I1) said of the collaborative work with staff on the Watt Academy vision, the approach used at in-services during this process was where:

> *I led a lot on the vision and the values underpinning the school and where we were as a school and what my vision was as a school, and what my values were and how did that link into what staff were involved in. So I have quite a significant impact in there.*

All three Head Teachers were able to direct and frame the work of teachers and formal leaders, both senior and middle, around establishing a shared understanding and collective purpose around learning and teaching. This was done by regularly engaging staff in discussions through a process of ongoing development and professional learning. At the same time the Head Teachers were themselves highly responsive to the ideas of staff, Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) indicating that teachers often highlighted that something cannot be done and that when this happened Alex said '*I have to go away and think again*'. Alex acknowledged that while there is '*always a little bit of them and us'* it is also about '*us together in terms of learning and moving forward*'.

It is clear that shared understanding around learning and teaching was developed in all three schools through the engagement of both Head Teachers and their staffs. In order to ensure that this was effectively linked to improving pupil learning, all the Head Teachers ensured a range of leadership for learning activities focused on the monitoring of pupil progress and evaluation of learning and teaching. This will be addressed in the next section.

5.4. Monitoring of Pupil Progress and Evaluation of Learning and Teaching

An integral part of all the Head Teachers' leadership for learning activity was their extensive use of data in order to support learning and teaching improvements. This included information emerging from each school's annual evaluation programme of learning and teaching in faculties, as well as data from pupils' learning progress

throughout the year and in national examinations. As will be shown in this section, the Head Teachers used this to simultaneously *support* and *hold accountable* middle leaders and teachers for the quality of learning and teaching in their faculties. While the role of the middle leader is introduced here it is dealt with in more detail in a later section (5.5.1.2) under the theme of capacity building.

5.4.1 Tracking and monitoring of pupil progress
Each school closely tracked the learning progress of each pupil, Jude (CL, Hume) as a middle leader connecting three times a year with the linked DHT to discuss each child's progress in the faculty, '*where they are in their learning and where they are progressing to*.' This process, common to all the schools, entailed each CL liaising closely with their teachers and ensuring that they were also monitoring each pupil's progress. All the Head Teachers ensured that tracking data underpinned 'next steps' discussions on learning and teaching with faculties, Jo (HT, I1) arguing that consideration of progression data leads to '*looking at the learning and teaching that is taking place*'.

The Head Teachers prioritised analysis of the annual publication of exam results. Robin (DHT, Watt) described Ray (HT, Watt) presenting an analysis of results at the first staff meeting of the year in a way that was '*accessible*' but at the same time identifying to staff where concerns were evident. Scrutinising national exam results with subject teams and faculties was an annual activity of all Head Teachers, Adrian (DHT, Burnett) describing the subject by subject process as '*intense*', '*rigorous'* and a key '*driver for improvement'*. In Burnett, as in the other two schools, this involved the Head Teacher coming to a meeting having done '*research beforehand*' and '*able to talk specifically about pupils at that meeting*' (Adrian, DHT, Burnett). Where there was a concern about results, other evidence would be addressed such as feedback from parents and pupils as well as information from the guidance department, but all focused on learning and teaching (Adrian, DHT, Burnett). From this support strategies would be put into operation to change and improve approaches. As will be shown in chapter 6 (6.4.3), a major source of data and information on learning and teaching across all the three schools came to every Head Teacher through the conversations they had with teachers, middle leaders and deputes, as well as pupils themselves. In all three schools Head Teachers did not look at tracking and monitoring data on pupil progress in isolation and a major

source of additional data was provided by the faculty evaluation programme to which I now turn.

5.*4.2 Evaluation of faculty learning and teaching*

Each school ran formal evaluation programmes, including classroom observations of the learning and teaching within faculties, with all the Head Teachers very much part of the process and central to its development. Jude (CL, Hume) described Jo's (HT, Hume) implementation of this programme as *the* key action in improving learning and teaching across the school.

Respondents across all the schools highlighted the benefits of the process. In Hume, classroom observations by SLT members targeted an aspect of learning and teaching identified by the faculty itself. These observations were complemented by pupil focus groups and led to an SLT generated report that supported ensuing discussions with all faculty members to identify next steps. Jude (CL, Hume) described the impact of this process on Jude's middle leadership role as an *'intensive process'* that '*sharpened me up on what teaching and learning was, what were my priorities for the department'.* Additionally, Aiden (DHT, Burnett) saw the evaluation programme as useful in identifying areas where teachers required support. Robin (DHT, Watt) described the process that Ray (HT, Watt) had helped create as '*rigorous'*, involving middle and senior leaders observing in a faculty '*in order to understand and know the quality of teaching and learning that is going on*'. Robin described the move from an early observation process as overly focused on such things as classroom management without *'depth of conversation or dialogue',* to one with '*genuine*' dialogues around the impact of professional learning on teachers' classroom practice. Similarly Aiden (DHT, Burnett) highlighted that it was not about grading teachers but rather '*about having real focused engagement on teaching and learning*'. The emphasis here was on each teacher identifying '*a personal learning and teaching focus'* (Aiden, DHT, Burnett) around which to base the observation and ensuing post-observation discussion.

The Burnett Academy observation team involved a wider range of personnel than the other two schools, including: SLT representatives; the CL of the faculty being observed; a CL from another area; a teacher from outside the faculty; and outside visitors. It included pupil focus groups and questionnaires, and could include

observations by pupils where staff agreed. Aspen (T, Burnett) saw the faculty evaluation programme as important saying, 'we are really reflecting on our teaching based on priorities as a school and a faculty'. Alex (HT, Burnett) highlighted that the generated data underpinned deep discussions at a meeting of the observation team, describing this as hugely beneficial in terms of learning. This reflects Alex's practice of maximising opportunities not just for *information* but for *learning*. The group discussion around the evidence was an active process not just in agreeing evidence but a collaborative reflection on what the evidence meant in terms of effective learning and teaching, itself a professional learning opportunity benefiting the learning of everyone involved. A subsequent report was used to facilitate further discussions with the faculty with a view to praising *'effective practice'* (Aiden, DHT) and generating next steps around learning and teaching.

In all three schools there was a strong element of holding teachers and faculty leaders to account through these processes. But the evaluation programmes were much more this: focusing on individual needs of pupils; supporting next steps for improvement by teachers, subject teams and faculties; providing a basis for the professional development of teachers; and giving faculty leaders direction and support. Moreover, faculty evaluation and classroom observation provided vital learning for each Head Teacher around:

- the attitudes and perspectives of teachers;
- examples of effective practice;
- knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching;
- the practice of learning and teaching within the school.

The Head Teacher's role as learner through processes like lesson observation will be addressed in greater detail in section 6.4.2.

Earlier in the chapter I highlighted the inherent tensions between a Head Teacher driving a whole school learning and teaching vision alongside the need to have this developed by teachers. Similar tensions existed around the evaluation processes, where lesson observation was both an evaluation instrument and a professional learning tool, reflecting a leadership for learning characteristic in all three schools of a simultaneous focus on accountability and support. While respondents were

positive about evaluation processes such as observation, some in Burnett reported that a few staff had concerns over the use of pupil voice. However, for the most part, the Head Teachers were able to balance in the eyes of respondents the tensions between accountability and support. Aiden (DHT, Burnett) was clear that the process was not about grading teachers but rather '*about having real focused engagement on teaching and learning*'. Head Teachers encouraged and practised this approach and appeared to be supported by the trust and respect afforded to them and a collective desire to improve learning and teaching as evidenced by respondents. Moreover, processes like faculty observation were themselves the result of an evolution, with changes being made incrementally as they developed. Within this staff were able to feedback with their views, and, as always in the case study schools, every Head Teacher engaged the support of middle leaders with developments. The critical role of CLs, the school middle leader cadre, in all the Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice is highlighted in section 5.5.1.2.

All three Head Teachers ensured the use of research around effective learning and teaching to ensure that teachers engaged with a series of notably similar questions around what '*that should look like in our schoo*l' (Alex, HT, I2) to create an agreed whole school understanding of effective learning and teaching. They used this collaboratively developed perception to focus energy around a number of processes and developments that included monitoring of pupil progress and the faculty evaluation programme in the support of improved learning and teaching throughout the school. However, all Head Teachers were clear that sustained improvement in pupil learning could only be realised though the classroom activities of teachers by addressing issues of school capacity and teacher capability across the school. These are addressed in the next section.

5.5   Building and Nurturing Capacities and Capabilities Across the School

My findings in this section indicate that all three Head Teachers were actively engaged in building and nurturing school capacity and teacher capability within their schools in order to deliver effective learning and teaching for each pupil. Two key practices were identified from the data in this respect:

- supporting leadership capacity across the school;

- and prioritising professional learning.

The Head Teachers used and adapted existing structures to align them more effectively to the needs of improving learning and teaching, Robin (3T2) indicating Ray's (HT, Watt) leadership for learning involved the school in going '*deeper in terms of the structures … to support good teaching and learning*'. This was particularly the case as regards Head Teacher support for leadership throughout the school.

5.5.1 Developing leadership capacity

Every Head Teacher articulated the belief that their leadership focused on learning and teaching could only be effectively enacted with and through other colleagues, in what Spillane and Coldren (2011) describe as an interactional process. A defining feature of all the Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice was how they supported and adapted the roles of both deputies and middle leaders to be more focused on learning and teaching. Every Head Teacher ensured a closer working relationship between these two roles, one that was clearly focused on learning and teaching. Their critical role was supported by a range of leadership opportunities for teachers not in formal roles as well as a focus on supporting teachers' agency around learning and teaching.

5.5.1.1 The role of the Senior Leadership Team and Depute Head Teachers

All the Head Teachers ensured that learning and teaching matters were a key and regular focus of SLT meetings, with Jo (HT, Hume, I2) highlighting of SLT system under the previous Head Teacher that '*I can't remember having meetings about learning*'. This accords with my own experiences, where SLT meetings can become overly dominated by issues unrelated to learning and teaching, reinforced by particular secondary DHT remits in some schools that can easily be enacted with little reference to learning and teaching. In contrast, each Head Teacher ensured that whatever the remit, learning and teaching was a responsibility of *all* DHTs and Robin (DHT, Watt highlighted that Ray (HT, Watt) deliberately ensured that DHT remits did not end up being 'painted into a box' without reference to learning and teaching. This clear positioning of SLT roles, from my own experience, runs counter to the allocation of remits in some schools that leaves particular DHTs with remits that mitigate against their role in learning and teaching. In all the schools the Head

Teachers were regularly involved in conversations with senior leaders around learning and teaching. These discussions will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter (6.4.2), but helped focus DHTs on learning and teaching and supported the repositioning of their relationship to CLs in order to improve learning and teaching as will be shown in the next section.

5.5.1.2 Developing the role of middle leaders

The role of faculty leaders was perceived by all Head Teachers as a key strategic component of their focus on improving learning and teaching. Each was concerned to address a role that in the Scottish secondary context could become distanced from learning and teaching (Priestley, 2011), dominated by administrative matters as many of the middle leaders in my Masters class attest or, as Jo (HT, Hume, I1) highlighted, too focused on addressing issues such as behaviour. Each set out to tailor the faculty structures, based on middle leaders in charge of several subject teams, to enable CLs' role '*in supporting learning and teaching*' (Jo, HT, I1). Aiden (DHT, Burnett) described Alex's (HT, Burnett) as '*activating the curricular leaders as leaders of learning*' and supporting them as '*the agents of change within their own faculty area*s'.

All three Head Teachers used the regular extended leadership team (ELT) meetings, made up of CLs, DHTs and the Head Teacher, to concentrate middle leaders' attention around their responsibilities and actions with their teams in improving learning and teaching. For instance, ELT meetings were used as a vehicle for professional learning with Jo (HT, Hume, I1) using the Standard For Middle Leadership and Management (SfML&M) (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012) as a professional learning tool to explore with middle leaders their role in '*supporting learning and teaching within their faculty*.'

This hands-on approach around supporting CLs' professional learning was typical of all the Head Teachers, with Alex (HT, Burnett) running a leadership course for middle leaders on the basis that without the requisite skills CLs could not effectively carry out their role. Ray (HT, Watt) demonstrated a similar emphasis, regularly bringing readings to the ELT meeting and, on one occasion, using a video to stimulate middle leaders reflections around leadership focused on learning and teaching. Regan (CL, Watt) described how Ray '*experimented*', '*struggled*' and

'*persevered*' with different ways to support the professional learning of middle leaders at ELT meetings, moving meetings from a traditional administrative focus to ones that include a component on '*what we are about?*' (Regan, CL, Watt), the improvement of learning and teaching.

This '*what we are about?*' reflects a practice common to all three Head Teachers, to create within the ELT body a united approach towards learning and teaching that aligned the thinking of senior and middle leaders. This was about ensuring that CLs perceived themselves, and acted, as part of a united strategic leadership team focused on improving learning and teaching, not just in their faculties but across the school. Ray (HT, Watt, I1) contrasted this with the previous structure, where the middle leader was in charge of a subject only and behaved as '*union rep of a department'* rather than having a whole school focus.

How this wider strategic conception of the CL role was developed through specific Head Teacher practice is highlighted by Alex's (HT, Burnett) support of mixed ability teaching. This engendered some staff reservations and in response, Alex's starting point was to discuss the issue with middle leaders and then, utilising the expertise of a depute, to split the ELT meeting into small groups to consider research evidence '*that supported the positive impact on attainment that mixed ability grouping can have'* (Aiden, DHT). The logic here was that CLs would take this back to their faculty members and that the CLs themselves would support and lead the process of change. This mixture of discussion and evidence to move the thinking of middle leaders around learning and teaching in order to support their engagement with staff was common in all three schools.

Crucially, the middle leaders had a role to play in the development of the learning statements in each of the schools and Ray (HT, Watt, I2) suggested that the engagement of CLs on this meant that '*we were able to get that relatively quickly*'. Similarly, when considering a new system of faculty learning and teaching evaluation, Jamie (DHT, Hume) described the SLT response as '*let's talk to our principal teachers about it, let's see if they think it would be helpful for them'*. Only with their agreement and engagement was it developed across the school.

As a result of the work of all three Head Teachers there was evidence across the schools of faculty leaders engaging with their subject teams around learning and teaching at faculty level, Avery (CL, Burnett), describing how time was spent:

> *… to discuss good practice or interesting practice… To really try and maximise the time on raising attainment, looking at learning and teaching and talking about the pupils, rather than the admin tasks ...*

This is reflected by observations of Ashton (T, Burnett) who highlighted a lot more discussions about teaching at these meetings, though Addison (T, Burnett) felt there was not enough of this.

In all three schools the focus on leaning and teaching was reinforced by the pivotal position of CLs, as was shown in sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2, in monitoring pupil progress and teaching quality throughout the faculties. Engaging with subjects for which they have no expertise can be challenging (Thorpe and Bennett-Powell, 2014) and Jo (HT, Hume) felt that each CL's participation with every pupil's progression, meeting regularly with their linked DHT, was a way to address any CL reluctance to become fully involved with subjects for which they had no subject competence. For Jo (HT, Hume) this was crucial in ensuring middle leaders were more connected to faculty teaching, talking to teachers about pupil progress and that this was leading to a deeper understanding '*of where learning is not happening*'. While each Head Teacher ensured continuous engagement with the role of the middle leader focused on learning and teaching this was not about micro-managing. Rather it was targeted at supporting what Regan (CL, Watt) described as 'the agency' of middle leaders to address learning and teaching in their faculties through giving them the 'freedom to … lead' Regan (CL, Watt).

All three Head Teachers perceived the faculty structure, with its smaller number of middle leaders, as advantageous in enabling CLs to work closely on whole school issues with the SLT, Ray (Watt, I2) describing it as a '*leadership tool'* which provided a degree of flexibility that could not be matched with the previous system. However advantageous the structure, it was an existing *tool* that each Head Teacher purposed more clearly in terms of leadership for learning, creating the conditions (Barsh, Capozzi and Davidson, 2008) to enable CLs to become more focused and effective in leading learning and teaching change. In addition to this,

Head Teachers added to leadership capacity throughout the school by establishing a cadre of unpromoted leaders within the school as well as providing middle leaders with opportunities for responsibilities beyond the faculty level as will be shown in the next section.

5.5.1.3 Supporting leadership across the school

Supporting volunteer leadership roles was a core feature in all three Head Teachers' practice with '*lots of development opportunities*' (Remy, T, Watt) for staff, many focused on learning and teaching and pupil well-being in a process that Aiden (DHT, Burnett) described as *'activating leadership throughout the school'.* Opportunities from across the three schools included teachers leading working parties or development groups, sharing '*practice at inset days and professional learning events*' (Ray, HT, Watt, I1), running professional learning workshops and engaging in action research projects for sharing. Rowan (T, Burnett) highlighted Ray (HT, Watt) encouraging teachers to take on development roles to build staff leadership capacity and to have a lead role on committees. An early action of Jo's (HT, Hume) was to introduce three unpromoted leadership roles, including one on leading learning and another on pupil assessment. This was mirrored in Burnett Academy on an even greater scale, with Alex (HT, Burnett) establishing 38 additional whole school leadership roles in session 2016/17 for middle and unpromoted teachers, each with a small amount of dedicated time, including the role of Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) coordinator responsible for the professional learning of all teachers around learning and teaching.

Wider leadership roles for faculty leaders was also a feature of each school, many leading working groups or with particular whole school remits supporting learning and teaching improvement in what Rani (DHT, Hume) described as a '*distributed leadership approach'*. Rani (DHT, Hume) felt that CLs' willingness to engage in wider roles was the result of the '*professional capital'* that Ray (HT, Watt) had nurtured, feeling this would not be the case in other secondaries. Assistance for these roles was exemplified by Ricky (CL, Watt) who described regular meetings with Ray (HT, Watt) around Ricky's whole school professional learning coordinator role as highly supportive. Jude (CL, Hume), working closely with Jo (HT, Hume) and the deputies, led on the implementation of 'The Hume Learning Model' into the everyday learning and teaching practice of the school and focused on the middle

leaders in the first instance, running sessions for the CLs that '*allowed them time to dig into their own practice*'. Similarly, in Burnett individual volunteer leaders met three times a year with Alex (HT) and the SLT to report back and explore any issues of support. Here the Head Teacher was, as Drago-Severson (2016: 73) suggests, 'intentionally supporting (and challenging) their progress and growth while they are enacting the role'.

The ethos of each school was around supporting colleagues' development and Head Teachers encouraged other colleagues to do the same. Jude (CL, Hume) commented that the Head Teacher facilitates CLs to delegate responsibility and that Jo '*has always really encouraged us* [the CLs] *to develop potential in others'.* Developing the potential of teaching staff through professional learning was a key plank in the leadership for learning practice of the Head Teachers as will be seen in the following section.

5.5.2 Prioritising Professional Learning
All three Head Teachers ensured that professional learning was predominantly focused on the teaching of teachers. According to Ricky (CL, Watt) this connection was not '*so apparent'* before the arrival of Ray (HT, Watt, I1), whose vision for professional learning was that it '*… should be focused on what is going on in the classroom*'. The classroom was a key concern in the early days of Jo's headship where a perceived lack of consistency around teachers' classroom teaching led Jo to prioritise the '*… need to make sure that people understand the pedagogy'.* Development of teachers' pedagogical understanding and expertise through professional learning was a defining belief of all three Head Teachers, echoing the Scottish Standard for Headship (SfL&M) (2012: 20) requiring Head Teachers to ensure that teachers' professional learning is aligned closely to its 'impact on outcomes for learners'. In this regard, Jordan (CL, Hume) described Jo (HT, Hume) leading a process:

> *… much more focused on professional learning, much more focused on pedagogy, and much more focused on the impact we are having on our young people directly in the class.*

Every Head Teacher ensured extensive professional learning opportunities for teachers linked to the school improvement plans, policies and the collective school

visions of learning and teaching. Alex (HT, Burnett, I1) described the 'big ticket items' that are the focus of whole school formal professional learning for all teachers through in-service and after school sessions such as supporting autistic learners in the classroom through effective learning and teaching practice and the use of ICT for teaching. Key staff were allocated to organise and run these and inhouse expertise was used as well as individuals from beyond the school. However, a strand of development running through each school's professional development support, as will be highlighted in the following section, was an emphasis on both the needs of individual teachers in the context of the subject and faculty contexts in which they worked and on supporting opportunities of greater collaboration and dialogue focused on learning and teaching.

5.5.2.1 Supporting conditions for collaboration, sharing and dialogue

All the Head Teachers translated the key focus on the classroom into prioritising support for teachers' collaboration, with an emphasis on dialogue between teachers around their teaching practice and their professional learning progress. Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) described the development of collaborative practice as the '*biggest change and the most positive change'* in terms of improving learning and teaching in Burnett Academy. Similarly, Rani (DHT, Watt) described Ray's arrival as Head Teacher leading to a '*whole different feel about professional learning*' that '*it is much more collaborative … more about dialogue and talking and exploring things together'.*

Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) on arriving at Burnett, felt that the quality of dialogue around learning and teaching was '*was a little muted and a little driven by one or two*'. Alex deliberately set out to stimulate this dialogue which included lesson observation, visits to other schools and professional learning opportunities within the school, all involving '*going and being challenged in your thinking*', saying:

> *… staff are either going into each other's lessons or out to other schools or to conferences and are coming back and are absolutely enthused about what they saw and they are talking about learning. So you will go to the staff room and hear them arguing about group work … you have got it right when that is happening.*

This quote is revealing as it emphasises the importance Alex placed on teachers' informal discussions around learning and teaching. Here the Head Teacher is

commenting on the informal and independent interactions that teachers are having around learning and teaching. All the Head Teachers paid close attention to supporting these interactions through opportunities, forums and spaces to enable what Jo (HT, Hume) described as teachers '*talking about learning.*' Ultimately, every Head Teacher was keen to support the agency and autonomy of teachers, as Ray (HT, Watt, I1) argued, '*we want our teachers to be reflective within their own classroom and make changes themselves, that will bring about change*'.

As part of the process of supporting teacher talk about learning, Jo (HT, Hume) moved the traditional system of individual teachers sharing their professional learning progress within mixed faculty group discussions at whole staff meetings to one that provided time for this within faculties. Jordan (CL, Hume) characterised this as '*a major bonus*' that enabled '*teachers to talk about pedagogy*' in their faculty context. Jo (HT, Hume) also ensured agreement that individual teachers would use the 'The Hume Learning Model' to '*evaluate themselves*' (Jamie, DHT, Hume) and from this identify their professional learning needs. This model was also concurrently used as a focus of faculty development plans, with the faculty team selecting one of the five learning model areas to address, within which each teacher had flexibility on what particular feature to pursue for their own professional learning. For instance, Jordan (CL, Hume) described one teacher focusing on a classroom action research project on pupil feedback as a result of the PR&D process, while simultaneously '*contributing to the faculty focus for learning and teaching*'. This approach anchored the locus of professional learning within the faculty and subject structure, the key arena for each teacher's practice, returning it '*… to where learning and teaching is happening*' (Jordan, CL, Hume). Moreover, as faculty plans were linked to the School Improvement Plan (SIP), teachers' professional learning priorities were now linked to both faculty and school priorities. Significantly, this move entailed extending the responsibility of middle leaders for the professional learning of their colleagues in a move Jamie (DHT, Hume) described as '*genuinely giving the faculty leaders responsibility and the time and the support to lead the learning and teaching in their faculty*'. For Jordan (CL, Hume) the effects have been significant as:

> *… in the past, departmental meetings have become opportunities for discussion about content 'where are you up to in the teaching?' … Actually we need to make time to be talking about learning and teaching.*

Individual teacher professional learning developments in Hume Academy were shared in mixed faculty groups during in-services with Jo (HT, Hume) highlighting examples that included:

> *… pupil led learning … expert groups, cooperative learning, encouraging mistakes and finding solutions, tracking, getting the voice from the class, encouraging non-readers, environment of success … revision strategy, metacognition, confidence building … taking time to build positive relationships.*

The linking of teachers' professional learning priorities with both faculty and school plans in Hume was described by Jordan (CL) as '*tying up improvement priorities together so that they align together in terms of learning and teaching*'. A similar point was made by Jamie (DHT, Hume) indicating that 'The Hume Learning Model' facilitated a more focused approach to learning and teaching with a '*better line of development*' into which a number of developments could be anchored such as the new faculty role in supporting teachers' professional learning.

Ray (HT, Watt) adopted a similar process, ensuring the professional learning of every teacher, including the Head Teacher and SLT members, was linked to a professional enquiry focus identified through the annual PR&D discussions with each teacher's learning and progress shared publicly on a learning wall (see figure 2 below).

Figure 5.2:The Watt Learning Wall
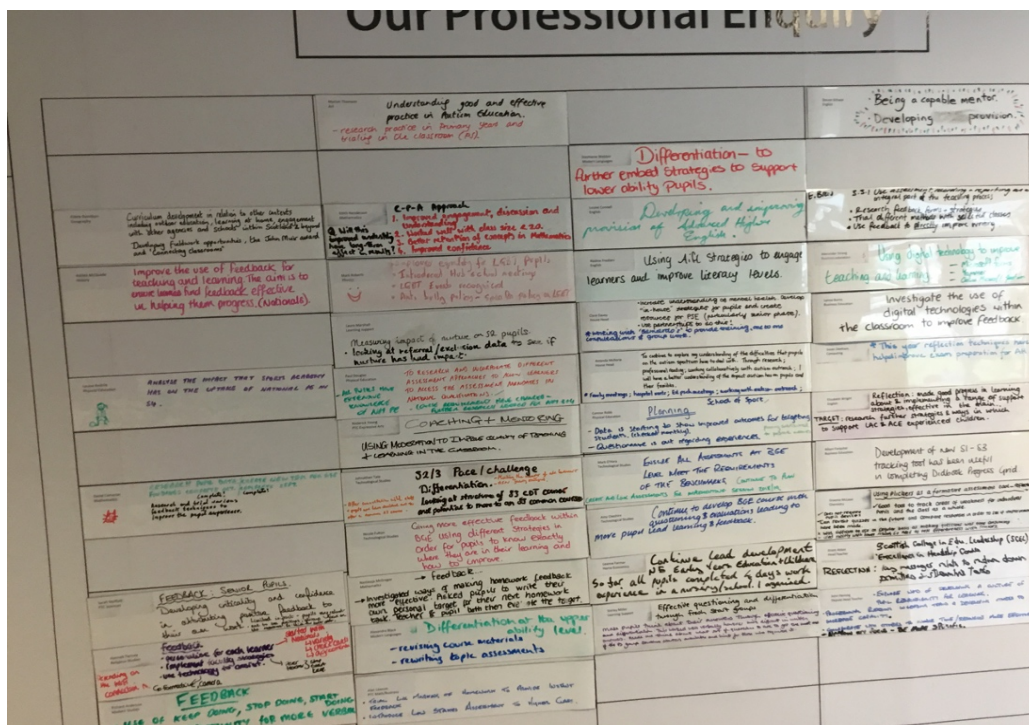
Removable magnetic strips that could attach to the learning wall, a technical innovation suggested by Ray (HT, Watt), enabled teachers to easily update their professional learning enquiry progress with successes or failures in what Ricky (CL, Watt) described as '*a very transparent way of seeing professional learning across all the levels*'. The engagement of the Head Teacher and the public sharing of teachers' learning appear to be powerful motivators for staff professional learning development. An example of one teacher's magnetic strip with update can be seen below in figure 5.3 below.

Figure 5.3: Teacher's professional enquiry with update in bottom right hand corner
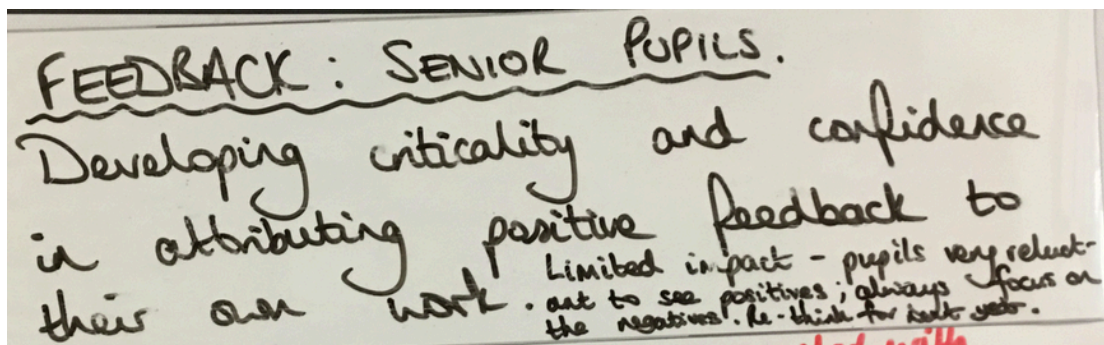
Each teacher took their magnetic strips four times a year from the learning wall, including Ray (HT, Watt), to share progress within randomly placed groups of staff at whole staff sessions '*having conversations and dialogue'* (Ray, I2) around their enquiry theme. Ricky (Watt, CL) described Ray as '*totally submerged with … staff'* when sitting with a group and sharing each other's professional learning.

Like the other schools, dialogues amongst staff were being prioritised here. The impact of this process was further developed by having it both as part of the PR&D annual review of each teacher's professional learning, and a focus of the lesson observation programme. This simultaneous linking of a number of processes together in Watt Academy appeared to add significantly to the impact of professional learning and was a key element of all three Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice. The diagram in figure 5.4 below illustrates from my findings how different elements of activity in Watt Academy are combined together to support the professional learning of each teacher.

Figure 5.4: Teacher's professional learning agenda contextualised within whole school activities
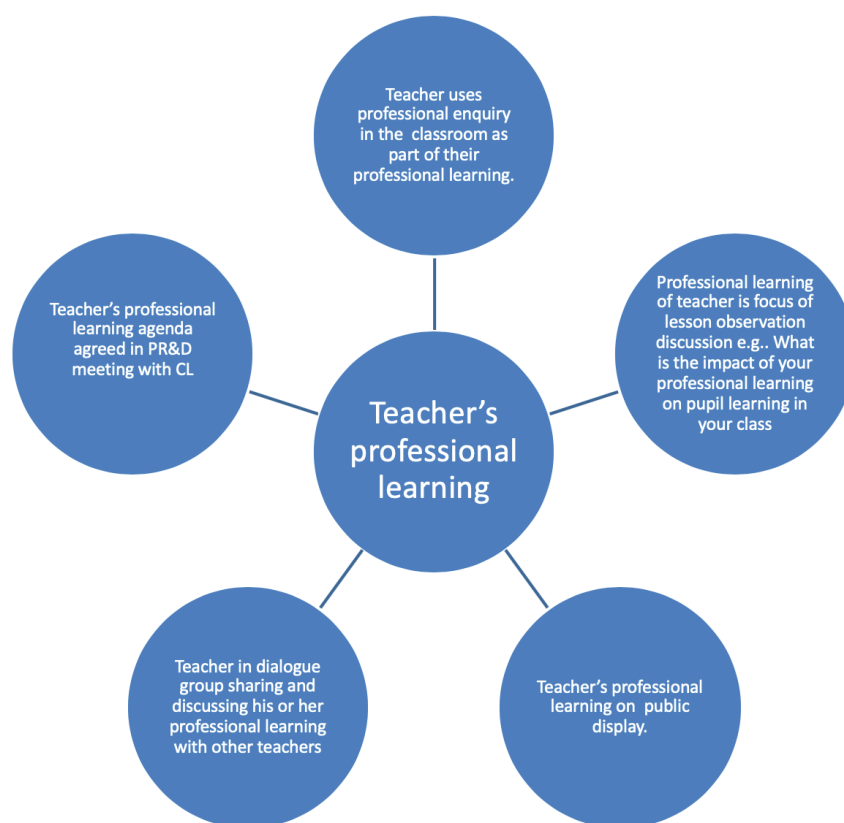
The testimony of Ricky (CL, Watt) paints a picture of a Head Teacher who has surrounded the issue of professional learning of teachers with lots of alignment to multiple support mechanisms. This '*linking*' (Ricky) is exemplified with the marrying of the SIP to the collaboratively developed Watt Academy Lesson statement, underpinning professional learning in the school, itself integrated with professional enquiry for teachers around an issue of their choice. Ray (HT, Watt) personally supported this alignment by regularly highlighting the importance of professional learning to staff; ensuring the school's professional learning's coordinator was given the freedom and support to effect improvements to professional learning across the school; resourcing for teachers' professional learning discussion in groups; and by giving the highest priority to professional learning, exemplified by the Learning Wall.

These coherence-making strategies are reflected in Burnett Academy, with Alex aligning the existing PR&D structure alongside both teachers' individual professional learning plans and the SIP. Alex refined this further by aligning the annual PR&D review process with a training programme for middle and senior leaders in developing coaching expertise to support their   annual and ongoing PR&D

conversation role with teachers, something from my own experience of schools is often left unsupported. With middle leaders trained in coaching skills, Alex then asked them, as the PR&D reviewers of teachers in their faculties, to question each teacher about the connection between their PR&D and school aims:

> *… I have reiterated to* [CLs] *throughout the year it is about coaching conversations and you need to be challenging – 'Why are you doing what you are doing?', 'How does it contribute to personal development?', 'How does that personal development contribute to the bigger picture?'*

The Head Teachers worked hard to ensure that key aspects of every teacher's professional learning were effectively supported through structures like the CL role and aligned with faculty and school development in order to maximise impact on learning and teaching. However, this alignment, while not an easy process for every Head Teacher was supported by a number of specific factors, as will be shown in the next section.

5.5.2.2 Challenges in aligning the professional learning of teachers to faculty and school plans

Aligning teachers' individual professional learning, faculty and school plans is not necessarily straightforward in secondaries with traditions of subject department independence and teacher self-direction (Robinson *et al.*, 2017). Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) noted that this had not been easy and that it had '*taken time for us to align as a school that we are all contributing to the same goal*'. Similarly, Jo's early attempts to develop alignment between working groups activities and faculty improvement plans, both areas with traditions of independence, alongside the SIP had led to '*a wee bit of push back from staff because they felt there was a wee bit of interference*'. (Jamie, DHT, Hume). However, as will be shown in greater detail in chapter 6 (6.4.4), relational trust between the Head Teacher and many teachers, close working relationships between the Head Teacher, SLT and CLs, and regular open conversations between the Head Teacher and teachers, appeared important in ensuring that staff understood the changes.

Moreover, the Head Teachers, from respondents' testimonies, show them attempting to develop teachers' engagement in the change process, working to ensure that their voice was heard and actively trying to involve them in shaping the direction and character of change. For instance, the development in Hume of PR&D

discussions and next steps anchored in the faculty were themselves responses to staff wishes. And while every Head Teacher determined that alignment was important, there were high levels of flexibility within this, each school's learning statements were designed to support the growth of teaching practice rather than as rigid templates to follow. As Ray (HT, Watt, I1) outlined '*it isn't to tell* [teachers] *what they should be doing on a given day with a given class*'. Ray (HT, Watt, I2) was clear that faculties had clear freedom in how they interpreted and applied the Watt Academy Lesson statement saying that:

> *How do we interpret that within the science faculty? How do we interpret that within languages? It gives autonomy to the faculties but again, we are all working towards this particular statement.*

Similarly, Jo (HT, Hume, I1) commented that it was the faculties themselves that had responsibility for 'd*eveloping their understanding of aspects of the* [Hume] *learning model*'. All of these are, it seems, important in reducing tensions that might be associated with the alignment each Head Teacher was after. Perhaps a bigger issue was the capacity of some middle leaders to support teachers' professional learning. Jamie (DHT, Hume) expressed a note of caution around the positioning of professional learning in the faculty in this regard. While acknowledging its very real potential, with significant developments in some faculties, it was for Jamie dependent:

> *… on the skills of the curricular leader and the faculty, and what the culture in that faculty is like. It is variable across the school.*

This is echoed by Ray (HT, Watt, I2) who thought that while collaboration in faculties was strong it was '*even stronger in certain faculties*'. It is significant that both these comments come from senior leaders, who have an overview across the school. However, one respondent, Addison (T, Burnett), without a leadership role, perceived a need for more shared discussions in their particular faculty around learning and teaching. Issues of consistency of practice, whether in middle leadership roles or in teaching quality, were of concern to all the Head Teachers and, as Alex (HT, Burnett, I1) pointed out, the challenge was around supporting those who were having difficulties. Respondents across the schools regarded their Head Teachers as successful in improving the focus on learning and teaching and its support through such things as engagement of teachers and more supportive middle

leadership roles. As will be shown in chapter 6, all three Head Teachers continuously developed their understanding of these issues through maintaining a proximity to learning and teaching in their schools and using open two-way conversations with colleagues.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a clear impression of the leadership for learning practice of three Head Teachers in a Scottish secondary school context. Each communicated a coherent and sustained vision of effective learning and teaching, using their position to engage all teachers in the creation of a shared conception of learning and teaching which could be applied and developed further by teachers in classrooms. They used this to establish coherence over several structures, activities and initiatives in order to more effectively support learning and teaching throughout the school in what could be described as a tightly coordinated learning and teaching support structure (Robinson and Gray, 2019).

This coherent approach involved adapting the roles of both senior and middle leaders to ensure that they were tightly linked to learning and teaching and that SLT and ELT meeting structures had a focus on this. Head Teachers also ensured supportive conditions for CLs to lead learning and teaching in the context of their faculties and a defining feature of each Head Teacher's leadership for learning practice was the absolute priority they placed on the professional learning of CLs focused on learning, teaching and leadership. In contrast to a professional learning culture in Scottish schools which has been characterised as overly individualised (Kennedy, 2011), each Head Teacher endeavoured to support a professional learning culture that was highly collaborative. Existing structures, such as the middle leader role and the faculty system, were tailored to both support collaboration and ensure that the professional learning needs of individual teachers, the faculty and the school were aligned. The next chapter will build on the developing picture of the Head Teachers' leadership for learning through an analysis of a number of their specific beliefs and approaches.

Chapter 6

6.1 Introduction

This second findings chapter examines particular practices of each Head Teacher through examples of behaviour, functions and operations associated with learning and teaching. Like chapter 5, my analysis is designed to develop new understandings around the leadership for learning role of Scottish secondary Head Teachers. In particular, it will examine the beliefs and values of each Head Teacher around supporting learning and teaching improvement and how, in spite of the many demands on their time, the various ways they each endeavour to keep in close proximity to the practice of learning and teaching in their schools and beyond. This proximity can involve a physical presence in classrooms and Head Teachers face to face engagement with colleagues around learning and teaching issues. But it also extends to a range of other things, such as Head Teachers' use of research on learning and teaching.

While the leadership for learning literature highlights the importance of dialogues, in the context of lesson observation of a teacher by a secondary Head Teacher, it often does so from the stance of feedback to the teacher from the Head Teacher rather than the learning of the Head Teacher from the teacher. In contrast, this chapter has a particular focus on the practice of Head Teachers' dialogues with colleagues around learning and teaching and their role in helping the Head Teachers make sense of what is happening in their schools. Underpinning many of these dialogues is the Head Teacher's role as learner or lead learner. This is a key feature of some of the leadership for learning literature (Fullan, 2014; Gold *et al*., 2003; Matthews, 2009), yet the literature is scant on how this is enacted by a Head Teacher in a secondary context or how it develops the Head Teacher's knowledge around learning and teaching. The findings from this research add specific detail on how this is carried out, deepening understanding of the practice and benefits of the role of the Head Teacher's role as learner.   The findings also provide insights into how Head Teachers develop trust and relationships to support dialogues through a conversational approach and their role as learner.

6.2 Head Teachers' Beliefs and Values About Effective Learning and Teaching

Every Head Teacher expressed clear, and indeed similar, theories of action around what makes for effective learning and teaching, and these were deeply imbued with values around what was important in the learning and welfare of children. All three were focused on what happened in the classroom and Ray (HT, Watt, I1) explained that *'... ultimately it comes back to that classroom experience'.* Here Ray (HT, Watt, I1) highlighted an increasing realisation that '*the biggest impact on the child is the teaching*' and the belief that this was '*where my emphasis needs to be'.* This a powerful statement of intent from a Head Teacher, who like the other two Head Teachers, was busy with an extensive range of demands unrelated to learning and teaching in the school, and an increasing workload coming to the school from the local authority, such as new health and safety responsibilities. The passion each Head Teacher displayed during the interviews around ensuring a quality learning experience for each child is summed up by Adrian (DHT, Burnett) who, referring to Alex's own family, said, '*if the learning and teaching experience ... isn't good enough for* [Alex's own children] *it is not good enough for anybody, therefore that is* [Alex's] *driver for bringing about improvement'.*

The Head Teachers exhibited what appeared to be sound knowledge around key developments in pedagogy, between them making reference to active learning, assessment is for learning, confidence building with pupils, cooperative learning, feedback, formative assessment, metacognition, questioning techniques and team teaching. However, Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) applied caveats to specifics like active learning, saying:

> *Those are contributors to successful learning. For me what I say to staff is successful learning, is about relationships, about children that actually know where they are going, where this fits in their learner journey.*

The importance of effective relationships between teacher and pupil came up repeatedly within each Head Teacher's testimony, Jo (HT, Hume, I2) arguing for the importance of teachers creating '*a nurturing relationship'* with each pupil and Ray (HT, Watt, I2) giving priority to '*high quality relationships that allow pupils and teachers to interact in classrooms to bring out the best in pupils'.* This resonates with the work of Immordino-Yang, Darling-Hammond and Krone, (2019) that

effective teacher pupil relationships are vital for a pupil's learning and cognitive development. Ensuring that these relationships take place across the school is not necessarily easy, with Jo (HT, Watt) pointing out that some teachers have difficulty applying the idea.

The views of teacher respondents across all three schools, DHTs, CLs and teachers, highlighted their Head Teachers' wider, more holistic conception of schooling, each committed to meeting the needs of children in a wide sense. Ray (HT, Watt, I2) argued that at '*the heart of teaching and learning is well-being, it is about how teachers develop learners rather than judge learners*'. This well-being was essential for all three Head Teachers, Jesse (T, Hume) highlighting Jo's repeated message of the importance of ensuring life chances for each pupil, which Ray (HT, Watt) interpreted as going beyond the narrow confines of each subject's content and addressing the social and individual needs of children, especially those from areas of deprivation. While Ray (HT, Watt, I1) felt that while most Watt teachers shared this belief, it was not shared by some:

> *Because their job as a teacher, they are in a classroom and they are interested in their subject, they are interested in the curriculum knowledge and they don't want that other side.*

All three Head Teachers' wider conception of learning, as more than academic achievement, accords with the Standard for Headship (General Teaching Council Scotland: 2012: 6) that leaders should 'drive an unswerving personal commitment to all learners' intellectual, social and ethical growth and well-being'. This unswerving commitment didn't just include pupils and is summed up by Ray (HT, Watt, I1) who wanted '*the best for this school and … the best for the learners and the teachers*'.

A consistently responsive approach across the school from all teachers to the needs of each and every child, especially those children that are marginalised, was a key concern of every Head Teacher, reflecting their shared and strong beliefs in inclusive learning. Jesse (T, Hume) described that the nature of Hume Academy had become more inclusive under Jo (HT, Hume), with Rowan (T, Watt) regarding Ray (HT, Watt) as genuinely wanting to make things better for pupils in their learning through '*tailoring*' the curriculum to meet different needs, a process Alex

(HT, Burnett, I2) described as '*about scaffolding young people in … class in lots of different ways*'.

While responsive pedagogy was a central plank of all the Head Teachers' beliefs, each was also very focused on how this could be addressed. As was shown in chapter 5 (5.5.1.2, 5.5.1.3, 5.5.2, 5.5.2.1) this included supporting leadership development, developing professional learning provision and ensuring the conditions for teacher collaboration, all focused on improving learning and teaching or, in the words of Ray (HT, Watt, I2), converging on '*a very robust pinpoint towards teaching and learning*'. This fits with Stosich's view (2018) that effective leaders for learning have a clear vision not only on what is important but on how to achieve it. Each shared a strong belief that in order to be an effective leader for learning you had to stay close to the practice of learning and teaching. How they kept in contact with this practice will be shown in the next section.

6.3 Maintaining Contact with the Practice of Learning and Teaching

My findings illustrate how the Head Teachers maintained contact with the practice of learning and teaching in a sustainable and regular way. It was both the focus of their leadership and defined its practice, with all three Head Teachers eager to learn more about it. This is summed up by Jamie (DHT, Hume) contrasting a previous Head Teacher who '*had no interest in learning and teaching, basically they could have been running an airport*', with the current Head Teacher's (Jo, HT, Hume) '*passion for learning and teaching and being out in classes and reading stuff and sharing stuff*'.

This curiosity reflects a pedagogic motive (Evans, 1998) underpinned by similar questions to the one regularly asked by Alex (HT, Burnett, I1), '*what does learning look like just now?*'. Questions like this underpinned all the Head Teachers' appreciative enquiry around learning and teaching issues through, as has been seen in chapter 5 (5.4.2, 5.5.1.1, 5.5.1.2), such things as the faculty evaluation programme and discussions at both SLT and ELT meetings. This is unlike the 30 secondary, primary and special school principals in Bush and Heystek's South African study (2006) where most did not conceptualise their role as focused on learning and teaching. In contrast, the three Head Teachers in my research regarded their prime function as being the support and development of effective

learning and teaching and each perceived that to do this effectively they had to keep in close proximity to learning and teaching.

As a result, whether within school or beyond, every Head Teacher dedicated regular time to staying in close proximity to, and learning about, learning and teaching. Archer (T, Burnett) felt that this was essential for Alex (HT, Burnett), suggesting that Alex's non-teaching Head Teacher status could be perceived as a drawback '*if* [Alex] *weren't still engaging with the actual teaching practice within the school … it would be a bit kind of absent if that awareness wasn't there, of how the learning and teaching was going on within the school'*. Each Head Teacher was clear that there were major benefits for both themselves and the school from this in terms of their effective leadership for learning. The next section will explore in greater detail particular practices around staying in proximity to learning and what these benefits were in the context of both the testimonies of the Head Teachers and their colleagues.

6.3.1 Practice and benefits of the Head Teacher's proximity to learning
The Head Teachers expressed concerns that their role entailed being '*too far away from the chalk-face to know what is really happening*'. (Alex, HT, Burnett, email). This suggests a perception of a gap between the Head Teacher's office or role and the world of the classroom, and respondents were clear that if this gap was not bridged it would impede their leadership for learning effectiveness. On a very general level, this was about wanting to know what was happening around learning and teaching in the school and Archer (T, Burnett) was clear that Alex (HT, Burnett) was both knowledgeable about learning and teaching and not *'distanced'* from it. Both Jo (HT, Hume) and Ray (HT, Watt) were keen on getting into classes through casual visits, Jo (HT, Hume, I1) describing this as '*just dropping in'* and Ray (HT, Watt I1) as '*leading by wandering'*. Jesse (T, Hume) felt that these informal visits helped Jo (HT, Hume) develop a clear idea of what is happening in classrooms. Rather than dropping into classes Alex (HT, Burnett) regularly covered classes for absent teachers, using the opportunity to speak to pupils and develop an understanding of their perceptions of learning.

Pupil voice was especially important to every Head Teacher as each sought to support and improve the learning of all children. It was an important part of all

schools' faculty evaluation programmes with Jo (HT, Hume, I1) asking pupil focus groups:

> *… what they felt was good about learning and teaching, anything they think should be changed, what would they say the strengths of that faculty were.*

Pupil voice provided the Head Teachers with insights into pupil perspectives around the quality of learning and teaching and added to other data coming out of the school evaluation and monitoring processes, as was seen in sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2. The Head Teachers also used informal opportunities to talk to pupils. Alex (HT, Burnett, I1) consulted pupils on what good learning looks like, saying, '*I try and talk to kids a lot. I try and do the five a day or daily dozen*'. On one occasion, information from an unplanned discussion with pupils led Alex to investigate whether there was an overreliance on teacher directed teaching in a particular area of the school. This focus on student voice, shared by all the Head Teachers, mirrors the influential Scottish policy document *How Good Is Our School? The Journey to Excellence* (Education Scotland, 2015: 68) which describes that 'learner voice and participation in development and evaluation activities which improve the provision is a significant feature of highly effective practice'.

While proximity entailed Head Teachers regularly endeavouring to find out more about learning and teaching from within the school, they also kept close to learning and teaching through mechanisms beyond the school. From the testimonies of both Head Teachers and teachers it appears that each Head Teacher was an avid reader of educational research and journal articles and regularly accessed a range of online forums for information. In addition, all the Head Teachers valued a variety of external links, highlighting their importance in helping them keep informed of teaching developments. Jo (HT, Hume) acted as an associate education inspector and Ray (HT Watt) was involved in local authority evaluations of learning and teaching in other schools. Alex (HT, Burnett) deeply valued engaging in networks both at home and abroad, with a focus on curriculum and learning. This included international Head Teacher links, membership of a voluntary national group of Head Teachers that met regularly to '*talk about learning*' (Alex, HT, Burnett, I1) and monthly meetings with a small local authority area group of Head Teachers. All three Head Teachers valued a range of external contacts, providing what Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) argued were opportunities '*to really gather what is happening out there*

that is good' and to counteract the isolation of the Head Teacher's role which Alex (I1) described as a '*lonely job*'.

Keeping close to practice also involved Head Teachers monitoring pupils' learning and progress, highlighted in 5.4.1, and as well as their involvement in dialogues with teachers during professional learning activities, lesson observations and in faculty evaluation group sessions. The importance of these dialogues with be dealt with in more detail in sections 6.4.2 and 6.4.3. The Head Teachers particularly highlighted the importance of the faculty observation programme in supporting their leadership for learning. There was an undoubted evaluative element to Head Teachers' observation of learning and teaching practice. For example, Archer (T, Burnett) argued that Alex's (HT, Burnett) engagement '*with the actual teaching practice within the school'* was vital in keeping Alex aware of the quality of learning and teaching throughout the school. Jesse (Teacher, Hume) also felt that Jo (HT, Hume) physically coming into classrooms provided an '*overview*' of the quality of learning and teaching across the school. Similarly, Rani (DHT, Watt) argued that it enabled Ray (HT, Watt) to '*temperature test*' the quality of learning and teaching in the school, while at the same time providing valuable information such as finding out about how new curricula were being applied. Rani (DHT, Watt) felt that this provided essential strategic information for Ray (HT, Watt) in a situation where the SLT was '*leading in an environment of qualifications that we have never actually taught before*'. This reflects, as highlighted in chapter 1, the intense pace of recent change around new curricula and qualifications in secondary schools, resulting in some SLT members leading learning programmes for which they have no direct experience. The nature of this change in Scottish education encompasses a range of expectations that teachers will adapt their teaching and use research-based approaches to meet the needs of new curricula and an inclusion agenda. This is challenging for secondary Head Teachers in a secondary school where they are faced by a myriad of different subjects for which they have no content expertise (Leithwood, 2012; Spillane and Louis, 2002).

However, observation appeared to be much more than simply evaluation. Rani (DHT, Watt) believed there was both an '*evaluativ*e and *learning'* aspect to observation, and Alex (HT, Burnett, I1) highlighted this *learning* aspect saying that getting into classrooms was mostly about finding out about learning itself saying:

> *You can read about it, you can hear about it, but unless you see it, feel it, touch it, smell it, you don't really know what that learning looks like.*

This, reflected in all three Head Teachers' practice, was much more than finding out about the quality of learning and teaching, but also about being curious and learning about learning and teaching itself. This situates the Head Teacher in the position of learner and will be explored in greater detail in section 6.4.2.

There were other benefits from the Head Teachers' proximity to learning and teaching, respondents suggesting that it developed knowledge that enabled each Head Teacher to disseminate, or as Jo (HT, Hume, I1) said, '*signpost',* to teachers examples of effective learning and teaching practice from around the school. Alex (HT, Burnett) signposted examples of good teaching practice on in-service days, Archer (T, Burnett) highlighting that '*hearing about those kind of examples is pretty good because it means I can steal them and use them myself'*.

Finally Jo (HT, Hume, I1) highlighted that processes like faculty evaluation and observation provided more than just '*a wealth of information'* but a platform to have conversations with teachers '*from a point of view of knowledge rather than a gut reaction'*, and one that enabled Jo to challenge issues and open up conversations with teachers. This highlights the ability of the Head Teachers to influence teachers through their proximity to learning and teaching which will be developed further in the next and later sections.

6.3.2 Credibility and influence through Head Teachers' proximity to learning and teaching

All three Head Teachers were perceived by their colleagues to be knowledgeable about learning and teaching. Jude (CL, Hume) felt that Jo (HT, Hume) '*is strong'* in learning and teaching, and this reflection applied to all the respondents' views of their Head Teacher. For Jesse (T, Hume), keeping close to learning and teaching brought credibility for Jo (HT, Hume) from staff, and Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) suggested that this credibility was specifically related to learning and teaching, saying:

> *… how you are able to talk about learning with any weight at all is by being able to bring real time examples to the table.*

From my findings, this *weight* or an ability to influence colleagues, seemed to derive from both the active engagement of the Head Teachers around learning and teaching, and perceptions of their expertise in this area, an expertise that was not dependent on their positional role. Across the three schools, school staff members acknowledged their Head Teacher as a source of credible advice about learning and teaching, for instance Jesse (T, Hume) highlighted that staff bounced teaching ideas off Jo (HT, Hume), indicating that each Head Teacher was perceived as both knowledgeable and credible in this area.

Respondents perceived that their Head Teachers' modelling of both an interest in, and the importance of, learning and teaching had important effects on teachers' confidence and motivation. Jules (T, Hume) suggested that leading by example was important and that if the Head Teacher was not interested in learning and teaching then it would be '*very difficult to promote it with your staff*'. By visibly staying close to the practice of learning and teaching, Alex, Jo and Ray were all, in effect, modelling its importance to teachers. Moreover, Jordan (CL, Hume) argued that if Jo (HT, Hume) *'… is not out there, and not seeing it, then staff could begin potentially to lose confidence'* and Jamie (DHT, Hume) argued that where Jo (HT, Hume), was talking to teachers:

> *…giving them a chance to talk about their classes and the learning and teaching that is going on, people feel valued. And where people feel valued, they feel they have more, they have a better sense of agency I think and therefore you get more discretionary effort.*

This sense of agency derived from all Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice and is evident in the testimonies from respondents across all three schools. Rani (DHT, Watt) reinforced the theme of giving more discretionary effort by suggesting that teachers '*put themselves out*' for Ray (HT, Watt) and '*challenge themselves to provide a better opportunity for the young people that are coming through the classrooms*'.

Teachers from all schools reported their Head Teacher actively engaged in the process of supporting learning and teaching developments. This engagement was visible with Rowan (T Watt) describing Ray (HT, Watt) walking the corridors and popping into classes saying '*what are you doing, what are you getting up to today, what is this class doing?*'. Archer (T, Burnett) described that '*when it comes to*

learning and teaching, [Alex] *is kind of present and … is always at the forefront'*. This visibility reflects all three Head Teacher's leadership for learning practice, arising from a variety of activities which included a physical presence, for instance in classrooms; but as importantly, it came about through aspects of Head Teacher practice like communication to staff focused on learning and teaching during in-service days and online, and communication to pupils. Remy (T, Watt) was highly positive about Ray (HT, Watt) regularly raising issues to do with the importance of learning and teaching with pupils at the regular Head Teacher assemblies, while simultaneously highlighting a positive message to them about the Watt teachers. This visibility focused on learning and teaching appears highly significant in terms of influencing teachers and was a defining feature of all three Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice.

My impression of the Head Teachers, both through their interviews and the testimony of their teachers, is that they appeared to stay in close proximity to learning and teaching practice in a variety of ways and that this was significant in developing their understanding of different aspects of teaching and learning practice. This proximity to learning and teaching practice was characterised, as will be shown in the next section, by open two-way dialogues with teachers, individually and in groups, around learning and teaching issues. Indeed, my analysis suggests that by showing an interest in learning and teaching through maintaining close links with classroom learning and teaching, every Head Teacher was able to support more effectively dialogues with teachers around pupil learning and teachers' teaching.   These dialogues were highly significant for every Head Teacher's learning and leadership for learning practice, both strategically and operationally.

6.4 The Process and Role of Open Two-Way Dialogue in Supporting Head Teacher Learning

A striking feature from the Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice was the importance of dialogues with individuals and group across a variety of forums. These dialogues formed an integral part of each Head Teacher's proximity to learning and teaching practice, benefiting both Head Teachers and teachers. From my analysis of a range of teacher respondents and from the Head Teachers' testimony, it is clear that all three Head Teachers displayed expertise in encouraging and supporting open two-way conversations between themselves with

individuals and groups focused on learning and teaching. This is not necessarily easy in the Scottish secondary school context, where Head Teachers occupy a powerful positional role at the top of what is still a hierarchical system, a possible demotivating factor for teachers in providing honest opinions and reflections. But each Head Teacher in this study endeavoured to break this restriction down, developing conversations with teachers as opportunities for collaborative learning. They did this through adopting what can be described as a conversational method (Groysberg and Slind, 2012a).

6.4.1 Talking to teachers as people: using a conversational approach

The Head Teachers attempted to level their conversations with teachers by making them as conversational as possible, '*talking to them as people*' (Jo, HT, Hume, I1), which Jules (T, Hume) described as '*being treated as a normal human being.*' In the context of a post lesson observation Rowan (T, Watt) described the process as a levelling of the relationship between Head Teacher and teacher with Ray (HT, Watt, I1) describing a genuine two-way discussion where no '*one person*' is leading. This process is illustrated through Head Teachers taking part in group discussions with teachers during in-service days, with Jordan, (CL, Hume) describing Jo's (HT, Hume) approach as '*very much conversational*', and Ricky (CL, Watt) highlighting Ray being involved in discussions as '*a participant instead of a director*'. A more detailed understanding of these behaviours is highlighted by Alex (HT, Burnett, I1) who said:

> *When I am talking to staff, I suppose the jacket is on, I am the leader, you want to promote confidence in your leadership so there is a very different stance, a different tone of voice, different eye contacts. When you are part of a group discussion, I always deliberately tone myself down... Jacket is off, look more informal, talk more informally … you have to bring yourself back into being a colleague.*

Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) described this process as '*dropping the headteacher hat at the door',* a metaphor reinforced by Rowan (T, Watt) who described Ray's (HT, Watt) attendance at the voluntary leadership postholders' meetings as non-directive, without '*the Head Teacher cap on*' and '*more like one of us*'. This approach is reflected in the language used by respondents across the three schools to describe the Head Teachers' involvement in discussions with teachers and includes words such as *chat*, *conversation, informal, participant, collaboration* and *courtesy.* This

language seems to indicate Head Teachers who are not tied to some narrow conception of their formal authority role, one that might entail keeping their distance, cultivating an aura of expertise and power for fear of being seen as weak. Rowan (T, Watt) highlights this, describing a discussion with Ray (HT, Watt) which is more about collaborative working through a relationship that is '*not the Head Teacher-Teacher traditional role*'.   Similarly, Jamie describes Jo's (HT, Hume) style as invitational where Jo '*invites people to … share whatever it is that is happening'*. The feedback from teachers reflects Head Teachers who want to communicate authentically (Groysberg and Slind, 2012a), and this is about having open and genuine two-way conversations with enough trust for both teacher and Head Teacher to share ideas in a mutual learning process. As will be shown in the next section this puts the Head Teacher, at times in the conversation, into the role of learner.

6.4.2 The Head Teacher as learner

All three Head Teachers engaged in open conversations with individuals and groups where their role could be characterised as that of learner. For instance, Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) perceived the open group conversation following a faculty evaluation, made up of members of the observing Burnett staff members and external visitors, to be '*invaluable*', saying:

> *You can just sit back and soak it up because people are arguing about what makes excellent learning. We are not talking about 'that is not good', we are talking about what is the difference between that being good questioning and that being excellent questioning? What is the difference? What makes excellent questioning? Or active learning? Why is that good active learning and not just a load of nonsense that the kids are up and out their seat? Was that group work actually group work? Or were there some passive learners in there?*

This reflects the value Alex placed on a forum where all seemed free to give their opinion and various ideas around learning and teaching were critiqued. It illustrates a Head Teacher who certainly does not appear to be in a directive mode, but rather is enthusiastically involved in *learning* within the group through open and in-depth conversations. Alex (HT, Burnett, I2) was clear that this discussion forum generates important insights that can be used both operationally and strategically '*further down the line'.*

Both the process and benefits of open conversations are illustrated through Ray's (HT, Watt, I1) post observation conversation with a particular teacher over collaborative learning, an area Ray described as *'… new to me'* and in which Ray was '*intrigued myself to see how collaborative learning worked*'. Ray (HT, Watt, I1) described how rather than this conversation being based on top down lesson feedback from the Head Teacher, the roles '*flipped*':

> *… because the teacher was telling me how [s/he] was doing it, what [s/he] was doing, what the pitfalls were, how [s/he] had built from that … which I would never have got if I was just going in to give a … analysis of how she was as a teacher.*

This '*flipped'* conversation was not being driven by positional status, with Ray able to divest the Head Teacher hat and any reliance on a 'directive, top-down model of leadership' (Groysberg and Slind, 2012a: 77). Instead the conversation was supported by the use of the use of questions, motivated by Ray's genuine curiosity around collaborative learning.

The '*flipped'* aspect of the conversation places Ray in the position of *learner,* with the role of the observed teacher in effect guiding the Head Teacher about an aspect of learning and teaching. Ray's (HT, Watt, I1) encouragement of openness and honesty resulted in *'new information'* from the teacher that enabled Ray to '*reflect back on what I saw, and ask … why certain things happened and why certain things weren't happening*'. Ray (HT, Watt, I1) reflected that '*there was a learning experience for me',* deepening understanding of cooperative learning that could be shared with other teachers*.* Ray (HT, Watt, I1) described this information as getting '*put into the data bank'*, to be used in future and that '*you are learning yourself where impact potentially can have a difference on kids'*.

Ray's role as *learner* conceptualises the behaviour of every Head Teacher, evident from interviews across the schools, either referenced directly or indirectly by respondents. For instance, Jude (CL, Hume) described Jo (HT, Hume) as a '*learner'* when Jo actively took part in table discussions with teachers during in-service days. Addison (T, Burnett) alludes to this when describing Alex (HT, Burnett) taking part with teachers during professional learning activities, saying that '*if it was an outside speaker …* [Alex] *would be as much a novice as we* [the teachers] *would be on a certain issue'*. An openness to teachers' ideas was a key

feature of every Head Teachers' approach with Regan (CL, Watt) describing Ray (HT, Watt) as willing to '*learn from them, learn with them*'. In this context, Rowan (T, Watt) described a post lesson observation with Ray as an equal dialogue between colleagues where '*neither has the answers'*. While all three Head Teachers were comfortable in this role as learners with their teachers it is a role that some secondary Head Teachers, especially ones new to the role, may find difficult as they may feel it implies some sort of leadership deficiency on their part (Barth 1986).

All the Head Teachers also utilised the SLT and ELT meetings as a forum for learning. As an example, Jamie (DHT, Hume) described learning and teaching as a standing item on SLT meeting agendas, where all '*would be talking about curriculum, talking about learning and teaching.'* (Jamie, DHT, Hume). These included issues from observations, faculty evaluation visits, twitter feeds, as well as incidental conversations with teachers about learning and teaching. Alex (HT, Burnett, I1) outlined the rich discussions following in-service days, where SLT members had taken part in table discussions within groups or paired with teachers providing a resource for discussions at SLT meetings saying:

> *… we are actually mining fantastic information which we can then sit down and talk about and say 'well actually this is what it is looking like on the ground, this is the lived reality, not the senior leadership lived reality which is very different.*

This reference to *lived reality* is revealing, characteristic of a disposition that reflects the other two Head Teachers. All were interested in the *lived reality* of teachers' teaching and pupils' learning, and this interest reflects each Head Teacher's role as learner. The emphasis on the role of Head Teacher as learner is evident where Jo (HT, Hume) highlighted that much of SLT discussions focused on learning and teaching was beyond timetabled meetings, with Jamie (DHT, Hume) emphasising the importance of the '*informal chat*' as a norm, just '*the three of us talking*' and a '*shared enthusiasm for learning and teaching'*.

My findings suggests that learning and teaching dialogues, either with individuals or groups, were highly significant in developing and deepening the Head Teachers' knowledge and understanding about learning and teaching. This is more than just staying in close proximity to learning and teaching through such things as classroom observation or reading research. The example of Ray's (HT, Watt) observation of a

colleague using collaborative teaching was, it appears, not enough on its own to develop Ray's learning. The potential of the observation was really only effectively cultivated through an open conversation, where the conversation *flipped* with the teacher. This was the case in many of the open conversations that the three Head Teachers had with teachers and groups, where they positioned themselves in the role of learner with ensuing benefits.

6.4.3 Key benefits of dialogues for the Head Teacher

As has been shown throughout this chapter there were key benefits for every Head Teacher from the open conversations they had across the school, at both an operational and strategic level. Jude (CL, Hume) described as '*invaluable*' the open conversations Jo (HT, Hume) had with teachers reflecting on their practice and Jamie (DHT, Hume) argued that these were important even when people '*moan*' about issues. Ricky (CL, Watt, email) surmised that where '*people open up and speak as part of a conversation',* this enabled Ray (HT, Watt) to gather a range of *'essential information',* summarised as follows:

- operational issues around teaching;
- teachers' perceptions of what it is like to teach in Watt including their frustrations;
- the professional learning of teachers and their needs;
- perceptions of how middle leaders are addressing their role.

Ricky (CL, Watt, email) highlighted that this information enabled Ray (HT, Watt) to identify learning and teaching areas requiring more focus or support, and this included professional learning support for middle leaders in their roles. Conversations like these appeared to provide the Head Teachers with strategic information they could use to refocus improvements to do with learning and teaching across the school. Jamie (DHT, Hume) said of the regular conversations Jo (HT, Hume) had with teachers that it provided Jo with understanding of the context, around what is happening in the school that '*helps you plan where you are going next*'. Similarly, Alex (HT, Burnett, email) argued that if these conversations with teachers about learning and teaching did not take place …

I would be implementing policy and practice without any 'feel' for what is needed. I would find this impossible. It would become sterile planning for improvement and would be unlikely to have impact.

This reference to *feel* is significant. In spite of the fact that Alex kept in close touch with the research on learning and teaching and had access to information from faculty observations and pupil progress data, Alex still felt that it was important to connect with teachers and find out information from their point of view. This accessing of people's points of view was an important part of all the Head Teachers' practice. Alex, Jo and Ray gathered this information through their regular open conversations with a range of colleagues, individually and in groups, and it provided a range of information in addition to that gathered from pupil data and faculty evaluations.

As important, is that these conversations, as was seen with the previous section's example of the *flipped* conversation in which Ray (HT, Watt) was involved, developed and deepened Head Teachers' knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching. Moreover, the knowledge and understanding developed by Head Teachers through these conversations was used in other conversations, such as those with senior leader colleagues, in what seems to be an iterative process of deepening understanding of learning and teaching issues even further. Similarly, the learning and teaching knowledge that Head Teachers derived from such things as lesson observation was itself the basis for deeper dialogues with teachers about learning and teaching practice.

The open two-way conversations that every Head Teacher had with colleagues appears to support their role as a leader for learning while simultaneously developing trusting relationships. It is this final important benefit of dialogues, that of relationship building, that I now address in the following section.

6.4.4 Supporting open conversations through relationships characterised by trust
In each school the Head Teacher ensured that there was a myriad of opportunities to work with teaching colleagues through trustful dialogues. This fits with the views of Wang (2015: 910), who argues that 'an open and trusting professional culture is a key feature of successful schools, highly dependent on the encouragement and leadership of the principal and executive staff'. From respondents' feedback, all

three Head Teachers worked to develop trust, playing what can be described as 'a key role in nurturing trust formation' (Bryk, 2010:27). For Ray (HT, Watt), when arriving as a new Head Teacher, the level of trust from teachers towards the Head Teacher role was not there and Ray worked on improving levels of staff trust. Similarly, on arrival, Alex (HT, Burnett) focused on creating the conditions for trusting relationships to support conversations with colleagues around learning and teaching. Jules (T, Hume) highlighted of Jo (HT, Hume) that '*the same nurture that* [Jo] *shows to the pupils is shown to staff*'. This nurturing approach appeared powerful in developing trust in Jo as Head Teacher. Several respondents saw the post observation conversation as vital for nurturing relationships, with Ricky (CL, Watt, email) suggesting that it provided teachers with '*a one-on-one opportunity*' to discuss their learning and teaching. Jesse (T, Hume) reinforced this, saying Jo's (HT, Hume) involvement in lesson observations meant Jo was both being seen in classes and was engaging with teachers in their classrooms, suggesting that a Head Teacher cannot be '*a faceless entity*' when it comes to what is happening in the classroom. Jo (HT, Hume, I1) described this process as beneficial for developing relationships with staff and pupils from someone who was not there to find fault but rather '*to talk about good learning*'.

It appears that the Head Teachers, by showing an interest in teachers and teaching, by getting into classes and engaging in discussions with teachers, encouraged the development of relationships and trust with a variety of teachers. This in turn, appeared to encourage teachers to talk about learning and teaching, further developing trusting relationships. In this respect, Jamie (DHT, Hume) described Jo (HT, Hume) as a Head Teacher in whom many teachers have trust and that this resulted in Jo receiving more information than a Head Teacher who is more hierarchical or distant.

However, while the process of discussion appears important to the formation of trusting relationships, Rani (DHT, Watt) felt that it was the relationships themselves that were important in encouraging staff to be more open, saying that the relationships Ray (HT, Watt) had cultivated enabled '*two way discussion with the majority of staff*'. Jude (CL, Hume) reinforced this by saying that by creating the right atmosphere of trust for teachers to provide honest reflections about their practice resulted in '*a lot of information*' for Jo (HT, Hume). Alex (HT, Burnett)

described the absolute importance of developing a strong and trustful collegial environment, arguing that the only way to do this was through working with teachers. All three Head Teachers actively engaged in this, ensuring that there were numerous opportunities to work alongside teachers and that this was primarily focused around learning and teaching

While trust was essential to these conversations, it would be naïve to think that Head Teachers could generate this with every teacher due to the large numbers involved in each secondary school. Each Head Teacher was aware that not every teacher would be open with them, and Alex (HT, Burnett) outlined the requirement to be '*sensitive*' to different teachers' needs and employ '*lots of different models.*' This might involve ensuring on occasion that one of the DHTs, rather than the Head Teacher, was the most appropriate member of the SLT to join a teacher group visit to another school in order to enable more open conversations. Similarly, Rani (DHT, Watt), acknowledged that some staff will be '*more guarded*' in the conversations they have with the Head Teacher, and that Ray (HT, Watt) '*is continually looking to break down that, to get to the point where people can be honest.*' This idea of some staff being more guarded is reflected by Aiden (DHT, Burnett) who had regular, open conversations with Alex (HT, Burnett). Aiden admitted to be being ambivalent about the benefits of observations done by SLT members, suggesting that there are benefits from having an '*unpromoted*' teacher observe as the '*whole relationship is about trust and you have to trust, and I don't think you can create that relationship sometimes when it is the headteacher coming in*'.

This highlights a key tension for the role of the Head Teacher as a leader for learning, the challenge of being perceived as an authority figure against the necessity for teachers to be open in their discussions in order for the Head Teacher to develop knowledge and understanding around learning and teaching. This reflects similar tensions highlighted in chapter 5 (sections 5.3.3 and 5.4.2) between accountability and support; between lesson observation as both an evaluation instrument and a professional learning tool; and between the Head Teacher's role driving a whole school learning and teaching vision alongside the need to have this developed by teachers.

While it is clear from respondents' testimonies that many staff were prepared to engage in more open conversations with their Head Teachers, some were, as Rani (DHT, Watt) pointed out earlier, more restrained. Moreover, Aiden (DHT, Burnett), who acknowledged the challenges for the role of Head Teacher in lesson observation, still saw real benefits where the Head Teacher had honest conversations '*where the staff feel that they can*', in terms of the '*intelligence*' it provided about the school. And from Burnett Academy respondents it was clear that there were many staff who felt that they could have these honest conversations with their Head Teacher. Ricky (CL, Watt) reinforced the importance of the Head Teacher being able to have open conversations with some colleagues, suggesting that if Ray (HT, Watt), through post observation conversations, '*can cultivate positive relationships with some staff* [Ray] *will galvanise support … as new changes/directions are introduced that impact on the classroom*'.

This reference to *some staff* indicates that it may not be necessary for the Head Teacher to have conversations with all staff in order to develop and deepen their understanding of learning and teaching issues. Moreover, as Alex (HT, Burnett) suggested earlier in reference to a DHT sometimes being the more appropriate person for some teachers to talk to, where colleagues may not wish to have an open conversation with their Head Teacher they might have one with a DHT or CL. Every Head Teacher's leadership for learning practice was characterised by close working relationships with a variety of DHTs and CLs and regular open dialogues. Topics in these discussions included issues from observations, faculty evaluation visits, twitter feeds, as well as incidental conversations with teachers about learning and teaching. In Hume, many of the conversations the Head Teacher and DHTs had with teachers about learning and teaching were brought back to meetings of the SLT team for further discussion, '*about where we have seen things, and how do people feel about that and so on.*' (Jo, HT, I1). Jamie (DHT, Watt) referred to the importance of informal '*incidental dialogues*' with teachers about learning and teaching and sharing these as SLT meetings in what Jo (HT, Hume) described as a powerful learning forum. Jo (HT, Hume, I2) said of this process, evident in each school, '*we have got high quality, ongoing continuous discussion around issues of learning and teaching where you are thinking deeply about learning and teaching*'. This was reflected in the other two schools, for instance, the close trusting relationship and productive dialogues that Alex (HT, Burnett) had with the two DHTs

whose remits were closely linked to learning and teaching and the conversations in Watt within SLT team and the sub-group of the ELT.

On a wider level, every Head Teacher worked to create an open trusting culture and Jude (CL, Hume) felt that every teacher had '*a voice to talk about learning and teaching in various different settings and in different contexts with different people*'. With the opportunity to have trustful open conversations about leaning and teaching with a number of colleagues - teachers, CLs and senior leaders - within a culture that itself was open, each Head Teacher was in a significant position to develop their learning through open two-way conversations with colleagues in different roles. What is clear from my data is that while each Head Teacher may not be having open conversations with every teacher, they are regularly having them range of colleagues in a variety of different situations in order to derive significant '*intelligence*' (Aiden, DHT, Burnett) to support their leadership for learning.

6.5 Conclusion

Improving pupil learning and teachers' teaching drove the leadership for learning work of the Head Teachers, focusing their actions and behaviours on affecting the conditions that support effective learning and teaching, both in the classroom and throughout the school. This chapter highlighted the different ways that the Head Teachers stayed close to the practice of learning and teaching. However, staying close to learning and teaching is not enough on its own. To have real benefits my findings suggest that it must be accompanied with open dialogues around learning and teaching and every Head Teacher ensured that proximity to learning was interwoven with the role of dialogues about learning and teaching. Open and authentic discussion appears to multiply the potential benefits for each Head Teacher's proximity to learning in terms deepening their understanding around learning and teaching and teaching. The key role of dialogue enabled all the Head Teachers to maintain what can be described as a '*finger on the pulse*' (Notman and Henry, 2011:382) around the quality of learning and teaching in the school, engaging in '*grassroots'* (Notman and Henry, 2011: 383) discussions with both teachers and pupils on a regular basis, a key characteristic of their leadership for learning.

Proximity to learning, active engagement in learning and teaching developments and the trustful open dialogues that Head Teachers have with colleagues and pupils appear to substantially support the process of coherence making, providing the Head Teachers with essential information to lead and adapt the process of change focused on improving learning and teaching. This theme permeated the findings throughout chapters 5 and 6, a key characteristic of all three Head Teachers' leadership for learning practices. Chapter 7 discusses in detail the coherence-making activities of the Head Teachers and it to this chapter that I now turn.

Chapter 7

7.1 Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 6, I presented the analysis and findings of my research into Head Teachers' leadership for learning for learning in three Scottish secondary schools. This revealed key aspects of their leadership thinking and practices focused on pupils' learning and teachers' teaching. My purpose in this chapter is to utilise these findings to explore and discuss the main aim of this thesis, as stated in chapter 1, which is to explore Head Teacher leadership for learning from the perspectives of Head Teachers and teachers within three schools. The discussion presented here is guided by the three research questions outlined in the introduction. Rather than address each of these separately, in this chapter my discussion will cut across all three, reflecting their close relatedness to each other. I will explicitly address them individually in the final chapter. This current chapter is organised around five specific themes:

1. the Head Teachers' focus on, and communication about, learning and teaching;
2. the practice of, and benefits from, ensuring proximity to learning and teaching including;
3. the role of dialogues and the Head Teacher as learner;
4. the role of the Head Teacher in creating capacities to support effective learning and teaching;
5. achieving coherence across different leadership for learning activities in order to ensure maximum impact on learning and teaching.

This chapter presents a discussion of key issues arising from the findings and analysis in the service of the quintain (Stake, 2006), as described in chapter 4. Stake (2006: 6) uses the term to describe the use of several cases to understand better, and in the service of, a focused study of 'an object or phenomenon or condition.' The focus of this particular study is Head Teachers' leadership for learning practices in a Scottish secondary context. There were observable similarities in the approaches of each of the case study Head Teachers to enable a

number of relevant conclusions to be drawn about leadership for learning practice within the quintain.

What is clear from the findings is that Head Teachers' leadership for learning is an intrinsically complex process. While this supports existing literature (Boyce and Bowers, 2018; Grissom and Loeb, 2011; Murphy *et al.*, 2016), the findings add to the knowledges base, providing a level of rich detail on particular characteristics of Head Teachers' leadership for learning practices. The findings illustrate each Head Teacher's involvement in an interactive process of engagement within their schools around issues of the learning of pupils and the teaching practices of teachers. They also illustrate each Head Teacher's involvement in a complex set of relationships and one to one interactions with a range of teachers, including middle and Depute Head Teachers. This mirrors findings of MacBeath (2019:54) that 'it is not the actions of individuals, but the interactions among them, that are critical in leadership practice'. The following sections discuss and analyse specific Head Teacher leadership for learning practices in the light of this complex and interactive process.

7.2 Focus on Learning and Teaching

The picture that emerged from my findings was of three Head Teachers who conceptualised their key leadership priorities as the learning of pupils, along with the teaching of teachers to facilitate this pupil learning. Despite the multitude of other demands on their time this learning and teaching conceptualisation imbued each Head Teachers' leadership, being both its object and determining its nature and practice in their respective schools. In this respect each Head Teacher regarded themselves, and acted, in what Siu (2008; 156) describes as 'the leaders in the teaching learning process', ensuring regular time was concentrated on improving learning and teaching. This is revealing, running counter to a conception of the Head Teacher as narrowly concerned with administrative affairs while leaving teachers to get on with the job of teaching in their classrooms (Barth, 2001; Murphy *et al.*, 2016). In contrast, my findings indicate that the Head Teachers simultaneously ensured issues to do with administrative practice were addressed while attending to what they regarded as their key work, improving learning and teaching. They endeavoured to make sure that any traditions of what Elmore (2000: 8) describes as 'the privacy' of classroom practice, teachers expecting to teach behind closed doors, were addressed. This privacy is something which is regularly

highlighted in the literature as an ongoing impediment to improvement in schools (see for example, Peurach and Neumerski, 2015) and the Head Teachers focused on breaking it down through such things as support for middle leaders as leaders for learning working with teachers, encouragement of teachers sharing their practice and through programmes of classroom observation. As a result, teachers knew that not only was the Head Teacher's prime concern learning and teaching but also that their leadership for learning activity would be focused on this.

However the findings show that this focus on learning and teaching from each Head Teacher was driven by a moral purpose, what Dempster *et al.* (2017: xx) describe 'as working continuously to improve the life chances for students through learning'. While within this pupil academic learning was important, conceptions of pupil learning went far beyond this, encompassing a broad range of pupil well-being needs and preparation for the diverse challenges beyond school, according with similar views from the literature (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009; Day *et al.*, 2010). All Head Teachers shared common and inclusive values underpinned by what Day *et al.* (2010: 7) describe as 'a belief that every pupil deserves the same opportunities to succeed'. This is significant, as the literature (Dwyer, 1984; Stosich, 2018) highlights the tensions Head Teachers experience when they come under national policy pressure to improve academic results across the school that often results in less attention for inclusive approaches to learning and teaching. As the findings show, while the Head Teachers in this Scottish context were not immune to pressures to improve academic results, they remained determined that this would not be at the expense of pupils' needs.

A key activity of all the Head Teachers was communicating this central purpose along with a vision of effective learning and teaching, each using a variety of methods to achieve this. My findings indicate that the interactions they had with teachers, through for instance speaking at staff meetings, appeared to have a powerful influence on both teachers' thinking and practice, forming what Adams and Olsen (2017: 514) argue is 'a conduit for social contagion of motivational beliefs', which in the case study schools focused on improving learning and teaching to meet the needs of each and every pupil. The findings show that much of this motivation came from each Head Teacher's passion and commitment to learning and teaching, their clear ability to communicate this effectively, and their perceived knowledge and

understanding of both learning and teaching along with the challenges teachers in their school faced around this. The Head Teachers' actions in this context display a key characteristic of the Scottish *Standard for Headship* (SfH) (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012:10) that 'leaders show and communicate their deep commitment to the education and well-being of learners in their everyday practices.'

Central to communicating a vision, was the development by the case study Head Teachers of a shared understanding with teachers of what constitutes effective learning and teaching. This is a key feature of the SfH (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012: 21) which states simply that 'Head Teachers build a shared vision to support the improvement of teaching and learning'. Yet how this is done lacks exemplification in the SfH (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012). These findings are important in demonstrating how this is applied in practice in three Scottish secondaries, particularly around how the vision is built and the respective roles of both Head Teacher and staff in the process. This reflects the ability of each Head Teacher to be both directive while also being genuinely consultative and collaborative. It involved them in the practice of communicating their vision of effective learning and teaching while simultaneously supporting the conditions where teachers' voice could be heard and used to actually shape an agreed whole school vision. This created what many staff members reported was a genuinely owned vision of effective learning and teaching that they wanted to apply and develop. This seems to fit with Gronn's (2008:154) view on the importance of voice where he says 'by de-monopolising leadership and potentially increasing the sources and voices of influence in organisations beyond just one, distributed leadership has helped widen the span of employee and member participation.'

The publicly communicated vision from each Head Teacher, regularly repeated at various meetings and in-service days, provided for staff a compelling and clear case for change. However it was the collective process of learning and development that was involved in its creation, as well as the agreed vision, that *both* appear to have provided a guiding mechanism for teachers. These afforded clear purpose and direction for teachers, underpinning discussions and learning in faculties and subject teams, enabling teachers to apply, adapt and further develop their classroom teaching. This is similar in some aspects to the findings of Priestley, Minty and Eager (2014: 207) in a Scottish secondary school context, where a clearly

understood vision provided a resource that teachers could use 'in framing innovation' in their classrooms. As importantly, the findings show in each school that the collectively agreed vision influenced each Head Teacher's practice too, providing a guiding mechanism around which they could anchor a number of leadership for learning developments. While it was the Head Teacher's broad vision, or what Sebring and Bryk (2000: 441) describe as a 'vision in outline', that helped shape discussions with various staff members around a whole school vision of effective learning and teaching, each Head Teacher's vision itself was in turn continuously shaped by staff members. This resulted from Head Teacher engagement in discussions with groups and individuals in a variety of situations. Moreover, for each Head Teacher, as highlighted in chapter 5, this was an ongoing collaborative process of vision making around learning and teaching, involving continuous staff learning about, and developing practice in, learning and teaching. This discussion provides a much more nuanced view of vision-making in terms of learning and teaching than is found in much of the literature, showing the recursive and evolutionary nature of the process, the critical role of the Head Teacher and the reciprocal effects upon the Head Teacher. It does however add weight to Hallinger and Heck's (2011b) reciprocal effects model which imply that while leaders, such as Head Teachers, may originate new developments they themselves can be influenced though the process. As shown in section 7.4.2, this reciprocal influence is particularly marked in the open dialogues Head Teachers had with colleagues.

In trying to make even deeper sense of what was happening though my evidence around the Head Teachers being both directive and collaborative, I found Sebring and Bryk's study (2000: 441) of American elementary Head Teachers useful. They found in effective Chicago elementary schools that the Head Teachers adopted a 'facilitative orientation' (Sebring and Bryk, 2000: 441), articulating only an outline vision, ensuring instead opportunities for teachers to collaboratively develop and create a detailed vision for what effective learning and teaching means by themselves. While the Head Teachers in this study also do this, my research both clarifies the processes involved and adds to our understanding. While each Head Teacher communicated a highly influential moral case to teachers that meeting all pupils' learning needs required teachers engaging in a range of responsive pedagogies, my detailed findings show that it is much more than simply providing an outline vision prior to teachers themselves collaborating around what this might look

like in classroom teaching. A salient feature across all the Head Teachers' leadership for learning actions was their careful preparation of the ground before the collaboration stage in which teachers engaged. This included frequent Head Teacher involvement in various discussions with staff, use of research with teachers and a focus on learning and teaching at meetings and professional learning opportunities for staff on learning and teaching. This prepared the ground or, to use the analogy given by one of one of the case study Head Teachers in chapter 5 (5.3.3), was a process of planting seeds. Each Head Teacher simultaneously engaged in communicating a vision, seeding ideas and developing capabilities in order to enable teachers to be in a position to engage with producing a collaborative and common vision of effective learning and teaching. This was not an either or, between a directive leadership approach (Williams, 2012) or a democratic leadership one (Krüger and Scheerens, 2012). Rather, all the Head Teachers managed to achieve a fine balance between the need to be directive when necessary with both a commitment to, and practice designed to create, a collectively agreed vision. However, the findings show that each Head Teacher was genuinely committed to working with teachers to create 'common purpose' (Williams, 2012: 168) around effective learning and teaching, and it seems clear from teacher respondents that this provided teachers with what Hargraves (1995: 42) describes as 'clear purpose and direction'. This adds to our understanding from the literature, not only around Head Teachers' involvement in supporting the creation of a common purpose, but in providing practical insights into how the Head Teachers negotiated the tensions between being simultaneously directive and collaborative, insights that are not evident in the *Standard for Headship* (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012). This understanding is important as Murphy and Torre (2014: 178) highlight a lack of substance around building a vision within the literature saying, 'dealing with vision is a bit like trying to carry fog around in a satchel. No area in the school improvement literature is more in need of intellectual architecture.'

What is clear within each Head Teacher's actions around creating a vision, is that the agency of both Head Teacher and teachers in the respective schools is apparent. To borrow from Priestley (2011) in the context of school improvement, this is about Head Teachers exercising their agency in a way that does not restrict teacher agency, and it is this agency that the Head Teachers each felt was so

essential for classroom improvements in learning and teaching. Moreover, all of this was achieved against a backdrop of Scottish curricular policy change that some commentators have described as 'often complex and confusing.' (Priestley, Minty and Eager, 2014: 189). The concept of agency and how it relates to the Head Teachers' leadership for learning practices is addressed in more detail in section 7.5.1.

The successful establishment of a shared purpose around learning and teaching in each school was, as highlighted earlier, due to a number of reasons. Not least among these were respondents' perceptions that their Head Teachers maintained close proximity to learning and teaching and it is to this that I now turn.

7.3 Proximity to Learning and Teaching

From my data, the theme of Head Teacher proximity to learning and teaching emerged, each ensuring regular time to keep in touch with learning and teaching. This is in spite of the observation from Murphy *et al*. (2016: 465) that 'there has been little change in the structure of principals' daily work routines to allow them the time to focus on instruction'. As was shown in chapters 5 and 6, this proximity involved a close physical presence through, for instance, classroom observation, what Sebring and Bryk (2000: 441) define as 'taking the instructional pulse of the school', engaging in professional learning discussions with teachers and speaking to pupils. It appears that how the Head Teachers perceived they could influence learning and teaching, and learn about it, determined key areas of their leadership for learning activity and where they prioritised proximity. For instance, the priority given in particular by all the Head Teachers to routinely accessing pupils' views of learning and teaching enabled a deep appreciation of the pupil experience as learners in their schools. This use of pupil voice is contrary to views that it is not regularly used by school leaders (Angus, 2006; Ferguson, Hanreddy and Draxton, 2011; Smyth, 2006), providing a particular sense of an approach that each Head Teacher used to inform their leadership for learning practice.

In the context of research, highlighted in chapter 2 (2.4.5), that showed Head Teachers experiencing difficulties in keeping in touch with learning and teaching (MacBeath, O'Brien and Gronn, 2009; Murphy *et al*., 2016), the question arises as to why the Head Teachers in this study were able to regularly engage with learning

and teaching issues. This is especially relevant, as Forde and Torrance (2016) found that the many demands facing Scottish Head Teachers restrict their learning and teaching involvement. Each case study Head Teacher was certainly subject to these demands. It seems from the evidence that there are a number of reasons for this, one of which is to do with the limitations of this study. Each Head Teacher was chosen against strict criteria, not because they were representative of Head Teachers in general, but rather because they were atypical, perceived to have the necessary involvement and experiences in the phenomenon in question (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015), the phenomenon being leadership for learning as practised by secondary Head Teachers. Moreover, all were highly experienced and were at a particular point in the headship where they felt more able to focus regularly and coherently on learning and teaching.

This was supported, by what appeared to this researcher, to be the high quality of the range of formal leaders interviewed, both middle and senior. This was reinforced by various interviewees, who pointed to specific examples of expertise across different roles. This expertise seems to have provided a resource for each Head Teacher that saw them working with, and through other colleagues, enabling each Head Teacher to engage regularly with learning and teaching through this. However, none of this, it seems, would have mattered had each Head Teacher not defined learning and teaching, and the needs of every pupil, as their overriding priority. By letting this drive their actions, it appears that they managed to dedicate and protect regular time on this, with respondents all perceiving each Head Teacher's high profile around learning and teaching.

While a close physical presence to learning and teaching, through for instance talking to teachers or visiting classes, was a characteristic of each Head Teacher's leadership for learning activity, Head Teachers' explanations of how they kept in touch with learning and teaching are revealing in showing a different sort of proximity, what I call an intermediate proximity. This was through such activities as close monitoring of data on pupil learning progress and regular use of online information sources and research. This is supported by teacher testimony such as references to Head Teachers reading widely.

It appears these more intermediate forms of proximity, were significant in aiding each Head Teacher's learning when done in tandem with the direct contact afforded by talking to pupils, teachers or taking part in the lesson observation programme. This combination adds significantly to our understanding of Head Teacher practice, indicating that benefits to a Head Teacher's learning through proximity to practice really begin to accrue when carried out in conjunction with a number of related activities. However, the evidence also suggests that while proximity to learning and teaching was important, whether through a close or intermediate presence, this too had limitations in terms of its potential on its own to develop and deepen Head Teachers' knowledge and understanding around learning and teaching. The findings suggest that the benefits of a Head Teacher's proximity to learning, at least in the case of these three Head Teachers, cannot be realised in isolation from rich dialogues with colleagues within the school. To develop the full potential of their proximity to learning it seems that Head Teachers need to be involved in dialogues about learning and teaching, and it is these dialogues, addressed in the next section, which were so important for each Head Teachers' learning.

7.4 The Role of Dialogue and Head Teacher as Lead Learner

One of the most striking findings from this study is each Head Teacher's engagement in a social process of open dialogues focused on learning and teaching. There is a lack of in-depth research on the interactions between Head Teacher and teacher (Adams and Olsen, 2017). In contrast, my findings provide a great deal of detail, showing that conversations within many of these interactions were an integral part of how each Head Teacher enacted their leadership for learning, both strategically and operationally.

Enacting dialogues, which involve an open two-way exchange of ideas between Head Teacher and teachers is not necessarily straightforward for Head Teachers whose role invests them with a great deal of authority by virtue of position (Beatty, 2007). This can inhibit openness, with teachers wary of being honest and frank with senior colleagues like the Head Teacher. Similarly, Adams and Olsen (2017: 521) suggest that new and experienced Head Teachers can find conversations with teachers a 'messy and emotionally charged process to navigate'. Yet in spite of this, the Head Teachers in this study demonstrated expertise in putting aside their positional role, creating the conditions in which, with a range of colleagues in

different roles (teachers, middle and senior leaders), they were able to engage in frequent open two-way conversations focused on learning and teaching. In this context, Riehl (2000: 71) describes leadership as 'fundamentally a discursive practice', and while this theme featured in the literature reviewed in chapter 3 (3.2.2), its importance to the learning of all three Head Teachers emerged much more clearly in the findings, with a greater level of detail than anticipated from both Head Teacher and teachers' viewpoints. What became clear was *how* Head Teachers encouraged and supported dialogues with teachers was closely entwined with their influence on the *learning* of each Head Teacher. The next two sections will address both these issues.

7.4.1 Dialogues to support learning

While there is educational leadership literature that deals, in part, with how Head Teachers can support more open conversations with colleagues (Collie, Granziera and Martin, 2018; Ford *et al*., 2019), this is often focused on improving teacher practice or motivation rather than the learning of the Head Teacher, and lacks the level of specificity reflected in my research. While I have made much use of this educational literature, it did not give me as complete a picture of how these open conversations were conducted in a way that accords with my findings. To date there are few educational leadership studies that describe in a level of detail *how* Head Teachers support these conversations to maximise the Head Teacher's learning in a leadership for learning context. Instead, I found recent literature from business settings (Groysberg and Slind, 2012a, b: McCown, 2014) both congruent with what my findings were showing and therefore potentially transferable to a Scottish educational context. When combined with educational literature this was helpful in creating a sense of how leadership for learning was unfolding in practice arising from my evidence.

The behaviours of all three Head Teachers reflected an informal conversation approach described by Groysberg and Slind (2012a: 78) as 'conversationally adept leaders step down from their corporate perches and then step up to the challenge of communicating personally and transparently with their people'. The language of the findings provides in detail rich descriptions from respondents of how the Head Teachers did this when meeting teachers ('*being a colleague*'; '*more like one of us*'; '*very much conversational*'). Using this approach the Head Teachers were able to

engage in discussions that were not controlled and directed, were more participatory, in which they could behave as colleagues, and were not infrequently led by teachers themselves. This reflects Head Teachers who wanted to communicate with their colleagues through open and genuine two-way conversations and this was a significant feature of how they practised their leadership for learning.

This involved all Head Teachers engaging with individuals and groups in a mutual learning process, reflecting each Head Teacher's role as learner and was another essential feature emerging from my research. While, the Head Teacher's role as learner is a key characteristic of the literature (Fullan, 2014; Gold *et al*., 2003), this is a problematic term, as was seen in chapter 3 (3.2.1), often lacking clarity in its conception and detailed accounts of both how it is practiced along with its accordant leadership for learning benefits. Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) highlight the importance of school leaders participating as learners in both formal and informal situations with teachers but do not explain how the role is defined or how it is effectively enacted. My findings add to our understanding of this construct, both theoretically and practically.

7.4.2 The Head Teacher's learning as lead learner
My findings make it clear that each Head Teacher displayed a curiosity about learning and teaching. They were particularly interested in teachers' and pupils' views of learning and teaching, and the practice of this within the school. What was described in chapter 6 (6.4.2) as a focus on the *lived reality* of teachers' teaching and pupils' learning reflects each Head Teacher's role as learner. This emphasis on the role of Head Teacher as learner mirrors Firestone and Riehl's (2005 : 53) description of Head Teachers having 'an orientation of learning about student learning and instructional practice'.

The role of learner is significant, positioning the practice of each Head Teacher's leadership for learning, stimulating their proximity to learning and teaching and, importantly, underpinning their interactions with colleagues using an informal conversational approach. The language of participants, describing their Head Teachers during interviews is revealing in this respect, for instance with teachers in professional learning contexts ('*learner*', '*as much a novice as we* [the teachers]')

and in post observation discussions (*'neither has the answers'*). This language does not reflect a narrow top down model, rather, as highlighted in section 6.4.2, it shows the Head Teacher behaving as a learner with a learning orientation focused on learning and teaching. But the findings also illustrate the converse, with the influential role of the teacher reflecting this more equalised situation. This is touched upon by Ogawa and Bossert (1995: 235), when they say 'organizational members, who possess the information needed by others to operationalise their roles effectively, are in a position within their network of roles to exercise influence, or leadership'. The result for the Head Teachers is about developing a deeper understanding of pedagogy through conversations with colleagues, as well as the realities of its practice in the school through the perceptions and experiences of a number of colleagues in a variety of settings.

During my data analysis I found Tharp and Gallimore's (1989: 80) concept of 'activity settings' useful to frame my analysis around these variety of settings, particularly in relation to Head Teachers' proximity to learning and teaching, their role as learner and the open discussion approach highlighted earlier. These social settings included, as shown in chapters 5 and 6, discussions with teachers following lesson observation, discussions around learning and teaching through faculty evaluation programmes and engagement with teachers in group professional learning discussions at in-services as well as a range of informal exchanges. Tharp and Gallimore (1989: 81) claim that Head Teachers need to construct more opportunities to ensure 'joint productive activity' between teachers and themselves. While they primarily frame these settings in terms of support for the teacher, they do allow for reciprocal influence on the Head Teacher. The Head Teachers in this study appeared adept at placing themselves in these reciprocal activity settings focused on learning and teaching and this was a conspicuous feature of the *how* of leadership for learning practice from a case study perspective. It provides fresh insights into particular ways to keep in proximity to learning and teaching as well as each Head Teacher's role as lead learner.

My study shows that the Head Teachers used these activity settings to intentionally learn about learning and teaching in what Ford *et al*. (2019: 617) describe, in a study on Head Teacher support for teachers' psychological needs, as 'leader-initiated efforts at intentional conversations about matters of teaching and learning'.

The findings show clearly that each Head Teacher ensured space and time to have these conversations with colleagues, such as those following lesson observation or when the Head Teacher worked with groups, which went beyond a unidirectional influence of communication from Head Teacher to teacher or teachers. Rather, these reciprocal activity settings were characterised by open input from both parties, meeting Robertson's (2011: 214) requirement that if Head Teachers are to learn effectively they require learning opportunities 'based on mutuality rather than control, and reflection and critical thinking rather than advice and the transmission of knowledge'. This locates these Scottish secondary Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice within the reciprocal learning processes that take place among individuals (Lambert, 2011), behaviour that reflects Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, with all the Head Teachers in the study involved in interactions in various activity settings with colleagues, and through their colleagues, that develop their own cognition (Vygotsky, 1978) around learning and teaching issues.

These reciprocal learning processes are significant for each of the Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice. Both proximity to practice and the dialogues that each Head Teacher has with teachers in various activity settings, seem to combine to provide the Head Teachers with vital information about learning and teaching, new approaches and the challenges teachers are facing. These translate into operational and strategic intelligence that informs Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice. Educational talk *amongst* teachers, Klein (2017) argues, contains crucial information that rarely reaches the Head Teacher which results in decision-making based on incomplete intelligence. In contrast, this study demonstrates each Head Teacher immersing themselves wherever possible in educational talk, in effect as a learner, which resulted in all sorts of intelligences, for instance, as was seen in chapter 6 (6.3.1) providing the Head Teachers with understanding of the circumstances required to support teachers' professional learning.

7.4.3 Connecting open dialogues and relational trust
The findings show that relational trust was both supportive of the social process of open dialogues Head Teachers had with a number of colleagues and an important outcome of them. Two things seem to be happening in these professional conversations as regards trust, something that the literature indicates is vital to school improvement (Bryk and Schneider, 2003; Marsh, Waniganayake and De

Nobile, 2014). The first is that there is sufficient trust for both teacher and Head Teacher to share ideas in a mutual learning process. Bryk and Schneider (2003: 42) identify 'respect' and 'competence in core role responsibilities' as two key components of relational trust and all respondents across all three schools evidenced these as regards their Head Teacher. The second, it seems, is that with the relationship dynamics set on a more equal basis through open-ended conversations between teacher and Head Teacher, a rapport developed from which elements of relational trust further emerged among those concerned. From business settings, Groysberg and Slind (2012a) point out that professional openness requires trust and that this itself results in trust. In effect, in the settings of the case schools, the actions of each Head Teacher in having these open conversations seems to result in a levelling of their role which encourages further relational trust. While there are many situations where Head Teachers can develop relational trust, such as when they show a duty of care to a teacher facing personal problems, here this is done in the context of learning and teaching. This area might be considered a challenging one for Head Teachers, where the positional role of the senior leader can make teachers guarded about talking about their teaching practice. While the small size of the study precludes a deeper understanding of the views of all staff as regards degrees of relational trust, there was an acknowledgement from some interviewees that developing necessary relational trust with some staff to support open dialogues is more difficult. In effect, the Head Teachers did not have these conversations with every colleague. However, they did have them with many different colleagues across roles and in a variety of situations, demonstrating what Ogawa and Bossert (1995) describe as leadership flowing throughout the school in a myriad of interactions. In the case study schools this included those with fellow senior leaders, discussion groups during in-service days and informal discussions with individual colleagues. What seems important in terms of guiding leadership for learning practice for Scottish Heads is that Head Teachers require to have relational trust with *enough* colleagues across all roles in order to have open ended conversations that support the learning of the Head Teacher. Certainly each Head Teacher worked to create the conditions for an open and trusting culture where these conversations could readily take place.

While much of the educational literature on open conversations highlights their role helping the Head Teacher support individual teachers around their teaching (Ford *et*

al., 2019; Adams and Olsen, 2017)*,* this study shows the importance of these conversations to the Head Teacher's learning and the role of relational trust. Head Teachers intentionally supported or framed these conversations with individual teachers and groups to ensure in-depth discussions about learning and teaching matters. Many of these conversations were supported by the Head Teacher's knowledge of learning and teaching, not as an expert, but with enough understanding to enable the Head Teacher to help structure the conversation along with the teacher or teachers in a way that enabled deeper learning. This knowledge was both the result of conversations and an enabler of them. In particular, they expanded and developed each Head Teacher's pedagogical knowledge and understanding and the importance of this will be explored in the next section.

7.4.4 Head Teacher knowledge of learning and teaching

While located in the Scottish context, the case studies provide a rich level of relevant detail around the origin and importance of a Head Teacher's knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching in a secondary context, adding to our understanding of the literature in this area. This is particularly important as the SfH (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012: 8) regards as essential that Head Teachers 'engage critically with knowledge and understanding of research and developments in teaching and learning.' This study provides detailed insights around how this can be done by secondary Head Teachers, along with the benefits of so doing.

Teacher respondents across the three schools viewed their Head Teachers as having significant knowledge and understanding about learning and teaching and that this was a key characteristic of their leadership for learning. This reflects findings in the literature that effective leadership focused on learning and teaching entails an understanding of effective learning and teaching (Louis, Dretzke and Wahlstrom: 2010; Robinson: 2007), in a context that 'makes broad demands on principals' knowledge and skills with regard to both student and teacher learning.' (Bryk *et al*., 2010: 62). Yet none of the Head Teachers in this study appeared to have the depth of knowledge around different subject pedagogies across the curriculum, as highlighted in some of the literature from elementary schools (Stein and Nelson, 2003). Leithwood (2012) regards this as impractical for secondary Head Teachers due to the complexity of the secondary school curriculum and that,

in any case, they have middle leaders with the necessary pedagogical understanding who can deliver leadership for learning to teachers. Certainly, all the Head Teachers in this study had a strategic conception of the middle leaders' role as leaders for learning in their faculties. Yet in spite of this and the many demands placed on them, all the Head Teachers were meticulous in developing their knowledge of learning and teaching practice through, as has been shown, their proximity to learning and teaching and their engagement in open dialogues with various colleagues. This knowledge appeared to benefit the Head Teachers' strategic and operational leadership of change and improvement through, for example, support for middle leaders as leaders for learning and ensuring the professional learning of teachers focused on learning and teaching. However my research suggests that the knowledge itself appears to do much more than this. Respondents' testimonies appear to show them responding both to a Head Teacher in each of the schools who was focused on improving learning and teaching while *at the same time* was able to demonstrate a genuine interest in, and knowledge and understanding of, learning and teaching. All the Head Teachers did both. From my findings this motivated teachers, providing intellectual challenge and brought each Head Teacher credibility. This credibility originated not from the positional role of the Head Teacher but was rather to do with perceived expertise as regards learning and teaching shown in areas such as discussions around learning and teaching with teachers, in what Torrance and Murphy (2010: 24) describe as 'real situations.'

This resonates with social network research on American elementary schools (Friedkin and Slater, 1994), that shows that Head Teachers perceived to have know-how around learning and teaching, and have the ability to provide advice on it, are more likely to be influential over the teaching of teachers than Head Teachers who are perceived to be without this expertise. What Friedkin and Slater (1994), found in an American elementary schools' context very much applies in the Scottish secondary sector context of the case study schools. The combined focus on, interest in and knowledge of learning and teaching also appears to have had powerful effects at the level of the interactions that the Head Teachers had with teachers. It underpinned their public communications on learning and teaching to teachers, while sustaining and deepening conversations with individual teachers and staff groups, especially with colleagues from the extended and senior leadership teams. This latter point is significant, as Spillane, Camburn and Stitziel

(2007: 118) found in an American study, one including high schools, that principals did not regularly collaboratively engage with fellow senior leaders around learning and teaching matters. In contrast, the Head Teachers in this study valued frequent collaborative engagement with fellow senior leaders around learning and teaching.

However, this study is also revealing in that even with learning and teaching knowledge and expertise in the hands of teachers and middle leaders, it seems that for these secondary Head Teachers at least, they felt that they required a sufficient knowledge and understanding of the learning and teaching processes that they led and managed in order to lead this area effectively. They applied this knowledge and understanding, as shown in the findings, to support teachers' teaching activities and pupil learning experiences, for instance, through the professional learning processes to boost teacher learning and addressing the conditions to encourage teacher collaboration. Without this knowledge of learning and teaching it seems, from my findings, that these secondary Head Teachers appeared to limit their opportunities to lead effective learning and teaching improvements.   This reflects Elmore's assertion (2008: 56) that Head Teachers require sufficient knowledge in order to comprehend the various obstacles to teachers teaching effectively. One of these obstacles or challenges from each of the case study Head Teacher's standpoints was the need to address teacher capacity throughout the school to support learning and teaching development and it is to this that I now turn.

7.5 Creating Capacities to Support Effective Learning and Teaching

A key issue arising out of the analysis was the importance of issues to do with teacher capacity. While the Head Teachers within the study worked on developing whole school capacity around learning and teaching through, for example, support for teachers' professional learning, the evidence shows that they did this in tandem with developing the leadership and agency of both formal leaders and indeed teachers themselves. This characterised the conceptualisation and practice of each Head Teacher, that their leadership for learning could only effectively be realised through collaboration with other colleagues. While they could be forthright and directive at times, their leadership was characterised by their interactions with others. Two interconnected themes will structure this section of the discussion:

- ensuring the role of the middle leader is focused on learning and teaching;

- supporting teacher engagement, collaboration and learning.

7.5.1 Ensuring the role of middle leader is focused on learning and teaching

The findings provide fresh insights into an understanding of Head Teachers' engagement with the middle leader faculty structure and how they strategically positioned this to ensure support for teachers' teaching and improvements to pupils' leaning. As was seen in chapter 1, the role of faculties in Scottish education is a relatively new one, and while there is some research in the Scottish context, this is limited with very little known about its leadership for learning practices (Forde *et al*., 2018) or how Head Teachers use it to focus on learning and teaching. Similarly, Klar (2012) refers to the lack of research in general on strategies to cultivate middle leaders' capacity around leadership focused on learning and teaching.

Each Head Teacher surmised that the middle leader structure they had inherited, focused on the role of the Curriculum Leader (CL), was not sufficiently located around learning and teaching. They set out to refocus this organisational structure more clearly around supporting pupils' learning and teachers' teaching, endeavouring to ensure that middle leaders did not simply define their role around every day managerial and administrative business, something that Feeney (2009) found in a study of American high school middle leaders.

However, from the findings it became clear that this involved much more than ensuring the role was simply focused on learning and teaching. Indeed, even though each Head Teacher did not use the concept, it was clear that they were trying to develop the *agency* (Biesta and Tedder, 2007: Priestley, 2011), a concept broached in section 7.2, of the middle leaders' role focused on learning and teaching. Biesta, Priestley and Robinson (2015b: 3, italics in original) argue that agency comes about through the '*interplay* of individuals' capacities and environment conditions' and Priestley (2011) argues that agency can only be achieved when the structural conditions that support or limit it are addressed. My study shows how this is enacted through Scottish secondary school Head Teacher activities designed to improve learning and teaching. The three Head Teachers focused on building middle leaders' capacity to lead improvements on learning and teaching while simultaneously attending to specific structural conditions that would enable them to exercise that capacity. In terms of capacity this involved the Head

Teachers and their senior leaders working closely with, and supporting the development of, middle leaders around their leadership for learning role within faculties. On a very simple level they tried to ensure that learning and teaching issues were a regular feature of agendas and discussions with middle leaders at ELT meetings. As regards structural conditions, these included: developing middle leadership roles to focus on learning and teaching through: engagement in the PR&D of teachers; the monitoring of both pupil progress and teaching quality; the supportive and strategic organisational structure of ELT meetings; and the senior leader link system where a CL is linked with either a DHT or the Head Teacher. Addressing structural arrangements is not necessarily easy, the literature highlighting that existing structures within schools can be resistant to change (Murphy *et al*., 2009), with what Donaldson (2001:11) describes as 'leadership resistant architecture'. Although there were in some instances issues of concern from staff, for instance as in section 5.5.1.2, Head Teachers were in the main able to overcome these through what appears to have been the regular engagement of all staff concerned in developments and the Head Teachers' openness to feedback and dialogue.

After my fieldwork I found Stein and Coburn's (2008:618) use of the phrase 'structures of participation', that Head Teachers build on, adapt or create in order in to ensure improvements in learning and teaching, very relevant here. In each case study school the Head Teachers used the opportunity of the faculty middle leader structure to provide 'leveraged activity with and through the expertise of other instructional leaders' (Portin and Knapp, 2011: 519), in this case their cadre of middle leaders, in order to effect change in teachers' thinking and practice. *Leveraged activity* did not result in an abdication of Head Teacher influence or engagement. Rather a feature of the quintain is how each Head Teacher continued to be actively and continuously involved with middle leaders' activities in various structures of participation (for instance, the faculty review programmes or the ELT meetings) with them around learning and teaching. This was not a simply a case of mandating a role to middle leaders, then leaving then to get on with it, reflecting Grootenboer's admonishment (2018: 26) that Head Teachers in promoting distributive leadership 'cannot simply abdicate their positional responsibilities'. Rather it reflects Gronn's (2000: 331) conception of 'conjoint agency' with Head Teacher, senior leaders and middle leaders more focused on *working together*

around implementation of a commonly agreed vision of effective learning and teaching, both strategically and operationally. And while not every middle leader may have this sense of engagement it was reflected in testimonies of senior and middle leader respondents across all three schools.

Moreover, this is more than a utilitarian approach, as outlined by Hartley (2010), of offloading work to others from overly burdened Head Teachers. Rather than reducing the workload of the Head Teachers, my findings show extensive areas of engagement with middle leaders either directly, through regular meetings with individual middle leaders or in groups, or indirectly, through their close engagement in a number of processes such as data analysis. Each Head Teacher gave careful direction and support to middle leaders, ensuring their work was located within a wider process focused on improving learning and teaching while ensuring support for this. In effect, as was highlighted in section 5.5.1.2, the Head Teachers engaged and supported their middle leaders as leaders for learning, providing opportunities, spaces and structures for them to fulfil their role, and ensure the necessary 'dispositions, knowledge, skills and motivations to provide such leadership' (Leithwood, 2012: 8). This assistance for middle leaders in the three case study schools is in stark contrast to the findings of Gurr and Drysdale (2013) in an Australian context where they found that support for middle leaders leadership for learning in a secondary context was often missing.

While each Head Teacher kept close to middle leaders' practice, it was clear from the findings that the Head Teachers were not micro-managing, but rather, in the words of Marsh, Waniganayake and Gibson (2014: 482), providing 'the authority to let people navigate to their end point'. This sense of autonomy is a marked feature of middle leader interview responses, although it would have been interesting to find out if this was shared by all middle leaders in each school. This autonomy, it seems, far from removing Head Teachers from the flow of intelligence about learning and teaching, rather enhanced it. Each Head Teacher utilised the middle leaders as conduits of information through regular discussions to keep in close contact with learning and teaching developments across the school. Similar and regular discussions were held with other senior leaders who worked closely with the middle leaders and faculties. This was supported by each Head Teacher's close contact on a regular basis to classroom learning and teaching through observation

and such things as taking part in professional learning discussions with teachers and middle leaders, and talking to pupils.

It is this direct involvement with teachers, middle leaders, senior leaders and pupils around learning and teaching that is so marked in my study, adding to our understanding of how leadership for learning is practiced. Even without a depth of subject expertise across an increasingly complex curriculum programmes, the Head Teachers still successfully managed to connect themselves to a regular stream of learning and teaching information with, as the findings show, significant effects on their leadership for learning thinking and practice. This section provided additional detail and practical insights into how secondary Head Teachers engage with middle leaders to focus more effectively on learning and teaching. The next section addresses the context of support for all teaching staff to support learning and teaching.

7.5.2 Supporting teacher learning, collaboration and engagement

My evidence suggests that while the effective learning of all pupils, in its widest sense, was the overriding priority of all the Head Teachers, each perceived that this could only be addressed effectively within the school by concentrating on teachers and their teaching. This study extends our understanding of the specific leadership for learning practices of Head Teachers in supporting teachers' capacities in this area, not only in terms of their classroom teaching practice but their wider collaborations with fellow colleagues and whole school approaches to improving learning and teaching.

A key component of each Head Teacher's leadership for learning practice focused on the needs of teachers around professional learning. Respondents highlighted the marked focus on pedagogy that each Head Teacher brought to supporting the professional learning of teachers, with a clear emphasis on its practical impact on the classroom. While various subjects had been experiencing curricular change resulting from national policy developments, as highlighted in chapter 1, each Head Teacher ensured that a focus was maintained on pedagogy while also ensuring time for curriculum development around new content.

Much of school-supported professional learning was specifically focused on pedagogical practices that would best meet the learning needs of diverse pupil populations. This framing both defined the purpose of professional learning in schools and determined its practice. As was seen in chapter 5 (5.5.1.3), supporting voluntary leadership role roles for middle leaders and teachers, 'positional and informal leaders' (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2016), including opportunities to lead on such things as professional learning sessions, were themselves defined as professional leaning development opportunities. This provided routes for school staff members to exercise and develop their leadership skills and expertise. Significantly, many of the voluntary leadership roles were related to learning, teaching and pupil well-being matters.

As importantly, each Head Teacher's strategy paid attention to encouraging teachers and middle leaders to go beyond a narrow definition of their roles located in a specific location within a classroom, subject or faculty, and instead actively engage in a wider whole school focus. For instance, the engagement with teachers around creating a common and agreed understanding of effective learning and teaching provided a vehicle for teachers to engage at a whole school level. The behaviours of the Head Teachers are characteristic of a distributed perspective of leadership found in the literature (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2016), focused both on 'the lateral distribution of leadership and the development of collaborative school cultures' (O'Donovan, 2015: 252). However, a very specific priority of each Head Teacher was not only support for teachers to *collaborate on*, but as importantly, simply *talk about* learning and teaching matters. The attention to teacher talk was a key feature of all three schools. This was realised through professional learning situations such as the annual Professional Review and Development (PR&D) meetings but also, just as importantly, each Head Teacher paid close attention to supporting spaces for teachers to talk informally and collaborate in faculties and elsewhere. For instance, ensuring supportive spaces within the formal in-service programme for teachers to discuss issues informally, highlighting Printy's view (2010: 117) that 'learning takes place in informal interaction, through participation and conversation, just as it does in more formal professional development settings'. Head Teachers' practice in supporting the informal learning of teachers is an area where the research lacks clarity and is limited (Fraser *et al.*, 2007). This research provides insights and detail as to how

this is supported in a Scottish secondary context. The ultimate aim of all the Head Teachers was to enable teachers themselves to explore and develop their own practice, in their classrooms through collaboration with other teachers. This is in stark contrast to Tharp and Gallimore's findings (1989) that Head Teachers often do not recognise the influence of teachers on each other.

The evidence adds to our understanding of how Head Teachers support the professional learning of teachers focused on learning and teaching. It illustrates the focus of the Head Teachers on ensuring that each teacher employed their professional learning experiences, their collaboration with fellow teachers and the collectively agreed vision of effective learning and teaching to, using the language from one Head Teacher's testimony, more effectively *dig* into their own classroom practice. This latter point includes a desire from each Head Teacher for teachers to try out ideas and experiment in their classrooms. This displays a marked attention to detail, with the Head Teachers concerned demonstrating an awareness that effective school improvement around learning and teaching requires ensuring time and appropriate spaces for teachers to meet, work together and engage in developing their own practice in a culture where this is acceptable. It is interesting to note that within the SfH (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012) there are no references to the role of Head Teachers encouraging teachers to experiment, be involved in trial and error and make mistakes in the interest of improving their learning about the practice of effective teaching.

The priority Head Teachers placed on supporting structures for professional learning such as space for teachers to talk and collaborate about learning and teaching reflected a wider concern. This was around each Head Teacher's desire to support the pedagogical agency of teachers, what Reitzig and West (2011: 175) describe as 'helping them realize their strengths and capabilities, and giving them opportunities to utilize their strengths to make a difference with students'. To this end, the findings illustrate the ways that each Head Teachers worked to support the influence of teachers in what Murphy *et al*. (2009: 181) describe as a 'leadership dense' school. It is clear that the role of the Head Teacher in each school was essential to this process, mirroring the assertion from Murphy *et al*. (2009: 186) that 'principals need to be assertive in reshaping structures in the service of developing a deeper pool of leadership'. This process, very much a work in progress, saw each

Head Teacher actively engaged in both modifying and developing structures. This involved creating opportunities for teachers to actively engage in school developments, to both contribute to, and help shape, the learning and teaching vision and work collaboratively and collectively with each other in faculties and other spaces across the school. In this context, each conceptualised the learning and teaching role of middle leaders as a means to an end, that is to provide more effective support for the development of the teaching capacities of teachers themselves. The emphasis on the role of the middle leader working together with teachers within faculties and the expectations that professional learning would be a focus of faculty work fits with similar findings from Robinson *et al.* (2017: 27, italics in original) that '*groups that work together learn together*'. This is about Head Teachers endeavouring to create an environment for teachers where collective and collaborative 'learning is the normal activity' (Elmore, 2000: 5). While it is a tentative conclusion, the willingness of many teachers to participate in whole school issues beyond their classroom may reflect Smylie's analysis (1992: 63) that teacher willingness to engage was positively affected by the degree of their perceptions of their relationship with their Head Teacher as being 'more open, collaborative, facilitative, and supportive'. Smylie (1992) also found the converse led to less willing responses. Certainly all the testimonies from the participants verified a conception of their Head Teacher as someone who had an open and collaborative stance, and it seems that this created a solid base for teacher participation and development.

7.6 Alignment and Coherence

An emerging theme arising out of my findings, extending through chapters 5 and 6 and the previous sections in this chapter, is the way every Head Teacher intentionally and adaptively strove to ensure coherence around the many concurrent developments focused on improving learning and teaching in their schools. While the concept of coherence is open to many different interpretations (Lindvall and Ryve, 2019), at its heart this is about ensuring the alignment of Head Teachers' and others' actions to ensure that school developments and resource allocation all have reinforcing effects on pupil learning and teachers' teaching (Knapp, Copland and Talbert, 2003). Coherence is important as 'sustained school improvement requires adequate organizational and instructional coherence.' (Robinson *et al.*, 2017: 2). Yet understanding of the key features of coherence is limited (Lindvall and Ryve,

2019) and this study illuminates in detail how coherence is developed in a Scottish leadership for learning context, an important area of knowledge to which this thesis contributes.

The central feature of the three Head Teachers' coherence making activities was that all used improving learning and teaching as *the* key focus. *From* this, and *around* this, they created *scaffolding activities*, a concept suggested by the use by one of the respondents of the word scaffolding, of what could be viewed as disparate elements of school activity and development to ensure they all simultaneously focused on supporting learning and teaching. This included, as shown earlier, engaging teaching staff in developing an agreed vision of learning and teaching, and then establishing around this appropriate structures adapted to focus on learning and teaching, formal and informal roles, expectations, the use of data and extensive professional learning provision for teachers. All were brought together to support the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers in, to use the language of Bryk *et al*. (2010: 4), a 'concerted focus on professional capacity building'. This is in complete contrast to the fragmented and uncoordinated approach to school reform reported by Sebring and Bryk (2000) from an American elementary schools' context, and addresses Sugrue's (2015: 278) concerns that too often aspects of capacity building can be 'episodic and haphazard'. Instead, the capacity building practices of each Head Teacher show them systematically putting in place building blocks of interdependent and mutually reinforcing activities and developments, all focused on improving learning and teaching.

Within the case study schools this idea of interdependence appears to be more than just simple alignment. The developments and activities were not only aligned, they were connected and interdependent in ways that brings together the analyses in the previous sections of this chapter, particularly as regards the importance of dialogues. Examples of mutually reinforcing developments and processes include how the whole school focus on effective learning and teaching is related to the role of middle leaders, with their role in turn based on improving learning and teaching, itself tied to the PR&D process that middle leaders conduct, which in turn is tied to the professional learning in faculties. This coherent approach helped develop capacities for change at all levels, contrasting with observations from Robinson *et al*. (2017: 1) that in the average secondary school, 'subject department organization,

norms of teacher professional autonomy, and involvement in multiple initiatives present powerful obstacles to forging a coherent approach to improvement.' Instead, the Head Teachers in each of the case study schools created cohesive and aligned approaches, amongst a myriad of different developments and policy initiatives, tied to the development of learning and teaching, engaging what appeared to be the majority of staff in a collective enterprise to improve pupil learning. Ogawa and Bossert (1995: 233) argue that '[L]eadership must affect more than individuals' actions; it must influence the system in which actions occur'. These findings provide a rich level of detail on how leaders simultaneously influenced both individuals and the system in order to ensure coherence and alignment in a leadership for learning context.

While the Head Teacher played the central role in the process, echoing similar findings from Robinson *et al.* (2017), this was far from being a unidirectional process. Rather my findings suggest that it was characterised by open two-way communications and frequent interactions between Head and key actors that included teachers, middle and senior leaders across a range of fora. By putting themselves into the flow of information about learning and teaching development and supporting structures and processes, and doing so though a range of open-ended conversations, each Head Teacher seemed to elicit the information so important to each Head Teacher's learning, enabling cohesion-making activities across various learning and teaching developments, providing both information to initiate and support developments and also to amend or curtail them in the face of negative data.

It seems that it is not enough on its own to simply align developments to focus on learning and teaching, rather each of the developments, processes and practices must be connected in significant ways. From this particular Scottish secondary school context, the role of the Head Teacher keeping in proximity to learning and teaching practice and engaging in dialogues is particularly significant. These dialogues, part of a social process, themselves appear essential to the process of cohesion-making, enabling the depth of information so essential to successful implementation of learning and teaching reforms. This social side of cohesion-making appears overlooked in much of the literature on cohesion-making and alignment.

In summary it seems that the Head Teachers in this study were aligning learning and teaching matters, the technical core (Bryk *et al*., 2010; Murphy *et al*., 2016), with organisational ones (Robinson *et al*., 2017) while underpinning these with key essential social supports such as relational trust (Bryk, 2010).

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter discussed my findings on Head Teacher leadership for learning practice from the perspectives of Head Teachers and teachers within the case study schools. Although the localised and restricted nature of my case study approach limits generalisations, my findings do provide apposite insights, contributing to understanding of the practice of Head Teachers' leadership for learning.

In places, my analysis aligns closely with much of the literature, mirroring Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe's view (2008: 668) that the most effective leadership for learning approaches are associated with leaders who 'focus on the quality of learning, teaching, and teacher learning'. Certainly, the case study Head Teachers focused on all three. But my study goes further than the existing literature in providing additional detail around a Head Teacher's leadership for learning practice and activities in a number of key areas. In particular, the role of a Head Teacher's proximity to practice and the open dialogues they have with many of their colleagues, all appear significant to each Head Teacher's learning about the characteristics of learning and teaching in the school, as well as their capacity building and coherence-making activities.

The next and final chapter of this thesis will both address the limitations of this study and outline the areas in which it makes significant contributions to both leadership for learning theory and practice, as well as making a number of key recommendations.

Chapter 8

Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

The findings and discussions in the preceding three chapters, 5, 6 and 7, focused on the three case studies that comprise the quintain. These explored and analysed the main themes and issues arising from the data. This chapter consolidates this analysis, using the literature from the literature review chapters (chapters 2 and 3), as well as elsewhere in the thesis, to reinforce interpretations and understanding.

Firstly, in section 8.2, I revisit the motivation and aims of this study along with the theoretical approach underpinning the collection of data. Section 8.3 summarises the findings under each of the research questions that guided this study. This is followed by my contribution to knowledge (section 8.4) which addresses the initial aim behind this study as outlined in chapter 1. Brief reflections are presented in section 8.5 on two methodological issues that arose during the data collection process. In section 8.6 a number of recommendations are made on the basis of this research for Head Teachers' practice, professional learning courses and policy. The next section (section 8.7) explores implications for future research arising from this study and is followed by some reflections on my learning (section 8.8). I conclude the thesis with some final thoughts in section 8.9.

8.2 Aims of the Study

The key motivation behind this instrumental collective case study, is to comprehend more clearly through the quintain (Stake, 2006), the scope, nature and effects of secondary Head Teachers' leadership for learning in three Scottish secondary schools, leadership that is focused on learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers. This necessitated exploring Head Teacher leadership for learning from the perspectives of Head Teachers and teachers within three schools. I adopted an interpretative approach to explore and interpret this leadership, keen to understand the issue through participants' views, observations and experiences (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Thanh and Thanh, 2015). This approach was designed to reveal conceptions and impressions of the nature of the Head Teacher role, including those processes involved in the enactment of its influence, from both Head

Teachers' and teachers' viewpoints. In this context, the following research questions guided my research:

1. How do secondary Head Teachers conceptualise their role as leaders of learning and teaching in their schools?
2. How do headteachers perceive their operationalisation of this role?
3. According to teachers, what is the scope and nature of this leadership?

8.3 Research Questions

While each of the three research questions have been addressed holistically across chapters 5, 6 and 7, the following provides a summary of key issues pertaining specifically to each of the research questions.

Research Question 1*: How do secondary Head Teachers conceptualise their role as leaders of learning and teaching in their school?*

Each Head Teacher conceptualised their key role around improving the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers. This conceptualisation imbued each Head Teachers' leadership, being both its object and determining its nature and practice in their respective schools. They believed that to effectively fulfil this key role they needed frequent and close engagement with the learning and teaching process. While all were busy with a range of administrative demands, each had a very practical philosophy that these demands should not define what they do. In line with Siu's findings (2008) the Head Teachers in this study conceptualized themselves as leaders of learning and teaching.

Underpinning each Head Teacher's beliefs was a commitment to all learners in their care. While pupil academic learning was important, Head Teachers' conceptions of pupil learning went beyond this. They had a much more holistic view of learning, concerned with pupil social and welfare needs and preparation for life beyond school, much more in keeping with the 'whole child' approach highlighted in chapter 1 by the International Council of Education Advisers (2017b: np.). Concerns with traditionally marginalised children highlight the moral characteristics of each Head Teacher's beliefs with each believing that responsive pedagogies were essential in

order to meet the needs of each and every pupil in an inclusive approach to learning.

The Head Teachers valued their own learning, feeling that they needed sufficient knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching in order to lead and manage improvements in this area. This belief guided their actions in terms of keeping in close proximity to learning and teaching and reflected their interest in pupils' and teachers' views, as well as their position as learner.

While each believed that there were times when they had to be quite directive, this was underpinned by a philosophy that valued collaboration, a belief in teacher agency and the need to provide opportunities for others to lead. They saw their positional role as a vehicle to support other roles. All felt that they could promote more effective learning and teaching within their schools by supporting the middle leader role and providing an environment for teachers to collaborate and exercise their pedagogical agency. In the long term they viewed supporting the agency and leadership of others, along with the development of a rich collaborative environment, as essential to bring about sustained improvements in learning and teaching. Tied to this was a belief that relevant and sustained professional learning for school staff was essential to overtake key improvements to learning and teaching.

As part of their belief systems, all the Head Teachers felt that trustful relationships were essential for effective learning and teaching: trustful relationships between teachers, between teachers and pupils; and between teachers and the Head Teacher. Each saw this as fundamental to their role as a leader for learning. To use a phrase from Hitt and Tucker (2016: 534), each Head Teacher conceptualised their role as 'a facilitator of continual teacher growth.'

Research Question 2: *How do headteachers perceive their operationalisation of this role?*

Head Teachers perceptions of how they practiced their role as a leader for learning and teaching in their schools were similar across each school. All focused on building a shared vision of effective learning and teaching amongst staff. This involved each Head Teacher regularly communicating a vision of effective learning

and teaching, underpinned by the diverse needs of each pupil, while simultaneously supporting the conditions where teacher voice could be heard and used to actually form an agreed whole school vision. Head Teachers' leadership for learning actions in this area were characterised by careful preparation of the ground before the collaboration stage in which teachers engaged. This involved maintaining a balance between being directive alongside a commitment to, and practice designed to create, a collectively agreed vision. In addition, each Head Teacher endeavoured to create more open practice and connectedness around learning and teaching, through such things as support for middle leaders as leaders for learning working with teachers, encouragement of teachers to share their practice and through programmes of classroom observation.

Each Head Teacher highlighted how they kept in close physical proximity to learning and teaching, for instance through talking to teachers and pupils or classroom observations. However, they were also engaged an intermediate proximity through close monitoring of data on pupil learning progress and regular use of online information sources and research.

An integral part of how each Head Teacher perceived they enacted their leadership for learning was through interactions and dialogues with a range of colleagues – unpromoted teachers, Curriculum Leaders and Deputy Head Teachers. Indeed a marked feature of each Head Teacher's leadership for learning practice was an interactive process of engagement with their colleagues, one to one and in groups, around issues of the learning of pupils and the teaching practices of teachers. Each Head Teacher described an informal conversation approach to support open dialogues with teachers focused on improving learning and teaching and developing relational trust. This approach supported Head Teacher behaviours as learners in a range of reciprocal activity settings with colleagues that helped develop for the Head Teachers a deeper understanding of pedagogy, as well as the realities of its practice in the school.

A particular aspect of Head Teachers' perceptions of how they operationalised their roles as leaders of learning and teaching was their focus on building whole school capacity focused on learning and teaching. They highlighted that they did this in a number of ways:

- developing the leadership and agency of middle leaders to work more closely with classroom teachers;
- supporting teacher engagement, collaboration and agency;
- prioritising and supporting professional learning across the school, including routes for teachers to exercise and develop their leadership skills and expertise.

Each Head Teacher described being actively engaged in both modifying and developing structures as well as creating opportunities for teachers to actively engage in school developments. The Head Teachers worked to support teachers to engage in shaping a collective learning and teaching vision and work collaboratively and collectively with each other in faculties and other spaces across the school. Encouraging and supporting talk amongst teachers about learning and teaching was highlighted as a key component of this strategy by all Head Teachers.

Anchoring their leadership purpose around improving learning and teaching, each Head Teacher outlined what can be described as a highly coherent approach to this, developing a number of mutually reinforcing strategies to support improvement and aligning a range of policies, roles and other key aspects of school's work to support this.   From Head Teachers' perceptions and understandings of their operationalisation of their leadership for learning role engagement in open dialogues with teachers appear essential to this process of cohesion making.

Research Question 3: *According to teachers, what is the scope and nature of this leadership?*

Teachers highlighted that their Head Teacher had established a high profile for learning and teaching in the school, demonstrating that learning and teaching was their prime concern and that their leadership for learning activity was focused on this. Respondents also described their Head Teachers ensuring that this prime concern pervaded the professional learning support for teachers, ensuring a clear emphasis on pedagogy and its practical impact on the classroom.   Within professional learning support, respondents highlighted the support for teachers to exercise and develop their leadership skills and expertise and the range opportunities for them to talk about learning and teaching in a number of forums.

All respondents felt that their Head Teacher was in close touch with learning and teaching in the school. Moreover, there was a perception that their Head Teachers had significant knowledge and understanding about learning and teaching, and for some this was also associated with a belief that their Head Teacher read widely.

Feedback from teachers indicates that their interactions with their Head Teachers could have a significant influence on both their thinking and practice. There was a view that their Head Teachers could be motivational, respondents pointing to the influence of their Head Teachers' passion and commitment for learning and teaching, their clear ability to communicate this effectively and their perceived knowledge and understanding both of learning and teaching and the teaching challenges teachers faced. Teachers highlighted in particular the significant impact of their Head Teacher's regular communications about learning and teaching on their thinking and practice, and this provided both direction and a sense of coherence over the many activities taking place in the school. Testimonies describe Head Teachers who are genuinely interested in learning and teaching, and that this, combined with their knowledge around it, was perceived by respondents as important in providing both motivation and intellectual challenge. Head Teachers derived credibility from a perceived expertise as regards learning and teaching, demonstrated in such things as discussions around learning and teaching with teachers.

Teachers believed their Head Teacher was genuinely committed to working with teachers around creating a collectively agreed vision of effective learning and teaching, providing them with clarity of purpose. Testimonies highlight that teacher engagement in this process resulted in what was considered a genuinely owned vision of effective learning and teaching that teachers wanted to apply and develop.

Rich descriptions were provided in respondents' testimonies of how the Head Teachers used a conversational approach that was not controlling or directive, one that was more participatory, open and often led by teachers themselves. The language of participants describing their Head Teachers during conversations with colleagues reveals a willingness to learn on the part of Head Teachers. This language does not reflect a narrow top down model, but rather portrays the Head

Teacher behaving as a learner with a learning orientation focused on learning and teaching. Respondents highlighted the approachability of their Head Teachers combined with high degrees of relational trust and the Head Teacher's role in supporting the agency of teachers.

Respondents outlined the Head Teachers' work in supporting the learning development of middle leaders and their middle leadership role in supporting learning and teaching in their faculties. Middle leader respondents were very clear that the Head Teacher did not micro manage their roles, instead supporting their sense of agency as regards their faculty work around learning and teaching. The testimonies of senior and middle leader respondents across all three schools highlight senior leaders and middle leaders focused on working together with their Head Teacher around implementation of a commonly agreed vision of effective learning and teaching, both strategically and operationally.

8.4 My Contribution to Knowledge

The aim of this thesis was to explore Head Teacher leadership for learning from the perspectives of Head Teachers and teachers within three schools. The research was designed to comprehend more clearly the scope, nature and influence of secondary Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice. Understanding this practice is important, as chapter 1 highlighted, because in spite of the volume of research on leadership for learning there is still a lack of practical understanding on what it is that Head Teachers actually do that is focused on improving learning and teaching (Neumerski, 2013; Southworth, 2011a; Spillane, 2006; Wahlstrom and Louis, 2008) in true-to-life settings (Simons, 2009). The lack of qualitative studies using evaluations from Head Teachers on how they operationalise their leadership for learning (Kalman and Arslan, 2016) indicates that a more detailed understanding on the how of leadership for learning is needed from this perspective. This detailed qualitative case study approach addresses the how, developing fresh insights and clear exemplification around leadership for learning as practiced by three Head Teachers in a Scottish secondary school context. In addition, it addresses several key themes which appear particularly significant to the way each Head Teacher led developments in learning and teaching, themes that are either under-theorised in the educational leadership literature or are areas of contention. The findings add

substantial understanding to existing literature, providing a level of rich detail on particular characteristics of Head Teachers' leadership for learning practices.

Over the course of a school year each Head Teacher was able to ensure work patterns that were regularly focused on learning and teaching, contrary to findings that indicate this focus of Head Teacher activity is marginalised by other work (Murphy *et al.*, 2016). A key aspect of this was how each Head Teacher regularly kept in proximity to learning and teaching. As shown in chapter 7, my findings offer a useful lens to describe this process, breaking it down into physical and intermediate proximity. Both appear important for effective leadership for learning through providing Head Teachers with both strategic and operational information, as well as deepening their knowledge of learning and teaching. Importantly, the evidence suggests that the benefits of a Head Teacher's proximity to learning, at least in the case of these three Head Teachers, cannot be realised in isolation from rich dialogues with colleagues within the school. To develop the full potential of their proximity to learning it seems that the Head Teachers concerned benefited from their involvement in open and participatory dialogues about learning and teaching through frequent interactions with a range of colleagues. As highlighted in chapter 3, the educational literature provides only limited detail around how Head Teachers support these conversations to maximise their own learning about learning and teaching. Through its rich detail, this research provides additional understanding around both the practices and benefits of Head Teachers engaging in participatory conversations with colleagues to derive information for their learning, particularly about learning and teaching matters. This is in contrast to much of the literature that frames more open conversations in terms of improving teachers' teaching performance or motivation (Dempster *et al.*, 2017; Forde *et al.*, 2019). In addition my findings add significantly to the evidence base on leadership for learning, providing guidance for Head Teacher practice and demonstrating that research from business settings (Groysberg and Slind, 2012a; Groysberg and Slind, 2012b; McCown, 2014), highlighted in chapter 7, has relevance in a school leadership for learning context.

While the role of the leader as learner is a key feature of the leadership for learning literature (Fullan, 2014; Gold *et al.*, 2003), much of it is vague and at level of abstraction that makes it difficult to understand how it might be implemented (as

highlighted in section 3.2.1). My findings show each Head Teacher's learning orientation towards learning and teaching and how this was enacted through adopting the stance of learner and deliberately placing themselves in various reciprocal activity settings with colleagues. By doing so, this study adds clarity to understanding of the construct of lead learner, both theoretically and practically, showing that the role of learner is vital to the Head Teacher's development of knowledge and understanding around learning and teaching issues.

Another important contribution to the literature made by this study is through demonstrating the closely interrelated relationship between the role of open participatory dialogues and the role of lead learner. Both appear vital in the case study schools to each Head Teacher's level of comprehension and understanding of learning and teaching.

This study suggests, again in the context of the three case study schools, that effective leadership for learning requires secondary Head Teachers who are committed to, knowledgeable about, and in touch with, learning and teaching. This is about Head Teachers who have an appreciation of effective learning and teaching processes and an understanding of the conditions that support not only the learning needs of pupils but both the learning and teaching needs of teachers. As was shown in chapter 7, the development of their knowledge and understanding about learning and teaching brought key benefits to the Head Teachers and the importance of this, and how it was achieved, make a significant contribution to an area of the literature where, as was shown in chapter 3, there are differing views (Leithwood, 2012; Nelson and Sassi, 2000; Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd, 2009; Spillane and Louis, 2002; Stein and Nelson, 2003).

This study reinforces the literature in highlighting the importance and practice of the Head Teacher's role on growing capacity and capability across the school through such things as supporting teacher learning and the practices involved in monitoring and evaluation – all focused on improving learning and teaching. It is significant in terms of the detail it provides on how Head Teachers engage middle leaders' capacities focused on learning and teaching, a level of detail in an area where there is a lack of research (Klar, 2012).

As was shown in chapter 3, understanding of the concept and practice of coherence is an area in which the literature is limited (Lindvall and Ryve, 2019), lacking detail on how Head Teachers establish coherence and alignment focused on learning and teaching. This is particularly the case in the Scottish context. This study illustrates and explicates specific behaviours and ways that Scottish Head Teachers reticulate and scaffold various processes, structures and practices to establish coherence and alignment over the schools' activities focused on learning and teaching. In effect, simultaneously orchestrating a number of different processes (Bryk *et al*., 2010; Robinson *et al*., 2017; Wallace, 2003) in order to lay the foundations throughout the school for learning and teaching improvement. Essential to the coherence process was the Head Teachers positioning of themselves in the flow of learning and teaching information through participative trustful dialogues, enabling their cohesion-making activities across various learning and teaching developments. This social process played a distinctive role in Head Teachers' leadership for learning cohesion making practice, and this study makes an important contribution to our understanding of an area of practice that is not fully developed in the coherence literature.

The literature is clear that establishing a focus on learning and teaching throughout the school is a key leadership for learning activity (Forde, McMahon and Dickson, 2011; Murphy *et al*., 2006; Terosky, 2014), and this study demonstrates how this focus becomes the driving force for a range of Head Teacher activities and behaviours in the case study schools. As has been shown, this learning and teaching focus stimulates Head Teachers' proximity to learning and teaching, underpins their participatory dialogues with colleagues, drives a desire to understand and learn about learning and teaching, and provides a rationale for their capacity building and coherence making activities. Through an exemplification of these and other practices this study adds greater specificity and new insights to key areas of existing research and literature. Moreover, this study's detailed information pertaining to Head Teacher leadership for learning provides a high level of exemplification that would be useful to Head Teachers using the Standard for Headship (SfH) (General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012) to guide their practice.

8.5 Reflections on Methodological Issues

The process of gathering data from all the schools concerned went relatively smoothly. All interviewees were keen to talk and I was able to generate a large data base of interviews, each teacher interview lasting between an hour and a half, and the total of the two interviews with Head Teachers each lasting around 4 to 5 hours. On reflection, the major issue that emerged was the length of the period taken to conduct the interviews, which started in February 2017 and were completed in June 2018. This was due both to my work schedules and the challenge of finding convenient times for teacher participants in between busy classroom teaching schedules. On reflection, I would rather have spaced the interviews much more closely together, perhaps over one term, from the first Head Teacher interview through the teacher interviews and ending with the final Head Teacher ones. This would have enabled a deep immersion in a regular and intense interview process, with issues being kept current in my mind rather than my relying on my notes.

Another issue arising from the time it took to complete interviews was that the interview process straddled not only two school sessions but also two school improvement planning cycles. This meant that some of the developments highlighted in the first Head Teacher interviews had been amended or stopped by the time of the second Head Teacher interviews. While this was not a major problem during the interview process, it did mean greater care had to be taken both at the analysis stage and in the presentation of data. While there would have been advantages in conducting the interviews within a school's annual improvement cycle in one session, where the focus would be more linked to the school's current developments, the longer process did highlight the organic and ever changing improvement planning processes in operation at school level.

8.6 Recommendations

This study aims to make an important contribution to understanding Head Teacher leadership for learning practice and to deepening academic understanding of the issue. However, this collective instrumental case study is bounded, as shown in chapter 4, by a particular geographical context, set in a particular time and in a specific school sector. Moreover, the case study Head Teachers themselves were selected on the basis of evidence indicating that they were very knowledgeable about leadership for learning and that it was a key focus of their practice. In this

sense they were chosen because they were atypical, perceived to have both the necessary involvement and experiences in leadership for learning. These particularities and the nature of the case study approach itself, restrict and limit claims to generalisability as they lack representativeness (Connell and Burgess, 2016). Instead of generalisability, I was looking for transferability, as highlighted in chapters 1 and 4, where the themes and practices arising from this study may have relevance to schools in similar circumstances. Features of the study, as will be shown, such as the powerful role of dialogues, may also have relevance for other Head Teachers regardless of the situation and for particular practices in the preparation and support of Head Teachers. The following recommendations are advanced in this context.

8.6.1 Recommendations for Head Teachers' practice

Chapter 3 highlighted the contentious issue within the literature around how much knowledge of learning and teaching is required of a secondary Head Teacher in order to be an effective leader for learning. What was clear from this collective case study is that each Head Teacher kept in close proximity to the practice of learning and teaching in their schools, either through direct contact, through such things as lesson observation or talking to teachers about learning and teaching, or through intermediate proximity, such as reading about learning and teaching or monitoring of pupil learning data. As shown in chapters 5, 6 and 7, this proximity resulted in a number of key benefits both strategically and operationally for the Head Teachers concerned. A key recommendation arising from this study is that secondary Head Teachers should devote time to keeping in proximity to learning and teaching. The challenge here is that the many demands on Head Teachers' time (Forde and Torrance, 2016; MacBeath and Townsend, 2011) can mitigate against keeping in close touch. Yet this study has shown that this can be achieved with regular contact points through participative structures (Stein and Coburn's, 2008) and opportunities that Head Teachers ensure are focused on learning and teaching, such as Extended Leadership Team meetings, lesson observation, faculty review and taking part in professional learning activities with teachers. Central to this is the importance of open and trusting conversations with staff, in a variety of roles and in a variety of situations, on learning and teaching. In this context, a second recommendation is that Head Teachers should engage in frequent participative conversations with colleagues across roles - teachers, middle leaders and senior

leaders - around learning and teaching issues. Through this process Head Teachers can fully develop the potential of both physical and intermediate proximity to learning and teaching, by deepening their pedagogical knowledge and gaining vital operational and strategic information for their leadership for learning.

A third recommendation concerns ensuring the development of effective capacities throughout the school to address learning and teaching. As was shown in chapter 7, two particular areas of this should involve simultaneously supporting the middle leader role as well as teacher engagement, collaboration and learning. As regards the middle leader role, Head Teachers should ensure effective structures, relevant professional learning support and regular opportunities for Head Teacher engagement with middle leaders are in place in order to support middle leaders' role in supporting the learning of pupils and the teaching of colleagues for whom they have line management responsibilities. As regards professional learning, Head Teachers would benefit by making this central to their work, supporting the learning of teachers through extensive opportunities, both formal and informal, for teachers to lead, collaborate and learn about learning and teaching. As important, each Head Teacher should pay attention to encouraging teachers and middle leaders to go beyond a narrow definition of their roles located in a specific location within a classroom, subject or faculty, and instead actively engage in a wider whole school focus.

8.6.2 Recommendations for professional learning programmes and courses
If the Scottish Head Teacher's key role is defined as leader for learning, this needs effective preparation and support. Scottish Head Teachers have access to a range of accredited and non-accredited programmes and courses run by universities, local councils and other providers. There are a number of university programmes at Master's level for Head Teachers and aspiring Head Teachers in Scotland. These are often, and rightly, focused on leadership of change and the processes involved in working with colleagues and others to achieve improvement. However, providers of these and other programmes should ensure that there is an explicit focus on the role of the Head Teacher in supporting the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers. This focus should include a clear focus on effective pedagogy, providing participants with both an understanding of how children effectively learn and how teachers can effectively engage pupils in the learning process. Development of

Head Teachers pedagogical understanding would support the SfH (2012: 8) requirement that Scottish Head Teachers 'engage critically with knowledge and understanding of research and developments in teaching and learning.' In addition, there should be an emphasis on the how of the Head Teacher's critical role in both supporting, and engaging in, the continuous learning of teachers that is focused on the learning and teaching of all pupils. This should include the nurturing of the conditions for teachers' collaboration, leadership and development around learning and teaching. Support programmes should also focus on developing the Head Teacher's role in supporting open and participatory conversations with teachers around learning and teaching issues, in order to develop the Head Teacher's own learning and guide their leadership for learning practice. Finally, time should be ensured within programmes to examining how Head Teachers can build and develop a supportive infrastructure for change that develops a cohesive approach to supporting improvements in the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers.

8.6.3 Policy recommendations

There is a need for policy documentation to have a greater degree of specificity around the Head Teacher enabling processes that lead to improved learning and teaching. The Standard for Headship (SfH) (General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2012) does provide a brief but broad road map of the direction of travel for Head Teachers' leadership focused on learning and teaching issues. While its brevity is useful as an easy guide for quick reference, discussion and a reference point for professional learning programmes, its lack of detail can pose problems. For instance, how does a Head Teacher practice the role of 'leading learner' (General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2012: 8) as highlighted by the SfH. It is often left to the reader to determine both what is meant by various terms and activities and how to implement them in practice. Similarly, while *How Good Is Our School? The Journey to Excellence (HGIOS)* (Education Scotland, 2015: 23) highlights as good practice the importance of a 'strong focus on improving learning among staff across the school', it does not provide advice around the various processes that might be considered by Head Teachers in their particular contexts. In effect, targets for effective practice are identified with little guidance for Head Teachers to get there. There is a need for more detailed and nuanced guidance to provide a back-up resource for policy documents such as SfH and HGIOS. In Ontario, the broad equivalent of the SfH is *The Ontario leadership framework: Successful school*

leadership practices and personal leadership resources (OLF) (The Institute for Education Leadership, 2012). However, there is a highly detailed companion piece to this (Leithwood, 2012) which provides details of the research underpinning the OLF. Something similar, adapted to a Scottish context, and using the research to outline more clearly aspects of the SfH could provide Head Teachers and aspiring Head Teachers with greater clarity about what is expected of their leadership focused on the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers as well as, crucially, influencing the conditions that nurture and support these. Moreover, if designed to support Head Teacher thinking and practice in a variety of school contexts it could also explicitly address some of the tensions and dilemmas that occur in everyday Head Teacher leadership for learning practice, such as the need to be both directive and collaborative.

8.7 Research Implications

This collective case study focused on just three Head Teachers, selected because they were assumed to have the necessary knowledge, involvement and experience with leadership for learning. As such the findings are limited, further study could address a wider range of secondary Head Teachers, over more local authorities. While it would be relevant to have this wider cohort selected on the same criteria used in this study, an equally relevant study might use random sampling as part of a larger quantitative study, for example survey based.

As highlighted in chapter 4 (4.3), study of each case within the quintain can pull researchers in different directions and there were times in each school where I found the idea of an in-depth case study in just one school attractive. Future research could explore Head Teacher leadership for learning practices in one location, with time to explore in even more depth emerging issues.

This qualitative collective case study design, while primarily instrumental in purpose was also exploratory. The instrumental nature of the study was determined by the choice of the case study schools, ones that appeared to provide, from the evidence highlighted in section 4.4, a rich resource to study leadership for learning, the key instrumental issue (Baxter and Jack, 2008) that drove my research. The exploratory characteristics of the study emerged from a Scottish leadership for learning context of Scottish secondary Head Teachers that was largely unexplored.

Having established what key leadership for learning features looked like across the three case study schools, future research might take an explanatory approach (Baxter and Jack, 2008) to enquire into why this sort of leadership emerges and what specific factors support a secondary Head Teacher to adopt various leadership for learning practices. The contextual factors that could be investigated might include such things as the background of the Head Teacher, the context of the school, the training and professional development of the Head Teacher, as well as the selection of teachers, middle leaders and senior leaders.

Recent developments in Scottish Education have seen the emergence of Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RIC). These pool the educational support work of individual local authorities into collaborative clusters, a new middle layer of infrastructure between schools and government, a response to recommendations from the OECD (2015) and the International Council of Education Advisers (2017b), as well as the Scottish Government's own governance review of schools (Scottish Government, 2017). The RICs are designed to improve learning and teaching quality and as John Swinney (Scottish Government, 2017:np.) says in the foreword to the governance review their emphasis is on collaboration 'which starts with leadership in our schools and should be complemented by our local authorities and supported by new regional improvement collaboratives which are relevant to, designed by, and close to the communities they serve'. From talking to school colleagues, these RICs are already supporting Head Teachers in their work, pulling together different stands of development in a collaborative and focused way with a focus on improving learning and teaching. However, it is too early to judge the effectiveness of these new clusters and whether they will give fresh impetus and support for Head Teachers' leadership for learning work or develop as simply a top down bureaucratic structure. Certainly they add another factor for Scottish Head Teachers to address in their leadership for learning practices.

The RIC initiative will be supported by a revised set of leadership standards due in August 2020. Significantly, the draft leadership standard for the SfH that was circulated for consultation (General Teaching Council for Scotland, 2019) builds on the role of the leader as learner as highlighted in the existing SfH. It provides a clear focus on the learning not only of pupils but all those associated with the

support of this, outlining that 'leaders act as "leading learners" and are committed to their own on-going professional learning and that of colleagues and the learning community to enhance practice.' This reinforces the role of the Head Teacher in creating a climate for learning. Both the new regional collaboratives and the revised standard have potential implications for the role of Head Teachers in leading learning and both will merit future research.

There are a number of specific areas arising from my findings that merit further and fuller research. This thesis throws light on the leadership for learning leadership practice of the Head Teacher as learner. This is not just leadership *for* learning but *by* learning. Further research is needed to explore in more detail how the role of the Head Teacher as learner is enacted, especially important in the light of the forthcoming publication of the revised SfH, and what are the essential benefits in the context of leadership for learning. Related to this role of Head Teacher as learner, is the need for further research on the Head Teacher's engagement with teachers through open and participative dialogues focused on learning and teaching. This could explore how Head Teachers both support and practice these dialogues and their level of impact on the Head Teachers' knowledge and understanding of learning and teaching, as well as their leadership for learning practices. In addition, further research might focus on the relationship of these dialogues to Head Teachers' leadership practices around establishing coherence over school activities focused on learning and teaching.

Finally, there are a number of other key areas arising from the findings that each merit further and more in-depth research: the role and practice of the secondary Head Teacher in engaging the middle leader cohort to focus on learning and teaching as their key priority; the practices and benefits of secondary Head Teachers keeping in proximity to learning and teaching; and the level of knowledge and understanding about learning and teaching required by a secondary Head Teacher. In addition, both the role of pupil voice and the engagement of parents with the school around their children's learning, including the impact of this involvement, are issues that require further empirical scrutiny.

8.8 My Learning

The process of conducting research for this study has been, for the most part, a hugely rewarding learning experience. For instance, from initially finding the coding process after my data collection a burdensome activity, I learned to enjoy and appreciate its role in the process of unravelling connections and patterns of leadership for learning behaviours and activities. Rather than becoming a repetitive activity, it became an essential vehicle in satisfying my curiosity, developing my coding and categorisation expertise and ability to abstract and identify key themes (Hedlund, 2013).

The importance of networking is another key part of my learning. During my research I had the opportunity to attend a leadership for learning symposium at Cambridge University in 2019, involving a range of rewarding interactions and conversations with researchers and school leaders from around the world. This provided a wealth of contacts and brought home to me the importance of keeping in regular correspondence with researchers and practitioners. It was the first time I had shared aspects of my research in an open forum and, while challenging, it was hugely beneficial in terms of my learning. In section 7.2, I refer to Elmore's (2000: 8) axiom in the context of teachers opening up their practice to other teachers, that 'privacy' of practice has negative consequences. The full quote from Elmore applies equally well to the role of the researcher, that 'privacy of practice produces isolation, and isolation is the enemy of improvement.' My learning is that effective researchers require to regularly open their research to the ideas and critique of others. In so doing they ensure that their research is refined and improved through the process and more likely to make a positive contribution to knowledge.

While I established a clear purpose and aims, supported by specific research questions, I learned to be flexible in my research approach, developing confidence and understanding that the data I generated would shape some issues to do with design. Far from having a rigid approach, I became increasingly comfortable with this fact that my research was very much 'a work in progress' (Robinson and McCartan, 2015:146), and that there would be opportunities to adapt as it progressed. At times I found this process highly uncomfortable. For instance, the process of starting off with a belief that I would report the three case studies separately and then moving to a holistic presentation of the data from the three case

schools, highlighted in section 4.7, was still one that I agonised over. However, this level of flexibility enabled relationships to emerge and comparisons to be drawn (Robson and McCartan, 2015). In many ways this flexibility was driven by the exploratory nature of the study which was, as stated in section 4.3, focused on better understanding the phenomenon of Head Teacher leadership for learning in the largely unexplored setting of Scottish secondary schools. In this situation, as Robinson and McCartan (2015:146) suggest, 'trying to get some feeling of what is going on in a novel situation where there is little to guide what one should be looking for, then your initial approach will be highly flexible.' If I had kept a rigid view of presenting the case studies separately, I feel that this would have restricted the rich analysis that I achieved in chapters 5 and 6.

Finally, there emerged from my research several promising lines of enquiry which, due to lack of time and resources, I was unable to pursue. Many of these, such as the potential of explanatory study or the need for further research to enquire into the leadership for learning roles of parents, pupil voice and the middle leaders, were highlighted in section 8.7. My learning from this is that it is not always possible to look at all the research implications generated by a small case study and that there is a trade-off between depth and breadth. Research involves making decisions about where the researcher's efforts will focus. The rich data and analysis contained in the findings across chapters 5, 6 and 7 demonstrates some of the benefits of the choices I made around depth. However, I now have a deeper understanding that, while not everything can be addressed in one project, the completion of one piece of research is not an end in itself but rather a bridge to the next.

8.9 Final Reflections

This thesis set out to examine the relationship between three secondary Scottish Head Teachers' leadership and pupils' learning and teachers' teaching. My interest in this study arose from both my experiences as a secondary Head Teachers and my close work over a number of years with secondary Head Teachers. This interest was encouraged by both a lack of literature in the Scottish context on this issue and the increasing importance of leadership for leaning in a Scottish policy context (Donaldson, 2010; Forde, 2011; General Teaching Council Scotland, 2012).   I adopted a qualitative interpretivist approach to focus on subjects' perceptions (Head Teachers and teachers) (Hindmarch *et al.*, 2017), seeking through interviews to

understand the how of Head Teachers' practice through both their own interpretations and their colleagues. A collective case study design, primarily instrumental in purpose but also exploratory, was used to address the research questions. This provided rich data that underpinned the findings and their analysis.

What is clear from the findings is that creating the conditions to support and nurture the learning of all pupils and the teaching of all teachers both underpinned and shaped Head Teachers leadership thinking and practices. Rather than being driven by policy, this focus was at the centre of how they defined their role, one Head Teacher describing this as the most important thing that the role required to address. As the research demonstrates, Head Teachers enacted this leadership for learning through an approach that could be both directive and collaborative, and though interactions and dialogues with a range of colleagues in a myriad of activity settings. As lead learner, their practice was characterised by staying in close proximity to learning and teaching and frequently engaging in reciprocal dialogues with teachers around learning and teaching matters. These contributed to each Head Teacher's knowledge and understanding about learning and teaching and their leadership practice. While pupil learning and the teaching of teachers was the key focus of all Head Teacher's leadership for learning practices, each Head Teacher was also clear that it could only be addressed by attending to their own learning.

The working definition that I used at the start of this thesis in chapter 1 for leadership for learning, is leadership that is focused on the learning of pupils and the teaching of teachers as well as, crucially, influencing the conditions that nurture and support these. This leadership was in evidence in all three schools not just from the Head Teachers but teachers too. However, the Head Teacher is in a privileged position to guide and enable the energies and talents of all within the school through genuinely collaborative endeavour, to ensure a concerted and sustained focus on nurturing the learning and well-being of all pupils as they journey to adulthood. It is a testimony to all the teachers and Head Teachers interviewed that the interests of pupils were always at the forefront of their thinking.

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Appendix 4.1 - Post Telephone Introductory Letter to Head Teacher Prior to First Meeting

Example of letter sent after initial phone call making contact with each Head Teacher and prior to the introductory meeting (name and date removed)..

Dear………………

Many thanks for agreeing to be involved in my research focused on the role of secondary Head Teachers as leaders for learning.

As discussed, I am currently undertaking a PhD on **Secondary Head Teachers as leaders for learning: the challenges for leadership focused on learning and teaching.** This is focused on 3 questions:

1. how do secondary Head Teachers conceptualise and think they operationalise their role as leaders of learning and teaching in their schools?

2. what is the scope and nature of this leadership according to teachers and in what ways do teachers believe their learning about teaching and pupil learning and resultant practices are affected, if at all, by the Head Teachers' leadership?

3. what factors constrain or facilitate the Head Teachers in their role as leaders of learning and teaching?

In the context of the interviews I am interested in interviewing:

- you, as Head Teacher, around a number of issues underpinned by questions 1 and 3 above.
- 6 volunteer teachers, individually, around issues underpinned by question 2 above. They will be selected on the basis of a number of criteria that include role, age, gender, length of service in general, years in school and subject discipline. Wherever possible I am keen to establish a balance over these criteria. Interviews will take place between the first and second interviews with yourself.

I anticipate each interview taking about one hour. This will be at a time convenient to each interviewee and within the school [however if any colleague wishes, this can be offsite]. I also hope to administer either a very short list of questions, I hope no more than 5, to all staff [whether or not colleagues wish to make a return will be up to them] or instead run one short focus group with a few staff volunteers.

Hope all this is helpful.

Many thanks for your very positive response and I am very much looking forward to meeting you on ………….

Best wishes,

Graham

Graham Thomson

Appendix 4.2 - Head Teacher Information Letter Seeking Written Consent

Dear …………

Following my recent conversation with you I agreed to send you more information on the research I wish to conduct in your school.

I am currently undertaking a PhD on **Secondary Head Teachers as leaders for learning: the challenges for leadership focused on learning and teaching.**

I am both a former teacher of history and a former Head Teacher. My research will explore the leadership of Head Teachers' directed towards the learning of pupils and teaching of teachers. This is focused on 3 questions:

1. how do secondary Head Teachers conceptualise and think they operationalise their role as leaders of learning and teaching in their schools?
2. what is the scope and nature of this leadership according to teachers and in what ways do teachers believe their learning about teaching and pupil learning and resultant practices are affected, if at all, by the Head Teachers' leadership?
3. what factors constrain or facilitate the Head Teachers in their role as leaders of learning and teaching?

In this context, I wish to use your school as one of 4 schools for my research. This will involve interviewing you twice, conducting one individual interview with each of 6 teachers and the administration of a survey to all teachers. The survey will explore whether the themes coming up in the interviews with the 6 teachers are also present in the wider teaching staff.

In the context of the interviews I am interested in interviewing:

- you, as Head Teacher, around a number of issues underpinned by questions 1 and 3 above.
- 6 teachers, individually, around issues underpinned by question 2 above. They will be selected on the basis of a number of criteria that include role, age, gender, length of service in general, years in school and subject discipline. Wherever possible I am keen to establish a balance over these criteria. Interviews will take place between the first and second interviews with yourself.

I anticipate each interview taking about one hour. This will be at a time convenient to each interviewee and within the school [however if any colleague wishes, this can be offsite].

Throughout my research I will adhere to the principles of anonymity. My PhD thesis, and any other uses to which I put my research, such as the publication of articles, will have all participants and schools anonymised.

If you would like an informal conversation before committing yourself to involvement please contact me at   to arrange a time to speak by phone or directly on my mobile number 07712 596533.

I will be delighted if, after reading the attached information leaflet, you agree to take part in my research. However, please let me reiterate that you are under no obligation to do so, especially in the context of how busy you and your colleagues are at the moment, and I fully appreciate that you may not wish to become involved.

Best Wishes,

Graham
Graham Thomson,

Appendix 4.3 - Head Teacher Information Leaflet and Consent Form

This research looks at secondary Head Teachers as leaders for learning, directed towards the learning of pupils and teaching of teachers. Leadership for learning is a key focus of the GTCS Standards for Leadership and Management but little is known about how it is perceived to be enacted by secondary Head Teachers and teachers' perceptions of these Head Teachers' enactments. The research will also explore the perceived benefits and challenges of the Head Teachers leadership for learning from the point of view of both teachers and the Head Teacher.

I would appreciate if you could complete the following checklist to ensure that you are fully aware of my role as interviewer, and how the information you share with me during our interview will be used in my research.

Once completed please sign and date the form:

☐ I have read Graham's letter to me along with the information above and understand that I am being interviewed as part of PhD research into the leadership for learning of secondary Head Teachers

☐ I understand that I may withdraw from my involvement with this research for any or no reason, and at any time

☐ I am willing for this interview to be digitally recorded and transcribed for use as part of this research

☐ I am willing for anonymised extracts from this interview to be used as part of the research

☐ I understand that anonymised extracts from this interview may appear in publications relevant to this area of research

Interviewee: _____ Date: _____

Interviewer: _____[Graham Thomson] Date: _____

Contact address: Graham Thomson, ███████████████████████████
██
Road, Edinburgh

If you have any queries or would like a discussion, please get in touch with Graham Thom█████████████████████████596533   and/or you may wish to speak to one of my supervisors as follows:

████████████████████████

████████████████████████

Appendix 4.4 - Teacher Letter Seeking Involvement.

Secondary Head Teachers as leaders for learning: the challenges for leadership focused on learning and teaching.

Dear Colleague,

My name is Graham Thomson and I am a former teacher of History and a former secondary Head Teacher. I am writing to ask if you would be interested in taking part in research I am currently undertaking for a PhD at Edinburgh University on:

Secondary Head Teachers as leaders for learning: the challenges for leadership focused on learning and teaching.

This research investigates secondary Head Teachers as leaders for learning,directed towards the learning of pupils and teaching of teachers. Leadership for learning is a key focus of the GTCS Standards for Leadership and Management. However, there is limited research in a Scottish context about how Head Teachers perceive they carry this out and how teachers' perceive their Head Teacher carries this out.

I will be conducting interviews with Head Teachers and teachers ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆ Your Head Teacher, ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆, has agreed that I can use ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆ as one of the schools for my research.

In this context, I am keen to talk individually to teachers in your school about their perceptions of their Head Teacher's leadership of learning and teaching.

I am looking for about 6 volunteer teachers based on a number of selection criteria that include role, age, gender, length of service in general, years in school and subject discipline. I anticipate each interview discussion taking no more than an hour.   This will be at a time convenient to the teachers concerned, within the school or offsite. All teachers who volunteer may withdraw from any involvement with the research for any or no reason, and at any time. Throughout my research I will adhere to the principles of anonymity.

If you would like to take part could you please pass the completed tear-off slip below to the named colleague who will pass on the list of volunteers to myself.

If you would like an informal conversation or more detailed information before committing yourself to involvement please contact me at graham.thomson@ed.ac.uk to arrange a time to speak by phone or for further information.

Many thanks,

 Graham

Graham Thomson,

…………………………………...……tear off slip………………………………………….

Secondary Head Teachers as leaders for learning: the challenges for leadership focused on learning and teaching.

I am interested in being considered for an interview with Graham Thomson as part of his research.

Signature   …………………………   Name (Block Capitals)   …………………..

Role/Subject   ………………………………………………………………………….

Please return this slip to ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆ who will pass on the list of volunteers to Graham Thomson

Appendix 4.5 - Email to Teachers Following Their Note of Interest

From: THOMSON Graham
Sent:
To: █████████████████
Subject: PhD Research

Dear █████████████████

My name is Graham Thomson and I am currently undertaking research for a PhD at Edinburgh University on:

Secondary Head Teachers as leaders for learning: the challenges for leadership focused on learning and teaching.

I am delighted that you have agreed to be interviewed as part this research programme.

This research investigates secondary Head Teachers as leaders for learning, directed towards the learning of pupils and teaching of teachers. Leadership for learning is a key focus of the GTCS Standards for Leadership and Management. However, there is limited research in a Scottish context about how Head Teachers perceive they carry this out and how teachers' perceive their Head Teacher carries this out.

In this context, I am keen to talk individually to teachers like yourself about their perceptions of their Head Teacher's leadership of learning and teaching. Your Head Teacher, █████████████████ ████ has kindly agreed that I can use █████████████ as one of the schools for my research.

I am writing to you now to arrange a convenient time to meet. This can be in or out of the school and I have a great deal of flexibility as to when we meet. Are there some dates and times that are particularly suitable to you?
I am aware that you have a busy role within the school and am so very grateful for your agreement to be involved.

I am very much looking forward to meeting you in due course.
Best wishes,
Graham

Graham Thomson

Appendix 4.6 - Teacher Participant Information and Consent Form

This research looks at secondary Head Teachers as leaders for learning, directed towards the learning of pupils and teaching of teachers. Leadership for learning is a key focus of the GTCS Standards for Leadership and Management but little is known about how it is perceived to be enacted by secondary Head Teachers and teachers' perceptions of these Head Teachers' enactments. The research will also explore the perceived benefits and challenges of the Head Teachers leadership for learning from the point of view of both teachers and the Head Teacher.

I would appreciate if you could complete the following checklist to ensure that you are fully aware of my role as interviewer, and how the information you share with me during our interview will be used in my research.

Once completed please sign and date the form:

☐ I have read Graham's letter to me along with the information above and understand that I am being interviewed as part of PhD research into the leadership for learning of secondary Head Teachers

☐ I understand that Graham will be discussing themes with the Head Teacher that arise from his interviews with teachers and that, while comments will not be attributed to any individual, it is possible that the Head Teacher may be able to identify particular staff members involved

☐ I understand that I may withdraw from my involvement with this research for any or no reason, and at any time

☐ I am willing for this interview to be digitally recorded and transcribed for use as part of this research

☐ I am willing for anonymised extracts from this interview to be used as part of the research

☐ I understand that anonymised extracts from this interview may appear in publications relevant to this area of research.

Interviewee: _____ Date: _____

Interviewer: _____[Graham Thomson] Date: _____

Contact address: Graham Thomson, ████████████████████████████
██
██

If you have any queries or would like a discussion, please get in touch with Graham Thomson at g████████████████████/or you may wish to speak to one of my supervisors as follows:

████████████████████████████

████████████████████████████

Appendix 4.7 - Interview Schedule – Head Teachers' First Interview

While there is a great deal of detail in the stem questions below. In practice many of them were never asked as the initial question was enough to generate answers that covered a range of questions. For instance, question 1 elicited answers such as the Head Teacher's and teachers' roles in developing a whole school vision focused on learning and teaching which led into question 6. There were overlaps in questions and in practice questions 1a and 1b became conflated during discussions.

Throughout the interview I used probing questions that enabled me to explore in more detail Head Teachers perceptions and understandings of their leadership for learning. These questions were often in response to something a Head Teacher would say and enabled me to tease out in an depth aspect of leadership for learning practices and the Head Teacher's thinking behind them.

1. **Focus on Learning and Teaching** **I am interested in how you perceive and practise your leadership work that is focused on:** a. **improving teachers' teaching** b. **improving pupils' learning.** *a.* **Could you describe to me the things that you do to improve the teaching of teachers' (stems to include: at whole school level, at faculty/department level and to teachers individually)?** **Stem Questions** • Can you give specific examples of how you do this? • Can you describe any ways in which teaching has changed due to this? • If I was to ask your teachers about how the importance of improving the teaching of teachers is evident in your work what do you think they would they say? Would SLT colleagues say the same things? • What is the most effective thing that you do to improve teaching in this school? • What factors **help or hinder** you in supporting and improving teaching? • In an ideal world what things do you think you should be doing to support and improve the teaching of teachers? b. **Could you describe to me the things that you do to help improve the learning of pupils?** **Stem Questions** Can you give specific examples of how you do this? Can you describe any ways in which the learning of pupils has been affected due to this?	

If I was to ask your teachers about how the importance of improving the learning of pupils is evident in your work what do you think they would they say? Would SLT colleagues say the same things? What is the most effective thing that you do to improve pupil learning? What factors **help or hinder** you in supporting and improving pupil learning? In an ideal world what do you think you should be doing to support and improve the learning of pupils?	
2. Head Teacher's role in developing 'staff capability, capacity and leadership to support the culture and practice of learning'? (General Teaching Council Scotland: 17) What are the different ways in what you as HT, **formally and informally**, lead and support the professional learning of teachers in improving learning and teaching? **Stem Questions** - How do you support teachers sharing their teaching expertise - Can you give an example of where you take part in professional learning activities with your colleagues around learning and teaching issues? What do you think are the benefits/problems, if any, of you doing this? - What do you do to create and support the conditions where teachers have productive discussions and interactions around improving learning and teaching with each other within departments/ faculties and beyond these. Can you give me some examples? - **What are you doing to encourage and support teaching staff to come up with ideas for and/or lead initiatives in the school around Learning and Teaching? Can you give me some examples?** - What are the factors that **help or hinder** you in your role in supporting teachers' professional learning?	
3. In what ways, if any, do you interact, with individual teachers and or groups around issues to do with improving learning and teaching in classroom practice? (**is there a where, e.g. in CLPL, observation or in meetings)?** **Stem Questions** - Can you describe an example of a particularly effective discussion/interaction and explain why it was so effective (to you/your colleagues)? Was this typical of the kind of discussion/interaction you have? - How do you think these interactions/ discussions improve learning and teaching? - What, if anything, are the effects of these interactions on your learning? - Are there any areas within this that you would like to do differently/better? - What involvement do you have in classroom observation of teachers? How useful	

was the experience for the teacher's learning/your learning? What factors constrain or facilitate you in this role?	
4. How do you keep close to learning and teaching practice in school? **Stem Questions** - How do you develop your knowledge and understanding about Learning and Teaching? - Generally - Specifically, different subjects - The curriculum overall - What factors **help or hinder** you as regards your learning as the key school leader focused on improving learning and teaching throughout the school?	247
5. Evaluation as whole school collective endeavor/ internal accountability In what ways do you ensure, if at all, that evaluation and data/evidence gathering are used to improve learning and teaching?	
6. Vision, Communicating Vision Involving of Others **In your role as Head Teacher can you describe what you do to ensure a shared whole school in support of improving learning/teaching** Can you give me some examples –e.g. your involvement in developing, communicating the school vision and how do you go about this? Are there any challenges associated with this? - What factors constrain or facilitate your role here - If I asked the teachers in your school what the school's vision for learning and teaching is, what kind of answers might I get? Would they all say the same thing? What documents might they refer to? - How do you contribute to high expectations around learning and teaching for teachers and pupils?	
7. In an <u>ideal world</u> what would you be doing in your role to improve learning and teaching throughout the school? What prevents you in this?	
8. From our conversation today I have built up a detailed picture of your leadership of learning and teaching in the school. Are there any areas that I have missed that are important to your leadership in this area?	

Appendix 4.8 - Interview Schedule –Teacher Interview

As with the first Head Teacher interview schedule there is a great deal of detail in the stem questions for teachers below. In practice many of them were never asked as the initial question was enough to generate answers that covered a range of questions. There were overlaps in questions and in practice questions 1a and 1b became conflated during discussions.

Throughout the interview I used probing questions that enabled me to explore in more detail teachers' perceptions of their Head Teacher's leadership for learning. These questions were often in response to something a teacher would say and enabled me to tease out in an depth aspect of leadership for learning practices and the teacher's thinking behind them.

1. **I am interested in your perceptions of how your Head Teacher practices his/her leadership that is focused on:**
   a. **improving teachers' teaching**
   b. **improving pupils'**
   learning.

a. **Can you think of any ways in which your Head Teacher works to improve the teaching of teachers stems to include: at whole school level, at the interviewee's faculty/department level and to the interviewee individually)?**
Stem Questions

- Can you give specific examples of how s/he does this?
- Can you describe any ways in which the teaching of you and/or your colleagues has changed due to this?
- What in your opinion is the most effective thing that your head teacher does to improve teaching/your teaching in this school?
- Are there any factors that **help or hinder** your HT in this role?
- In an ideal world what things do you think your HT should be doing to support and improve the teaching of teachers?

b. **Can you think of any ways in which your Head Teacher works to improve the learning of pupils?**

   Stem Questions

   b. Can you give specific examples of how s/he does this?
   c. Can you describe any ways in which the learning of pupils has been affected due to this?
   d. What in your opinion is the most effective thing that your head teacher does to improve pupil learning?
   e. Are there any factors that **help or hinder** your HT in this role?
   f. In an ideal world what do you think your Head Teacher should be doing to support and improve the learning of pupils

2. Head Teacher's role in developing 'staff capability, capacity and leadership to support the culture and practice of learning'? (General Teaching Council Scotland: 17).

Can you think of any ways in which your HT leads and supports the professional learning of teachers around improving learning and teaching?

   Stem Questions

- Can you describe what happens if and when your HT takes part in professional learning activities with you and your colleagues around learning and teaching issues? What do you think are the benefits/problems, if any, of

doing this?

- How does your HT support teachers' in sharing their teaching expertise?

- Can you think of any ways, if at all, in which your HT creates and supports the conditions where teachers have productive discussions and interactions around improving learning and teaching with each other within departments or faculties and beyond these? Can you give me some examples?

- Can you think of any ways, if at all, in which your Head Teacher encourages and supports teaching staff to come up with ideas for and/or lead initiatives in the school around Learning and Teaching? What do you think are the benefits/problems, if any, of doing this?

- In your opinion are there any factors that **help or hinder** your Head Teacher in his/her role in supporting teachers' professional learning?

3. In what ways, if any, do you or your colleagues interact, on a one to one basis or in groups, with your Head Teacher around issues to do with improving learning and teaching in your classroom practice or at whole school level?

Stem Questions

- Can you describe an example of a particularly effective discussion/interaction you individually or as part of a group of teachers, had with your HT around learning and teaching issues, and explain why it was so effective? Was this typical of the kind of discussion/interaction you/your fellow teachers have with your Head Teacher?
- Can you think of any ways in which your HT has helped you or another colleague with their teaching (Check similar bullet point in 1)?
- Describe the involvement of your HT in classroom observation of teachers. If you have been involved in this directly how useful was the experience for your learning? How important do you think it is for the Head Teacher to be involved in lesson observation? What factors constrain or facilitate your Head Teacher's role here?

4. Does your HT keep close to learning and teaching practice in school? And if so, how does s/he achieve this?

5. Following question to be used if it comes through strongly in HT interview.

In what ways does your Head Teachers ensure, if at all, that evaluation and data gathering are used to improve learning and teaching?

6. What does your HT do to ensure a shared whole school vision to support the improvement of learning and teaching?

- what is the school's vision for learning and teaching?
- How does your HT contribute to high expectations around learning and teaching for teachers and pupils?

7. In an __ideal world__ what do you think your HT should be doing in his/her leadership role to improve learning and Teaching throughout the school?

8. Are there other issues you wish to raise in relation to how your HT leads improvements to learning and teaching

Appendix 4.9 - Interview Schedule for Second Head Teachers' Interview.

The interview schedule for each of the second Head Teacher interviews was tailored to the particular school contexts, arising from both the first Head Teachers interviews and the teacher interviews.   While the interview schedule below was useful, the second interview with all three Head Teachers was not driven by the formal questions, but rather through a process of iterative engagement between the Head Teachers and myself. Each question had a number of stems or bulleted points that could be used to frame further questions as necessary. Some of these stems were often more relevant in the context of a particular Head Teacher than another.

Interview schedule
I'd like to hear a little bit more about the various leadership roles that are developing in the school. What has happened here since we first met in terms of learning and teaching?

- middle leader role /support for role and faculty
- focus of leadership roles
- wider staff engagement/leadership

Tell me a bit more how intentional has been your process of aligning many different developments and structures that we discussed last time around learning and teaching ? And could we discuss in more detail what you do to achieve this?

- faculty alignment with SIP/national policy
- other forms of alignment and cohesion e.g. professional learning/collaboration
- role of faculty evaluation/data/lesson observation/pupil voice
- use and practice of structures to focus support on learning and teaching
- challenges

What is the driving force with you in terms of the sorts of pupil learning?
- attainment versus wider issues
- quality and practice of learning and teaching
- inclusion

Tell me more about **your** vision for effective learning and teaching and the need at the same time to establish a **shared** vison with teachers.
- how is a shared vision achieved?
- are there tensions?
- examples of bottom up development of the vision of effective learning and teaching/ looks like/benefits
- collegiality versus directiveness
- benefits of shared vision
- values

I am very clear from our last interview, and talking to your colleagues, about all the different ways you connect with learning and teaching (ask for examples). What are you learning about learning and teaching when you are doing all this, specifically learning and teaching?

- benefits from keeping in close touch with learning and teaching?
- additional ways of keeping in touch

I am interested in the conversations you are having regularly about learning and teaching in your school? Where are the most important learning and teaching conversations you can have and why?

- what sorts of things are discussed?
- approaches used by Head Teacher in to make these conversations as open as possible
- HT learning/impact on Head Teacher
- informal/formal
- importance of relationship/levels of openness/challenges
- importance in terms of learning about learning and teaching/impact on leader practice

What is the most important thing that you have done with your colleageus to move learning and teaching forward in the school?

Themes to interweave or watch out for in interview

- challenges
- focus on learning and teaching in HT work and schools
- HT learning through staying close to practice of learning and teaching
- developing teacher capacity and capability/professional learning
- HT beliefs around learning and teaching
- relationships/trust
- leadership approaches
- monitoring
- perceptions of progress with learning and teaching through Head Teacher leadership
- HT attending to own learning

Appendix 4.10 - Burnett Academy Head Teacher (interview 1) Extract of Initial Coding.

Both columns 2 and 3 were used to identify patterns of themes

I=Interviewer, R = Respondent	Comments	Possible Themes
I …….I don't want to lose sight of that vision. You said you had to communicate it. Where or how do you communicate that vision? How is that done as the role of headteacher?		
R It has to be everywhere, so every time you talk to staff or pupils or parents, that message has to be coming through and it looks very different for all the groups, but you have to be talking about what excellent learning and teaching looks like, so that I suppose, everyone is aware that this is what we are expecting, this is what we should be offering, this is what you should expect from our school. So that vision can't just be on a policy, can't just be in a drawer, can't just be on your wall actually, it has to be lived reality. So when I am talking at staff meetings, you have to be using the language of excellence, that you are talking about the learners experience, you are talking about some of the aspects from your shared vision all the time. Referring staff back to it. All our policies tie in with our vision for learning, which is around the aspects of excellence from HGIOS4 so everything ties into the same type of language…	HT role in communication of vision Developing awareness of excellent learning and teaching Expectations "Not just a policy, lived reality" Using the language of excellence/talking about learners' experience. Regularly reinforcing aspects of shared vision All policies tie to shared vision Use of HGIOS 4 language/use of national policy doc./using same language all the time Shared vision Revisiting regularly Alignment	HT communication around learning and teaching at staff meetings. Alignment Shared Vision Alignment

Appendix 4.11 - Regan (CL, Watt) Interview 1

The following list identifies key impressions arising from my interpretation of the raw data from the interview with Regan, Curriculum Leader at Hume.

- Developing Educational Infrastructure
- Use of structure/middle leaders
- Policy Development/ focus on learning and teaching
- DL/Collegiality/Empowerment/Agency
- HT justification for collaboration
- Professional Learning and supporting capability/capacity
- Evaluation aligned to improvement and professional learning
- Consistency
- Trust & Dialogue/Conversation
- HT at PL sessions and Restrictions on role here
- HT enacting leadership for learning
- Authority/Power
- HT Relationships Emphasis
- Visibility of HT
- HT Learning and how/School Learning/HT knowledge of school and benefits
- HT Focus on learning and teaching
- HT Proximity to Learning and Teaching Benefits
- HT Language infused with Learning and Teaching
- HT thinking re. approaches, beliefs, values
- Learning and Teaching Issues
- Constraints/tensions on HT role as leader of learning and teaching/ Enablers/inhibitors
- Strategy
- Visibility of Information
- Adaptability
- Alignment/Coherence/Clear Focus on Learning and Teaching
- Vision
- Formation re. Directive/non-directive

Appendix 4.12 - Head Teacher (Jo, Hume Academy) Interview 1

The following list identifies key impressions arising from my interpretation of the raw data from both Hume Head Teacher interviews.

- Focus on learning and teaching/vision
- Visibility of HT
- Communication
- Policy Development
- Redefining and supporting learning and teaching
- Tracking/Data as theme in thesis
- Support Services
- Vision/Collective/Culture
- Evaluation aligned to improvement and professional learning
- The HT as person & relationships (what they do and who they are) enacting leadership
- Trust & Dialogue/Conversation/HT relationship emphasis
- Includes HT at professional learning sessions
- Restrictions on role at professional learning sessions
- Authority/Power (HT in control)
- Enacting leadership for learning
- Learning and how/HT knowledge of school and benefits
- Proximity to Learning and Teaching Benefits
- Language infused with Learning and Teaching
- HT thinking re approaches, beliefs, values
- Learning and Teaching Issues
- Constraints/tensions on HT role as leader of learning and teaching/ Enablers/inhibitors
- Strategy
- Visibility of Information
- Adaptability
- Formation
- Pupil learning focus
- Supporting capability/capacity/
- Developing Educational Infrastructure
- Role of teachers
- Professional Learning
- DL/Collegiality/leadership density/Empowerment/Lateral Responsibility
- Structures
- Role and operation of SLT
- Role of SLT and DHTs/Flatter structure
- CL role / Flatter structure
- Sharing/Collaboration
- Ensuring time/resource to support L&T
- Alignment/Coherence through clear focus on Learning and Teaching

Appendix 4.13 - Early Impressions from Raw Interview Data

- HT practice
- HT staying close to practice of learning and teaching .
- HT beliefs
- HT Maintaining continual and intense focus on learning and teaching
- Learning and teaching the responsibility of every teacher across the school
- Learning and teaching key focus of school professional learning support
- Through staff focus groups
- Using and adapting structures to improve learning and teaching
- Evaluation: Data, monitoring and observation of learning and teaching
- HT vision and beliefs
- HT underpinnings of learning and teaching philosophy
- HT Philosophy of effective learning and teaching
- HT beliefs re ensuring successful improvement learning and teaching/ HT Philosophy of change re. learning and teaching .
- Classroom focus a priority
- Engaging teachers in school strategy re. learning and teaching
- Keeping teachers close to learning and teaching thru structures e.g. SLT/CLs/In-services- **constant talk** in these forums/HT attends
- HT has good knowledge of learning and teaching around school
- Power
- Maintaining supportive environment
- HT involvement in range of key areas: thematic reviews; lesson observation; annual results review
- HT staying close to the practice of learning and teaching
- Perceived benefits of staying close to learning and teaching practice
- HT learning
- Dialogue and Interactions Importance
- Collegial Relationships
- Adaptive Leadership
- HT as person (HT Practices and beliefs)
- HT qualifications/other roles/CLPL
- Formation
- HT changing, more confident in leadership of learning and teaching
- Planning/SIP
- Shared Leadership/collaboration
- Role of SLT
- Role of CLs
- Developing teacher capability and school capacity
- Professional learning of teachers
- Creating coherence/alignment
- Resourcing
- Pressure and impediments
- authority demands

Appendix 4.14 - Extract from Jordan's (CL, Hume) Transcript with Coding Annotations

This shows early interpretive codes (Hedlund, 2003: Saldana, 2009) arising from the raw interview data of one CL.

ALL REDS IMPORTANT

HT's   HT's

about *passion* for it, and *very*

(SP) principals of what *believes* in are then part of that direction of improvement that the school adopts. So over the last two to three years I would say there has been a

(A) *real focus on tying up improvement priorities together* so that they align together in terms of learning and teaching. So the focus becomes learning and teaching. The focus has become learning in the classroom and teaching, and what we mean by teaching. And those priorities and the learning that staff have been going through have all been tied up together with that focus in mind. And that has been a real steer in terms of the direction of travel that the school has gone in in the last two to three years. And so for example, we did have working groups that ... every school has working groups but ... they have become aligned to the school focus on learning and teaching and they have changed from in the last section, the last academic session we were focusing on pedagogy, purely on aspects of pedagogy. And this year they have *changed to faculty collegiate time*. Which ... so it is *faculty specific pedagogy* focus. Again *tied up with the schools focus on learning and teaching*. So ... all of that has resulted in staff ... whether it is individually taking on areas of study like little action research projects for example. To do with pedagogy. Or it is staff working together on different aspects of things. So ... I would say there has been a much *clearer focus in the last two to three years, in terms of leadership ... in terms* of

— This in HT's time

New = alignment of w/gs. with LeT.

- 2016/17 - focus = pedagogy
- 2017/18 — change to faculty collegiate time
→ Now focus = faculty specific pedagogy
But tied to school focus on LeT

(a) Teachers taking on action research projects
(b) Staff working together on an aspect

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leadership of learning. And developing learning amongst teachers. In school. And that has really become a focus. In what I have seen.	Clearer focus on L&T & dev. L&T	
I Anything else …?		
R I think … what has been a benefit of that, from my perception, and this could be quite different, but teachers have taken a much clearer ownership of their own professional learning, so by developing a whole school understanding of what we mean by learning and teaching and time in the classroom and then developing their understanding of that, and they have been focusing on … what aspects of practice do I need to develop and how will I do that? So that has been a shift I would think. There has been a … much more focus on that whole idea of professional learning with impact. It is not just because I have got to do this as part of my process, it is actually going to have an impact of the experiences of people in the classroom because 'here is our collective understanding of what we mean about learning and teaching', the leadership drive that, it is linked to everything. What part of it is it that I need to focus on? So as a faculty head, when I was faculty head, we identified as a faculty what we needed to focus on but individuals within that were allowed to say 'well actually I need to focus on this aspect of learning and teaching', so that directed their learning and teaching and how they would bring about improvement.	This sequence essential	① Ownership of teachers re. PL. + ② Whole school underst of what we mean ③ teacher dev aspect of their Practice ④ No longer PL for the teacher — but tied to whether it is going to have impact on classroom & pupils ⑤ Collective understanding of what we mean about L&T. ⑥ Leadership includes teacher focus

Left margin annotations: Q, Qu, Qu, Qu, Teacher Qu, Four Colour

Appendix 4.15 - Second Interview Comparison Chart

Example of comparison chart on the Head Teachers' interviews on theme of 'Head Teacher maintaining continual and intense focus on learning and teaching.' Comments in right hand column have been removed as they contained confidential information on schools.

Head Teachers' Interview 2 Head Teacher maintaining continual and intense focus on learning and teaching	RHS	BA	WA	Comments
• HT/SLT/middle leaders' focus on learning and teaching – their meetings focus on this	*	*	*	
• Staff involvement in creating shared understanding of effective learning and teaching /regularly revisited/shared understanding of effective learning and teaching across SLT/middle leaders/staff	*	*	*	
• Understanding of effective learning and teaching regularly revisited and refined	*	*	*	
• Key/regular agenda item on ELT/SLT/staff meetings	*	*	*	
• Mostly shared understanding of effective L&T across SLT/middle leaders/staff	*	*	*	
• HT uses role to regularly highlight /remind staff of vision	*	*	*	
• HT communicates clear vision of effective learning and teaching using evidence from classroom observations/dialogues with teachers/research	*	*	*	
• Linking vision to strategy	*	*	*	
• Focus on learning and implications for teaching	*	*	*	
• Ensuring staff understand the vision, have shaped that vision and are on board with it.	*	*	*	
• Learning and teaching the responsibility of every teacher across the school	*	*	*	
• sharp focus for senior leadership team on learning and teaching.	*	*	*	
• Learning and teaching key focus of school professional learning support/focus	*	*	*	

Appendix 4.16 - HT Interview 2 Head Teacher Staying Close to the Practice of Learning and Teaching

Example of comparison chart on the Head Teachers' interviews on theme of 'Head Teacher staying close to the practice of learning and teaching.' Comments in right hand column have been removed as they contained confidential information on schools.

HT staying close to the practice of learning and teaching				
• Lesson observation/faculty evaluation	*	*	*	
• critical conversations with teachers re. L&T e.g. after lesson observation with teacher	*	*	*	
• critical conversations re. L&T after lesson observation with group	*	*	*	
• Discussions with SLT members/learning here for HT	*	*	*	
• Engagement in monitoring pupils' progress	*	*	*	
• Annual results meeting				
• Observing in other schools/networking	*	*	*	
• Reading/research/using online	*	*	*	
• Knowing about learning and teaching	*	*	*	
• regularly and actively involved with L&T	*	*	*	
• taking part in professional learning with teachers	*	*	*	
• HT teaches		*	*	
• Regular informal conversations with teachers, CLs and DHTs/listening	*	*	*	

Appendix 4.17 - HT Interview 2 Head Teachers Creating Coherence

Example of comparison chart on the Head Teachers' interviews on theme of 'Head Teachers creating coherence.' Comments in right hand column have been removed as they contained confidential information on schools.

Creating coherence	*	*	*	Comments
• Linking structures, policy and roles to school improvement	*	*	*	
• Intentionality from HT/clear strategy	*	*	*	
• Staff engagement in identifying CLPL needs re SIP	*	*	*	
• Orientating SIP to staff needs	*			
• CLs are more tightly bound into a more coherent leadership structure, with HT & SLT, ELT and other areas	*	*	*	
• leadership roles and working groups are focused on learning and teaching and there is a tight coupling to learning and teaching issues	*	*	*	
• *strategic coherence* - Clear coherent strategies in place e.g. coherence over and between different elements essential to effective improvement in learning and teaching	*	*	*	
• Linking teacher personal learning development to school/faculty/school learning model	*	*	*	
• Consideration to aligning support services			*	
• Aligning SIP/Faculty plans/personal learning plans	*	*	*	
• Trying to ensure leadership team onside	*	*	*	
• Strategic role of SLT in creating conditions for staff to engage in development	*	*	*	

Appendix 4.18 - Identification of Themes and Codes First Collation of all Interviews

Focus On Improving Learning And Teaching Across the schools

- Communicating a constant focus on, and vision of, learning and teaching across the school
- Creating a common understanding of learning and teaching
- Collegial versus directive in Head Teachers' leadership for learning practice
- Monitoring of Pupil Progress and Evaluation of Learning and Teaching
- Tracking and monitoring of pupil progress
- Evaluation of faculty learning and teaching

Building and Nurturing Capacities and Capabilities Across the School

- Leadership capacity across the school
- The role of the SLT and the DHTs
- Middle leaders
- Supporting leadership across the school
- Prioritising Professional Learning
- Supporting conditions for collaboration, sharing and dialogue
- Aligning the professional learning of teachers to faculty and school plans

Head Teachers' Beliefs and Values About Effective Learning and Teaching

- Maintaining Contact with the Practice of Learning and Teaching
- Practice and benefits of the Head Teacher's proximity to learning
- Credibility and influence through Head Teachers' proximity to learning and teaching
- The Process and Role of Open Two-Way Dialogue in Supporting Head Teacher Learning
- Talking to teachers as people: using a conversational approach
- The Head Teacher as learner
- Key benefits of dialogues for the Head Teacher
- Supporting open conversations through relationships characterised by trust

Focus on Learning and Teaching

- The Role of Dialogue and Head Teacher as Lead Learner
- Dialogues to support learning
- The Head Teacher's learning as lead learner
- Connecting open dialogues and relational trust
- Head Teacher knowledge of learning and teaching

Creating Capacities to Support Effective Learning and Teaching

- Ensuring the role of middle leader is focused on learning and teaching
- Supporting teacher learning, collaboration and engagement
- Alignment and Coherence

Appendix 4.19 - Ethical Consent

The following is email confirmation of approval from Moray House School of Education on my Ethics Application. Names have been hidden for confidentiality purposes.

Moray House Research: Student Ethics Application (...

M

Friday, 4 November 2016 at 13:59

To: THOMSON Graham

Your supervisor or relevant programme sub-committee has approved your Ethics Application and it has been submitted to the School Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) Office for their records.

A standard condition of this ethical approval is that you are required to let your supervisor and the RKE Office know of any significant proposed deviation from your original research plan. To do this, please speak to your supervisor, and contact

You should also inform your supervisor and the RKE Office if there are any unexpected results or events once the research is underway that raise questions about the safety of the research.

Before starting your data collection you must ensure that you have full approval from your supervisor for the project (design, method) and that you are eligible to proceed to the PhD/EdD dissertation phase.

Good luck with your project.

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The University of Edinburgh is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, with registration number SC005336.

Appendix 5.1 - The Watt Academy Lesson

The Watt Academy lesson: Our Teaching and Learning Statement in action

Educating the whole person, in a spirit of enquiry, to judge wisely, act fairly and live well

Our shared vision is embodied in our teaching practice and embedded in our lessons. Our lessons are aspirational and express our commitment to high quality learning and teaching. Our lessons are underpinned by pedagogical approaches designed to support progress in learning and we employ a range of strategies to ensure our lessons are inclusive, engaging and challenging. As critically reflective practitioners, we apply our expertise in the classroom in different ways, while recognizing the role we play collectively in developing a consistent culture of learning across our school. It is within this context that we exercise our professional autonomy as teachers. To this end, the Watt Academy lesson does not have a prescribed structure; but is rather informed by common approaches to learning that we personalise and adapt in line with our school vision and values. We use the following questions to guide our planning process and incorporate the approaches below in our lessons:

How will the purpose of learning be communicated?

What **strategies** will be employed during this lesson to include, engage and challenge pupils?

How will this lesson be concluded?

- Share learning intentions explicitly
- Build on prior learning

- Provide stimulus questions
- Use starter activities

- Facilitate discussion about the learning and/or learning behaviours

- Co-construct success criteria with pupils

L

- Model positive relationships
- Question skilfully and effectively

- Provide targeted feedback
- Differentiate, as appropriate

- Provide structured opportunities for pupils to develop higher order thinking
- Refer explicitly to skills practices and/or learning behaviour promoted and signpost for pupils
- Coach pupils in the development of relevant learning behaviours
- Use formative assessment
- Employ digital technology in creative ways
- Involve pupils in leading learning
- Link learning to pathway/careers
- Incorporate links to literacy, numeracy, H&W, as appropriate
- Draw on relevant professional learning (CLPL)

- Build on prior learning
- Summarize learning, referring back to learning intentions
- Link to/preview future learning
- Provide structured opportunity to reflect on learning with pupils
- Formatively assess in line with success criteria

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Appendix 5.2 - Burnett Academy Vision Statement

What does learning look like at Burnett Academy?

Our vision is that every pupil at Burnett Academy Engages & LEAPS forward with their learning through the learning experiences devised by their teachers. Learners will experience the following during their learning, not necessarily in the same order.

ENGAGE—an opening starter task during which the register is taken

L learning intentions and associated success criteria

E elicit understanding through various tasks to check learning

A activate learnings in their thinking and understanding of knowledge

P plenary task at the end of learning, thinking about the difference between 'I taught it' and 'they learnt'.

S skills – both subject specific and employability skills within learning

Appendix 5.3 - Watt Academy Learning and Teaching Statement

Our Learning and Teaching Statement

From our school community to embody its vision

Educating the whole person, in a spirit of enquiry, to act fairly, judge wisely and live well

And our school values of

Respect, Support, Confidence, Ambition, Achievement and Success

We promote a culture of

Excellence and Aspiration

We are motivated by

Improving what learners can do

Challenging how our learners think

Developing who our learners are

And to do this we understand the importance of

The quality of teaching

Subject knowledge and expertise

Career Long professional learning

Through this approach the Watt Academy lesson is

Inclusive, Engaging and Challenging