

**LEADERSHIP IN 'SCHOOLS WITHIN SCHOOLS': HOW DO LEADERS
TRANSLATE SHARED VISION INTO PRACTICE?**

**Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education at the University of
Leicester**

by

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February 2017

Leadership in ‘schools within schools’: how do leaders translate shared vision into practice?

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Abstract

This research is an embedded case study in a secondary school in the UK, reconfigured as four small, distinct, ‘schools within schools’ (SWS). Research in the USA emphasises the success of this model but accepts that there are challenges, particularly in relation to change management, creating a culture of collegiality and improving the pedagogy of teachers. This study makes an original contribution to knowledge in that it explores leadership and vision building in a SWS configuration. The study is grounded in the views of participants, leaders and teachers, through an inductive, exploratory approach. Semi-structured interviews, participant observation and shadowing were employed as the main methods of data collection. Data were coded and processes of constant comparison were used to develop key themes. Findings from the study show that the development of constructive interpersonal relationships are critical and often challenging within this model, that there are challenges in how teachers collaborate together around a common pedagogy for teaching, and building active participation of staff in creating a shared vision is an underused and perhaps poorly understood strategy. The findings point very strongly indeed to the challenges involved in developing a shared vision which devolves considerable autonomy to each of the constituent schools while at the same time seeking to retain a strong corporate character and purpose: competitiveness and lack of sharing best practice between SWS; the difficulties of building personal relationships; and the need to balance the distinctive nature of SWS with the need for a strong, central, organisational vision. The primary importance of this study has been to contribute to the development of contextualised policy and practice at the site of the research. But it may also have significance to leaders, educationalists and academics with an interest in school improvement, change management, small schools and personalisation.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor David Pedder for his outstanding support and guidance throughout my study. I would also like to thank Dr Paul Warwick who supervised my doctoral study for the first two years.

My thesis would not have come to fruition had it not been for the willingness of staff from Thornville College to give up their free time to be involved in this study. Particular gratitude must go to the Principal of the college who gave me unequivocal support throughout the five years.

Finally my thanks go to family and friends for their support and understanding throughout my period of study.

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Background of Researcher

At the time of the research I was deputy principal of the organisation that was the site of this research. I had a particular interest in 'schools within schools' (SWS) through my role and I worked closely with the principal, governors and staff in strategically planning the organisational restructuring. I had been given responsibility between 2009 and 2011 for developing one of the small schools before opening with a particular focus on curriculum, resources and staffing, teaching and learning and distinctive ethos. In 2011 my role developed as deputy principal of the overall SWS organisation. I commenced my doctoral study in January 2011 and had an interest in exploring leadership within a 'schools within schools' configuration, particularly in the area of how leaders within each small school develop a distinctive identity and vision. Data collection took place in autumn 2012 and summer 2013.

Chapter One: Introduction

This embedded case study (Yin, 2009) centres on Thornville College, a unique and innovatively designed 11-19 school comprising four separate schools, each with their own leadership team and staff. ‘Schools within Schools’ (SWS) are defined as a school within a larger host school (Architecture Research Institute, 1999). Raywid (1985) defines a SWS as:

...an administrative unit created within a larger school. It gains separateness and distinctiveness by having its own teachers, its own courses and space and distinctive environment.

(Raywid, 1985:30)

Building a shared vision is considered important for developing and forging a common purpose and sense of direction in SWS and small learning communities (Copland and Boatright, 2004; Meier, 2002; Mohr, 2000; Tasker, 2008a; Toch, 2003; Vander Ark, 2002). The main aim of this study is to explore how leaders at Thornville College collectively develop a shared vision that is acceptable to, and relevant for, the purposes and priorities of each of the four ‘constituent’ schools, while at the same time articulating a common framework of commitments that stretches across all of them. A key objective of the research is to understand more about the processes and practices that leaders enact to bring this vision to life.

1.1 Background of the Problem

This model of schooling originated in the USA through the break-up of large high schools. There is, however, a scarcity of fully autonomous SWS (Lee and Ready, 2007; Raywid, 1996) that are entirely self-governing, and that report independently and directly to government instead of through the mediation of a host school. The SWS reform movement is partly a response to the problem that many large American high schools face insofar as students remain largely unknown to their teachers (Copland and Boatright, 2004; Meier, 2002;Sizer, 1999; Toch, 2003). The SWS model gives more scope for the creation of a stronger more personalised, less anonymous social climate of the kind typically found in smaller units (Lee and Ready, 2007) that tend to cultivate increased opportunities for teachers and pupils to interact (NASSP, 2004).

The acceleration of this movement to create smaller schools began in 1984 with the creation of 12 redesigned schools that formed the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) at Brown University. In 2003 CES was awarded a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to form the Small Schools Project, a network of over 50 newly formed small schools. CES schools were tasked with achieving equity, personalisation of learning and high academic standards within an environment and ethos that was to be “creative, caring and thoughtful about putting students and families at the center” (Benitez et al., 2009:8).

There is limited academic research in the UK on this model of schooling. The Human Scale Education charity has funded ‘human-scale’ projects in 39 large secondary schools (Wallace, 2009) that showed a desire to improve relationships through small settings. However, the majority of these schools are not ‘SWS’ and working towards a decrease in the size of schools is not the aim of the charity:

It wasn’t our intention that schools should in some way become smaller; rather, that they should restructure into small-scale communities or adopt other practices that gave priority to the human scale in education.

(Wallace, 2009:8)

The Human Scale Education manifesto is broader and promotes a holistic curriculum and inquiry-based learning (Tasker, 2008a). SWS could be thought of as one type of structural change designed to promote human-scale practices. Others though, such as ‘houses’ or ‘mini-schools’, have much less autonomy than the SWS.

A number of research studies exploring SWS show that smaller schools are safer, more challenging, have fewer discipline problems, have higher achievement and have greater satisfaction amongst pupils, parents and teachers (Ayers et al., 2000; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Duke et al., 2009; Feldman and O’Dwyer, 2010; Lee and Smith, 1995; Nathan and Thao, 2007; Raywid, 1998). However, claims that SWS restructuring leads to improved academic standards are contested. Levine (2010) concludes that attendance, graduation rates and the environment all improve in SWS, although not academic achievement. By contrast, other studies show impressive evidence in support of the claim that SWS restructuring does in fact contribute to improved academic achievement (Bloom et al., 2010).

Nevertheless much of the small body of research into SWS has been undertaken in challenging, low-achieving schools and included schools that have not always adopted the full SWS model (Lee and Ready, 2007). Indeed, Bloomfield (2006) is highly critical of the research base that supports the positive association between SWS restructuring and pupils' academic attainments. He argues that many of the New York conversions to SWS have resulted in many underperforming pupil groups such as those pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and/or those who speak English as an additional language were displaced to other schools in order to decrease the pupil roll (and hence the school size) in the conversion school.

From my review of literature, I identified four important challenges to be faced when developing SWS: fostering small learning communities, changing the practice of teachers, issues concerning autonomy and accountability, and the management of change. I now discuss each of these challenges in turn.

1. The development of small learning communities (David, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2001; Strike, 2008; Wetz, 2010)

One of the main reasons for the development of small learning communities is the desire to reduce the alienation and isolation that some young people experience in large schools. Toch (2003) states:

Students typically work harder in the classroom when they sense their teachers and other adults value them. But in large schools teachers struggle merely to learn their students' names.

Toch (2003:9)

Schools must become places where it is easier for students and teachers to know each other well and build a community (Sergiovanni, 1995):

Communities are, in essence, places where members are bonded to one another by mutual commitments and special relationships, where they share a set of ideas and values that they feel compelled to follow. People belong and feel responsible for themselves and for others.

(Sergiovanni, 1995:48)

Creating small schools offers the potential to create a social climate in which relationships can flourish. But the development of small learning communities is about much more than care; it requires the building of relationships focused on pupils' learning, and embedded in the culture of the school (Stoll et al., 2006). Developing these relationships involves fostering a culture in which beliefs can be developed and discussed respectfully, participation is encouraged and commitment to each other nurtured.

2. Changes in pedagogy (Oxley and Kassissieh, 2008; Oxley and Luers, 2010; Supovitz and Christman, 2005).

A number of research studies point to the challenges of developing changes in teacher's pedagogy in the SWS structure (David, 2008; Kahne et al., 2008; Lee and Ready, 2007). Creating a more personalised structure is the easy part of SWS reform; translating this into changing the practice of teachers towards more personalised and responsive pedagogy is more complex (David, 2008). As teachers often take on many more roles in a small school, there is less time invested in professional development (David, 2008). There appear to be challenges with regard to encouraging genuine collaboration and too often SWS have not taken advantage of the benefits of being small to support teachers develop practices more tailored to the particular needs of individual students. In many cases the level of attention to teaching and learning in SWS is variable (Lee and Ready, 2007). Too often leaders and teachers in SWS appear to spend time focusing on discipline, behaviour or trips (Quint, 2006) or concentrating on day-to-day operational matters (Stevens, 2006). Changes to the practice of teachers, Kahne et al. (2008) argue, requires the development of teachers' expertise and giving time to plan, learn and reflect on how to realise a more tailored pedagogy in practice. In order to give this collective time to teachers, leaders need to address the additional time demands placed on teachers in small schools (Stevens, 2006).

3. Autonomy (Allen et al., 2001; Feldman and O'Dwyer, 2010; Gregory, 2001; Vander Ark, 2002; Wallace, 2009, Wallach, 2010).

In the SWS model, autonomy is of paramount importance. Each SWS needs to be able to develop its own distinctive identity (Raywid, 1996). It is this distinctive identity that galvanises the community on the basis of a common vision (Copland and Boatright,

2004) for which all members are accountable. It is important to the success of this model that each SWS does not lose its own special features.

The small schools were able to develop concrete identities, supported by a substantial and enduring sense of community, and these were characteristics that meant a lot to the kids.

(Wasley et al., 2000:41)

Furthermore, each SWS needs to be empowered: If SWS leaders are given overall responsibility and accountability they also need decision-making power and influence (Allen et al., 2001). Wasley et al. (2000) clarify the important link between autonomy and individual and collective commitment and accountability:

When the small schools were guaranteed enough autonomy to bring their ideas to fruition, they invested more in the school and its students. Many of the teachers and principals in these small schools were intellectually strong and found the problem-solving that came with creating their own schools very compelling. Ensuring that they have the opportunity to bring their ideas to fruition is an important incentive to encouraging teachers to undertake renewal and improved accountability within the system.

(Wasley et al., 2000:72)

4. Transformation and change (Wasley and Lear, 2001; Quint, 2006)

Restructuring a large, traditional comprehensive school into small autonomous SWS can be transformational. However, cultural expectations of the conventional high school can remain deeply embedded after restructuring and so change can be slow (Wasley and Lear, 2001). SWS require a different way of working. Leaders need to develop nurturing but no less demanding relationships that encourage greater participation of teachers and that keep a focus on pupil learning (Mohr, 2000).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Whilst extensive research has been carried out in the USA on SWS, there are very few research papers that look specifically at leadership in SWS (Copland and Boatright, 2004, Wallach, 2010) especially as it relates to finding an optimal balance between the coherent whole and the distinctiveness of the constituent parts-how can a shared sense of direction be developed, articulated, shared and informed by all without losing a sense of local identity, purpose and history? There are no specific studies that explore the concept of vision-building in a SWS configuration and the challenges that this brings. This represents an important gap in the research literature that my research aims to address. There are various general leadership ‘models’ (MacBeath, 2004) which may be significant for SWS, particularly with regard to how leaders develop communities that are committed to common goals, in particular, transformational leadership (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Kirby and Paradise, 1992; Leithwood and Poplin, 1992; Sergiovanni, 2007), instructional leadership (Dimmock, 1995; Oxley and Kassissieh, 2008) and distributed leadership (Harris, 2008; Spillane et al., 2001).

I emphasise these ‘models’ at this point because to put it simply, if we are going to foster and embed small learning communities and a shared vision in SWS, then we need to consider how we, as leaders:

- Encourage all to be involved in developing and moving the school forward through ‘transformational’ practices and embedding a commitment to shared vision;
- Cultivate active engagement and participation of all in contributing and translating shared vision into practice;
- Build strong teams of teachers who work collaboratively on improving teaching and learning.

There are gaps in the literature in relation to how leaders develop shared vision. Furthermore, the concept of vision-building creates unique challenges within this model. The general leadership models referred to above have not been informed by research in SWS settings. The empirical research I planned for this thesis was undertaken in the SWS setting in which I work and has provided an invaluable opportunity to test out the relevance and applicability of these more general leadership

models and refine them in order to understand questions related more specifically to vision-leadership in an SWS context.

Each school needs to have the scope to develop its own distinctiveness (Bronson, 2013; Reed, 2003; Spote, Kahne and Correa, 2004; Wallach, 2010). There are particular challenges with regard to how each SWS does this within a larger school and the guiding central mission that gives expression to the larger school's own corporate sense of purpose and direction. How do leaders navigate this challenge of encouraging the development of autonomy in each SWS as far as possible whilst maintaining a common vision that stretches across constituent schools? How does the concept of 'multiple visions' work in practice? How do SWS leaders balance the need to focus on developing their own communities with the need to create coherence and a whole organisational identity? These questions remain unanswered in the literature.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The justification for this study is that there is limited research on leadership in a SWS configuration. The ability to really capitalise on the small size in order to build powerful relational communities with a strong sense of history and identity, while at the same time remaining committed to a shared collegiate vision is one of the cornerstones of this restructuring. There are no studies that explore how leaders build shared vision within and across these SWS. Wallach (2010) argues that leaders in SWS do not always understand the specific leadership issues of small schools. We know that it should be different, that is, flatter and more distributed: management structures should be leaner with no hierarchical departmental structures, and with teachers making decisions about matters directly affecting students (Wasley et al., 2000) and leadership being shared among colleagues in different roles (Benitez et al., 2009; Copland and Boatright, 2004; Wallach et al., 2005). We understand the centrality of relationships in building collegiality (Kahne et al., 2008) in the SWS model, but we are yet to explore what leaders can do to build shared vision in this complex model. It is in relation to this central phenomenon that I wanted to advance understandings.

This research explores leadership as construed and enacted not only by the head teacher, but also by the team of senior leaders within each SWS. It also involves the perspectives of teachers. This study explores vision-building in SWS through a qualitative, inductive

design adopting an open-ended, exploratory mode of investigation. I have adopted an embedded case study design (Yin, 2009) which allows for depth and richness in the representations of practice and perspective. A case study approach allows for a detailed level of enquiry (Yin, 2009) and the embedded design allows for detailed multi-level qualitative analysis of the college and constituent sub-units, allowing for comparisons between leadership in and across each SWS.

Participants were purposively sampled (Barbour, 2001). A total of 30 leaders and teachers participated in this study. Details of each participant, their role and the SWS they are assigned to can be found in chapter four, table 4.4. The study uses triangulation through the use of different research tools (Denscombe, 2010): semi-structured interviews (Bell, 2010), unstructured participant observation (Punch, 2005) and shadowing (McDonald, 2005). The research strategy is discussed in greater detail in chapter three.

The site of this embedded case study is Thornville College, a large 11-19 school in London. A pseudonym, Thornville College, has been used throughout the study.

1.4 Context of the Site

My enthusiasm for this study comes from a personal interest in human-scale education and ‘downsizing’. I was, at the time of the research, a deputy principal at the site of the study and was centrally involved in the planning stages of creating the new school, based on the principles of SWS, and established under the ‘Building Schools for the Future’ (BSF) policy framework. I carried out an international visit to SWS in the U.S as part of a Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) training course which, although brief, allowed for comparison of a school of 4,000 pupils with a newly introduced SWS structure, giving some insight into how the model works in practice. This intense involvement in planning and implementing this model at the site of the research brings a deep familiarisation with its context, culture and staff and pupils.

This school was rebuilt as four SWS and opened on the former sports field in May 2011. The 1,800-pupil school was broken down into small units with 450 pupils in each. Unlike many of the American high school conversions which have tended to be low-performing, challenging schools where issues of safety were of prime importance, this school was judged ‘good’ by OFSTED in December 2009 and was on an upward

trajectory in relation to key indicators, such as attendance, exclusions, progress and attainment. Trends in performance data over the three year period prior to restructuring are included in appendix one. Each set of SWS performance data obtained during the study is included in appendix two. Governors took the bold decision to use 'Building Schools for the Future' to undertake something that they considered would be 'transformational' and would lead to a different form of education, namely, human-scale education, in which relationships between teachers, pupils, parents and the community were to be of paramount importance. The central guiding vision for this new college was:

Thornville College is a school based on the principles of 'human scale education'. Pupils learn better in smaller schools, where the curriculum can be more effectively personalised and individual needs met. ... Our objective is that every pupil should make outstanding progress in subjects that suit them that they enjoy and that will challenge them. The small school model allows for much greater support and challenge as every teacher knows every pupil and personally cares about their achievements. High expectations of behaviour underpin our work and we use a 'rights and responsibilities' framework and home-college agreement to support our vision 'our community, your success'

(College Prospectus, 2012)

Each small school was geographically separate with its own building, playground, classrooms, staffroom, lecture theatre/ small assembly space, science laboratories and reception. Whilst the schools were in close proximity, they were built at the same time as separate schools for the purpose of establishing a campus of SWS. Each SWS was separated by its own playground space. Whilst each school's layout was the same, three different colours were used throughout the buildings and in pupils' uniforms, to create a feeling of being a distinct entity. Staff had been allocated to work in one of the three schools, including teachers, administrators, attendance and pastoral officers, special needs teachers and cover supervisors. Each school had its own leadership team consisting of a head of school, two deputy heads of school and a senior teacher. Schools had their own staff briefings and meetings. Pupils spent around seventy percent of their week in their home school. In addition to the three small, 11-16 schools, a fourth building was for post 16 pupils. On the campus there was also a design

technology and art building, a sports hall, an inclusions building and a central administration hub which hosted the principal and deputy principal, exams officer, human resources, bursar and finance officer, media resources area, library and hall. Whilst certain parts of the site were shared between schools-the technology building, sports hall, library and music, pupils still stayed in their own small school classes when accessing these areas of the campus.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This case study was not designed to produce findings that could be replicated on a wider scale, but its significance and importance, and its position within the research field, is justified. This study is unique within the UK. There are gaps in the literature regarding how leaders interact with each other and with ‘followers’ in SWS settings and structures.

This study is original as leadership in SWS in the UK has not been the subject of empirical research, presumably due to a limited number of potential research sites. The study will illuminate leadership and aims to generate new theoretical perspectives, contributing to the field of knowledge about SWS, vision-building and leadership. It will be of interest to academics, educational professionals and school leaders as well as those with a real interest in more holistic concepts, such as the management of change and small schools.

My research is significant to the community at Thornville College who are undergoing a journey of transformation and change. Findings will be shared so as to contribute to school improvement. Furthermore there are elements that require self-reflection, dialogue and self-awareness on the part of both the researcher and the researched, thus contributing to the professional growth of leaders and further development of practitioner knowledge. This study explores the journey of this school as leaders seek to develop their own personal identity and shared vision and build strong small-school communities within one larger school.

1.6 Research Questions

There are three broad research questions. The first question is designed to investigate how leaders, within each SWS, seek to develop and implement a shared vision. How are

leaders, at all levels, changing the organisation and taking everyone with them? What vision and values are guiding this process of change? What are the similarities and differences between how leaders in each of the schools embody shared vision? How do leaders in SWS reconcile diverse, and perhaps competing, perspectives within their school?

1. Within the SWS structure, how are leaders in each small school translating vision into practice? What processes and practices are they using and why? How do leaders develop shared vision?

The second question explores how leaders of both the whole college and its constituent schools develop and embody a shared vision, while maintaining each schools' autonomy and distinctiveness. What processes and practices are used? How are leaders listening and responding to diverse views in the development of shared vision? What opportunities do leaders create for others to influence the direction of this shared vision?

2. How does whole-college leadership take into account multiple perspectives in developing a shared vision? Through what processes and practices do leaders develop shared vision?

The third question aims to find out the specific challenges for leaders in SWS.

3. What challenges exist for leaders in SWS and what processes and practices do leaders use to overcome these?

1.7 Research Design

Thirty participants were purposively selected (Punch, 2005) to take part in this study. All members of the senior leadership team of each SWS: head of school, two deputy heads of school and a head of learning, three teachers from each SWS, the principal of the organisation and several subject advisors who lead across the SWS were all part of this study. Teachers were selected using my contextual knowledge of the SWS to ensure a range of perspectives. It also included those who I felt would have a real interest in the study. It was important, as not all teachers were being interviewed, that a diverse range of teachers were interviewed in terms of age, experience, subject taught and position.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews (Bell, 2010) with each participant interview lasting between 45 and 90 minutes and being digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Observation was carried out by shadowing (McDonald, 2005) the head of school for a typical day. Several meetings of senior leaders, including a residential, were observed and field notes recorded. Data were collected in the spring and summer terms of 2013.

The study is an embedded case study (Yin, 2009). Each SWS was firstly treated as a separate subunit and then compared with each SWS, allowing for cross-case comparisons.

Data were analysed through a constant comparison approach that is incidents were compared with incidents, categories with categories in order to develop theoretical perspectives. Categories become saturated when the researcher is convinced of their importance and meaning (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Simultaneous data collection and analysis were used whenever possible so that emerging lines of inquiry informed the strategy for sampling participants and the process of seeking further contextual detail through interview and observation. For example, a decision was taken to involve more participants with leadership responsibility across each of the SWS in order to explore collaboration and cooperation between the SWS. A reflective journal was used to challenge my thoughts and opinions. Analytical memos were also used.

The research was carried out without any entrenched initial lines of inquiry (Strauss, 1987) and was not shaped in any purposive way by any firm theoretical concepts around leadership in SWS; although broader leadership notions around how we develop commitment to shared vision and identity were being explored. Despite my own ideas about leadership, informed through my own contextual knowledge of the research site and a literature review, I remained committed to open-ended exploration in the design of the study, and the research evolved as the areas of importance became clear through developing inductive analysis of the data (Sbaraini et al., 2011).

Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach, that could be described as 'intensive' (Charmaz, 2006), attempting to get beneath the surface and provide contextual stories. Each interview was carried out face to face at the site of the research

study and was digitally recorded. Observation, particularly a shadowing strategy, was used as bringing further contextual detail to the processes and practices that leaders use in developing a shared vision.

1.8 Limitations and Scope

Researcher bias was carefully considered throughout the study. It is acknowledged that whilst ‘insider research’, in which the researcher has relationships with informants, can be an advantage, there can be a blurring of roles between formal (researcher role) and informal (friendship/relationship) that can influence the data collected (Hockey, 1993). Whilst ‘insiderness’ (Mercer, 2007) may allow for easier access, familiarity and rapport can affect data collection. Familiarity, in some cases, would have put some participants at their ease and made them more open to discussing their ideas. However, it could also have led to myself taking things for granted and not challenging assumptions (Hockey, 2003). It is acknowledged and accepted that my role as a deputy headteacher at the time of the research could have influenced participant responses and existing relationships could have affected the collection of data (Ball, 1993).

In addition I did not seek inter-coder agreement for themes emerging through my analysis. I worked in isolation in the forming and conceptualising of analytic codes, although I did attempt to reduce bias by discussing key analytic themes that were emerging with informants, and I used analytical memos to guide my thinking, reflection and subsequent research.

The scope of this study is a single-site case study that has embedded sub-units. It does not attempt to create statistical generalisation although relatability, the ability for others to reflect on, and relate to, their own context and learn from this study was an important feature in making this study relevant to other practitioners. It was through processes of “naturalistic generalisation” (Stake, 2000:20), whereby it is the readers who identify connections between their own experience and perspectives and my analysis of the accounts of the informants of this study, that I sought to establish the wider relevance of this study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

My initial interest in this study centred on the SWS configuration and my direct involvement in leading the initial development of a SWS configuration. We were doing something that, it could be argued, was 'transformational' and different: abandoning old relationships, departments and traditional forms of leadership, and creating 'smallness', personalised approaches and small communities, with relationships at the centre.

I wanted to chart this journey of change in some way and ensure the research contributed to the improvement of the school and also to the development of my own leadership practice and understanding, in my role as a deputy headteacher in this school. My original idea was to somehow explore the personalisation aspects of SWS. But this is a vague term that lacks conceptual clarity. How would I define 'personalisation'? My supervisor and I discussed this in the course of a two and a half hour supervision session. We explored what the model meant, how it was translated into practice, what were the key challenges. He asked, 'What was common and what was different across each school? How much autonomy do leaders have?'

It was these discussions that cemented my views that the development of shared vision was indeed a significant challenge in this model, and one of real interest and importance. Conducting a study primarily focusing on leadership satisfied my interest, but I was more concerned with how leaders behave, what they do, how they realise principles in their practices and strategies for embedding vision. This supervisory meeting represented a critical point in my research planning and therefore I include the supervision notes as appendix three.

In section one of the literature review I explain the different forms of 'downsizing' of large secondary schools into 'house plans', 'mini-schools', SWS and separate autonomous small schools and review the literature on the benefits of restructuring to SWS. It is important to clarify the differences between 'federations' and SWS.

In section two I delve more deeply into the challenges evident in restructuring to a SWS model: the need to focus on developing strong professional communities; teaching and

pedagogy; the types of relationships conducive to success within this model; change management; and tensions in the development of autonomy in each SWS.

The purpose of this study is to develop understandings in relation to the practices and perspectives that leaders bring to building, nurturing and embedding shared vision in an SWS context. The research literature that relates to vision-building in a SWS configuration is sparse. Whilst much research identifies the critical importance of galvanising the whole community on the basis of a common mission, there is limited research on the processes and practices that leaders use to do this. In section three I explain my application of the term ‘vision-building’ in this study and synthesise some of the more general leadership notions concerning vision-building in schools.

In section four I make links with the development of small learning communities and professional learning communities, and I discuss these ideas and how they can be considered in relation to vision-building in SWS.

In section five I explore some of the ideas relating to autonomy and distinctiveness and how the tensions of multiple visions are addressed.

I go on to explore, in section six, the implications for leadership and particularly the different models of leadership that may have importance within this structure, and when building vision. The broader literature concerning transformational, instructional, distributed and participatory leadership is explored. Whilst this is not an extensive review of all the literature, as these areas are all well researched, I aim to present an argument for why these practices are of importance to this particular study.

The uniqueness of this study is arguably the fact that it addresses the tensions that arise when developing multiple visions within one organisation. This is an under-researched area. I am particularly interested in the cooperation and collaboration between each SWS when developing shared vision. The concept of system leadership is explored in relation to this study.

In the final section, section seven, I discuss the concepts of social capital and how it could be usefully applied to a SWS configuration and the development of a shared vision.

Section One: Schools within Schools.

2.1 History and Context of Schools within Schools

‘Schools within Schools’ (SWS) are defined as a school within a larger host school (Architecture Research Institute, 1999), although Raywid (1996) would contest this definition, arguing that fully autonomous SWS must report directly to external authorities, as opposed to an overarching leadership team and governing body. Raywid (1985) defines a SWS as:

...an administrative unit created within a larger school. It gains separateness and distinctiveness by having its own teachers, its own courses and space and distinctive environment.

(Raywid, 1985:30)

But unfortunately clear definitions are not characteristic of the SWS literature. There is in fact an unhelpful multiplicity of terms. ‘Small schools’, ‘mini-schools’, ‘house plans’, ‘schools within a school’ are all terms that Raywid (1998) explains in her ‘continuum’ of multi-school configurations. At one end she identifies individual and fully autonomous small schools and on the other end ‘house plans’. The place an organisation may be deemed to fit along this spectrum depends on levels of autonomy afforded to the unit. The house plan, for example, is described as merely a way of dividing up a large school into smaller parts for the main purpose of pastoral care and extra-curricular activities. House plans are only partial implementations of the SWS model. A ‘mini-school’ Raywid (1998) explains, has more autonomy. Pupils and most staff are allocated to one school but remain part of the larger school. However, in the case of the SWS, Raywid (1998) states that these schools simply share a building but have no other connections.

There are schools in the UK that call themselves SWS when in fact, according to Raywid’s definition, they are actually ‘house plans’. Wallace profiles these different ‘SWS’ in the UK (Wallace, 2009). Lee and Ready (2007) in their case studies on SWS in the USA found there were very few *authentic* SWS models. Even with the full SWS model, in which each school has clearly defined autonomy, there is a building principal

who has overarching responsibility for managing the whole site, shared facilities and some blurring of the boundaries of separateness (Bronson, 2013; Reed, 2003).

The importance of vision-building and how leaders translate vision into practice within each SWS is the central research question in this study. Therefore it is important for me to define how I am applying the term SWS. I apply the ideas of Lee and Ready (2007) namely, that each SWS should have a certain degree of autonomy and the potential to collectively improve teaching and learning, and that of Fine (1994) who states:

A SWS has anywhere between 200-400 students with 10-12 core teachers. The charter enjoysshared responsibility for a cohort of students and invent curriculum, pedagogies and assessment strategies that reflect a common intellectual project. With teachers, parents and counsellors they constitute a semi-autonomous community within a building.

(Fine, 1994:5)

I return to the key principle of SWS: pupils and staff must remain part of the one small-school community (Lee and Ready, 2007), as is the case in this research study site; and they must have the autonomy to develop their own vision, policies and practices with regard to teaching, learning and the curriculum. This is a very pertinent point. The levels of autonomy each SWS has, particularly with regards to teaching pedagogy and the curriculum, is key to teachers and leaders in each SWS collaboratively implementing a shared and distinctive vision. This concept permeates my study as I seek to explore how leaders translate shared vision into practice within each SWS, and as an organisation. I revisit the distinctive features of SWS later in section 2.21.

2.11 History of SWS in the USA

There has been a growing movement, originating in the USA, to restructure large schools as 'small schools'. However, as early as 1961 Rushton and Leahy (1961) proposed the concept of a 'school within a school' in order to capture the benefits of a large school with the personal relationships and care for the individual that can exist in a small school. A body of evidence suggests that smaller schools are safer, more challenging, have fewer discipline problems, have higher achievement and show greater levels of satisfaction amongst pupils, parents and teachers (Ayers et al., 2000; Darling-

Hammond, 2002; Lee and Smith, 1995; Nathan and Thao, 2007; Raywid, 1998). More recently though, Levine (2010) has concluded that research shows improvements in attendance, graduation rates and the environment, but *not* academic achievement.

By contrast, Bloom et al. (2010) extensive study of SWS in New York reports an impressive range of quantitative data demonstrating sustained improvement in pupils' academic achievement over a six-year period. A report on the Boston pilot schools (2006) similarly shows higher attainment, fewer exclusions and higher college staying-on rates for pupils in small schools, although not all are SWS, some are small, autonomous schools. Nathan and Thao (2007), whilst accepting that not every small school is successful, carried out a review of the literature around the success of small schools and SWS, noting that the schools are safer, have fewer discipline problems, higher achievement and higher graduation rates. The authors go on to carry out multiple case studies across 50 small school conversions. However, the report explicitly identifies that it is not a theoretical study, but a profile of each school and its successful features. Therefore it is unclear the methodologies used to conclude that successful small schools focus on relationships, care and academic standards. It also highlights some of the positive elements of SWS sharing facilities, although the challenges are notably absent.

Cotton (1996) carried out an extensive review of the literature around how school size effects student performance and school climate. She reviewed 103 documents, with 40 of these focused on secondary schools. Cotton unequivocally claims that smaller schools are superior to larger schools in levels of participation in extracurricular activities, attendance and positive student attitudes. Cotton reports that achievements in assessments and examinations were always either better in small schools than larger ones, or the same. But I am interested particularly in SWS, and Cotton accepts that the SWS research literature is less conclusive, less extensive and often less rigorous. But a comparison of studies for SWS and non-SWS (Cotton, 1996) showed higher attendance, stronger student-teacher relationships, higher levels of pupil satisfaction and more positive pupil behaviour in SWS. Cotton (1996) identified key features of SWS that are considered to have a strong influence on the success of SWS: greater levels of care from teachers towards pupils; greater parental involvement and pupils' strong sense of

personal identity with their SWS. But Cotton acknowledges that many of the studies fail to identify if the SWS were truly self-contained and distinctive schools.

Furthermore, one should note that the evidence gathered from academic research regarding this type of reform is concentrated in the USA and mainly concerns challenging American high schools (Lee and Ready, 2007). Lee and Ready (2007) selected five SWS as part of their study. However, in the process of this selection they were unable to find a single school that was either high-achieving or serving affluent areas prior to restructuring as SWS.

It should also be noted that much of the research and writings about SWS comes from SWS advocates (Sizer, 1999), state departments in the USA that have rolled out SWS reform, almost universally through whole inner-city districts (Boston, New York, Chicago, LA, Philadelphia) and with experienced practitioners who have led or are leaders in the SWS field (Meier, 2002; Mohr, 2000).

2.12 Context for this Study

Leaders and governors at Thornville College were in a unique position in being afforded the opportunity, through building schools for the future, to rebuild the school as a SWS model. Each school has its own leadership team, staff, pupils and, most importantly, the autonomy to develop distinctive pedagogy and practice through the participation and collaboration of a team of multi-disciplinary teachers. It is not the purpose of this study to debate the advantages of the model but to explore leadership in SWS, where gaps in knowledge currently exist, and to support the development of Thornville College as it develops this model of schooling.

2.13 Federations

It is important to emphasise that other forms of partnership and collaboration between schools have been developed in the UK. Schools in federations are completely autonomous although they do share aspects of leadership and governance to varying degrees (Chapman et al., 2010). Different from SWS, federations have generally been between a 'low-and high-performing' school. Each school is completely autonomous and geographically not on the same site. The literature on leadership in federations is scarce, although OFSTED (2011) argue that effective leadership is the single most

critical feature in driving improvements in federations, and that leaders in effective federations focus on raising expectations, holding staff accountable and using the federation to promote professional development of teachers (OFSTED, 2011).

2.14 Human Scale Education

In the UK, there is limited literature on SWS although the charitable organisation Human Scale Education has produced occasional papers (Harland and Mason, 2010; Taylor, 2011; Wetz, 2010), and Wallace (2009) and Davies (2005) both describe two different examples of the SWS model and how they were developed. The Human Scale Education manifesto promotes practices that include the implementation of small learning communities, a holistic curriculum, active participation of all and inquiry-based learning (Tasker, 2008a). SWS would be considered one possible structural change that could be implemented to develop human-scale practices. Thornville College makes clear in its mission statement that it is a school based on the principles of 'human-scale education'. However, this study will not explore aspects of the curriculum or inquiry-based learning that is defined within the manifesto of the charity Human Scale Education. The focus is on vision-building and the leadership involved in developing a vision in an SWS context.

Section Two: the Potential Challenges of Developing Schools within Schools

2.2 The Importance of Relationships

At the heart of moving to small schools is the notion of stronger personal relationships.Sizer (1996: xiii) states that "one cannot teach a student well if one does not know that student well and the heart of schooling is found in relationships between students, teachers and ideas". NASSP (2004) emphasises that SWS are about taking advantage of the opportunity that small size brings to increase both the quality and quantity of interactions between members of the school. Toch (2003) emphasises that students work harder if they sense that teachers and other adults care and value them. Sizer (1999), a SWS pioneer, writes about the need for close personalised relationships and fewer hierarchies:

If we must ask for permission or refer every change to higher authorities, there is no ‘personalisation’. The people providing the permission are those who, in fact, know the affected students the least.

(Sizer,1999:4).

This statement from a major advocate of SWS is a powerful one. It unequivocally states that the development of SWS is not just about building relationships but about ownership, involvement and decision-making. These notions are explored in detail throughout this study.

However, it is with caution that one should simply argue for the importance of relationships *per se*, or indeed that the SWS structure guarantees improvements in the types of relationship that would improve teaching and learning. Quint (2006:22) identifies small learning communities which show improvements in climate and ethos, but do not necessarily show improved academic outcomes, and concludes that “structural change to improve performance and instructional change are the twin pillars of high school reform”. Therefore it requires more than the structural change of assigning all pupils and staff into four new SWS. It requires changes to the way teachers work together to improve teaching practice. Cultural change is more important than structural change (Lee and Friedrich, 2007). Lee and Ready (2007) question if ‘smallness’ is sufficient. Smallness may make relationships easier to form and develop, which in turn can improve behaviour, attitudes, satisfaction and enjoyment. But some SWS can substitute caring for intellectual growth and academic rigour (Fine, 2000). Care and rigour must be coupled together (Wasley et al., 2000). Changes to whole school teaching and learning arguably require changes in the way things are done, the culture of the school. A strong vision for teaching needs to drive this reorganisation (Oxley and Luers, 2010).

2.21 Specific Challenges of Schools within Schools

What are the features of SWS? What makes them different? Wasley and Lear (2001) summarise some important features of SWS:

- Leadership needs to be flatter and more distributed;
- Culture is distinct;

- Community is important;
- Change and transformation is a necessity.

In an extensive study of SWS Wasley et al. (2000) find that in SWS pupils, parents and staff feel more connected, there are greater opportunities for collaboration between teachers and leadership tends to be flatter. Steinberg and Allen (2002) in a study of best practice in SWS argue that sometimes reorganisation is too complex and too organised. They emphasise two key aspects: in successful SWS students and adults know each other well and professionals make collective decisions.

From the general school leadership literature I reviewed I extrapolated a number of central characteristics that I considered pertinent to an understanding of SWS configurations and vision-building which I now turn to consider.

1. The development of small learning communities (David, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2001; Strike, 2008; Wetz, 2010).

Sergiovanni (1995) claims that large schools are too bureaucratic and impersonal. In strong communities connections between people and purpose, and between people themselves, are based on shared commitment (Sergiovanni, 1994). But Stoll et al. (2006:223) emphasise that in a powerful learning community “a range of people inside and outside the school mutually enhance each others’ and pupils’ learning”. Meaningful relationships, focused on pupil learning, must become embedded in the culture of the school. Developing these relationships involves fostering shared beliefs, participation and commitment to each other.

2. Changes in pedagogy (Oxley and Kassissieh, 2008; Oxley and Luers, 2010; Supovitz and Christman, 2005).

Changes in the practice of teachers, how teachers teach and how they collaborate together to learn about and work on a common aspect of practice or theme for instruction is not always evident in SWS (David, 2008; Kahne et al., 2008; Lee and Ready, 2007). SWS have not always taken advantage of the scope for improving the practice of teachers, for example by supporting collaborative approaches to teachers’ professional development that stem from the small school size of SWS. The level of attention paid to teaching and learning in SWS is variable (Lee and Ready, 2007) as the

pressures of starting up new SWS can prevail and distract the focus away from improvements to teaching (Sporte et al., 2004).

3. Autonomy (Allen et al., 2001; Gregory, 2001; Vander Ark, 2002; Wallace, 2009; Wallach, 2010).

Autonomy is an important concept. How separate and distinct is each small school? Unless SWS are given some freedom to determine how to develop, it will be difficult to establish a distinct identity (Raywid, 1996). Tensions can arise when leaders in small schools feel they have increased responsibility for results, but without the resources necessary for an autonomous school (Allen et al., 2001). This also relates to decision-making authority. Wasley et al. (2000) explain the reason for as much autonomy as is practically possible:

When the small schools were guaranteed enough autonomy to bring their ideas to fruition, they invested more in the school and its students. Many of the teachers and principals in these small schools were intellectually strong and found the problem solving that came with creating their own schools very compelling.

(Wasley et al., 2000:65)

4. Transformation and change (Wasley and Lear, 2001; Quint, 2006).

Cultural expectations of the conventional high school can be deeply embedded and change can be too slow (Wasley and Lear, 2001). SWS require a different way of working. As Mohr (2000:141) states “A small school is not merely a change of scale; it is a change of intensity and it requires a whole new set of responses”. Conflict can become more intense as there are fewer people working together (Wasley et al., 2000) therefore, Mohr (2000) argues, leaders need to find new ways of working together with teachers, through open discussion and debate. The traditional model of hierarchical leadership and top down leadership may seem more efficient, but lowers the engagement of teachers (Mohr, 2000). Mohr (2000) explains that leaders must work hard on developing nurturing, caring and demanding relationships, encouraging democratic participation and keeping a focus on teaching and learning.

5. How each SWS develops its own personal vision and direction within a central guiding mission could be considered a challenge. Whilst the literature is sparse in this area, there are studies which touch on the difficulties that some SWS have had in the USA in relation to conflicting visions and direction (Bronson, 2013; Reed, 2003; Sporte et al., 2004; Wasley et al., 2000).

When SWS share buildings, interbuilding conflict can arise around issues such as how pupils are assigned to each SWS, the structure of the school day needing to be the same across all SWS, the challenges of sharing spaces and the levels of autonomy granted (Wasley et al., 2000). Bronson (2013) identified challenges for teachers and leaders in SWS that form part of one building; there was a continuous struggle between hierarchical building wide leadership and leadership within each SWS, resulting in the SWS culture being undermined. Levine (2010) reports that autonomy is a particular issue where pupils cross over between each SWS. But we are still left questioning how leaders in SWS and the whole organisation can allow each SWS the freedom to develop its own identity, whilst maintaining a whole organisational vision and direction.

Section Three: Vision and Values

2.3 Developing Shared Vision in Schools within Schools

Underpinning the development of small communities and SWS is the need to develop a commitment to a shared vision (Copland and Boatright, 2004, Meier, 2002; Mohr, 2000; Tasker, 2008b; Toch, 2003; Vander Ark, 2002). Building a shared vision is the goal of most schools. However, this should be easier in small schools as there are greater opportunities for leaders and followers to interact, discuss the direction the school is moving towards, establish a level of agreement around a common vision, and translate such a vision into practice (Copland and Boatright, 2004).

A strong central guiding vision must underpin each of the SWS as the basis for forging coherence across different SWS. But the context of SWS raises particularly important and interesting questions, which have not been addressed in the literature. These relate to how (in my SWS context) four small schools develop their own identity whilst still cohering with the aims and purposes of the one organisation. It is this research focus which is useful to the site of this case study as it seeks to establish and embed a

common vision at a time when it is going through a highly complex structural and cultural reform, and navigates the challenges this brings.

But it is important firstly to consider our knowledge of vision and vision-building and attempt to define the problem under exploration. The purpose of this next section is to bring conceptual clarity to the term ‘vision-building’.

2.31 Vision-Building

Beare et al. (1989) state that outstanding leaders have a clear vision, communicate it and secure commitment to it. Vision is the broad direction in which the school wishes to move (Hallinger, 2011)

But a vision should not just be about clarifying goals and developing strategy but should inspire followers (Evans, 2000). It is what people are doing to bring this vision to reality which is of greater importance. Ultimately vision-building must focus on the core business of any school, improving teaching and learning:

The vision is a statement that embodies and unfolds the school’s beliefs about teaching and learning and how they occur. It articulates what the school values and believes is important. It states how these beliefs will be enacted.

(Ancess, 1997:2)

Evans (2000) states that there needs to be an appreciation that any successful school restructuring develops through the accomplishments and expertise of its staff and that as leaders seek to promote change, they are regarded by their staff as trustworthy agents of change:

Principals whose personal values and aspirations for their schools are consistent, coherent, and reflected in daily behavior are credible and inspire trust-they are leaders worth following into the uncertainties of change.

(Evans, 1993:20)

The development and translation of shared vision in a SWS configuration is essentially a process of change and reform, ‘reculturing’ staff into new ways of thinking and doing in order to establish coherence across the new SWS structure while at the same time

safeguarding the distinctive integrity of each constituent SWS. Fullan (1996:420) defines reculturing, as “the process of developing new values, beliefs and norms”. This change requires trusting relationships between leaders and followers (Evans, 1993). Similarly Gillespie and Mann (2004) accept that trust is fundamental to vision-building and go on to explore specific leadership strategies that develop trust between followers and leaders. The largest influence, they suggest, is a consultative leadership style:

In sum, consulting followers when making decisions and communicating and modeling a collective vision, can be viewed as the key to a set of leadership practices which elicit the trust and confidence of team members.

(Gillespie and Mann, 2004:602)

We do not know from research how leaders successfully build and establish a vision in a SWS model but we accept that building relationships, trust, respect and integrity are all key.

Murphy and Torre (2015) synthesise views found in literature published between 1995 and 2012 to define what vision actually means. A vision is about building a sense of hope, commitment to continuous improvement, reflecting and building on what is working well, galvanising collective responsibility of all and firmly anchoring vision in learning and academic outcomes.

Furthermore they state that whilst the principal is the essential figure in the creation of vision, it should not be imposed. It can be acknowledged that vision is, in the main, created by the principal (Leithwood et al., 2004) but in order to embed a vision as genuinely shared and sustainable in the longer term, the constructive and critical involvement of as wide a range as possible of members of a school community needs to be central to the process.

Senge (2000) emphasises the importance of shared vision and common goals:

When there is a genuine vision (as opposed to the all-too-familiar ‘vision statement’), people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to. But many leaders have personal visions that never get translated into shared visions that galvanise an organization. All too often, a company’s shared vision has revolved around the charisma of a leader or around a crisis that galvanises everyone temporarily.

(Senge,2000:19)

There are two main problems, identified by Fullan (1992), when vision is confined to a few and not widely shared. The first relates to leaders who have particular commitments to certain innovations or philosophies, which are pursued in a narrow way. The second problem, according to Fullan, concerns high-powered, charismatic leaders, where vision-building seems to depend only on the personal determination of the principal. Both suppress teachers’ voices. All people implementing the vision must have a deep understanding of its meaning and importance (Fullan, 1992:92). Fullan proposes the need for leaders to value teachers in order to promote growth, encourage collaboration not cooperation and facilitate, rather than constrain. The difference between cooperation and collaboration is discussed later in this review.

Similarly Benitez et al.’s (2009) book published by CES (Coalition of Essential Schools), a small-school network in the USA, states that in successful conversions leaders create shared agreements that hold everyone accountable for fulfilling the mission of the school. Effective schools place decision-making in the hands of those who know students and their needs best, and is localised and used as a base for developing shared vision (Darling-Hammond, 2002).

Top leaders should provide direction. They should:

...take the initiative, set the agenda, establish the pace and contribute to the conversation-all the while involving other key actors and synthesising their views.

(Murphy, 1988:656).

Vision-building in communities is about embedding shared ideas (Sergiovanni, 1994).

In communities the connections of people to purposes and the connections among people are not based on contracts but on commitments. Communities are socially organised around relationships and the felt interdependencies that nurture them... This social structure bonds people together in special ways and binds them to concepts, images and values that compromise a shared idea structure.

(Sergiovanni, 1994:217)

This relates to the development of collegiality, which arises from developing forms of interdependency, mutual obligations and emotional ties (Sergiovanni, 1994). Allen and Glickman (2005) explain that a school-wide vision is built as people have ongoing dialogue and collegial conversations about the curriculum, teaching and pedagogical practice. They also emphasise the importance of inclusive and shared decision-making when developing vision, arguing the need for good listening skills, respect, trust and wide involvement of all. Arguably this is a theme of importance and also relates to ideas, discussed further on, concerning the development of social capital.

Therefore the development of shared vision has significant implications for leaders embarking on SWS reform. The basis of developing shared vision is to create feelings of mutual accountability, drive, and push in a certain direction for the strong benefit of those within the community. But some of the limited SWS research has found that developing shared vision is not without its difficulties.

2.32 The Challenges of Developing Shared Vision in Schools within Schools

A study of leadership by principals who have recently converted to SWS (Nehring et al., 2009) has found that one of the main dilemmas faced has been that of developing an authentic mission that is collaboratively produced. However, this qualitative grounded theory study, whilst it usefully discusses and analyses principals' perspectives, is limited by its lack of involvement of teachers or pupils within the study or in exploring the conflict of multiple visions.

My own study involves a larger participant base of leaders at different levels, teachers and pupils in order to develop multiple perspectives on how leaders translate a shared

vision into practice. The development of shared vision in SWS is a unique challenge facing leaders. How, for example, do leaders of the organisation allow for multiple perspectives from each separate school? Are these multiple perspectives a rich resource for viewing the school in new ways or merely a challenge to the centralised vision? How do leaders in SWS develop their own distinct school with its own identity whilst still being part of a whole organisation?

Creating a shared vision specifically in SWS is about creating distinctiveness in everything the community does:

The mission and vision of the school serve as an umbrella under which all other activities take place. Together, the mission and vision of the school provide coherence for the work accomplished at the site.

(Reed, 2003:12)

Reed (2003) carried out a case study on two SWS to explore the concept of 'distinctiveness' in relation to a small, autonomous school that was part of a larger 'host school'. Whilst this case study is small-scale and only involved two sites, it did find that the mission of the 'host' school was in conflict with that of one of the small schools, and this did impact on the development of one of the small schools.

Similarly, Wallach (2009), through case studies on SWS conversions, found that some teachers can feel conflict between identifying with their own small school and with the larger organisation. Wallach (2009) carried out her research across two sites and used semi structured interviews with the building wide principal, assistant principal and a teacher leader in each SWS. Wallach (2009) found 'fragmentation'. Some teachers talked of too much autonomy being allowed for each SWS, resulting in tensions between each SWS; others felt that autonomy had been eroded through the agreed parameters, staff and pupils being allocated to one SWS, being changed. This diminished autonomy affected decision making and the ability to nurture strong professional communities. This, Wallach claims, resulted in one school reverting back to a comprehensive model and the other implementing a comprehensive model with three small schools.

Bronson (2013) carried out an ethnographic study on one high school that formed part of a larger host school, exploring in what ways, if any, leadership, the building space, curriculum or identity affected the SWS development. The study took place over a year and used qualitative strategies for data collection using observation, document analysis and 25 individual interviews with leaders and teachers. The findings show that there was a lack of clear vision as too many programmes without an explicit link to a common purpose were running at once, and that the vision lacked an explicit understanding of what teaching and learning in a small school should look like. Bronson (2013) refers to this as ‘too many pieces, not enough glue’. Furthermore there appeared to be a continual struggle with regard to sharing buildings and decision-making. There has to be coherence within each SWS as well as between the bigger school and constituent SWS. However, the literature field lacks studies that investigate how leaders develop this synergy between the SWS.

Small schools have the potential to create powerful forged values (Mohr, 2000) as there is greater opportunity for leaders and followers to interact united by a common mission (Copland and Boatright, 2004). But vision itself may not be enough, and the relationships that leaders establish with others are arguably more important. Barnett and McCormick (2003) report on a case study on vision, relationships and teacher motivation. Whilst this is a small-scale study involving only four principals and 11 teachers, the researchers reach an interesting conclusion: even when teachers are involved in the development of shared vision, there is no guarantee that this will lead to individuals acting to make this vision a reality. They argue that relationships and what leaders are actually doing to develop commitment to vision is of real importance. Notably they conclude that leaders should:

- Continually discuss and reinforce vision;
- Act consistently with regard to the vision; be trustworthy, honest and moral;
- Demonstrate individual concern, use praise and share power;
- Be accessible, show interest and provide support.

Whilst the authors accept the limitations of the sample size, it does provide interesting insights that can be reflected on when considering the real promise that SWS can bring to embedding shared vision.

Returning to the idea of the principal typically being the person who develops the vision for the school and the apparent contradiction with the need for 'shared vision', Lashway (1997), in writing around visionary leadership, concludes that not everyone needs to have formulated the vision, but everyone must bring it to life. He argues that vision needs to be 'institutionalised' and 'lived' in thoughts, words and deeds. The importance of shared vision for leaders in a SWS model is that it should effectively utilise the small school size to ensure the involvement and participation of all, galvanised on the basis of a common set of values and a clear direction. The development of shared vision is a process:

At the heart of building shared vision is the task of designing and evolving ongoing processes in which people at every level of the organisation, in every role, can speak from the heart about what really matters and be heard.

(Senge et al.,1994:299)

There is greater potential in small schools to develop these interactions, through more frequent contact between people. Vision-building is therefore heavily dependent on leaders' ability to build relationships with teachers. Principals need the ability to persuade teachers, and others, to bring the vision to life in everyday practices (Greenfield et al.,1992). But how leaders in each small school are interacting with people, and the processes and practices they are using to embody the vision, is a neglected theme in previous research.

2.33 Summary

To summarise there appear to be three main areas of importance for leaders in SWS and these relate to processes and practices that leaders use in:

1. Building relationships with all in the community and securing commitments to common goals while at the same time establishing common respect for distinctive characteristics and priorities of constituent schools;
2. Centralising the key issue of developing high-quality teaching and learning;
3. Encouraging participation, influence and building capacity.

Adherence to, and articulation of, a common vision in SWS is a key aspect of developing a professional community. In the next section I discuss what we mean by ‘small learning communities’ and ‘professional learning communities’ and try to extract from the literature implications for leaders in developing shared vision in a SWS model.

Section Four: Developing Small Learning Communities

2.4 Small Learning Communities (SLC), Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and Communities of Practice

The term “Small Learning Community” (Cotton, 2001) is highly relevant to SWS. The main aim of SWS can be considered to be the development of a small community of pupils and teachers who have the potential to collectively improve teaching and learning (Wasley and Lear, 2001). But there is a need for clarity on the term ‘small learning community’ and how this term can be related to SWS.

Cotton defines this term as:

Any separately defined individualised learning unit within a larger school setting. Students and teachers are scheduled together and frequently have a common area of the school in which to hold all or most of their classes.

(Cotton, 2001:8)

Strike (2008), in contrast, argues that it is not the size of the school that matters, it is the development of a community that has real clarity, coherence and purpose, with interpersonal relationships based on active participation, intellectual challenge and care. Sergiovanni (1995) refers to communities as:

Places where members are bonded to one another by mutual commitments and special relationships, where they share a set of ideals and values that they feel compelled to follow. People belong and feel responsible for themselves and for others.

(Sergiovanni, 1995:49)

One of the goals for SWS is to develop strong professional communities (Wallach, 2010). Dufour and Eaker (1998) define four features of professional learning

communities: shared mission and values, collective inquiry, collaborative teams and a focus on improvement. Westheimer (1999) emphasises additional features of small learning communities that focus on personal relationships: the interaction and participation of members, concern for individual and minority views and commitment to each other. These additional features are arguably important foundations for building genuinely collaborative teams in which a strong culture of participation exists. The nature and quality of leadership influences how this culture can develop (Stoll et al., 2006). Hord and Hirsh (2009) usefully summarise leaders' processes and practices that will strengthen learning communities, emphasising the power of collectively pooling expertise, encouraging teachers to participate through continuous dialogue in which knowledge is shared, and building trust and openness.

Furthermore there needs to be an acceptance amongst leaders that the principal is not the bearer of all knowledge, and leaders must cultivate the idea and expectation that everyone is involved in the disciplines of learning (Carmichael, 1982).

Whilst there appears to be no universal definition of 'professional learning communities', both Stoll et al. (2006) and Bolam et al. (2005) emphasise the importance of people, both inside and outside the school, enhancing each other's and pupils' learning. Bolam et al. (2005) through case studies in 16 schools define key features we would expect to see in a professional learning community:

- Shared vision and values, whereby all members take collective responsibility for student learning;
- A focus on individuals and groups of individuals and their individual and collective professional learning and reflection;
- A climate of openness, mutual trust and respect and support.

Each of these can be linked to the purpose of this study. In the first section of this review I have discussed the paramount importance of shared vision, collective responsibility and a common set of values. How do SWS leaders promote the collegiality that is required to embed these common values? Would we expect each of the four SWS in this study to have the same common values and direction? If not, how does this reconcile itself with the central mission of the organisation? How do leaders

develop reflective behaviour? What processes and practices do leaders use to build trust and respectful relationships?

Bolam et al. (2005) place emphasis on the building of personal relationships between leaders and followers. Trust, openness and the ability to develop partnerships and networks between colleagues are all deemed important. This is potentially a real challenge for four separate schools. What binds the schools together? What processes build trust both within and across the schools? What leadership processes and practices across the schools both allow for discrete and distinct schools, but also encourage partnership and dialogue between them?

Perhaps here Wenger's (1999) concept of 'communities of practice' is of importance. Wenger defines communities of practice as follows:

1. Members are bound together by their collectively developed understanding of what their community is about and they hold each other accountable for this joint enterprise.
2. Members build community through mutual engagement.
3. There is a shared repertoire of resources such as language, routines and tools.

Wenger asks what events and interactions bind the community together and build trust? In a community of practice, Wenger states, leadership takes multiple forms. There is connectivity between people, but there are also system-wide practices, such as building links, developing collegiality, reciprocity and negotiation.

2.41 The Challenge of Developing Small Learning Communities and Professional Learning Communities in Schools within Schools

Clearly the creation of PLCs within SWS ought to be easier than in a large traditional school simply due to size and the ability to form these relationships. Bolam et al. (2005) have found that the development of PLCs is slow. They argue that lack of time is a key factor, but also that the key challenge in large secondary schools is not just sustaining relationships, but also the interdepartmental conflicts that can occur when some departments instil a shared vision more successfully than others, and when departmental structures seem to encourage people to fight for their own self interests. But potentially

a similar challenge exists in SWS, the possibility of conflict and competition between each SWS.

Supovitz and Christman (2005) though, suggest caution should be used on the development of small learning communities. As a result of their study on teacher communities in SWS and SLCs they argue that simply moving to a community structure is not enough to achieve authentic desired change. Whilst there is an expectation that teaching pedagogy will improve as teachers work more collaboratively together, there needs to be greater clarity about the forms of collaboration that are useful for enhancing teaching and learning. Leaders need to have a deeper understanding of the types of collegial relationships that will enhance learning. The authors report that too often not enough time was spent with the team discussing teaching, reflecting on pedagogy, team teaching and conducting peer observations.

Similarly Levine and Marcus (2010) in their study on teachers' collaboration in two restructured SWS argue that it is not enough to talk about 'collaboration' as there are many different forms, each having different effects. They emphasise that collaboration requires a specific focus that will then give direction, for example, working collaboratively on improving assessment. They also discuss the challenges of teachers opening up their practice. There needs to be frequent and transparent access to each other's teaching. Teachers' privacy and autonomy can act as barrier against such collaboration and openness. Teachers can have problems 'digging into' aspects of teaching. Clearly this is important within each of the SWS in this study as it relates to how leaders build a genuinely shared vision of high quality teaching. It requires strong relationships based on mutual respect, honesty and openness. It relates to how SWS leaders build this culture.

Creating and managing culture is the most important thing leaders do (Schein, 1985). Schein identifies the main challenges in building culture, namely balancing the interests of all stakeholders, encouraging open communication, ensuring approachable leadership and developing team work.

I have established the link between SWS and their main purpose, that is, to create powerful small-school communities, with relationships at the core and with a powerful shared vision. This vision must be based on teaching, pedagogy and pupil learning in

order to raise achievement and enrich the learning experience of pupils and teachers, a fundamental principle of all schooling. SWS need to capitalise on the benefits of small school size and the opportunities to develop strong relationships that are focused on collaboration and mutual learning among teachers and pupils.

However, members of a strong professional community do not always agree (Stoll et al., 2006). Conflicts, and resolving these, are essential to the development of shared values (Stoll, 1998). Hargreaves (1994) argues that schools should promote both collegiality *and* individuality. In a study on a SWS conversion (Center for Collaborative Education, 2003), whilst the research was small-scale and involved only nine interviews, the researchers find that teachers must have a voice and that leaders must encourage disagreement.

Mohr and Dichter (2001) write from experience as leaders of SWS and discuss the stages of team development. Firstly, they state that shared decision-making and participation does not necessarily lead to better teaching or better outcomes. It depends on what the focus of participation is, and it must be on pedagogy and practice. Secondly, they state that shared decision making does not mean abandoning traditional forms of authority:

Leadership can vary and move around, but when it comes down to it, no matter how much decision making is shared, there does have to be someone who is in charge – and we have to know who that is. Otherwise, we all can spend an inordinate amount of time either duplicating each other's efforts or waiting for someone to be decisive.

(Mohr and Dichter, 2001:746)

Thirdly, Mohr and Dichter argue that groups are powerful precisely because they hold differing views. They advocate developing the habit of consulting regularly and accepting that this can create messiness:

There is a particular problem of messiness for the leader, who is expected to simultaneously strengthen cross fertilisation and collaboration; maintain calm, order, and the sense that someone is in control; promote strong cultural norms, values and beliefs; and include everyones voice in setting the agenda.

Similarly Lieberman (1995), in her work on restructuring schools, argues that conflict is part of the process of shifting culture surrounding teaching, learning and the curriculum. Effective leaders must know the school inside out so they can manage these tensions and competing priorities (Ancess, 1997). Ancess (1997) asks what kind of leadership best develops small schools and lists leadership qualities: accessibility, perseverance, stamina, optimism, trust, passion and a brutal commitment to vision.

But there has been a more recent debate (Watson, 2014) about professional learning communities, which is worthy of reflection. Watson challenges the concept of professional learning communities and re-examines the assumptions that underpin these. Watson asks, with regard to the development of shared vision, what exactly is shared and how and whose values are valued? She goes on to state that an insistence on shared vision could actually stifle school improvement as “creativity thrives on uncertainty thus requiring divergence from shared vision and values” (Watson, 2014:23). Watson also challenges the idea of a professional community. She argues that too much collaboration between teachers can create inward-looking teams, particularly if the team is a stable one. This is because experienced members of the team contribute little new knowledge to the team, and whilst less-experienced members may know less, their contributions are likely to be more novel. Watson discusses commitment to shared vision and suggests that resistance may foster adaptability.

She goes on to discuss community and asks, who is part of this ‘community’? What does professional actually mean? Does the community involve all staff and pupils?

In conclusion Watson (2014) makes the following statement that has implications for leadership in SWS and vision-building. Whilst discourse and debate are strongly advocated by others (Meier, 2002; Stoll et al., 2006), this statement appears to go further:

The appeal to shared values articulated within a single vision for the school creates the very organizational reality within which professional practice is realised and enacted-indeed made possible-but by doing this the shared vision imposes a rationality and a direction which suppresses possibilities for change.

(Watson, 2014:27)

The implication for leaders involved in developing shared vision in SWS is that they need to acknowledge and accept that disagreement and differing ideas can be a source of positive change. Fink and Stoll (2005:33) ask leaders to “honour the individual, the maverick, because creativity and novelty will be required to deal with an unknown future”. Therefore it is important for leaders in SWS to consider carefully the inclusion or exclusion of different ideals and values of all members of the community. Whose voices are heard and why? An interesting term is ‘contrived collegiality’ (Hargreaves, 2004:19). Hargreaves refers to collaborative cultures as voluntarily and spontaneously arising from teachers themselves, as a social group. However, ‘contrived collegiality’ is often forced rather than facilitated, taking the form, for example of mandatory planning time or compulsory team teaching. Such collegiality could be viewed by teachers as leaders intentionally creating ‘shared leadership’ in order to embed their own agenda. What is needed is the ‘messiness’ of constant debate and dialogue.

The other key challenge appears to be associated with how restructured SWS take advantage of the opportunity to change teachers’ pedagogy and practice. Research carried out in reformed SWS in Boston (Allen et al., 2001) emphasises the challenges of restructuring:

People haven’t realised that organising into SLC (small learning communities) is about changing the conversation about teaching and learning. I wish we had called it realignment instead of restructuring.

(Allen et al., 2001:20)

Furthermore, a qualitative study on reformed SWS (Stevens, 2008) finds little change in pedagogy and teaching. The key message from this study is that the evidence showed changes in how teachers felt about transforming their practice but that often other challenges, such as the increasing demands in small schools, meant discussions often centred on day-to-day matters rather than on the bigger picture. This is attributed to the increasing demands placed on teachers in SWS.

Change in pedagogy is important to the development of SWS (Oxley and Kassissieh, 2008; Oxley and Luers, 2010; Supovitz and Christman, 2005). Oxley and Kassissieh

(2008) conclude that teaching, pedagogy and instructional leadership represent the biggest challenges to the success of the SWS model. In addition, Wasley and Lear (2001:24) highlight those individuals who limit reform because they do not want to change: “We want schools that are better but not different”. Advocates of SWS reform argue that we need to do things differently (Benitez et al., 2009; Wasley et al., 2000; Wasley and Lear, 2001). This requires transformation and change, seizing on the advantages of a unique structure in order to do things differently. Otherwise the result is simply a smaller version of the old school, and improvements in teaching, learning and progress will not be evident. This management of change is inevitably a challenge for leaders.

In a study on SWS through the Small Schools Project (Wallach et al., 2004) strong professional communities were shown to share a sense of purpose and there was a sense of professional cohesion. How leaders develop mutual accountability, collegiality and group commitment is central to my research. How are leaders developing a vision that is shared by all those in the community? How are they securing commitment to common aims? More importantly, what are they actually doing to embody this shared vision?

An important emergent theme arising from research into SWS is that no one strategy has been proven to underpin successful SWS in different circumstances and contexts (David, 2008). What we do know is that improving the climate, by this I mean care, safety, behaviour, relationships and attendance, is easier than improving achievement. How can leaders promote a shared vision while at the same time engaging with, and learning from, multiple perspectives of different stakeholder groups in the SWS community?

Section Five. Autonomy and Distinctiveness

2.5 Autonomy

Autonomy and accountability constitute a significant issue in SWS (Allen et al., 2001; Gregory, 2001; Vander Ark, 2002; Wallace, 2009, Wallach, 2010). Lee and Ready (2007) and Wasley and Lear (2001) both suggest that the degree of autonomy is a defining feature of success. Lee and Ready identify very few schools which operate a full SWS model, none of which are schools that serve affluent communities, but from this research base they found that:

The autonomy afforded (or denied) subunits deeply influenced the extent to which they could create and sustain the unique identities and personalized environments that constitute this reforms *raison d'être*.

(Lee and Ready, 2007:23)

Similarly Vander Ark (2002:12) argues that “the positive aspects of small size are most evident in schools that have strong identities and are autonomous in their vision”. Strike (2008:172) uses the following metaphor “subunits must be free to create their own programmes and march to their own drummers”. Whilst research from the USA on SWS emphasises the importance of autonomy (Dolan and Anderson, 2007; Gregory, 2001; Meier, 2002; Raywid, 1996) it could be viewed as a major challenge in terms of practical aspects, such as timetabling, assigning pupils, staffing, resourcing, sharing facilities and accountability.

But autonomy in SWS has far greater implications than just practical ones. Why is autonomy so important to SWS? How can leaders develop real coherence, shared commitment and what Sergiovanni (1990:24) describes as “bonding”, if there is not the potential to develop the organisation with its own distinctive mission? Each school must have as much autonomy as practically possible. By this we mean decision-making powers and influence. The distinctive school, argues Meier (2002), is one which has the autonomy and flexibility to solve its own problems in an individual way. When a school is distinctive, “it has become the product of teachers who operate it” (Reed, 2003:5), that is teachers work together to develop a shared vision and a distinctive culture. However, it is more complex when there is one central organisation. In other words, the small schools are not fully autonomous.

2.51 The Challenge of Distinctiveness in a Schools within Schools Model

Allen et al. (2001), in a study of five Boston school conversions, found that some staff were uncomfortable with different visions and that the school felt splintered and lacked a common vision. There is a dichotomy between sustaining small schools and sustaining programmes and structures that are linked to the old *status quo* (Wallach, 2009). This is made more challenging if pupils or staff ‘cross over’, that is, if they are not spending all their time in one SWS. If this happens, the authors found, then teachers do not know

each other well enough, no one takes overall responsibility for the individual pupil and consequently the small-school culture is undermined (Wasley and Lear, 2001).

Raywid (1996) argues that there needs to be an acceptance when moving to a SWS structure that the old relationships will disappear and that the establishment of new ones is part of the change process. That 'concern' for the whole school will drain away and diminished communication between each subunit is to be expected and will create tensions. The SWS arrangement can give rise to tensions between identifying, on the one hand, with the whole organisation, on the other hand with the subunit.

Consequently how shared vision is created, developed and translated both within the SWS and across all small schools in one organisation is of importance. What specific challenges exist when leaders are developing small, semi-autonomous organisations that aim to be 'special', but none the less remain within the shared vision of the whole organisation? How do leaders reconcile these tensions? These are gaps in the literature on SWS that need further exploration.

2.52 Summary

In summary, we have to secure mutual commitments and internal accountability by encouraging all in the community to buy into the shared vision and to work towards the goal of high quality teaching, greater personalisation and better progress for every pupil. Whilst these are likely to be common goals for most schools, the SWS model offers opportunities for leadership which are different from those of a large, traditional comprehensive school. These may be summarised as follows:

- Fewer hierarchies should exist, and leaders and teachers should be professionally closer through both a flatter structure and the personal relationships that can be embedded through this model.
- Opportunities exist for small groups of interdisciplinary teachers to work collaboratively and collegially on improving teaching and learning.
- There is a real opportunity to secure commitment to the vision by encouraging people to participate actively in the organisation and to help it move in the direction it wishes to take.

But we have to overcome the barriers to this reform such as the difficulties of managing change, the tensions associated with coherence of their overall configuration and autonomy of constituent SWS that are inherent in this structure, the need to ensure we develop strong, professional communities with a real focus on improving teaching and learning and the need to do things differently. This has unique implications for leaders and how they translate the guiding vision for SWS into practice. In the next section I discuss the implications for leaders and their approaches.

Section Six Leadership in Schools within Schools

2.6 Implications for Leaders in Building Shared Vision in Schools within Schools

Leithwood et al. (1999) state that leaders work with others to create a shared sense of purpose and direction. Leadership is a collective activity (Bennett et al., 2003).

Empirical leadership studies specific to SWS are rare. On the basis of semi-structured interviews with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and teachers in 5 SWS, Allen et al. (2001) conclude that effective leadership is important particularly in relation to developing whole-school instructional practice, targeting professional development and sharing best practice. This study points to the need for strong instructional leadership, which will be discussed later. Wallach (2002), using a single case study approach, has explored how a comprehensive high school converted into small learning communities. Wallach used interviews with leaders, teachers, parents and pupils. The study again stresses the need for shared leadership and explores the different ways that the case study school did this, although Wallach (2002) investigated the process of restructuring, rather than how and what happened after the school had restructured. In a later synthesis of the literature in SWS conversions, Wallach (2010) highlights the need to pursue a deeper understanding of small schools. Interesting, is Wallach's (2010) claim that:

Most school leaders had neither real images of what a conversion might look like nor experience with the personalized teaching, professional community, and shared decision making that are indicative of small schools.

(Wallach, 2010: 272)

This conclusion is a very important one as it suggests that leaders in SWS need a deep understanding of how small schools can capitalise on their small size by building strong

communities, but that most leaders do not have the knowledge or experience of how to lead and manage in a small-school setting. This is very different from a traditional, hierarchical leadership role in a large school.

Lee and Ready (2007) take a multiple case study approach and look in depth at several SWS. They conclude that instructional change does not necessarily come through changes to structure. The SWS model is not a guarantee of improvement in teaching. Leaders place differing levels of attention on developing teaching.

In a study of seven SWS as part of the Small Schools Project (Wallach et al., 2005) the researchers conclude that it is crucial to move away from hierarchical, traditional roles and functions.

This leadership style runs contrary to small school ideas of personalisation and the development of a strong professional community, which lead to improving teaching and learning.

(Wallach et al., 2005:1)

The focus of my doctoral research is on leadership strategies and perspectives developed within and between the SWS for translating vision into practice. There is an array of leadership ‘models’ (MacBeath, 2003) that may provide a theoretical framework for this study. But leadership is complex and contextually contingent. As such, a number of different types of leadership approach are likely to be invoked by different leaders in different situations in order to , in the terms used by Leithwood et al (2004), set direction and influence others to move in that direction.

Therefore it is not the purpose of this study to prove certain theoretical models of leadership are relevant to SWS, but to explore processes and practices that are used by leaders in each school and across the schools. My interest in carrying out his research is to learn more about the ‘how’ of leadership; the daily performance of leadership routines, interactions, practices and structures.

Nevertheless, it is important to briefly define key leadership terminology that *may* form part of the practices of leaders in SWS. In addition, I broaden my references to the literature to include a brief discussion of key ideas that are not specific to SWS.

I have intentionally focused my literature review on three aspects of leadership, arguably interrelated, which I have concluded, on the basis of this literature review, are important in building vision in a SWS configuration:

1. What processes and practices assist in building commitment to shared vision? This links to concepts relating to transformational leadership and visionary leadership.
2. What processes and practices assist in building people's participation and involvement in the organisation. How do leaders develop leadership capacity? This links to concepts concerned with distributed leadership, participatory leadership and capacity-building.
3. What processes and practices keep schools focused on developing teaching and pedagogical practice or instructional leadership?
4. How do leaders ensure not only that strong learning communities are developed within each SWS, but also that SWS develop links, partnerships and support for each other? This links to the concept of system-wide leadership.

2.61 Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) was the first to explore ideas concerning transformational and transactional leadership, proposing that transformational leadership is when leaders and followers are united in their intention to fulfil a common mission. Leaders raise awareness of the importance of outcomes and ways to achieve them. Conversely transactional leadership is when followers are motivated to perform through an exchange relationship, whereby value is accorded to work through pay, conditions or rewards. It is not the purpose of this research to debate the differences between the two, although I acknowledge that the two forms of leadership can exist alongside each other (Bass and Avolio, 1994) and that despite the somewhat optimistic portrayal of transformational leadership, the pressures of inspection, examination performance and league tables can all force the use of more transactional processes, particularly in schools in challenging circumstances (Smith and Bell, 2011).

But what interests me in this study are the processes and practices that translate vision into practice, and how these relate explicitly to transformational leadership. Bass and Avolio (1994) state that transformational leadership is evident when leaders, through

generating awareness of vision, motivate colleagues to look beyond their own self-interest, and develop their ability and potential to higher levels.

Bass (1999) specifically breaks this down into four components. Firstly there is 'idealised influence', which is when leaders arouse strong emotions and identification with the leader. Leaders are admired, respected and trusted. Followers identify with leaders or want to emulate them. Secondly 'inspirational motivation' involves leaders communicating vision and giving meaning to people's work through fostering team spirit, enthusiasm and optimism. Thirdly, 'intellectual stimulation' refers to leaders encouraging people to be creative, consider different perspectives and find new solutions to problems and challenges. Lastly 'individualised consideration' involves leaders focusing on individual needs through providing support, coaching and encouraging professional development.

Sergiovanni (2007) identifies reasons that teachers strive to do their best, namely, that they find their work interesting and challenging, they feel value in what they are doing and feel a sense of responsibility to respond. Transformative leadership is leadership that binds and bonds, according to Sergiovanni (1990:24), while Sagor (1992) summarises the qualities of three highly successful principals who all have a 'transformational effect' but through different styles. There appear, therefore, to be different ways of being 'transformational'.

The field of literature that relates to SWS is bare, although Benitez et al. (2009) in their book on SWS reform articulate their view that transformational leadership is essential; and must focus on distributing power and fostering ownership by developing the leadership of others, and working collaboratively with teachers to implement teaching and learning strategies that are focused on achievement for every student. They conclude that the building of relationships and active participation are extremely important: "Creating a culture that is built on relationships and reflects and respects multiple voices is one of the building blocks of transformational leadership" (Benitez et al., 2009: 136)

But Benitez et al. (2009) also focus on practical advice for how to build such a collaborative learning culture, emphasising the need for staff to be involved fully in the life of the school, for example, in setting meeting agendas and facilitating discussion,

giving the necessary time for teachers to collaborate and develop professionally and creating opportunities to debate and challenge policy and practice. They also identify key challenges: there is often more work than people to do it; it can take several years before the school feels settled; and, at times, it can feel frustrating.

Leithwood (1994) suggests that there are eight dimensions to transformational leadership:

- Build vision;
- Establish goals;
- Provide intellectual stimulation;
- Offer individualised support;
- Model best practice;
- Demonstrate high expectations;
- Develop structures to foster participation.

This is why leadership ‘models’ are confusing and often in conflict with each other. For example, one and two on this list could be described as ‘visionary’, three and four as ‘instructional’, seven as ‘democratic’ or ‘collaborative’ and so on. Cheng (2002) usefully extends the concept of transformational leadership to a model of five different components: human leadership, that is, enhancing staff commitment through relationships; structural leadership, that is developing goals; political leadership that involves building participation; cultural leadership, that inspires and stimulates people; and educational leadership involving provision of providing expert advice and direction in teaching.

Whilst not specifically concerned with to SWS, Barnett and McCormick (2003) carried out a useful study on vision-building and transformational leadership, asking how commitment to school vision is developed. What influence does vision have in school? In their study of four schools, using semi-structured interviews, they found that whilst there was a clear understanding of what is meant by vision, and that it is important that vision should not be rhetoric but should involve action. They argue that the influence of vision may be overestimated, that individual concern is the most important factor. That refers to leaders knowing people individually, providing encouragement, and praising and recognising individual efforts. They conclude that visionary and transformational

leadership characteristics are rooted in the relationships that leaders have with others. They use the term “acting consistently”; that is that leaders should act consistently in the process of translating vision into practice by demonstrating individual concern, using praise and sharing power and responsibility.

Building relationships with teachers and other members of the community was central to the leadership of principals in this study because it was through these relationships that they established leader legitimacy, and encouraged commitment and effort towards making the goals of shared vision a reality.

(Barnett and McCormick, 2003:70)

A study of extraordinary leaders in education has been undertaken by Kirby and Paradise (1992) looking at two different studies: a quantitative one investigating the degree to which leaders utilise characteristics of transformational leadership and a second one which tells narratives of extraordinary leaders from the perspectives of their followers. Despite some variation they found that transformational leaders are people-orientated, caring, supportive, optimistic and committed. Individual concern, personalised professional development are strong features of highly effective leadership. Findings suggest that a leaders “unshakeable commitment to vision” (Kirby and Paradise,1992:310) may explain followers’ emotional commitment to the leader. It ought to be easier for leaders within a small school to develop the sort of supportive, caring relationships with others that Kirby and Paradise refer to, because there is greater opportunity for leaders to interact frequently with followers. However, how leaders develop the emotional commitment of followers within the SWS model, through reinforcement of vision, will be of interest in this study.

One of the most fruitful pieces of research that highlights the difficulties associated with advocating models of leadership is that of Printy et al. (2009). Their qualitative study of seven schools shows that all had high levels of transformational and instructional practices. A previous quantitative study had shown that in some cases transformational leadership provided by the principal did not guarantee instructional collaboration. They conclude that it is difficult to distinguish transformational and instructional leadership, or prove the influence that one or other has on outcomes. They define a new model of “integrated leadership”. In integrated leadership, predominant practices include teaming

structures, interdisciplinary approaches for instruction and personalised approaches to working with students.

Hallinger (2003) through a synthesis of leadership literature, argues for the conceptual importance of both transformational and instructional leadership. However, he also shows the limitations of this research base. Most transformational leadership studies have focused on the principal but, in transformational leadership, leadership is distributed across a variety of people. Transformational leadership seeks to influence people from the bottom up (Hallinger, 2003).

Currie et al. (2005) explore, through interviews with 51 headteachers across 30 schools, the relationship between transformational leadership and performance and alternative forms of leadership. In this study the researchers have found that principals use a variety of approaches and that there is often a blurring and overlapping of boundaries between different forms of leadership. With regard to the notion of ‘inclusive leadership’ they suggest two challenges: Firstly that people can sometimes be reluctant to take up leadership; secondly that people in leadership roles often have very defined managerial responsibilities, which limits their potential to be more holistically involved in aspects of leadership.

My doctoral study has been planned to explore aspects of transformational leadership in relation to vision-building in a SWS structure. How do leaders work to develop the leadership and influence of others? How do they secure commitment to a central vision, that I have established is the cornerstone of SWS? What do leaders say and do? How involved do teachers feel in the development of a shared vision and identity in their own SWS? The potential benefits of the SWS model is that these processes ought to be much easier in a small school where far more frequent interactions can occur, both formal and informal, between leaders, staff and pupils. But it does rely on more ‘distributed’ and ‘participatory’ forms of leadership, as discussed in the following section.

2.62 Distributed Leadership and Capacity Building

Distributed leadership is a term used frequently in the literature on SWS as a means of ‘sharing power’ (Benitiz et al., 2009; Copland et al., 2004; Nehring et al., 2009). Leadership in SWS should be ‘flatter’ argue Wasley and Lear (2001). Meier (2002) states that the school is too large if teachers cannot sit round a table together to discuss

and make decisions. The challenge for SWS leaders is to smooth the balance between a top-down system and a flattened form of organisation (Mohr, 2000). Similarly Wallach et al. (2005) in a study on distributed leadership in SWS, state that:

The creation of multiple small schools, particularly out of a single large school, elevates the need for many, rather than a few, to assume leadership.

(Wallach et al., 2005:1).

The distribution of leadership is an important concept in this study, both how leadership is encouraged and developed with each small school, and also how the principal of the whole organisation develops the leadership of each head of school. Leadership in SWS is most effective when each leader has the freedom to develop his/her own school's distinctive features and be responsible and accountable for teaching and learning (Wallach et al., 2005).

Distributed leadership is collective leadership rather than vertical accountability (Hargreaves and Shirley, 2009). However, the term 'distributed leadership' is a difficult concept as it can have many different meanings (Harris, 2008). Spillane (2005) presents a holistic view in which leadership practice:

...is viewed as a product of the interactions of school leaders, followers, and their situation.....Rather than viewing leadership practice as a product of a leader's knowledge and skill, the distributed perspective defines it as the interactions between people.

(Spillane, 2005: 144)

MacBeath (2004:34) sees two distinct forms: firstly one in which the leader appoints or delegates others to carry out work, referred to as "distributed"; and, secondly, one in which leadership is distributed on a more democratic basis, referred to as "dispersed".

Harris (2008: 173) suggests that all leadership is to some extent distributed but that "the key to success will be the way that leadership is facilitated, orchestrated and supported". Harris's main argument is that leadership capacity is not fixed. As more people formally and informally exert influence, leadership capacity increases. Harris usefully breaks distributed leadership down into three levels: the superficial level which simply involves delegating; the subterranean level where there are new roles and

responsibilities; and the deep level, where the culture has changed and a different way of working exists.

This links to the concept of building capacity. Leadership capacity is defined by Lambert (2002:38) as “broad based and skilful participation in the collective work of leadership”. Capacity-building transforms an organisation into a community (Mitchell and Sackney, 2000). But what does ‘capacity-building’ look like? How do leaders in a SWS structure build capacity? Lambert (2002) uses some examples: skilful participation, collaboration between teachers and reflective practice. Sharing knowledge becomes the “energy force” of the school (Lambert, 2002:38).

Mitchell and Sackney (2000) argue that capacity-building has three aspects. Firstly there is the ‘individual’: in a community individuals reflect on, and question, their own practice. They seek out new ideas and knowledge. Secondly there is the ‘Interpersonal’ which has two parts. The cognitive part involves shared values and understandings, and the affective part, involves developing trusting and caring relationships. The authors emphasise that creating professional dialogue between leaders and teachers assists the cognitive part. The affective part is developed through leaders encouraging people to speak in meetings, showing respect for differing views, decreasing marginalisation and alienation. The authors argue that structure and culture are both important. Leaders must develop structures to foster participation and must facilitate and encourage staff to address conflict and promote shared values.

Arguably there are similarities between collaborative forms of leadership and distributed leadership. Bennett et al. (2003), separate the concept of distributed leadership into ‘delegated’, ‘democratic’, ‘dispersed’ and ‘distributed’. They stress that more needs to be known about the practice of distributed leadership and how it relates to context and to school improvement.

Leithwood et al. (2007), through a best practice study of schools deemed to be using distributed leadership effectively, conclude that distributed leadership does not entail giving authority away, rather it involves guiding and leading others to carry out leadership processes and practices. Surely this has even greater significance in SWS? If we are to seek the involvement of all in developing and implementing a shared vision, collaborating to create common practices for improving teaching and learning,

participating in decision-making and encouraging people to feel ownership, then arguably hierarchical, traditional styles of leadership will not work. However, Locke (2003) emphasises that some hierarchy is unavoidable. Some roles need to be performed by certain people by virtue of their position or experience, such as reporting to external authorities. There are also evident challenges when people in positions of influence or authority attempt to distribute this influence to others but do not agree on the best way forward (Storey, 2004).

There are further challenges though. In a qualitative case study of distributed leadership by headteachers in six UK schools (Arrowsmith, 2007) leaders still viewed distributed leadership as entailing delegation and creating more positions of authority. This implies that leaders are still operating in traditional, hierarchical ways, delegating tasks rather than developing the influence of all. Similarly in SWS, Wallach et al. (2005), whilst accepting progress in the movement to flatter, more distributed leadership, found that half the schools in the study had changed very little, or not at all, from traditional leadership roles. They give examples of how distributed leadership looks in SWS, with staff being given opportunities to present data on student achievement; facilitate student and parental engagement; develop professional community; and efforts to build a culture of high expectations.

Wallach et al. (2004) explore the distribution of leadership and influence in SWS conversions. They highlight successful and less successful cases. In the strongest cases teachers across different subjects know each other better, both personally and professionally. Group members recount how they work through conflict and disagreement. There are collective teaching practices commonly used. Teachers have significant influences on each other's practices. The emergence of "elevated conversations" is a key indicator of strong distribution of leadership and strong professional communities. These conversations are focused on individual pupils, learning needs, different forms of teaching practice and learning from each other. However, in three out of seven cases there was much less clarity about vision, less evidence of shared language and less collaboration. Time, workload and staff turnover are all considered barriers to increasing the participation and influence of teachers.

Day et al. (2006) introduce a new concept of 'hybrid leadership'. It is argued that leadership is not just about formal leaders and how they distribute power or influence as

this ignores the leadership capacity of groups of individuals who are influencing each other. Gronn (2008) refers to 'hybrid leadership' as that which recognises diverse practices which may be hierarchical, or heterarchical, whereby individuals at different levels influence each other.

But Hargreaves and Fink (2008) bring a different dimension to the debate about distributed leadership making a point that it involves a moral and democratic question. They ask, 'What kinds of distributed leadership do we want, and what educational and social purposes will it serve?' (Hargreaves and Fink, 2008:238). They ask if such forms of leadership are merely subtle ways of driving forward processes and practices that will more easily satisfy government targets and performance measures, or whether distributed leadership is a key principle supporting the development of coherent, inclusive communities committed to a common vision.

SWS need to develop formal and informal interactions that encourage all to buy into the school and to influence its development. Distributed leadership should not be about flattening the structure or the roles that leaders play, rather it is about interactions and relationships (Harris and Spillane, 2008). It is *how* this happens within each SWS and across them that requires further exploration.

2.63 Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership assumes that the critical focus of leaders is the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities relating to improving pupil progress (Leithwood et al., 1999). Southworth (2002) suggests that modelling, monitoring, professional dialogue and discussion are all key features of instructional leadership. However, Hallinger (2003) argues that direct, hands-on involvement in teaching and learning is unrealistic in larger schools, and in many cases principals have less expertise than the teachers whom they are supervising. But, some would argue, within the SWS structure it is instructional leadership that is the most important as the shared vision must focus on teaching (Oxley and Kassissieh, 2008).

Certainly practices that support the development of teaching, such as modelling, observation, staff professional development and continual dialogue between teachers, should be a strong feature in SWS. In an extensive study of instructional leadership by Blase and Blase (2000) teachers were asked which leadership practices used by leaders

assisted the development of their teaching. The authors conclude that there are two key themes: talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting professional growth.

A useful study in one New York district (Fink and Resnick, 2001) accepts that principals often spend the greater part of their time on administration. They state that principals frequently delegate professional development to others, rarely visiting classrooms other than for formal observations of teaching. But this study tells the story of one NYC district that has developed a distinct culture of learning and teaching through developing the concept of nested learning communities. A strong central vision means certain practices are common across schools but schools are free to shape these practices. Common leadership practices within these nested communities include sharing problems and different ways to do things; a programme of ‘intervisitation’ where principals carry out visits to share best practice; principals and teachers attending conferences together building interdependence. These practices may well form part of a useful repertoire of practices in a SWS model as they encourage collaboration, partnerships and support between schools.

But which specific practices support the development of a shared vision of teaching in SWS? Supovitz and Buckley (2008) explore the processes and practices of instructional leadership. Usefully, they delve more deeply into what this concept actually means in practice. They refer to “medium leverage instructional leadership” (Supovitz and Buckley, 2008:8) which involves spending time on issues such as lesson planning and attending CPD. The biggest impact, they argue, is made by “high leverage” (Supovitz and Buckley, 2008:8) practices which are acts carried out by the principal that encourage teachers to examine their own practices: observation, feedback, individual attention and recommendations for improvement. These processes and practices could be much more easily embedded within a SWS structure. This links to the ideas, previously discussed as transformational approaches, concerning ‘individualised consideration’, which entails leaders knowing teachers and their needs well; planning professional development that allows for reflection and growth; and recognising the importance of this in relation to developing a vision for teaching.

2.64 Summary of Leadership within Schools within Schools

In summary, the studies of leadership in SWS are scarce. We accept that the development of small learning communities with common aims and a shared vision for how to move the school forward are critical within each small school and across the whole organisation. We also accept the need to develop a powerful vision for teaching. Leadership models can provide a theoretical framework, although leadership is contextual and contingent. Therefore different leaders may use different models at different times and for different purposes. Arguably it is what leaders are doing on a day-to-day basis to maximise the benefits of being small that is crucial. Clearly there are challenges with the SWS model that need further exploration, particularly with respect to how each school develops its own distinctive identity within a common vision for the whole institution. This links to the notion explored in the next section on system leadership.

2.65 System Leadership

What is meant by this relatively new notion of ‘system leadership’ and how can this concept be applied to vision building in a SWS model?

Ballantyne et al. (2006) define the broad idea of system leaders:

System leaders are leaders who build capacity within their own schools and also work beyond their school on behalf of all children in their locality. They are moved to make a difference-and to do so across a local system and in partnership with others. We should think of system leaders as of the system (rather than as heroic leaders); creative and skilled individuals to be sure, but nurtured, supported and promoted by systems that they build around themselves and, crucially, by the skilled and creative colleagues with whom they work

(Ballantyne et al., 2006:2)

System leaders are those who work beyond their own schools, through moral principles, to do their best for all pupils. Hopkins (2009) states that significant levels of autonomy and accountability for schools can lead to overt competition. In system leadership this is replaced by collaboration between schools. But system leadership refers to leaders supporting and collaborating beyond their own schools. This is very different from an

organisation that maintains its identity as one organisation but is comprised of different subunits, as in my study, although the ideas can still be usefully applied:

The system leader acts as a curriculum or pedagogic innovator, who with their staff develop an exemplary curriculum, teaching and assessment practices and systematically share them with others.

(Hopkins, 2009:6).

However, system leadership must not be about one school providing solutions for another. Context is important and what works for one school may not work in another (Hopkins and Higham, 2007). It is about systematic sharing of best practice. System leaders build networks of trust through relationships built on deep listening, collaboration and openness (Senge et al., 2015).

Senge et al. (2015) emphasise three core processes of system leadership, each of which has been considered in this literature review as important in building shared vision in SWS. Firstly, people need to understand the whole system, not just their own individual part. Each subunit in the SWS configuration is relatively autonomous but is part of a whole organisation. Development as an organisation therefore requires everyone to understand not just their own SWS vision, but also that of the institution as well. To do this requires Senge et al.'s (2015) second point, which is that leaders need to hear opinions different from their own. Finally, system leaders need to build the confidence of all, and not just solve immediate problems, but build a vision for the future.

There is an issue of interdependence: leaders should want to support other communities as well as their own, for moral reasons and through a strong commitment to the central vision. What is needed is a reciprocal exchange of ideas, which are mutually beneficial but do not sacrifice what is unique about each schools ethos and identity. This area is central to the research. How do leaders in a SWS model deal with the potential conflicts that arise from trying to achieve a balance between their own vision and that of the organisation?

Section Seven: Social Capital

2.7 Social Capital

The concept of social capital could be considered useful to reflect on in the context of this study.

Social capital is defined by Szreter (2000) as:

Social capital flows from the endowment of mutually respecting and trusting relationships which enable a group to pursue its goals more effectively than would otherwise have been possible.

(Szreter, 2000)

The main idea of social capital is that “Involvement and participation in groups can have positive consequences for the individual and the community” (Portes, 1998: 2). People increase their motivation levels when they identify with their own sect or community (Portes, 1998). Social capital is about building the links and shared values that enable individuals and groups to trust each other and work together (Fielding, 2008; Keeley, 2007). Social capital consists of the norms, obligations and trust that are developed through relationships within a community (Sergiovanni, 1998). These attributes are more likely to emerge in smaller schools or SWS where smaller teams stay together for long periods.

Furthermore, Portes (1998) refers to two different motivations to develop social capital. Firstly there is ‘consummatory motivation’: people feel a moral obligation towards their community and have bounded solidarity. It is this solidarity that increases social capital. People have loyalty and commitment to each other and their community through strong bonds and networks and therefore want to share materials, ideas, strategies and staffing. Secondly, Portes (1998) refers to ‘reciprocity’, that is, people provide access to resources on the expectation that they will get something back, a more instrumental form of social capital motivation.

The development of social capital requires both collaboration and collegiality. But what is the difference? Ainscow and West (2006) explain. Cooperation they define as closer links through tighter participation. Collaboration is when schools work together on

particular problems and is not always sustained as it is focused on specific objectives. Collegiality, however, is when everyone shares responsibility for one another's progress. This can create challenges, the authors argue. Results and the accountability culture that exist in schools can create a barrier, as what one school contributes to another's success cannot be measured in league tables. Collegiality requires a long-term relationship of interdependence. For this collegiality to become embedded requires teachers to be motivated by their own belief in the power of working together through developing trustful and open relationships (Ainscow et al., 2006).

In the SWS structure this requires strengthening social capital within each unit by leaders developing a strong culture and an ethos of working together for the good of the school. But, arguably, more difficult is developing this collective approach and interdependence across each SWS, particularly if leaders are encouraging each SWS to focus only on their own individual school. Relationships, and connections, must be both established and sustained in order to increase levels of social capital (Fielding, 2008).

We should also be wary when promoting social capital in a SWS configuration of two possible negative side-effects that can arise:

1. The strong networks and partnerships that can be built within each small school, which, arguably, can result in increased sharing of resources, ideas and best practice, can result in the marginalisation of those that are not part of this community (Portes, 1998)
2. The idea that a central vision becomes the 'norm', stifling creativity, innovation and diversity and resulting in 'group think' and contrived collegiality (Mulford, 2005).

Section Eight: Summary of Literature Review

In this final section I pull together the concepts that are relevant to this research. I started my literature review with a long lens scanning the broader literature on SWS, mainly from the US. The literature identifies many successes with this model and its effect on attendance, drop-out rates, achievement and behaviour and safety (Ayers et al., 2000; Bloom et al., 2010; Cotton, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 2002; Lee and Smith, 1995; Nathan and Tao, 2007). I have then synthesised the literature on SWS in identifying the potential challenges of this model:

The importance of relationships and ensuring leaders fully utilise the model to create more personal relationships that strengthen care and support, through frequent interactions between leaders and followers (Sizer, 1996; NASSP, 2004; Toch, 2003).

However care and support does not necessarily lead to changes in the practices of teachers in classrooms; this only happens through cultural shifts in ways teachers work together and through developing collegial approaches to teaching (Fine, 2000; Lee and Freidrich, 2007; Quint, 2006; Wasley et al., 2000).

This theme of the importance of a cultural shift in ways teachers work together links to concepts common in making sense of small learning communities (Cotton, 2001) such as creating relationships based on trust that are focused on pupil learning; such trusting pedagogic relationships become embedded in the culture of the school (Stoll et al., 2006). Much of the literature points to challenges around how leaders re-culture the SWS. In particular how do they manage to create small, highly personalised, distinctive schools that are not simply miniature versions and continuations of the large, previous traditional school (Meier, 2002; Mohr, 2000; Wasley and Lear, 2001). Leaders should seize the opportunity to do things differently and encourage different ways of working, in creating professional learning communities.

I accept that developing the whole community requires a focus on embedding shared vision and values, one of the cornerstones of the SWS restructuring (Copland and Boatright, 2004; Nehring et al., 2009; Toch, 2003; Vander Ark, 2002). Although the literature review also identifies that it is important for leaders to fully embrace the idea of discourse and debate around vision and values (Meier, 2002). That is the SWS restructuring should allow for different perspectives and opinions to avoid groupthink (Mulford, 2005), to ensure the school is a creative learning community (Watson, 2014) and enable every member of the community to have a voice (Copland and Boatright, 2004; Meier, 2002; Mohr and Dichter, 2001). This, the literature review suggests, is a challenge: the challenge of allowing 'messiness' in creating shared vision (Ancess, 1997; Hargreaves, 1994; Meier, 2002; Mohr and Dichter, 2001) and paying due attention to both individuality as well as collegiality (Hargreaves, 2004). How do leaders in SWS and across them navigate this challenge in embedding a shared vision?

This leads into an understanding that autonomy is of real importance (Allen et al., 2001; Gregory, 2001; Wallach, 2010). How can a community galvanise around a central vision if they do not have the freedom to create a distinctive identity? (Raywid, 1996; Reed, 2003; Wasley et al., 2000). This, however, leads to challenging questions around how leaders navigate the challenge of multiple visions within one organisation. It is this understanding that is sought through this research.

This research study explores leadership and vision-building; I identified several broad leadership constructs important to this research. I intentionally avoided debating common 'labels' of leadership as I find these unhelpful. Models of leadership can be confusing in that, I argue, many of the leadership traits that fall under certain leadership 'umbrellas' actually overlap or have different definitions. Indeed leadership is also situational. That is leaders will operate different forms of leadership when in different situations and contexts. However, in terms of this study I identify the following leadership notions as important to the study, and how leaders in SWS develop a shared vision:

1. How do leaders motivate colleagues to look beyond their own self interest and develop their ability and potential to higher levels (Bass and Avolio, 1994). How do leaders develop a shared vision through enhancing staff commitment, participation, influence and personalised attention to individuals and their worth?
2. How do leaders in SWS distribute power and influence (Benitez et al, 2009; Copland and Boatright, 2004). What processes and practices do they use to encourage participation in the school and thereby increase feelings of belonging and commitment to the school and its central mission?
3. How do leaders keep a focus on pedagogy or instructional leadership processes such as coaching, feedback, the use of teaching and learning driven initiatives so that the school community are focused on a core mission to improve teaching, as advocated in the literature field ?(Fink and Resnick, 2001; Lee and Ready, 2007; Supovitz and Buckley, 2008).
4. How do leaders develop ideas around system leadership? (Ballantyne et al., 2006; Hopkins, 2009). That is the importance of leaders working beyond their own school. The idea of reciprocity and working beyond the parochial limits of your own SWS is an important concept.

5. How do leaders develop social capital within schools as well as across them? Social capital is a very relevant concept in vision building in SWS as, I argue, involvement and participation in groups can have positive consequences for building strong communities (Portes, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1998). Developing both cooperation and collegiality within the SWS and across them, could be considered a challenge (Ainscow and West, 2006). But I also accept, through the literature, that social capital can have negative consequences, namely the notion of marginalisation and alienation if you are not part of one small community (Portes, 1998), or that the central vision can become the 'norm' stifling creativity and innovation (Mulford, 2005).

Section Nine: Research Questions

In the light of my review of literature I formulated the following research questions:

1. Within the SWS structure, how are leaders in each small school translating vision into practice? What processes and practices are they using and why? How do leaders develop shared vision?
2. How does whole-college leadership take into account multiple perspectives in developing a shared vision? Through what processes and practices do leaders develop shared vision?
3. What challenges exist for leaders in SWS and what processes and practices do leaders use to overcome these? I turn in the next chapter to present my research design and the methodological thinking behind its development.

Chapter Three: Methodology

In this chapter I present an account of the research approaches and methods which underpinned the research design I developed in order to address my research questions listed at the end of chapter 2. I also consider the choices I made in developing the research design and their justification. The methodological discussion I develop in this chapter is organised into seven sections as follows:

Section one. The philosophical assumptions that underpin the study and how these have informed the research approaches that have been selected. I justify the use of an inductive exploratory approach.

Section two. Justification for the use of a case study and the advantages and disadvantages of this approach.

Section three. Justification for the research tools selected in this study: semi-structured interviews and observation.

Section four. An explanation of the processes and procedures through which data were analysed and presented.

Section five. The challenges of insider research. The adoption of a reflexive approach. The ethical framework.

Section six. Optimising the quality of data and findings

Section One: Methodological Approaches

3.1 Philosophical Stances

It is important, firstly, to articulate the philosophical stances that underpin this study. During the design of my research methodology I reflected on three questions:

What is the nature of the world around us?

What is the nature of our knowledge?

What is the nature of the processes we apply to gain knowledge?

Ontology is “a range of perceptions about the nature of reality” (Morrison, 2007:18) and is described as “the study of being and everything involved with being such as human relationships and the ontological worlds they create” (Burgess et al., 2006: 53). Is reality objective or constructed by individuals? A useful table of paradigms (Cohen and Manion, 1985: 41) displays two very different ways of thinking about the nature of social reality. In the normative paradigm a reality exists and is objective in the sense that it exists independently of the understandings and interpretations of human minds. In contrast, the interpretivist paradigm does not admit the existence of such independent reality; instead realities are socially constructed through the understandings, concepts and interpretations of interacting human minds and multiple realities can exist through differences in the interpretations of different people and groups.

This study is aimed at developing understandings of leadership and has developed from the ontological viewpoint that reality (in the case of this research, leadership) is constructed from the “product of individual consciousness” (Cohen and Manion, 1985:6) and consists of an individual’s mental constructions (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Multiple realities of leadership exist across the minds and experiences of different leaders working in different contexts. An assumption that has shaped development of my doctoral research is that the beliefs, feelings and views of participants about how leaders develop a shared vision in a SWS model, however dissimilar and divergent they may appear, are equally valid and bring a deeper understanding of how senior leaders are embodying vision and values in each of the SWS and across the organisation.

Ontology and epistemology are related:

Ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions; these in turn give rise to methodological considerations; and these, in turn, give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection.

(Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995: 87)

Flowing from these assumptions, the contribution my research makes to our knowledge and understanding of leadership will be based on a subjectivist or interpretivist set of epistemological assumptions; in other words, the claims made through this research will have their foundation in the personal experiences and subjective perspectives, preferences and understandings of those directly involved in vision-building leadership

in the SWS context under investigation (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Confidence in the authenticity of the knowledge claims I develop is grounded in the richness and depth of participants' accounts (see section 7 below for further discussion of this). A key underpinning of authenticity in this research is the development of a robust, coherent and ethical methodology that pays due attention and respect to establishing, interpreting and presenting participants' genuine and trustworthy accounts, however dissimilar their accounts are shown to be.

This research has been shaped on the basis of ontological and epistemological assumptions that the most authentic knowledge of vision-building in SWS contexts comes from developing an understanding of the subjective meanings that each participant brings to this research. It was participants' views, perspectives, beliefs and interpretations that were important. The general approach I took towards uncovering the depth of leaders' practice worlds, involved me investigating "from the inside, through a process of *verstehen* or empathetic understanding" (Morrison, 2007:27). The research sought validity through a full understanding, close observation and an interpretive approach (Newman and Benz, 1998).

3.11 Interpretivism

In the interpretive paradigm "all phenomena can be studied and interpreted in different ways, mainly because people and situations differ, and realities are not abstract objects but dependent on the intersubjectivity between people" (Burgess et al., 2006: 55). Interpretivism gives priority to revealing patterns and connections in data rather than seeking causality (Charmaz, 2006) and the emphasis is on giving meaning (Scott and Morrison, 2006). Knowledge is a social reality which is value-laden and emerges through individual interpretation.

This contrasts with the positivist paradigm which sees an objective reality that can be unearthed. In the positivist paradigm a clear theoretical focus usually exists from the outset and is tested through questionnaires, surveys or experiments, using random sampling and a 'neutral' researcher to improve validity (Cohen and Manion, 1985; Punch, 2005; Robson, 2002; Scott and Morrison, 2006).

There is insufficient theoretical or empirical evidence regarding leadership processes and practices that build vision within a SWS structure. A positivist approach would

require a set of variables or a hypothesis that can be tested. My aim was to generate new theoretical perspectives in relation to the research questions, based on the articulated perspectives and practices of those directly involved in the context of interest, namely SWS.

What was important in this study was to explore the complexity of leadership in SWS. It was a bottom-up analysis in which the researcher “keeps a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researcher brings to the research” (Creswell, 2009: 179).

The inductive, qualitative approach has been taken by Nehring et al. (2009) in their study on the potential challenges required of leadership in SWS. This approach, despite its limitations, came to interesting new conclusions. However, these conclusions were drawn from a single site and hierarchical leaders, rather than looking holistically at leadership through also seeking the perspectives of teachers and pupils. There was also no attempt to look specifically at how different leaders operated within each of the SWS and the challenges that this brought. The uniqueness of my study was not that it explored senior leadership in each of the four schools, but also that it compared and contrasted the processes and practices through which leaders translated the institution’s shared vision into practice within this distinct model.

3.12 The Use of a Qualitative Design

There are many research methods texts which discuss the differences between quantitative and qualitative research (Bell, 2010; Burgess et al., 2006; Cohen and Manion, 1985; Morrison, 2007). In this section I justify my choice of qualitative methods.

Quantitative research is often used for establishing causal relationships between variables, seeking verification (or falsification) of a set of well-formed hypotheses through the use of reliable scientific instruments and methods (Creswell, 2009). As there is such scarce previous research in the area of my research focus, I decided to adopt an open-ended, exploratory mode of enquiry developed through an inductive, qualitative research design (Creswell, 2009). Importantly in quantitative research the researcher and research object are independent of each other (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). In this study my role and position as an insider was important; my interpretations and

subjectivity were central to developing a full understanding of the data collected and their meaning.

Creswell (2009:8) emphasises that in qualitative studies “the goal of research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied”. ‘Thick description’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 10), a term used in qualitative research, is defined as “vivid, nested in a real context and have a ring of truth that has strong impact on the reader”. The qualitative approach is considered useful for exploration (Creswell, 2009) although Miles and Huberman (1994) claim that both qualitative and quantitative approaches can be explanatory, exploratory or confirmatory. But certainly the methodological approach in qualitative research lends itself to deeper probing of complex phenomena that the research wishes to investigate, as there is greater emphasis on the “holistic picture in which the research is embedded” (Morrison, 2007: 27).

It is this deep probing and holistic understanding of leadership in SWS, and particularly vision-building, that I was seeking. The structure of SWS is rare in the UK and the research site, Thornville College, has attempted to redefine traditional school leadership structures and the concept of organisational vision. The problem presented is quite unique: four small schools with their own distinctive vision, within a whole organisation with a central mission. Understanding how the vision is built and translated into practice within this structure was therefore complex, and demanded an interpretive, qualitative approach.

Careful consideration needed to be paid to the issues raised by Miles and Huberman (1994) regarding qualitative analysis:

1. The researcher only knows roughly what they are looking for. Therefore a carefully designed methodology must keep a focus on collecting data that will answer the original questions. I took this into account throughout the process, keeping a very clear idea throughout the research process of the processes and practices that leaders were using to develop and translate vision into practice.
2. The researcher is the data gathering instrument.

This can create many challenges in relation to a range of issues such as access, participant feelings, the demands on the participants' time, bias and the validity of responses. These are explained in greater detail in section 3.5 on reflexivity.

3. Data are in the form of words, pictures or objects.

The collection and interpretation of these kinds of data require time-consuming processes of collection and interpretation; therefore I needed to allocate plenty of time for the iterative and recursive processes of analysis and presentation of data.

4. The researcher can become subjectively immersed in the subject matter.

Qualitative research is value-laden and therefore the researcher can interact with what is being researched. Therefore it was necessary to approach all areas of the research with an understanding of the bias that I brought to this work. This could affect many areas such as the selection of participants, how interviews were carried out and seeing patterns in the data which evidence would suggest is not significant enough to report on.

3.13 The Challenge of Subjectivity

There was an evident challenge when considering my own subjectivity. I accepted throughout this research that my own subjectivity cannot be eliminated. My own values will have influenced the research design as well as data collection, analysis and interpretation. I had preconceived ideas, through my literature review, professional role, experience and understandings of this model, about effective leadership. For example I believed in the underlying importance of leaders fully utilising the model by interacting regularly with followers in creating a more personal school. This, inevitably, pointed to leadership processes that were less hierarchical. I also believed in the importance of leaders building shared vision through encouraging staff and pupils to feel ownership, creating 'buy in' and enhanced levels of commitment. This inevitably meant leaders at all levels accepting the need for levels of autonomy that allowed leaders to feel they were creating, with staff and pupils, their own distinctive identity.

These values informed my research questions as I was interested in the processes and practices that leaders used to develop this shared vision. I was not looking for certain processes and practices that leaders used to develop shared vision as I also accepted the notion that leadership is situational, personal, contingent and context related. That is,

leaders should have the freedom to develop this vision in their own style and way of working. Finally I accepted that each school needed to be free to create distinctiveness but I had no preconceived ideas around how leaders navigated the challenges of developing their own identity, as part of one bigger, host school. It was important, therefore, to explore understandings of leadership by seeking honest and credible accounts from leaders and teachers. But it should also be acknowledged that the different relationships I had with leaders could have influenced data collection. There was a need within my study to constantly reflect on this through consideration of thought processes that were recorded as analytical memos and a reflexive journal. In other words considering carefully my own thinking as the research was carried out. Writing about these thoughts helped me to navigate these challenges and reflect critically on the decisions I was taking.

Section Two: Case Study Strategy

3.2 Case Study

The case study is used to carry out an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context (Feagin et al., 1991; Yin, 2009): it is particularly suitable for new research (Eisenhardt, 1989) such as the research I report in this thesis. Given the lack of relevant previous research, I wanted to develop multi-layered, textured understandings from the perspectives of colleagues working in different contexts of the SWS under investigation, with a focus on similarities and differences in their perspectives, experiences, practice and policy preferences, beliefs and mind-sets. This focus on detailed, highly contextualised, in-depth understandings from a variety of perspectives at a single SWS site persuaded me that a case study approach would be very well-suited to this research:

Properly conducted case studies, especially in situations where knowledge is shallow, fragmented, incomplete or non-existent, have a valuable contribution to make.

(Punch, 2005:147)

In this study there were “embedded subunits” (Yin, 2009: 50), each separate ‘school’, which enhanced the case study.

The advantage of using a case study is that it allows for deep description of a phenomenon in a unique context, through data developed from a variety of methods, including interviews and observation. A disadvantage that is often attributed to small-scale case study research is that findings are often not considered generalisable (Bell, 2010, Denscombe, 2010). However this concept needs clarification. Bassey (2001:5) refers to “statistical generalisation” and “fuzzy generalisation”. However, both of these terms refer to the transferability of findings from one place to another but with differing degrees of confidence. This case study aimed to develop theory and identify key constructs and ideas related to vision-building leadership. These then could be related to other concepts and theories in the literature, a process that Yin describes as “*analytical generalization*” (Yin, 2009:38). Small scale studies can lay claim to wider relevance (i.e. beyond the site of the research itself) by influencing developments in policy and practice. Bassey (1981: 85), for example, argues that “well prepared small-scale studies may inform, illuminate and provide a basis for policy decisions within the institution. As such they can be invaluable”.

‘Relatability’ (Bassey, 1981:85) also needs brief discussion as a term and process akin to developing the wider relevance of a study, including small scale studies such as this. As the term implies, ‘relatability’ brings attention to the question whether a teacher or leader in another school could relate their decision-making to the findings and claims of this study. Whilst the context for this study, it could be argued, is unique, it does not necessarily follow that readers leading in different contexts may not find that some aspects resonate with their own leadership challenges in vision-building.

In summary, I did not seek generalisation based on statistical analysis, I aimed at wider relevance through a rich and detailed portrayal of the case, making the study interesting and important to professional practitioners, both within the organisation and also the broader educational field. It was “naturalistic generalisation” (Stake, 1995:20) that I strove to achieve in order to further general understanding.

This is not a descriptive case study. Yin (2009) refers to three types of case study: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. Exploratory case studies, such as this one, are conducted to address a problem that has not yet been clearly defined. Exploratory case studies are defined by Bassey (1999) as theory-seeking, as opposed to explanatory case studies which can be considered as theory-testing. Stake (1995) articulates these ideas in

a different way referring to intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. This case study was both intrinsic, because I wanted a better understanding of this particular case, as well as instrumental, since I examined the case in order to develop insight and theoretical perspectives. There was no attempt to use a collective case study, which would have required the examination of multiple cases in order to better understand the phenomena.

This was a single-site embedded case study. It consisted of the college and its constituent embedded schools, but within one site. The rationale for a single-site case study is twofold. Firstly whilst I had originally considered more than one site, each of the models of SWS in the UK is contextually different. There are those that adopt 'house plans', 'mini-schools', 'small learning communities' and 'SWS'. As described in the literature review, there is much confusion about the definitions of these restructured schools and how they look in practice. But this case study site has a relatively unique form of organisation in that the SWS, whilst not fully autonomous, are very close to being so. Staff work in one school, pupils do not cross over and the leaders have the autonomy to specialise the curriculum, develop pedagogy and practice and, importantly, they are accountable for the quality of teaching and examination outcomes.

To have explored a school with a similar organisational structure, it would have been necessary to travel to the USA where this form of organisation predominates in most urban areas. This was not possible for the extended period of time that the case study would have demanded. Secondly, and arguably more important, is that the single case study allows for investigation in much greater depth as far more time can be spent in the field (Feagin et al., 1991).

A strength of case studies, because of the scope for combining different methods of data collection and analysis focused on multiple perspectives and meanings, is that there are rich opportunities for "triangulation" (Denscombe, 2010: 346). In this case study I have used "data triangulation" and "methodological triangulation", that is, collecting information from multiple sources and using more than one method in order to improve the confidence in the authenticity of my findings. These methodological approaches and data-gathering tools are described in the next section.

But triangulation in qualitative research is not concerned with objectivity and improving “external validity” (Bush, 2007: 99); it is about creating richness through different data collected from different participants and using different tools. Triangulation in this study did not reflect a naive positivist concern for data convergence in order to improve confidence in the ‘validity’ of my findings. Arguably the term ‘validity’ is a difficult concept (Hammersley, 1987; Whitemore et al., 2001). It is just as important in qualitative as in quantitative research, but has different meanings: credibility, authenticity and trustworthiness (Flick, 2002).

Indeed, at the outset of fieldwork I was open to the possibility at least that there might be no convergence of perspectives, creating challenges for analysis but opportunities for new understandings and provisional theorising. This interpretivist model of triangulation, with openness to the possibility of divergence and convergence of findings developed from different methods, was intrinsic to my strategy for enhancing the authenticity of my findings.

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) argue that one should be sceptical about using terms such as ‘validity’ and ‘generalisability’ as these are not achievable. Better, they argue, to ensure ‘justifiability’. Justifiability, they claim, has several parts to it:

- *Transparency*: other researchers should know the steps that you took to reach your interpretations.
- *Communicability*: themes and constructs should be understood by, and make sense to, other researchers and the participants themselves.
- *Coherence*: Everything should fit together.

The biggest challenge to the case study design was to create ‘justifiability’. This involved careful consideration of how data were to be collected, from whom, and how to ensure there was a clear rationale evident throughout. Multiple sources of evidence from a range of participants, who are discussed in the sampling strategy, were used. A reflective journal was used throughout to reflect on decisions that were taken and the rationale for these. Changes that were required to how data were collected and to the interview questions were recorded in field notes (Eisenhardt, 2002).

Yin (2009) highlights other weaknesses that need addressing in relation to case study research: sometimes there is a perceived lack of rigour; the case is sometimes not easily

defined; and findings can sometimes be vague and lack clarity. This embedded case study had clearly defined “units of analysis” (Yin, 2009:31) to ensure the case had focus and clarity. Each SWS was treated as an individual case. The unit of analysis was the leaders within the particular SWS. The study then shifted and explored college-wide leadership and vision-building. The unit of analysis here was college-wide leadership.

The case study approach using qualitative methods is used when the case is unique and contextual and to ‘tell the story’, for example, Wallach et al.’s (2005) study of distributed leadership in SWS and single case studies on SWS reform by Nehring et al. (2009) and Wallach (2002). But case studies can be more than this. They are described by Cohen and Manion (1994) as a “step to action”:

They begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use; for staff or individual self-development, for within institutional feedback; for formative evaluation; and in educational policy making.

(Cohen and Manion, 1985:146)

One of the main rationales for this study, as explained in the introduction, was to encourage leaders’ reflection, to build knowledge and understanding and to contribute to the development of leadership and school improvement, at Thornville College. The research study aimed to be of use not only to local policy makers, such as leaders and governors of Thornville College, but also to academics and educationalists with a holistic interest in different forms of leadership, school improvement strategies, school organisation, personalisation and human-scale education.

3.21 The Use of Some Grounded Theory Techniques

Much of the conceptual development of this research was shaped by grounded theory approaches. Grounded theory is a strategy, not a theory (Punch, 2005). The rationale that underpins this approach is that theory is developed independently of any particular lines of research or theoretical perspectives (Strauss, 1987:5). In grounded theory methods participants are used as a source of knowledge and are viewed as experts on the phenomenon because they are experiencing it directly (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). Grounded theory is fundamentally different from other qualitative strategies as

central to the strategy is the fact that the research may evolve as it becomes apparent to the researcher what is important (Sbaraini et al., 2011).

The justification for using *parts* of grounded theory is that this research topic is in an area of underdeveloped research. This research comes from “newly developed professional practice and newly developed organisational contexts” (Punch, 2005: 160). Indeed empirical leadership studies, exploring what leaders are actually doing, are scarce and have so far been unable to reach robust conclusions (Firestone and Riehl, 2005, Hallinger, 2011). There is a gap in the knowledge of holistic leadership and a lack of understanding of the relationships between leaders in an organisation (Spillane et al., 2001). However, in an area such as SWS the gap is even greater, particularly in the UK.

We have no real evidence-based ideas or theoretical framework relating to how leaders behave in SWS in the UK because we have not observed or otherwise studied them sufficiently. We do not know if leaders in each small school behave differently, how they embody vision or the challenges that exist. Therefore it was appropriate to use grounded theory approaches in this study in keeping with the more general exploratory, inductive stance taken for this research.

However, whilst many of the key features of grounded theory were employed, I would describe the study as ‘partial grounded theory’ (Parry, 1998). Parry does not suggest two different research approaches, merely that many grounded theory studies do not, in fact, make full use of all aspects of grounded theory. In order to explain this point I refer to the methods involved in grounded theory.

In grounded theory the following features are evident (Glaser and Strauss, 1967):

Simultaneous data collection and analysis: that is, following data collection, for example, an interview, transcription and analysis are carried out and these inform both the sampling strategy for future research participants as well as the focus of the research questions.

Construction of analytical codes and categories from the data: no pre-determined codes are used, and although some theoretical understanding is needed, it should not be used to force the data into categories.

Constant comparison: that is, incidents are compared with incidents, categories with categories from different transcripts in assembling the grounded theory. Categories become saturated when the researcher is convinced of their importance and meaning (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This constant comparison advances the stages of theory development.

Sampling of participants is carried out using theoretical rather than random sampling. Participants are selected to contribute additional data when theoretical categories are too 'thin' (Charmaz, 2006).

Parry (1998) advocates the use of grounded theory in leadership studies but states that many studies fail due to lack of time to collect and analyse data simultaneously. Braun and Clarke (2006:8) refer to these as "grounded theory lite". They explain that researchers are using coding mechanisms generally similar to those used in thematic analysis and are often not conducting analysis in order to advance theory development.

I refer to these approaches as my research has employed many of the techniques in grounded theory in order to explain the phenomenon of vision-building in SWS, as opposed to merely describing it (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). However, not all collection and analysis took place simultaneously. The techniques used are explained in each section on research tools and data analysis.

3.22 Summary of Research Approach

With regard to the research approach, the study used a case study:

As a research method, the case study is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political and related phenomena.

(Yin, 2009:4)

The case study allowed for as much data as possible to be collected in order to investigate in depth the phenomena and to triangulate the different views and perspectives of participants, creating a more valid and trustworthy study. The SWS model is very rare in the UK and therefore the importance of this study is its originality, not its transferability or ability to be replicated.

Section 3: Research Tools

3.3 Research Tools

Epistemology, ontology and methodology are all interconnected (King and Horrocks, 2010) and so the selection of research tools reflected my epistemological and ontological assumptions for this study discussed earlier. The interpretivist paradigm adopted typically involves interviews, reflective diaries and observation as common research tools, and purposive sampling, all of which will contribute to contextual detail and attention to the perspectives of different informants to the study.

In this section I explain the use of semi-structured interviews and observation. A survey could have been used with a wider participant base to explore patterns of processes and practices that a larger number of leaders use to develop a shared vision. However, given my focus on a single SWS site and a commitment to working with a small number of informants in order to develop rich in-depth contextualised understandings from the ground up, I decided not to pursue a survey approach.

In-depth interviews were the main tool used in this enquiry. There is an obvious disadvantage with interviews as a data collection tool, in that situations are not always natural. How can you tell that responses are accurate? Combining interviews with observation and recording naturally occurring events, such as observing senior team meetings, were designed to go some way to alleviating this (Have, 2012), although I did not expect there to be any necessary straightforward alignment between what leaders observably did and what they were to say to me during interviews.

3.31 Interviews

Qualitative interviews should focus on meaning and experience (King and Horrocks, 2010: Kvale, 1996). Interviews are the most appropriate data gathering tool:

When the researcher needs to gain insights into things such as peoples' opinions, feelings, emotions and experiences then interviews will almost certainly provide a more suitable method, a method attuned to the intricacy of the subject matter.

(Denscombe, 2010:173)

Semi-structured interviews were used which were based on some key questions and ideas, but allowed for flexibility and probing of interesting responses or for clarification. Denscombe (2010) usefully states that interviews should not be described as either 'open' or 'semi-structured' as in most interviewing there is a sliding scale between the two. It was important to allow participants the freedom to talk about what is significant to them but a common core structure of questions ensured the main topics were covered (Bell, 2010) and that trustworthy comparisons across the accounts of the different participants could be made.

Grounded theory interviews which Charmaz (2006:26) refers to as "intensive interviews" need to be able to explore beneath the surface, seek details about participants' actions, slow or quicken the pace and keep participants on the subject. These are interview questions that are "open ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted" (Charmaz, 2008:28). The research participants should be given the opportunity to be regarded as experts, express views and to tell their story. The probing strategy used was aimed at optimising this contextual detail. It allowed for exemplification of points and claims, clarification of vague or ambiguous points and for congruence of accounts, which refers to when a participant made points that appeared to contradict earlier statements, thus requiring further exploration. The probing strategy was used to gain greater confidence in the trustworthiness and authenticity of accounts.

Interviews were all carried out face to face as I had access to participants and time. As each interview unfolded, each became more probing. Key ideas emerged and I was often testing these out, looking for negative cases and for examples to illustrate my main categories. It was an iterative process whereby I specifically asked more focused questions in order to seek answers (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014). Analytical memos were written after each interview and these informed my next interviews and the probing strategy used. As an example, if participants referred to empowerment, then I asked, what did this actually mean in practice? Why did line management structures appear more important in one school? What were the tensions relating to collaboration and why?

Interviews bring their own challenges:

Interviewing is not an easy option. It is fraught with hidden dangers and can fail miserably unless there is good planning, proper preparation and sensitivity to the complex nature of interaction during the interview itself.

(Denscombe, 2010: 173)

I implemented Denscombe's tactics for interviewing (Denscombe, 2010). He lists key issues for interviewers:

- Identify the main points;
- Look for underlying logic;
- Look for inconsistencies;
- Look for answers designed to please the interviewer or answers that 'fob off';
- Get a feel for context (would the interview have got different responses at a different time, for example);
- Keep eye contact and watch non-verbal communication.

Establishing a rapport was important. Kvale (1996:128) suggests that "good contact is established by attentive listening, with the interviewer showing interest, understanding, and respect for what the subjects say." He (1996:148) continues, "a good interview allows subjects to finish what they are saying, lets them proceed at their own rate of thinking and speaking."

In terms of the interviewing it was of real importance to consider carefully my role as a senior leader and how it could affect participants and their responses. It was important to be flexible and allow the participants to have some influence over direction as well as trying to adopt a non-hierarchical approach in personal interactions (Birks and Mills, 2015).

The purpose of the interview was to provide answers to all three main research questions. There were four broad areas of inquiry:

- How leaders were translating vision into practice with all those in the school community. What courses of action were they taking and what examples could they give?
- How did leaders develop shared vision and what actions were they taking?

- How did leaders develop autonomous SWS as part of the whole college?
- What challenges existed in relation to developing and implementing vision in SWS and what processes and practices were used to overcome these?

Appendix four shows the broad structure of questioning of leaders, but as discussed questions did need tailoring to the participant. Consequently there were slightly different emphases for leaders and for teachers (appendix five) but also greater scope for clarifying, probing and allowing participants to go slightly off track if needed. This was important as trust and the feeling that participants views are being listened to is important in this type of qualitative study.

“Purposive sampling” (Barbour, 2001:1115) was used to select participants. It involves selecting participants who will provide insight into the area of exploration. A total of 30 interviews were carried out. This included all four senior leaders in two of the schools and half the leaders in the third. It was not possible to interview the HOS in one of the SWS, although attempts were made, as he left during the process of data gathering. Three teachers were interviewed from each SWS. Several leaders and teachers who work across the schools or in more than one school were interviewed. No colleagues declined to participate. Teachers were selected using my contextual knowledge of the SWS to bring a range of perspectives. It also included those who I felt would have a real interest in the study. It was important, as not all teachers were being interviewed, to include a diverse range of teachers in terms of age, experience, subject taught and position.

A pilot study encouraged me to consider involving teachers whose views might contradict some of the initial findings that came out of the pilot. A full list of interview participants is presented in the findings section and appendix six.

Some theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006) was carried out after initial data analysis. I went back and re-interviewed three participants with a specific area of focus. One of these was with the principal as I wished to revisit the clarity of institutional vision and the conflict between SWS visions and the organisation. The second was with a school leader in order to explore further teachers’ participation in vision-building. The third was with a teacher to investigate more closely the tensions between the autonomy afforded to each SWS and the overarching need for collaboration and partnership.

Each participant was interviewed for approximately one hour. Some interviews were slightly shorter. SWS heads' and the principals' interviews were longer at around an hour and a half. Interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Notes were also taken during the interview by hand to record issues such as how participants were responding to questions, the language used and participants' behaviour. Time was set aside immediately after most interviews, to prepare an interpretive commentary (Stake, 2000). This was not possible in every case due to my own teaching timetable and other professional commitments.

Verbatim transcription (Poland, 1995) was carried out from the audio-recordings. I transcribed the pilot study interviews myself. Transcription is an interpretive act (Kvale, 1996) and allows the researcher to relive the interview, note verbal and non-verbal exchanges and avoid mistakes with key words, content and accuracy, thus each interview took several hours to transcribe. Therefore for the main study I arranged for a professional company to transcribe each of the interviews. When selecting the company, I carefully researched those companies that were recommended by research scholars. This was important in terms of confidentiality and data protection. Arguably, the researcher gains a thorough understanding of the data in the course of transcription (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Hence it was important for me to read and re read transcriptions, listen carefully to all audio-recordings and familiarise myself fully with the data.

Whilst verbatim transcription did mean additional data had to be scrutinised, for example, when participants went off track, it was important to show participants that their voice was being heard. This was about building trust and respect. Participants were offered the opportunity to read their interview transcription, although no one took up this opportunity.

Interviews were carried out during the spring and summer terms 2013 and participants selected the most convenient time and place for the interview. This did involve some challenges with participants rearranging the interview due to workload but it was important for me to maintain flexibility and show an understanding towards participants, who were giving up their precious free time to be involved in my study.

During the interview I frequently asked the participant if I could summarise their thoughts to check and review. This was a useful way of seeking feedback on the accuracy of my understanding. A summary was also discussed at the end. On some occasions I believed that participants were anxious about answering in depth, particularly when the issue was controversial or critical. Reassurance that information would remain confidential, I believe, helped alleviate any anxiety and allowed for a full and frank discussion.

In addition, four focus groups of pupils were interviewed, one group from each school. It was decided to use a focus group rather than individual interviews as I deemed it more likely to produce open and thoughtful ‘discussion’. I acknowledge though, that in focus group interviews one or two characters can dominate and some individuals may be reticent about disagreeing with others (Bell, 2010). I used a range of prompts, such as periodically checking if everyone was in agreement with statements made. Interview questions were slightly amended to suit the needs of a younger participant group, who might not have had the detailed knowledge and understanding of what vision is and how it may look. Pupils were selected purposively in discussion with the HOS. Appendix seven shows the pupil interview questions.

3.32 Observation

I considered that observation would strengthen this case study:

There is an over dependence among qualitative researchers on interview data, and above all their use of data as a window on the world and/or the minds of their informants.

(Hammersley 2003:19)

The purpose of observation in this case study was to “probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit” (Cohen and Manion, 1985:120). The ‘unit’ being the group of leaders within each SWS. Observation of these leaders and the processes and practices that they used in building a shared vision proved to be powerful and, more importantly, real (Moyles, 2007). Observation was used to gather more detail and to see how leadership and vision-building was being practised.

In qualitative approaches the researcher tends to adopt unstructured observation (Punch, 2005). The behaviour and actions of participants are observed as they unfold. Therefore I did not use predetermined observation schedules that are more attuned to quantitative methodologies (Punch, 2005). Categories and concepts for describing the observation data emerged later through analytical induction, rather than being imposed from the start. The advantage of this was to keep a holistic, larger picture in view (Punch, 2005). However, this did require careful logistical consideration of how data would be recorded and analysed.

Therefore it is important to explain what was observed, why and how. Some observation would be described as “participant observation” (Moyle, 2007:242), that is, I was actively participating in what was being observed as a member of the group. Some of the observation was non-participant or passive. Punch (2005) refers to this as ‘naturalistic observation’, where “the observer neither manipulates nor stimulates the behaviour of those whom they are observing” (Punch, 2005:179). However I acknowledge that any observation that is not covert is subject to some form of observer effect. It depends on how removed or otherwise the observer is from the actions and events being observed.

Arguably the greatest challenge associated with observation was my own views and expectations as a leader, which could have influenced the interpretation of the data. Objectivity is difficult (Moyle, 2007). Moyle usefully states that researchers need to be clear about the purpose of the observation. I accept that my own views and expectations during observation could not be easily removed. However, I attempted to lessen effects by ensuring that interpretation came from the observational data itself (Moyle, 2007).

Three executive team meetings were observed as well as a weekend residential. The executive team comprises the principal, deputy principal and HOS. The purpose of this observation was to see at first hand, the different processes and practices that were being used by senior leaders in developing a college-wide shared vision. Through this observation I aimed to bring contextual detail and real examples of how leaders were working together in developing organisational vision. Field notes were taken during meetings, with a particular emphasis on recording examples of shared vision and

identity, and apparent challenges experienced in translating vision into practice. It was useful to observe the actual behaviours of leaders.

Spradley (1980) helpfully gives some guidance on writing up field notes from unstructured observations and states nine points that should be recorded:

Space-the physical setting;

Actors-the people being observed and their role;

Activity-the recognisable patterns of behaviour that people perform;

Object-the physical things present;

Act-the single actions that people perform;

Event-the set of related activities that people perform;

Time-the sequencing of events over time;

Goal-the things people are trying to accomplish;

Feelings-the emotions expressed.

I sat as a non-participant and took field notes during a meeting that takes place weekly with the three HOS. I was looking at the range of discussions and how these relate to building a college-wide vision. Whilst this meeting was observed with no involvement or participation on my part, my presence could have influenced the discussions that took place.

Moyles (2007) states the need to be aware, and understand the effects of, observer bias. This is manifested in three different ways:

Selective attention: we select what we want to see;

Selective encoding: we make unconscious and subconscious judgements about what is seen;

Selective memory: if notes are not recorded at the time of observation, or soon after, our memory cannot always accurately recall what was observed.

3.33 Shadowing

A day of shadowing the head of school was also undertaken to bring further richness to the data and to record highly contextualised field notes about how leadership processes and practices were enacted by the head in specific everyday settings. I was able to record behaviour as it occurred and to make notes about salient features (Cohen and Manion, 1985).

Shadowing is a holistic and insightful method which can lend much to the study of organisations in all their complexity and perplexity. Shadowing can provide insight into the day to day workings of an organisation because of its direct study of contextualised actions.

(McDonald, 2005: 470)

The shadowing allows for “seeing the world from someone else’s view” (McDonald, 2005: 464). The shadowing brought richness and depth to how leaders were translating their shared vision into practice. It allowed for me to see what roles, actions and events were taking place to develop this shared vision. It could be argued that shadowing involves the researcher observing someone else and recording notes from their perspective. It should be acknowledged that my own views and perspectives are evident in my observation logs. However, I involved leaders in discussing key events and interactions throughout the day. That is, it was as important to hold (as unobtrusively as possible) brief conversations with each HOS at various points throughout the day, to gain their perspectives on how their actions were developing shared vision.

The aim was both to observe leaders’ behaviour and also to seek leaders’ reasons and rationales for enacting leadership in the way I observed. This allowed the leader to reflect on observed practice and also allowed them the opportunity to obtain feedback and be involved (Earley and Bubb, 2013). Discussion with the participant throughout the day meant that interpretations could be considered to have greater validity (Moyle, 2007).

Shadowing allowed me to develop understanding about leaders’ practices from an additional vantage point. It generated an additional data source for triangulation with interviews and other observations.

It should be noted that interpersonal relationships do come into play when carrying out such an intrusive process. For example, my relationship with one of the HOS was much more longstanding and therefore more trusting, perhaps leading to behaviour which was more typical. It is accepted that in this type of observation relationship and power issues needed careful consideration.

3.34 Diaries

Diaries were considered as a potential way of collecting data on leaders and the processes and practices that they were using to translate vision into practice. Diaries are easy to complete, are flexible and have a clear purpose (Morrison, 2007). However, I reflected on some of the disadvantages of diaries: leaders might have not recalled their main interactions with staff and pupils each day, it might have been cumbersome for people and that it might not have generated the thick description that I would gain through other forms of observation. However, I did, as part of a pilot study, use an interesting method similar to the use of diaries, the experience sampling method.

The experience sampling method (ESM) log was used by Spillane and Hunt (2010) to record what principals were doing at each of six points throughout each day for a week. Whilst the ESM can seem intrusive, it can assist in gathering data concerning what leaders are actually doing at each point. In the pilot study I asked one participant to use this process for a week and to link processes and practices to how they were being used to develop a shared vision. The participant, the head of the 16-19 school, used an APP that buzzed 12 times in a day and at each point he recorded what he was doing at this time and why.

The purpose of the ESM is to enhance depth and to promote reflection. In this pilot case it was used qualitatively to reduce bias associated with writing up diaries at a later point. The advantages of the ESM are that it surveys real time, does not rely on memory and reduces bias (Spillane and Zuberi, 2009). It helped leaders to record the processes and practices that they were using, in real time, throughout the day and over a week. However, I decided not to use this method in the main study. A follow-up interview with the participant, which included reflecting on the process and how useful it was for developing richer data showed several problems:

- Keeping up with the journal entry;

- Entries were often just factual statements of what the leader was doing at that time and did not contribute rich data of the context for the interactions that took place;
- Twelve short moments in each day of the week did show what leaders were doing, only at a very short moment in time. Therefore it missed the depth that shadowing would bring and for this reason I decided to abandon this research tool and instead focus on shadowing each leader throughout a day.

Section Four: Data Analysis and Presentation

3.4 Data Analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994) explain the processes and procedures for generating meaning with qualitative data and refer to the noting of patterns and themes, clustering of cases and drawing comparisons and contrasts. I explain how each of these stages was carried out with respect to my data. The aim was to create themes, a cluster of linked categories that conveyed similar meaning and developed through my analytical induction of the accounts of participants.

The data analysis was carried out in three stages:

1. Analysing the data related to question one. How do leaders in SWS develop and translate a shared vision into practice? What processes and practices are they using?

Firstly, each of the SWS was separated out and treated as an individual case or three embedded subunits. This was to allow comparison between each SWS. An important feature of the study was to explore leadership in SWS and to see the different approaches leaders were taking, as well as the issues or challenges that this raised for college leadership in developing the identity of the organisation. In addition each set of teacher interviews and pupil focus groups was treated separately to the interviews with leaders. Again this was to enable me to compare and contrast the perspectives of leaders, teachers and pupils.

The analysis of interview transcriptions was done using a process of thematic analysis: “Thematic analysis involves the searching across a data set... to find repeated patterns of meaning”(Braun and Clarke, 2006:11). Thematic analysis is a broad and flexible approach not aligned to a particular paradigm (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

It is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Minimally it organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic.

(Braun and Clarke, 2006:5)

I set out the strategy I employed below:

1. Reading and re-reading transcriptions, noting the key ideas that seemed to have emerged so that a broad understanding is gained.
2. Transcriptions were then coded manually to gain initial perspectives as a result of being being close to the data (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). Open coding is when the data are cracked open (Saldana, 2009; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Charmaz, 2006). In this case it was initially carried out using line-by-line coding (Saldana, 2009), which involves segments of text on each line being coded. This was time-consuming but important to ensure that nothing relevant was missed. Codes were noted in the margin. Coding came from the emerging data, not any preconceived ideas (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Initial coding resulted in large numbers of codes which then needed to be reduced.
3. Clustering. This entails taking a long list of codes and reducing them by grouping together codes that are similar and removing duplicate codes. This was done manually rather than using software. Software has its advantages in that everything is stored in one place, it is easier to find information and easier to amend/re-code, and clustering diagrams and the relationships between codes and categories can be easily displayed. But it does not allow the researcher to 'feel the data' and the immersion experienced from coding by hand can be lost (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003).

Six interviews from the pilot study were analysed using NVivo. It was important for me to learn how to use qualitative data software before the main study commenced. However, an initial attempt to fully code two of the sets of SWS data led me to go back to manual methods. I found the process using NVivo distanced me from the data. I felt much more comfortable starting again with hard copies and colours. Whilst this did, I believe, result in a much more time consuming process, mainly due to the constant

organisation and reorganisation of the data and themes, I preferred this approach. The use of software does not do the actual coding for you (Bazeley, 2007), it merely makes the management of information easier.

Each interview generated new codes. The total list of codes for each of the three interviews in each SWS ranged from 40-80. This list of codes was then reduced. This reduction was done by removing duplicate codes and by merging categories that were displaying similar properties.

4. Transcriptions were read and re-read and through a process of constant recursive comparison similar ideas were assembled as a category or theme. Provisional categories were recorded against chunks of text. The next transcript was then examined and categories were recorded in a similar way, and previously analysed transcripts were reread in light of new categories. Frequency counts were generated of both the number of times that a particular process was mentioned and the number of participants who identified this theme. This was so that I could explore the pervasiveness of a theme as well as its intensity.

6. Final themes were constructed. For each group of leaders, teachers and pupils; and for each SWS, five to six key themes were constructed.

In summary, these themes were created through a process of constant comparison, which involved comparing incidents, processes and practices that leaders use to develop shared vision, leading to the generation of a large number of initial codes. Groups of codes were collapsed into categories and categories were compared with categories (Charmaz, 2006). This process maintained a focus on the data themselves, not on where the researcher wanted to take them (Charmaz, 2006).

3.41 Data Presentation

Data matrices were produced. These summarised the key ideas and salient points by recording the key category, how commonly it occurred amongst participants, how the category linked to the development and translation of shared vision and a quotation to illustrate the main point. However, this does not mean that data were 'flattened'. The salience of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifying its importance but more about whether it captures something important in relation to the research question

(Braun and Clarke, 2006). It was important to tell the story, including reporting on quirky outliers or negative cases within each category. These were discussed in the text that followed each data matrix.

Each theme was explained using the ideas of participants. It is their voices that were important in these stages and therefore I deliberately did not refer to any literature or theoretical concepts. I wanted the reader to focus only on participant voices-to bring the case study to life, to focus on views, opinions, and feelings. There were three evident challenges to this: ensuring that participant voices were still evident in synthesised descriptions and accounts; listening to competing views in order to maintain openness; and representing participants views faithfully (Fossey et al., 2002).

For the second research question, how do leaders across SWS develop and translate vision into practice, the same techniques for data reduction, coding and categorising were employed. The difference in this section of the analysis is that it brought together the views of all 30 participants, teachers and leaders in assembling an account of leadership across the schools. Again, a data matrix was produced showing the main categories that emerged.

The final research question employed the same techniques of data analysis as previous sections but the analysis was focused on identifying the challenges that exist in developing and translating a shared vision into practice in SWS from the perspectives of all 30 participants. A data matrix was used to summarise and present these data.

Section Five: Reflexivity, Seeking Authenticity and Ethics

3.5 Reflexivity

Qualitative research acknowledges that subjectivity and participant values cannot be controlled or eliminated (Auerbach and Silverman, 2003). Therefore the researcher should not just acknowledge their own subjectivity, but should actively examine how this influences the research. This is called 'reflexivity', a goal of qualitative research. As the researcher cannot be neutral or objective, their actions should be scrutinised as carefully as the data (Mason, 1996).

Therefore it is important when justifying my methodology that I describe my own role, values and the biases that I bring.

I was a deputy principal at Thornville College at the time of the research and right through the writing up stages. I am a strong advocate of the SWS approach and the approaches of small schooling to enhance pupils' educational provision. I played an integral part throughout the design stages at Thornville College. This encompassed a whole range of tasks such as developing the vision statement, planning the curriculum, and developing the policy on teaching and learning through to the recruitment and appointment of senior staff and teachers.

I visited two schools in the USA as part of the planning stages, one large 4,200-pupil school that had retained its traditional structure and one school that had restructured into three small SWS. This form of fact-finding was particularly useful for exploring how the SWS system is used to personalise educational provision. Through these experiences and my own professional practice I had preconceived ideas of how leaders should operate in a small school setting in developing SLC: there should be fewer hierarchies, fewer structures, less bureaucracy and a greater focus on developing tighter relationships between leaders and teachers and staff and pupils.

But throughout the research I tried to keep a focus on the research questions and the participants' accounts in relation to these, rather than on my own preconceived ideas. Collecting authentic and trustworthy data, and interpreting these data with care, rigour and transparency, was at the forefront of my thinking. That is not to say I was ignoring or denying my own views on, and understanding of, leadership, but the findings and conclusions had to be rooted in the data, and not led by my own views and opinions.

I must honestly state that this was incredibly challenging and the most difficult part of my research study. An initial draft analysis of the analysis chapter required a rethink. I was drawing out key themes about which there was not enough empirical evidence to support them, and I also had not delved deeply enough into the meaning of what participants were telling me. I went back to the dataset and starting the coding and data reduction again. This meant that the period of data analysis took much longer than originally expected. However, I strongly believe that, as a result, the conclusions are more authentic and more truthful.

But perhaps the biggest challenge to reliable and authentic data when using insider research is power and influence. This was extremely pertinent in my own case study

because of my role as a deputy principal. How did I ensure, as far as possible, that I did not influence participants in the way that they answered questions or how they behaved when observed? What if participants did not wish to be critical of their leaders? What if leaders felt uncomfortable being open and honest about challenging issues, when being interviewed by the deputy principal? Mercer (2007) finds that insider research can result in distortion of data for two reasons: firstly participants can temper their opinions in order to sustain a positive, professional relationship with the research; secondly, as so much is known about the interviewers opinions, this can influence the data collected.

Case studies do put the spotlight on the individuals themselves. Getting close to people, particularly if the researcher is there over a prolonged period of time, can allow for depth of understanding to be achieved (Lieberman, 1995). But researchers need to be also concerned about the effects of their writing on those they are researching as well as the accuracy of their observations (Lieberman, 1995). This was a challenge. It required a level of sensitivity to the individual leaders, and the challenges they might have been facing, whilst also writing truthfully and accurately. I took these ethical issues into account when designing and carrying out my research and this involved:

1. Emphasising confidentiality of data. I made explicit to all participants that views would only be used for the purpose of the research project and would remain confidential. This was articulated before seeking informed consent but also immediately prior to interview or observation. In certain interviews I stressed this during the interview as well when I felt areas being explored were highly sensitive or difficult for the participant.
2. Articulating the right to withdraw at any point. This was done through an informed consent document, appendix 8.
3. Introducing the research to the executive team of leaders at the beginning of the project. I presented my research proposal to all senior leaders together at a meeting. The purpose of doing this was to:
 - Ensure all participants were knowledgeable about the study and what was involved.
 - Emphasise how the study might contribute to organisational improvement.
 - Build trust and confidence in order to obtain honest and trustworthy data.

- Answer any questions participants had.
- Explain both informed consent and the right to withdraw at any point.

I ensured that all participants could select the time and location for interviews, (Birks and Mills, 2015) and that they had the opportunity to read interview transcriptions, summaries and observation logs so that they felt fully involved in the process. A relatively flexible approach during interviews gave participants greater power over the direction (Birks and Mills, 2015).

Demonstrating integrity and honesty and forging trusting relationships were central to carrying out data collection. Understanding the relationships that you have as a researcher with participants, and the effect these relationships can have on the data, was important:

It is easy to stay where life is most comfortable, with people you like to get along with. But it is difficult to recognise the ways in which your view of the organisation is coloured and constrained by the network that you inhabit.

(Ball, 1993:39)

But it should still be recognised that my own interpersonal relationships with others might have affected some of the data, despite specific actions implemented to address these risks. Limitations to my findings are discussed in detail in the conclusion chapter.

Despite the challenges, insider research has many advantages (Bell, 2010): knowing the pupils, staff and leaders, the contexts, the micro-politics of the institution and, more practically, the travel issues and accessibility. The real advantage of this single-site case study using insider research was the immersion in the field with the opportunity to easily go back to participants for re-interviews or clarification, to observe meetings, to shadow, to record field notes and contextual detail. I strongly believe that as an insider I was able to collect much richer data than if I had been researching in an unknown institution, navigating new relationships and the challenge of sustained access.

3.51 Ethics

This study conformed to the core principles of the Framework for Research Ethics (Economic and Social Research Council), British Educational Research Association

guidelines (BERA) and The University of Leicester Ethics Code of Practice. Particular issues included researching with children, risk of harm to participants or the organisation, storage of data and the Data Protection Act. Approval was gained from the Research Ethics Committee in the University School of Education and from the school in which the research was carried out.

Appropriate consideration was given to the consequences of particular actions for society, individuals and particular groups, referred to by Stuchbury and Fox (2009:492) as the “consequential layer”. In particular participants needed to feel part of the research and that they would professionally develop from it. There might have been issues that were sensitive to discuss or could cause harm. Harm also includes wasting participants time or invading their privacy (Bush and James, 2007). Consequently, participants were fully aware of the purpose of the study, that they needed to consent to participate and could withdraw at any point should they wish to, referred to as informed consent (Bell, 2010).

It was important to be very clear on what is meant by anonymity and confidentiality (Bell, 2010) Anonymity is defined as “even the researcher will not know which responses came from which respondents” (Sapsford and Abbot, 1996: 319) and this was not promised. However, responses were confidential as neither the participants nor the institution were identified.

Section Six: Quality in Qualitative Research

Arguably the term ‘validity’ is a difficult concept (Hammersley, 1987; Whitemore et al., 2001). In qualitative research it is just as important as in a quantitative study, but has a different meaning, referring to credibility, authenticity and trustworthiness (Flick, 2002).

Tracy (2010) defines several important features of quality in qualitative research: a worthy topic, rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution and attention to ethics. The purpose of the research was made clear from the outset: to contribute to localised policy-making within the institution; to encourage thought and reflection of colleagues; to contribute to school improvement; and, hopefully, to be of interest to both academics and professional practitioners.

In this short section I summarise the key issues associated with creating an authentic and trustworthy study.

1. Time. The longer the researcher spends on the case, the greater the validity. This justified carrying out single case study research, which allowed sufficient time to achieve greater depth rather than breadth. Prolonged engagement at the site strengthened credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

2. Potential for bias. This exists particularly at the data collection point when doing participant observation, but also at the analysis stages when it is important that the researcher does not ignore or overly emphasise certain data in order to satisfy a conscious or unconscious bias.

I have explained the adoption of a reflexive approach in the collection and analysis of data. There was a need to recognise the demands and challenges of this type of research in terms of both the collection of data and their interpretation. Many interpretations are plausible (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Analytical memos were used as a way of charting the research journey, the decisions that were made and the developing interpretations and explanations. A page of analytical memos is included as appendix nine. A reflexive account is included as appendix ten.

It was not feasible to use a second person to review coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994), although as patterns and ideas emerged, they were discussed with a range of colleagues. Inter-coder agreement (Miles and Huberman, 1994) states that a second person should also code and there should be 80 per cent agreement. However, there is an alternative argument that coding is reflexive and therefore bears the mark of the researcher. There is no one accurate way to code (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3. At what point “*theoretical saturation*” (Denscombe, 2010:327) reached? This is the point at which data are providing no new perspectives. Can this point ever really be reached? Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasise the need to be wary of when to close down as this is usually more to do with lack of time or limited budget than being based on scientific grounds. I would argue that a better term is “*theoretical sufficiency*” (Dey, 1999:117). This focuses on whether the researcher has collected enough data to justify the theoretical concepts they develop.

A research planning grid was used to summarise the key methodological approaches used, table 1 below.

Table 1: Research Planning Grid	Professional problem Professional challenge	Research aims and questions	Research approach	Data collection methods	Approach to data analysis
	<p>Thornville College restructured into four SWS. Four small, semi-autonomous schools co-exist as part of one college. SWS are more than small learning communities. They are also different from ‘houses’, ‘federated schools’ . They are effectively ‘mini-schools’ This creates additional opportunities and challenges in creating bespoke, small schools within one. A particular challenge is the development of a shared vision, and how it is translated into practice both within each small school and across them.</p> <p>The study is professionally relevant</p>	<p>The research aims to explore leaders’ actions in developing and translating a shared vision into practice within each SWS as a whole organisational entity. It attempts to uncover the key challenges in doing so.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Within the SWS structure, how are leaders in each school translating vision into practice? What processes and practices are they using and why? How do leaders develop shared vision? 2. How does whole college leadership take into account multiple perspectives in developing a shared 	<p>This is a qualitative, inductive approach using an embedded case study design. It is investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. It is an exploratory case study, although it aims to build theoretical perspectives using grounded theory approaches to interviewing and in data analysis.</p>	<p>Interviews. Initially purposively sampled and in subsequent stages theoretically sampled. Semi-structured although more towards open-ended on a continuum. Some structure is required to questioning in order to keep a focus on the broad areas of interest. Observation of meetings. Observation of leaders’ behaviours in a typical day through shadowing.</p>	<p>Inductive approach. Coding and using a technique of constant recursive comparison. Key themes identified through thematic analysis. Data are presented in the form of data matrices which summarise key issues and allow comparison between different groups (leaders’ and teachers’ perspectives) as well as across schools (each SWS).</p>

	<p>to leaders, governors and teachers within the organisation. This study is a reflective account of how the organisation is leading in this relatively unique organisational structure. It aims to be of interest to professional practitioners as well as academics with an interest in small schooling, leadership, vision-building and school improvement strategies.</p>	<p>vision? Through what processes and practices do leaders develop shared vision?</p> <p>3. What challenges exist for leaders in SWS in the development of a shared vision and what processes and practices do leaders use to overcome these?</p>			
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Chapter Four: Findings

This research aimed to explore and illuminate leadership in a SWS configuration. There are three main research questions:

1. Through what processes and practices do leaders in SWS develop and translate a shared vision into practice?
2. How does whole-college leadership take into account multiple perspectives in developing a shared vision?
3. What challenges exist for leaders in developing a shared vision in SWS?

The findings with respect to each SWS are presented in three sections:

- The perspectives of senior leaders;
- Observable facets of the leadership approaches of the head of school;
- The perspectives of teachers.

The emphasis in my analysis was to develop understandings about SWS leadership and vision-building in the terms used by the leaders and teachers themselves. It is their perspectives that were of primary interest to me. I go on to make connections between their expressed perspectives and observable facets of leadership practices and the findings and theorisations in the wider research literature where appropriate.

4.1 Findings from Greenhill School-Case 1

The school had 450 pupils, 16 teachers and four senior leaders. It was a highly successful school in terms of the quality of teaching and pupil progress (Appendix one and two contextual information about the schools).

The vision for Greenhill School was presented on the schools website:

We are passionate about learning and place huge emphasis on sharing and celebrating individual and group successes... A stimulating and mutually respectful learning environment encourages and challenges pupils to achieve their best academic goals

Vision-building activities took place at the planning and development stages of the school and involved pupils, parents and staff in developing what everyone collectively wanted the school to be like. From these activities the school motto 'Making aspirations a reality' was created.

The senior leaders from Greenhill School who participated are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Profile of Senior Leaders of Greenhill School

Participant	Role	Length of time in school	Teaching subject	Previous role prior to conversion
Isobel	Head of School	Two years	Sociology	Deputy Headteacher
Richard	Deputy Head of school	Eighteen months	Maths	Head of Maths in a different school
Ben	Deputy Head of School	Two years	PE	Head of Year
Anne	Head of Learning	Two years	Geography	Head of Geography

Five thematic clusters were identified, from 70 original codes:

- Processes focused on developing teaching pedagogy;
- Interactions and relationships;
- Direct vision-building;

- Consulting and involving others;
- Influence and decision making.

These are areas which appear highly significant based on both the number of participants who referred to them and the frequency of their occurrence in accounts, which provide a measure of the intensity or pervasiveness of a theme. This is summarised below as a data matrix, table 3, with examples of quotations that illustrate the points.

Table 3 A Data Matrix Showing Leaders' Perspectives on the Processes and Practices Used to Develop and Translate Shared Vision into Practice

Thematic cluster	Processes and practices used by leaders to develop and translate vision into practice	Number of informants	Frequency of occurrence	Link to shared vision	Quotation
Pedagogy and practice.	Collectively trying out teaching strategies, professional development, staff meetings focused on sharing best practice, coaching and modelling, monitoring, specific feedback, support, challenge.	4	45	The central guiding vision was to improve the progress that pupils were making through high-quality teaching. The small size was used to enable staff to work together collectively in implementing this vision.	'It is a small school model. Teachers interact with leaders all the time. Through the school meetings ideas are shared. Meetings are open and frank..... Then there is a forum for feedback.' (Richard)
Interactions and relationship-centred leadership	Talking informally about the vision, passion, interest, motivating others, positivity, interacting with pupils, care, being accessible, listening, valuing people, social relationships, empathy, trust, breaking down barriers between teachers and leaders.	4	35	The small size created more opportunities for interactions that were positive, supportive, challenging and helped build commitment to, and confidence in, the shared vision.	'It's those relationships that you build up. You have smaller core staff and they all talk to each other. It's almost like a big house really.... You have so many conversations about so many different things that it is impossible not to talk about things that worked in your lesson, things that have not worked and to talk about the pupils'

					(Richard)
Vision-building	Passing vision down through teams, informal discussion created strategy, focused on improving teaching, consistent approaches, explaining key actions and decisions and linking to vision, common shared language, celebration of success, praise.	4	34	<p>The vision was powerful but very much led by senior staff.</p> <p>Leaders were persuasive and influential in guiding the vision forward.</p>	<p>‘I constantly refer to the Greenhill language, like the words ‘consistency’ and ‘high expectations’ are in pretty much everything I say. Every e-mail goes back to what I want for the pupils. Then you can actually see it, when you start hearing staff using the common language.’</p> <p>(Isobel)</p>
Limited scope for consulting and involving others in decision-making.	By e-mail, through meetings with lead teachers, open forums, ultimate decision-making was with senior leaders, talking with people with diverse perspectives.	4	22	Leaders believed that staff had input into the direction of the school, although decision-making broadly resided with senior leaders.	<p>‘He does buy into what we are doing. He does bring his ideas to meetings. But I am not sure he agrees with everything so that’s not really what you want... people toeing the line.’</p> <p>(Isobel)</p>
Developing people’s influence.	Input through staff meetings, giving staff responsibility, distributed leadership, listening to pupils, encouraging risk taking, pupil leadership, empowering people.	4	22	Staff influenced the direction of the central vision for quality teaching through sharing best practice and collaboration. Although few examples of policy critique outside that of	‘People are listened to as they are respected, rather than through their position. Sarah does not hold a high ranking position here but she is massively respected by all her colleagues because they know she is a fantastic practitioner and

				formal leaders.	she completely buys into what we are trying to achieve.. so when she talks people listen.' (Richard)
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In addition to interviews, the head of school was shadowed for the day. These observations and short commentaries were designed to record and illuminate observable facets of leadership practice in specific contexts of enactment. Appendix eleven presents the full observation log. Data were coded and analysis involved the same techniques as used previously. Constant recursive comparison created the thematic clusters in table 4 below.

Table 4: Shadowing of Head of Greenhill School

Observable facets of leadership approach (codes)	Processes and practices.	Frequency of occurrence
Informal interactions with staff	Showing care. Accessible and approachable. Informal interactions. Positivity. Showing genuine interest. Use of humour.	34
Interactions with pupils.	Interactions with pupils. Listens to opinions. Talking about the vision. Shared language. Praise and celebration of achievements. Challenging and supporting pupils to strive for the best.	23
Teaching and learning focused.	Discussions with teachers. Talking with pupils about learning, progress and achievement. Observing in classes. Developing a shared language of learning. Reinforcing key vision of outstanding teaching.	17
Developing the influence of teachers and pupils.	Non-hierarchical approaches. Developing participation and responsibility of others. Dialogue with others. Showing interest.	12

4.11 Key themes from Greenhill School

Processes focused on developing teaching pedagogy

It was evident that Greenhill school leaders focused their work intensely on generating a collaborative and cohesive vision for teaching, and professional development was the

backbone of school leaders' work. Practice included coaching, training, specific advice on how to improve, and the use of every school staff meeting as a training forum for sharing best practice. A strong culture of collaboration existed where people learnt from each other.

All four leaders believed that a culture and ethos had been created in which everyone wanted to improve themselves, whatever expertise they had, and the openness of interactions had created a positive culture of risk-taking:

People are willing to say, 'how can I develop this aspect of my teaching?' 'How can I resolve these issues of engagement?' Subsequently more guidance is provided.

(Anne)

You also make them fearless in what they do in the classroom so that they feel okay to try something that doesn't work....Anne's really, really good at making staff feel at ease with that because she reinforces that all the time, that if it doesn't work, it doesn't matter. 'So what? Big deal!'

(Richard)

Yet one potential area of tension was about common approaches to teaching and learning and the centrally 'agreed' shared vision for teaching. Do the research findings suggest a 'one size fits all' approach? Did all teachers contribute to this agreed shared vision?

It was seen as important by leaders that consistent approaches should be used but leaders acknowledged that this was a challenge, and suggested that there was flexibility in personalising teaching. Teachers had strong input in developing pedagogical approaches:

Meetings are open and frank..... there has not been anything that people come back negative about... The ideas are innovative and allow for flexibility. Teachers have choice and can bring ideas that can then be shared.

(Richard)

For Greenhill leaders this was about accepting a degree of flexibility in practice, whilst also reinforcing collective approaches. There was an understanding that developing a shared vision, consistent approaches and team work overrode 'individuality'.

Interactions and relationships

Relationships were pivotal in translating the vision into practice. Leaders referred to creating a more personal school, being 'accessible', supportive and breaking down traditional barriers between leaders and other staff.

The school building was rather like a large house, with bright, open spaces that were referred to by leaders and teachers as 'break-out spaces'. Leaders positioned themselves in these spaces interacting with staff and pupils. Therefore whilst hierarchical structures existed, leaders, teachers and pupils were professionally and personally closer. The head of school explained that this means she knew pupils and teachers well.

All leaders described relationships as 'supportive', providing opportunities for staff to raise concerns or discuss issues. This was deemed to be easier in a small school model as people knew each other better.

I think that sometimes people perceive somebody in a leadership position and may not always be that forthcoming in conversing their concerns... Because you are in a small school environment with an open door policy, there is not that awkwardness.

(Anne)

Leaders at Greenhill had developed a community where people were bound to one another through mutual commitments and a set of ideals. The head of school used some profound words that described her values: empathy, respect, optimism, care, trust and passion. She explained the importance of empathy and gave examples:

If you acknowledge that people may need a bit of extra time, you give it to them. I cover a lesson for a teacher. They think 'oh my gosh' you are willing to do that.

(Isobel)

Passion is also explained:

I think if you show that relentless passion, then it is like an infection... You have to show that you are genuinely passionate. Staff mockingly joke about how excited I get...

(Isobel)

There was a balance being struck between leaders exerting influence through hierarchies and the informal interactions and the personalisation associated with being in a small community. The head of school explained that this reduction in professional distance between leaders and teachers was a natural transition when they moved into the newly restructured school, which resulted in the formation of closer relationships. Two leaders accepted that it was a different way of working, and particularly emphasised the 'intensity' of such continual, close personal interactions.

A strong praise culture existed, with all leaders referring to the public, high profile celebrations of achievements, a central feature of Greenhill's vision statement.

Direct vision-building

This theme referred to actions that specifically related to embedding the vision in everyday practices, through talk. It was about the use of a common language including such terms as 'high expectations' and 'consistency'. Talking about the vision was referred to many times by leaders: 'The vision is a core idea... we talk about it' (Richard).

The use of a common language was interesting and described by the HOS as 'almost cult-like'.

I constantly refer to the Greenhill language in pretty much everything I say. Every e-mail, it's about going back to what I want for the pupils. Then you can actually see it, I think coming out with other staff, when they start using the common language.

(Anne)

The vision comes from (Anne) really. The first part is her visual-what she wants the school to be. For example, the staff are really clear that she is less concerned about attainment and more about progress. This comes out in every conversation that we have.

(Richard)

Leaders explained the importance, when justifying decisions, of always reminding staff and pupils of the agreed key vision.

Influence, ownership and consultation

This theme related to leaders' actions in developing feelings of ownership and staff and pupil influences in the strategic direction of the school. I include the consultation in this theme as some of the ideas are interrelated.

Leaders referred to staff being 'empowered'. Examples included developing the influence of less-experienced staff and giving them roles and responsibilities to lead on initiatives such as gifted and talented, pupil voice and subject leadership.

Staff come and show me things, ideas that they have got about what they want to do and what they want to roll with Also we get the whole staff team involved. Like with science week, suggested by one of the science teachers. We dedicated a whole staff meeting to this.

(Isobel)

However, on one hand leaders wanted to encourage active participation of all; on the other, formal authority was still deemed important. The head of school stated that she usually had clear ideas from the outset of the direction in which she wished to take the school in. A model of persuasion could be seen. This was about reinforcing how well the school was doing, praise, building people's confidences and developing their commitment.

Few *formal* systems existed for teachers to influence direction or make decisions, such as involvement in voting, committees or openly critiquing policy; however informally leaders were listening and taking ideas on board:

I am always ready to listen and pick up on fresh ideas... If there was a new approach to doing things I would be one of the first people to encourage that.

(Richard)

The deputy head of school gave an enlightening response that showed that decision-making could be delegated and risks could be taken:

Helen wanted to try and approach where year 10 did early entry. It was something that, if I am honest, I always had reservations about. But she felt strongly that it was something she wanted to explore, and felt confident that it was an approach that would prove fruitful. It was right to allow Helen to try that...and then afterwards evaluate.

(Richard)

How did leaders embrace those who might have appeared to be on the margins of the community, or not fully committed to the vision? Leaders referred to having a degree of flexibility, keeping people actively involved and recognising the experience of staff, an example of which was the appointment of a colleague as a 'lead coach' to disseminate best practice. However, the head of school acknowledged that this could result in people 'toeing the line' as opposed to genuine commitment.

4.12 Teachers' Perspectives on how Leaders Develop and Translate Shared Vision into Practice in SWS Model

Three of the 15 teachers were purposively sampled based on my own contextual knowledge and representing different ranges and experience. Key themes were identified through the same data analysis procedure as was used with senior leaders. A total of 44 codes were generated and from these codes four themes were identified: interpersonal relationships and interactions, pedagogy, developing influence and collective ethos.

Table 5 Profile of Teachers from Greenhill School

Participant	Role	Teaching years	Subject	Length at school
Denise	Teacher	9 months	Science	9 months
Susan	Lead teacher	6 years	Science	2 years plus 4 years in pre-conversion school
Charles	Teacher	20	Maths	2 years plus 4 years in pre-conversion school

Table 6 Data Matrix Displaying Teachers Perspectives on Leadership Processes and Practices Used to Develop and Translate Shared Vision into Practice

Theme	Processes and practices used by leaders to develop and translate vision into practice	Number of informants	Frequency of occurrence	Link to shared vision	Quotation
Interactions and relationships.	Positive interactions between leaders and teachers, modelling, confidence-building, praise, openness, honesty, support, emotion and passion, non-hierarchical, robust but approachable, pressure, culture of everyone wanting to be the best they can be, monitoring for improvement.	3	21	Leaders' actions in developing and translating vision into practice were relationship-centred.	'It sounds silly, but you can tell that they are putting their absolute heart and soul into it. It is an emotional career as well as a career.' (Susan)
Focused on teaching pedagogy	Professional development, sharing best practice, leaders continually talking about teaching, specific feedback, consistency of approaches, clear purpose linked to vision.	3	10	Leaders had developed a collaborative, collegial ethos focused on professional development and sharing best practice.	'We know specifically what we are doing and how this relates to the bigger picture.... to progress the students, to progress us as professionals and to be an outstanding school. It's reinforced constantly in staff meetings and CPD.'

					(Denise)
Developing people's influence.	Distant from formal decision-making, pupils had input but not power, decisions were justified and linked to vision, influence through staff meetings, input through interactions.	3	9	<p>The vision was powerful but very much led by senior staff.</p> <p>Senior staff built the confidence of staff in driving forward the key vision.</p>	<p>'Everyone likes to feel valued. That your contribution is heard, even if it is not accepted ... You need a vision, goal and clear steps to achieve these goals. So everyone can have their say but ultimately not everyone has an input into that final decision.'</p> <p>(Charles)</p>
Collective ethos	Clear strong vision, but SLT-led, reinforcing the bigger picture, collectively clear, strong ethos had been generated.	3	7	<p>The vision was evidently strong. It was a vision led by head of school but which people bought into.</p>	<p>'I think that it is very clear to each teacher that everyone plays a part in making that vision... I think there is a strong group ethos in the school. We are very together.'</p> <p>(Susan)</p>

Relationships and interactions

Two of the three teachers interviewed felt that interactions, relationships and accessibility were fundamentally important. One teacher described leaders as 'robust but approachable'. The reduced professional distance between leaders and teachers had helped to develop strong, positive, and supportive relationships. Challenge, referred to by all three teachers, was also a strong feature; by this, I refer to the high expectations and relentless drive on the part of leaders to improve teaching and the progress of pupils. Two of the three teachers explained that this resulted in a 'fear'. This 'fear' was explained by one teacher:

You don't want to let people down...It's quite clear where we want to be as a school, as a collective body. You do not want to be the teacher who is not achieving those goals.

(Denise)

Interviews with all three teachers showed a very powerful commitment to the vision and the community of which they felt a part of. One teacher described the school as rather like a large family, although this was not felt by all staff:

People can feel pride in what they are doing and a sense of achievement, without necessarily feeling part of the family.

(Charles)

Personalities were important within this close personal structure and not everyone embraced this closeness, although it did not affect their commitment to the community, which Charles explained was intrinsic.

All three teachers emphasised the importance of celebrating achievements of individuals and of the organisation. One teacher cited 'praise' as the most influential leadership action in terms of translating vision into practice. Teachers felt valued and that their contribution to the vision was important. Regular briefings, notices and displays were all used to publicly congratulate people, to reinforce people's commitment to the vision.

Developing pedagogy

All three teachers interviewed described a strong focus on developing pedagogy. They recognised that leaders prioritised the improvement of teaching and the need to create a cohesive strategy for pedagogy through high-quality professional development, coaching and the use of the school's meeting time. A strong culture of collaboration existed:

Fortnightly we are introduced to a new way in which we can do things, whether it is improving homework, literacy, assessment for learning... Teachers are invited to share good practice. Anything they have thought of, that they have used, that has worked well in the classroom... We share ideas and discuss.

(Denise)

The staff team listened, discussed and then tried out different approaches. Observation of one of the training sessions reinforced this. Part of the meeting involved each member of staff sharing one practice they had used that week. Teachers asked 'What's the purpose of this activity?' and 'How can we apply it in the classroom?' It was seen as important by teachers that consistent approaches are used, but this was not without difficulties:

When things are rolled out, which is part of the success of Greenhill-things are rolled out in consistency.... That's when the pupils have a clear vision and understanding of what is expected of them. But sometimes, especially in science, it won't fit.

(Susan)

Consultation, influence and decision making

Teachers perspectives showed that whilst they had input, whole-school decision-making broadly resided with senior leaders. This did not necessarily affect people's commitment to the core vision.

As one teacher explained:

It's because they are the leaders. With your leadership comes more responsibility. I do not have the same responsibility as SLT, so ultimately they make decisions. I can have an opinion and inform their decision, but I do not make decisions, apart from the daily decisions I make in the classroom.

(Denise)

The data from all three teacher interviews showed that they expected leaders to make decisions because of the experience and expertise that they had. This was likely to have arisen from a lack of experience of different models of decision-making and input, particularly within such a new and different structure.

Teachers evidently felt consulted and that they had input. Nonetheless, none of the teachers interviewed gave examples of being involved in strategic decision-making or in policy critique.

Collective ethos

Teachers perspectives indicated that there was a powerful group identity. This had been developed by leaders who constantly reinforced the key vision:

We know how what we do relates to the bigger picture..... It is clear where we want to be as a collective body.

(Denise)

One teacher described daily interactions with leaders that conveyed positive messages and the reassurance that everyone was doing well. Decisions were justified by leaders and related to the key vision.

4.13 Summary of Greenhill School

It was evident that a powerful vision existed within the Greenhill community. Central to vision-building by leaders was their compelling focus on teaching and learning. In this area strong collaborative and cohesive practices such as coaching, training and sharing best practice embedded the vision. The influence of staff in developing a vision for teaching could be seen through leaders' and teachers' responses regarding their involvement in these practices.

Involvement of teachers and pupils in decision-making and policy development in other areas was somewhat less clear. The clear lack of depth in leaders' responses in this area, corroborated by teachers' perspectives, indicated that the direction of the school was driven by the head of school. Why then did teachers appear so committed to this vision? What explanations were most plausible?

1. A very heavy focus on teaching. This was what everyone was in the job for. It ignited passion, interest and engagement in people. This enthusiasm for a strategy that was collectively driven by all staff helped to build teamwork and bound people together. As one senior leader commented:

You're making them excited about different approaches and they're having fun.

(Richard)

2. This work was then strengthened by significant leader actions that rewarded, praised, reinforced vision and built the confidence of the community that 'we are doing well'. Personal qualities in leaders including genuine passion, interest, respect and empathy were the foundations of strong, trusting relationships that were used to galvanise staff to translate vision into something more than just words.

3. The small school size was utilised fully to deepen relationships. More frequent interactions occurred between leaders and followers than had existed in the previous structure. This had resulted in the creation of a much more personal 'human-scale' school.

A vision statement should be a guiding force for change. It was pertinent then to look again at the key vision statement for Greenhill School and relate it to what had been seen.

Key phrases from this vision statement were:

- A hub of excitement, energy and enthusiasm;
- High expectations of all and the need to persevere to reach challenging goals;
- Constant recognition of, and praise for, achievements-both individual and collective;

- Consistent practices and strategies rolled out across the school.

All these were strongly referred to by both leaders and teachers. The area of consultation, influence and decision-making were notably absent from the vision statement. There appeared to be no difference between the espoused vision and the vision in practice.

4.2 Findings from Brownhill School-Case Two

The school had 450 pupils from a range of backgrounds. Contextually the school had a challenging intake with significantly below-average prior attainment, high levels of social deprivation and special educational needs. The school had experienced many challenges: significant changes in leadership in the year before the study commenced and examination results that had been very low for two years. Performance data prior to SWS conversion and for two years after is included as appendices one and two.

The vision for Brownhill School, published on their website stated:

Brownhill School celebrates success both on an individual and school level. The learning environment is one of a constant drive for all to achieve their very best, where all should feel happy, confident and safe.

The vision had been developed further by the senior team following staff and pupil input through questionnaires. The statement, 'A world of possibilities' was used to create a tree with six branches that emphasised how pupils would develop as learners. This tree was displayed in every classroom.

4.21 Leaders Perspectives on Developing Shared Vision

Coding and constant recursive comparison resulted in 69 codes being reduced to four thematic clusters: Team-building, structure and organisation, teaching-and learning-focused and input to vision.

Table 7: Profile of Senior Leaders at Brownhill School

Participant	Role	Length of time in school	Teaching subject	Previous role prior to conversion
Mark	Head of School	One year	PE	Assistant Head in another school
Craig	Deputy Head of school	9 months	PE	Head of PE in a different school
Rachel	Deputy Head of School	Two years	Maths	Head of Maths in pre-conversion
Cynthia	Head of Learning	One year	PE and Geography	Assistant Head in another school

Table 8 A Data Matrix Showing Leaders Perspectives from Brownhill School on the Processes and Practices Used to Develop and Translate Shared Vision into Practice

Thematic cluster	Processes and practices used by leaders to develop and translate vision into practice	Number of informants	Frequency of occurrence	Link to shared vision	Quotation
Team-building and interpersonal relationships.	Assemblies, goal-setting, praise, social gatherings, feel good events, interactions, bonding, team ethos, enthusing people. Fairness, mutual respect, care, visible and approachable.	4	50	The development of strong team work was considered important in translating vision into practice.	‘It’s very much about building teams.... we all win together, we all lose together. A particular passion of mine is building teams and building groups and organisations of people.’ (Mark)
Structure and organisation	Line management meetings, teaching and learning committee, Senior leadership team meetings, subject leaders disseminate, consistent approaches.	4	26	It was important that the shared vision is consistently developed by all. Tight management structures were considered important in translating vision into practice.	‘I look after humanities and speaking with those staff within that department. Where each of the senior team are doing that, in the different areas, we are sharing our vision that we have as a senior leadership team.’ (Craig)
Teaching- and learning-focused	Professional development, teaching and learning reviews, developing teachers, teaching and learning committee, feedback.	4	21	A key component of the vision was to improve teaching and various processes and practices were utilised for this purpose.	‘I went to see him because his marking has been recognised as outstanding and he was able to talk me through it... Then he led the teaching and learning committee meeting...’ (Cynthia)

Consultation, influence and input into vision.	Individual meetings with teachers, pupil input, staff questionnaires, giving leadership opportunities to teachers.	4	21	Staff had input through line management, committees and questionnaires. But it was a vision determined mainly by the head of school.	' Mark has a very, very clear vision and ethos for Brownhill School and so I think that anything that's brought to the table has to kind of be run by him before that meeting, so you know you have his support.' (Cynthia)
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Shadowing of the head of school took place over a day, and involved recording the processes and practices being used and relating them to the development of a shared vision. These were coded (description in methodology) and from this I identified five key thematic clusters. These are summarised in the table below:

Table 9-shadowing of Head of Brownhill School

Observable facets of leadership approach (codes)	Processes and practices	Frequency of occurrence
Teamwork and building a cohesive vision.	Assembly, celebrations of achievements, involving people in organisation of trips, involving pupil leaders, reinforcing vision – drive, ambition, determination. Praise.	19
Personal approaches and relational leadership.	Strong use of humour, optimism, engaging, positive, showing interest in pupils and teachers, honesty with staff through meetings.	18
Involving others	Delegation of responsibilities, for example in organising school events, management of the school.	13
Teaching-and learning-focused.	Frequent interactions with staff, pupils and other leaders on exams, coursework and achievement levels.	7

Key themes Brownhill School, leaders' perspectives

Team-building and motivational strategies

The strongest category to emerge from leaders' perspectives on how shared vision was translated into practice was the development of 'teams' and interpersonal relationships. These were referred to frequently by all four leaders. What did this mean and how did it relate to shared vision?

It was about sharing success, setting goals and creating strong team spirit:

At staff meetings I will talk through relevant points and how that has impacted on individual staff or students. Most of these are around motivation and goal-setting. So if we have had a particular success with a member of staff who has taught an excellent lesson, I will refer to that and make it high-profile. We introduced star of the week to recognise outstanding contribution.

(Mark)

The assemblies are a very public time to impress your vision ... I think they have always been a focus of mine to get right, and to make sure key messages are coming out over and over again.

(Mark)

There was a great deal of development of ownership through social events, for example, 'the big breakfast' and termly dinners for the whole staff at the heads of school's house. These events were felt to develop a loyalty to the school and its vision.

It's about me cooking for them, but it's more about them coming round socially. Actually because we are all teachers, it's all we talk about. You're creating the shared vision there. Things like the 'Brownhill big breakfast' where we cook breakfast for the staff. A lot of the ownership and the 'feel good' factor in Brownhill has developed through those kind of things, those kind of events, if you like. Because when the pressure is on, you are tending to go back to conversations that you had two or three weeks ago, perhaps round at my house. When they come round and they felt special.... so people have got those strong links and bonds.

(Mark)

The head of school explained that he shared the vision through 'anything that I do or say in a public environment, through whole-staff e-mails'

When I talk about the school, I am talking about Brownhill, not the college. It's all about the vision for Brownhill.

(Mark)

The school had gone through many staffing changes. This, the deputy head of school explained, had allowed leaders to build stronger levels of commitment and team work:

When Mark came into his position there was a massive battle. But he had his vision. He moulded his team. He moulded them because he knows that they are

the people that are going to do stuff for him and for the senior leadership team.
For the good of the staff and the pupils.

(Craig)

Structure and organisation

Senior leaders referred to structures of line management and how these were used to reinforce and translate vision into practice on twenty eight occasions across all four interviews. The process of vision-building started with the senior leadership team meetings. These were consensual and all four leaders described strong input and debate, although arguably these were led by the head of school.

Mark has a very, very clear vision and ethos for Brownhill School and so I think that anything that's brought to the table has to, kind of, be run by him before that meeting, so you know you have his support.

(Cynthia)

— Leaders then referred to disseminating information and reinforcing the vision through line management meetings. These were individual meetings which leaders had with the subject leader. They appeared to be one of the main ways that the vision was developed. According to two leaders, it was at these meetings that staff could have input into the school vision. However, none of the leaders gave any examples of how teachers had influenced the direction of travel of the school or been involved in policy critique. But teachers did have the opportunity to raise concerns as explained by the deputy head of school:

We are able to communicate our vision that we have as a senior leadership team, and if any difference of opinion arises, that is a great forum for them to air their concerns. They feel valued, because they are given time to do that.

(Craig)

Leaders felt that teachers were comfortable with decisions that were made.

Hierarchical structures were important. The head of school referred to a 'middle management group'-subject leaders who met together with senior staff.

I think that group has given us a middle leader level which is incredibly important in driving school improvement. Instead of the top-down four telling everybody how it's going to be, how we are going to do it, we have another layer beneath us driving that as well.

(Mark)

Teaching and learning-centred activities

All four senior leaders described the strong focus on teaching, although leadership in this area was delegated to the head of learning, described by the head of school as 'a market leader in this area'. Processes and practices involved training and bespoke programmes of support to develop individuals. Leaders described how individuals had been asked to lead training in an area of their expertise.

A teaching and learning committee, comprising of teachers with responsibility, disseminated key ideas to the staff. Best practice was celebrated and shared. Whilst there were aspects of policy that required consistent approaches, such as the start of lessons, how work was marked and the management of behaviour, there was also a strong emphasis on flexibility:

But I do think that teaching is still very personal and I think that's important...
That staff are able to put their mark on their own lessons.

(Cynthia)

However, whilst leaders referred frequently to processes and practices used to develop a shared vision for teaching such as CPD, training and school meetings, findings do not show how leaders were encouraging collective reflection or evaluating, as a community, the shared vision for teaching.

This leads into the next theme on how leaders and teachers influence the direction of the vision.

Consultation, ownership and influence in vision building

Leaders described the different ways that staff had ownership and influence within the school. Examples were provided, namely, using an outstanding English teacher to share

best practice with the staff concerning marking; a teacher who led a professional development session with the whole staff; giving more junior members of staff leadership responsibility, for example, leading the schools 'debating' club; and a group of new teachers planning a cross-curricular theme day together.

The teaching and learning committee, which formulated policy and practice with regard to teaching, was a forum for developing the influence of teachers in relation to pedagogy.

I meet with the subject leads in each department and that has been instrumental in driving forward teaching and learning because they are able to set the agenda of what we need in Brownhill. We designed together the pupil progress sheets.... we have looked at marking strategies, literacy.

(Cynthia)

This may suggest that teachers who did not hold positions of responsibility did not have input into the direction of the school, although the head of school explained that any member of staff or pupil could make a contribution:

The doors always open; come up, knock on my door, send me an e-mail.

(Mark)

This did not necessarily imply that leaders were *actively* consulting staff and gaining their perspectives but it did suggest an open culture whereby teachers could propose ideas to the head of school.

But it was still very much a vision directed from above. The head of school explained the direct, honest approaches used with staff who might disagree.

I will see the member of staff and have a full and frank private discussion. I would hear their point of view and if it's something that I don't like, there's not really any leeway on it.

(Mark)

The head of school referred to questionnaires used to gauge staff opinions and that the outcomes from these fed into the direction he was taking the school. However, senior

leaders did not provide any examples of how teachers had influenced policy decisions. Pupils had the same opportunity and the HOS gave examples of when pupils had been involved in resetting the agenda for the school, for example, changing the curriculum at 14 as it was too restrictive and narrow.

Some consultation, however, could be described as tokenistic and a mechanism for persuading teachers to commit to the vision, rather than debate and discourse actively being used to determine strategy.

It kind of depends what you're launching really and if in a way we've, kind of, made the decision anyway, so we just want them to buy in.

(Cynthia)

4.22 Teachers Perspectives on Processes and Practices That Leaders Use in Developing Shared Vision

The perspectives of four teachers from the school have been incorporated. Data analysis and data reduction took the same form as previously and three thematic clusters were created from 39 different codes. These are interpersonal relationships, developing pedagogy and influence.

Table 10: Profile of Teachers from Brownhill School

Participant	Role	Teaching years	Subject	Length at school
Kim	Teacher/advisor	5 years	RE	1 year

Frances	Lead teacher	8 years	Science	2 years plus 4 years in pre-conversion school
Roy	Teacher	1	Maths	1 year
Madeline	Teacher	5	Spanish	1 year

Table 11: Data Matrix Displaying Teachers Perspectives on Leadership Processes and Practices Used to Develop and Translate Shared Vision into Practice

Theme	Processes and practices used by leaders to develop and translate vision into practice	Number of informants	Frequency of occurrence	Link to shared vision	Quotation
Interactions and relationships.	High presence, proactive relationship building, welcoming, high expectations, gratitude, praise, approachable, loyalty, community, competition, teamwork, support.	4	31	Strong personal relationships existed between leaders and teachers. These relationships led to high levels of commitment to the school community and a strong sense of loyalty to the pupils and each other.	‘Everyone seems to be in it together. There is a close-knit family feel...trust and confidence underpins what leaders are doing.’ (Roy)
Focused on teaching pedagogy	Professional development, sharing best practice, teaching and learning committee, consistency in practice, modelling, sharing ideas.	4	14	Leaders had developed a structure for sharing best practice through a committee of post-holders who reinforced the vision for teaching.	‘Cynthia comes in with ideas, good practice she has seen elsewhere. She shares it and we decide together what works for our school and our children.’ (Madeline)

Developing peoples influence.	Teachers ran professional development sessions, could make contributions, input to strategy was limited.	4	8	The vision was very much led by the Head of school although staff felt committed to the vision and translating this into practice.	'It's open to new ways and new ideas. If anyone has an opinion, I feel they are valued' (Madeline)
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Interpersonal relationships

Teachers all commented on the feeling of being part of a strong community. Roy described this as 'everyone seems to be in it together.... There is a close-knit family feel It is a cohesive and relaxed place to work'. Teachers explained that leaders were approachable, had high presence and had strong interpersonal skills.

Praise was used extensively through celebration of the achievements of staff and pupils. This took place in weekly briefings, assemblies, by e-mail and through informal interactions. All staff felt valued by senior leaders. These leadership actions all generated feelings of loyalty and commitment to each other and the community, as well as a sense of pride and identity.

Teaching pedagogy

All teachers referred to professional development programmes and support for teaching. Interestingly two teachers commented that frequent informal interactions in the staffroom helped share best practice:

Most sharing of best practice comes through informal dialogue. Discussing what went well..... As Brownhill teachers we know what kind of pupils we are teaching. Engagement becomes part of the Brownhill identity.

(Roy)

Again this was about knowing pupils well and planning to meet their needs, the key vision for the school. This was also apparent through the observation of one of the staff-training sessions, in which SEN teachers from the SWS community delivered specific training for the community.

Teachers could input into the strategy for teaching through the teaching and learning committee and the school staff meetings:

With the CPD sessions the staff are very much involved in sharing their good practice... there is one member of staff who is fantastic at marking and dialogue. She ran a session, and I think it had a very positive effect on everybody else because it seems it's not really coming from above....

(Madeline)

However, findings do not show how leaders were encouraging collective reflection or evaluating as a community the shared vision for teaching. Indeed two of the teachers stated that when initiatives were implemented, there was no follow-up to determine how successful these strategies were, or dialogue with, and input from, teachers in developing a strategy. This leads into the third theme concerning how the vision was influenced.

Influence in vision-building

Whilst all teachers stated that they could have input into decisions if they so desired, examples were not given of occasions when teachers had critiqued policy or made decisions, other than those who led subjects and had delegated responsibility through line management for the making of subject-specific decisions.

One teacher claimed:

I have input but am not sure if its policy making or anything like that, I just follow the school policy and am quite happy to do so.

(Madeline)

Roy, one of the newer teachers, stated that it was structured and organised and when asked about involvement in the organisation:

I always feel I know what's going on. I know the chain of command and I always feel in the loop.

(Roy)

There was an obligation, according to one teacher (Roy), to show loyalty to the school and vision: 'You have to be on that page if you are part of the school'. He also described this as the 'vision drip feeding down' (Roy). Certainly this was the view of three quarters of the teaching staff interviewed who referred to input and consultation. One described how ideas had often already been discussed and were set in stone. Another teacher went further and stated that teachers felt consultation was 'tokenistic'.

I think it's very much driven by the SLT team, very much. I do not think that other middle leaders feel they have much input into where the school is going. But that's not necessarily a bad thing....I don't think it's democratic but they are all still doing a good job and enjoy their job.....Ideas are not forced, people are not disagreeing with things and are not dissatisfied but they do not necessarily feel part of it.

(Kim)

4.23 Summary of Findings from Brownhill School

It was evidently clear from each of the datasets, interviews with leaders, teachers, shadowing and observation data, that the community was committed to the shared vision to 'celebrate success both on an individual and school level' and to 'ensuring the learning environment is one of a constant drive for all to achieve their very best, where all should feel happy, confident and safe'. However, the vision statement did not refer specifically to ownership, decision making or the drive to improve teaching pedagogy.

But the vision was a 'top-down' vision led by the head of school and senior leaders. It was referred to as 'Mark's vision' by several participants. Another teacher explained that you 'have to all be on the same page'. But even when some staff felt that active participation and consultation were lacking, they explained that this does not affect people's commitment to the school and its pupils. What strategies were most important in securing this commitment?

1. Findings from teachers' interviews suggested very high levels of loyalty to the school and the community. Certainly this indicated strongly that members of staff had bought into the vision, were committed to it, and would work hard for the benefit of the community they were a part of. Strong personal relationships existed, based on respect, and team camaraderie had been created which appeared to be highly influential in securing teachers' commitment to what was, in effect, a top-down vision. This could well have arisen from the school's need to improve itself following poor examination results, lower attendance and higher levels of exclusion than the other two schools on the campus.

2. Teachers might not necessarily have had a comprehensive understanding of different models of leadership, and perhaps neither did leaders. They expected the leaders to lead and make decisions and they expected hierarchies. This is not to say that the small size was not extremely important and did not create greater accessibility, less professional distance and more personalised relationships.

3. Leaders had developed people's loyalty and commitment to the vision through a culture of praise, recognition and a sense of 'we are all in this together'. Strong interpersonal relationships between leaders and teachers meant that a powerful team spirit had been developed in which loyalty was paramount. This meant that staff would go the extra mile for the benefit of the pupils in their small school community.

4.3 Findings from Redhill School-Case Three

Redhill was a mixed school of 450 pupils. It had been highly successful in terms of progress and achievement, despite being a school with very low prior attainment and high levels of social disadvantage. There had been significant challenges in terms of leadership. The first SWS head had left just before moving into the new structure. Two terms later a new head of school was appointed from another school. At the time of the research there was a great deal of fluidity and transition. The HOS had left before being interviewed as part of this research. Data were obtained from two thirds of the other senior leaders and three teachers.

It is with some trepidation that I report these findings as they are lacking the depth that would have come from interviewing the HOS and observation of the HOS's daily practice. The findings present the perspectives of other senior leaders and teachers. It was, however, important to still report these but with an understanding of their limitations.

The school vision was created in the planning stages of moving to the new site where the team discussed and drew up vision statements for the school. This was revisited by senior leaders. The website defined the vision as:

We provide a stimulating curriculum which challenges and stretches our most able whilst also supporting the needs of all of our pupils to ensure they all fulfil their true potential. Our school has a strong focus on academic success,

developing pupils' individual talents and unlocking creativity to ensure they develop the skills to thrive in their futures..... As a small school, we provide an individually tailored education in a friendly, family environment.... staff know each individual pupil and their needs, interests and the things that make them unique; our pupils' happiness and safety is of paramount importance to us.

4.31 Leaders' Perspectives on Developing and Translating Shared Vision into Practice

Interview transcriptions were coded creating 55 codes which were then reduced by constant recursive comparison to create three thematic clusters: interpersonal relationships, lack of teaching and learning strategy, and lack of authentic ownership.

Table 12-Profile of Leaders from Redhill School

Participant	Role	Length of time in school	Teaching subject	Previous role prior to conversion
Sandra	Deputy Head of School	Two years	English	Head of Year
Stuart	Head of learning	One year	PE	AST in a different school

Table 13 A Data Matrix Showing Leaders Perspectives from Redhill School on the Processes and Practices Used to Develop and Translate Shared Vision into Practice.

Thematic cluster	Processes and practices used by leaders to develop and translate vision into practice	Number of informants	Frequency of occurrence	Link to shared vision	Quotation
Strong interpersonal relationships in some areas.	Understanding, empathy, building relationships with teachers, quality of interactions, informal conversations, personal interest in people, care.	2	14	For some leaders it was important to build mutually respectful relationships. These relationships were deemed important in developing a shared vision.	‘For example a member of staff that had low levels of self-worth, picking up on the small things she did. For example, sending her an e-mail before she goes home for the weekend, telling her how much I appreciate her work ethic and her attitude with the kids.... To make sure she feels cared for and supported.’ (Stuart)
Teaching and learning strategy not embedded.	Team teaching, learning from each other, role modelling, professional development.	2	9	A key component of the vision was to improve teaching. Processes of some leaders were focused on coaching, modelling and sharing best practice although overall strategy was unclear.	‘So we had two training sessions, on marking effectively. Talked about the strategies and she is now trying them out, and in the next meeting we come back and look at what she has managed to achieve.’

					(Sandra)
Absence of ownership amongst teachers.	Some processes alienated teachers and isolated them. Lack of openness, decision-making by senior leaders only, lack of consultation.	1	10	One leader believed that teachers were marginalised and alienated from the school's direction. Commitment to vision came from teachers' intrinsic motivations rather than leaders' actions.	<p>'At the moment the whole staff reorganisation of some people, is causing massive upset across the whole of the staff. Because people feel its the wrong decision and its inappropriate in the way that it is done. So we move back several steps.'</p> <p>(Sandra)</p>

The themes that emerged are reported below:

The importance of interpersonal relationships

Both leaders spoke about the hugely positive relationships with pupils. The continual interactions focused on learning as well as more social aspects. Leaders felt that pupils were well known, that relationships were highly positive and that everyone was committed to doing their best, although both leaders claimed that this came from people's intrinsic motivation, rather than leaders processes and practices.

Interpersonal relationships between leaders and teachers, on the other hand, were fragmented. Both leaders interviewed eloquently discussed processes and practices that they used to develop strong relationships with staff to help build commitment; valuing people's contribution, care, empathy, trust and respect. But in one leader's case it was emphasised that these qualities had not been universally adopted by all senior leaders in the school, particularly with regard to building staff commitment:

I think I spend a lot of my time fire-fighting in that area all the time, across the whole school actually, not just with my team. I'm going to talk about it because it answers the question, but I think we have real issues with people feeling committed to the school. I think that every time I try and do some work around that and people start to feel more positive, something will happen that means that we're set back again.

(Sandra)

She discussed the fact that interpersonal relationships generally were poor. That staff were often treated badly, alienated, isolated and left unsupported.

Teaching and learning strategy was not embedded

Both leaders talked about how they, individually, adopted practices designed to build people's commitment, such as dialogue, coaching and team teaching. However, they also accepted that this was not a collective strategy and that few opportunities existed for the practitioners within the school to work collectively and collaboratively to share best practice.

There is not enough focus put on teaching and learning, again one of the most fundamental things at the school. Yet very little time is given to it..... There is complete resistance about us trialling anything new.

(Sandra)

Lack of influence in the direction and vision for the school

One leader explained that people did not really have input or a voice in the school.

People do not feel they can have a voice as when they gave spoken up they have been treated quite badly.

(Sandra)

She goes on to say that consultation was tokenistic and provided an example:

A staff meeting was arranged to develop ideas.... It ended in a model being presented at the end which bore no resemblance to the work that the team had carried out. It was dismissive and 'faux consultation'.

(Sandra)

A further example was the use of staff questionnaires, with some leaders feeling that teachers' opinions and perspectives were unreasonable, unwarranted and invalid. The other senior leader interviewed was unable to comment on how staff were involved in influencing direction.

Some leaders did, however, recognise the importance of debate, discussion and listening to diverse views as an important strategy in translating a shared vision into practice:

People need to feel decisions, whether they agree with them or not, are based on something they have trust in.

(Sandra)

4.32 The Perspectives of Teachers on Processes and Practices that Leaders Use in Developing Shared Vision

It has been challenging to present findings with any coherence. This is because the processes and practices that leaders were using were very different for each member of the senior team. In addition, many of the participants found it difficult to link back these processes to shared vision, as they felt unclear about what the vision was. It should also be noted that this school was going through significant leadership challenges at the time of the research.

However, the available data from three teachers and observation of a staff meeting have been used to create three key themes with regard to how leaders were translating a shared vision into practice: lack of ownership and influence, lack of strategic prioritisation of teaching and interpersonal relationships.

Table 14 Profile of Teachers at Redhill School

Participant	Role	Teaching years	Subject	Length at school
Mollie	Teacher	4 years	History	2 years plus 4 years in pre-conversion school
Graham	Teacher	6 years	Science	2 years plus 4 years in pre-conversion school
Heather	Teacher	4	English	1 year

Table 15 A Data Matrix Showing Teachers from Redhill School Perspectives on the Processes and Practices Used by Leaders to Develop and Translate Shared Vision into Practice

Thematic cluster	Processes and practices used by leaders to develop and translate vision into practice	Number of informants	Frequency of occurrence	Link to shared vision	Quotation
Challenge of ownership and influence	Some processes alienated teachers and isolated them. Lack of openness, decision-making by senior leaders only, lack of consultation.	3	14	Teachers did not feel any ownership of a shared vision. Most felt that they had a lack of input into the direction of the school.	'They will have their meeting, discuss their ideas and then they will bring them to the rest of the staff.... It's dictated. ' (Graham)
Teaching and learning not prioritised.	CPD, Teaching and Learning Committee, lack of meetings, no follow through, no monitoring.	3	11	Teachers believed that the vision for improving teaching was not high priority and there was a lack of collective approaches, monitoring and support.	'It's kind of expected that the odd conversation, the odd performance management meeting and the odd school meeting on general practice will be enough or it will happen anyway.' (Graham)

Interpersonal relationships	<p>Encourage, use of praise, some leaders accessible.</p> <p>But also lack of trust, atmosphere negative.</p>	3	7	<p>There were strong relationships between some leaders and teachers but the school was fragmented and mistrust and negativity prevailed</p>	<p>‘Trust is lacking in certain areas.’</p> <p>(Heather)</p>
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Lack of ownership and influence in vision-building

Whilst two of the teachers who started at the school when it first opened explained how the vision was discussed and debated as a staff team prior to the restructuring, they stated that the vision one year on lacked any clarity. This was also referred to by all three teachers and one of the leaders. Participants did not know what the vision or direction of the school was:

We had a vision in January last year, there were four pillars-but I might be confused... Beauty was one, and 'here, safe and learn' is definitely something that has been outlined as a vision.

(Graham)

I am not sure what the shared vision is. I don't know whether that's because everybody's settled in and other things have become priority, or whether it is due to a general confusion within, or lack of communication concerning the vision of the school.

(Mollie)

All participants stated that there was a distinct lack of direction, other than the pressure applied by senior leaders to improve examination results. There appeared to be a lack of a forum for discussing key values, vision or direction.

They will have their meeting, discuss their ideas and then they will bring them to the rest of the staff.... It's dictated.

(Graham)

Staff are afraid of the consequences of perhaps not doing things in the way they have been asked to. It's a sense of 'toe the line otherwise you are in trouble' and staff are then left wondering whether that's the correct line we should be taking or whether there is a clear line.

(Mollie)

One teacher did state, though, that the process of obtaining people's perspectives and involving them in the direction of the school came through individual meetings which the HOS had with all members of staff.

Whilst all three teachers stated that it was possible to make suggestions, these had to be pursued:

If you want to be heard you've got to speak up..... Because there isn't that forum I think sometimes it tends to be ignored unless you're persistent with it... If you speak to the right people and you constantly go, 'Listen, I don't think this is right', there is a chance they will listen to you ... but there is not a forum that allows everyone's voices to be heard in that context.

(Graham)

One teacher felt that certain leaders were approachable and listened to ideas that were put forward, but then these ideas would 'move up the management chain' (Mollie).

Hierarchies were very evident within the SWS. One teacher described how she viewed this model:

Its turned into a diamond basically. Because you have the SLT at the top. It expands to middle management in the middle and there are very few staff left to fulfil the criteria at the bottom.

(Mollie)

Interesting, though, is the opinion of one teacher that these professional distances between HOS and teachers should exist:

I do think that HOS should only have the final yes/no say if it has come through other senior leaders first. ... I don't think you should go and approach him. In a normal-size school I wouldn't see the HOS to speak or to talk to them anyway.

(Heather)

More recent actions taken by leaders to encourage a more inclusive approach included the setting up of an 'academic board'. This board consisted of the subject leader post-

holders for Mathematics, Science, RE together with senior leaders. However, whilst this created greater involvement for some teachers in influencing the direction of the school, for others it led to feeling even more marginalised and excluded.

Teaching and learning lack of focus

All three teachers agreed that there was a lack of focus on, and whole-school drive towards, improving teaching. This was both developing teachers individually and developing teaching collectively in the SWS. There was no embedded strategy for developing the key vision, namely, to improve teaching:

My performance management from last year was not looked at when setting targets this year. There was no discussion about how well things had gone last year.

(Mollie)

Here is an idea. Feel free to work it into your practice if you want.

(Graham)

However, this did not imply that there was no sharing of best practice. Strong relationships existed between teachers within the SWS and one teacher described how the structure itself could lead to greatly enhanced pedagogy:

You're communicating across subjects. It allows the opportunity to discuss with staff informally, ideas and things. That's the biggest thing. You have a far greater awareness of all students and not just those within your subject.

(Mollie)

This, she stated, linked firmly to the vision for the whole college to 'raise attainment and provide something which is very focused on the individual student... for children to flourish' (Mollie). There was an openness on the part of teachers to be reflective and collaborate:

All the doors are open. You can just go in and see what is going on. I think that really helps to improve teaching and learning and to talk to students and make it really personalised.

(Heather)

At the time of the research leadership was changing. I observed one of the staff meetings as part of the research, talked to staff and wrote field notes. The session showed high levels of involvement of pupils and teachers in developing teaching pedagogy. This was, according to one teacher, the first time a session like this had taken place. The session was led by a geography teacher, had been planned by a group of teachers and involved pupils and staff learning together about how to maximise learning through engaging group activities. The session revealed enthusiasm, collaboration and a strong focus on developing pedagogy that suited the needs of pupils.

Interpersonal relationships

Findings from teachers suggested some explicit leader actions that were creating strong bonds with pupils:

In staff briefing, leaders will say, ‘oh if you see this kid around, congratulate them on this because....’

(Graham)

Some management are very high profile.... they are accessible...They are keen to involve themselves in what’s going on in lessons without being pushy.... If you ask them to take a look at learning, they get very excited about what is going on and there is a presence.

(Mollie)

There was a great deal of public celebration of pupils and teachers achievements, for example, through displays and through staff briefing each week.

Interpersonal relationships between leaders and teachers, on the other hand, were fragmented. One teacher claimed that some leaders were encouraging, enthusiastic, supportive and interested but that some leaders were feared.

Another teacher who had close relationships with all members of the senior leadership team stated that there was an issue of trust for some, and that people did not know each other well enough yet. Another teacher held a similar view. But the opinions below are illustrations of the importance of interpersonal relationships within a small school community.

People do not feel they can go to Andrew primarily. They do not feel they can go and talk to him about things because of the way he interacts with people. But once you get to know the way that he does that, you understand that that's just him and that's just the way he responds to people.

(Heather)

Perhaps the small-school model amplified the type of difficulties that can arise when new relationships are forming:

The change in staff at that level was always going to cause issues.... It's someone you are not used to dealing with. It's someone you don't know, and you have got to get used to. It took time for it to work, just the clash of personalities, in the way in which things were dealt with. It didn't fit with what was expected, from both sides, I think.

(Graham)

4.33 Summary of Findings from Redhill School

Interpersonal relationships between leaders and pupils and leaders and teachers are considered of real importance in developing and translating shared vision into practice by both teachers and leaders. It was evident that strong, highly personal relationships existed between teachers and pupils, and some leaders and pupils. However, processes and practices used by senior leaders were very different. Some leaders described the processes they used as centred on building strong relationships, praise, honesty, trust and valuing people. Teachers also referred to such behaviours amongst some leaders. Nevertheless, as discussed extensively by the deputy HOS and all three teachers interviewed, not all relationships between leaders and teachers are strong. Some teachers stated that they felt excluded, marginalised and uninvolved when it came to contributing to the direction of the school.

Findings suggest that there were no systems for involving teachers in influencing the strategic direction of the school other than by pursuing their ideas with some senior leaders. This also extended into collective approaches to developing teaching. Two thirds of teachers stated that there was no real focus on developing pedagogy and practice as a community. That is not to say that teachers did not share best practice, discuss ideas and collaborate, but such activity emerged from informal social networks within the school, such as discussions in the staffroom, as opposed to training or school meetings.

It is clear from the data that a shared vision was not embedded with any degree of coherence. Staff could not describe the vision, although the latter part of the vision statement, which focused on personalising education within a small school, knowing pupils well and meeting their needs, appeared to still be driven by some leaders and teachers within the small school community. So it cannot be concluded that the vision statement itself was purely rhetoric. Staff were still very much focused on trying to make the SWS system work and overcoming the clear challenges that this structure can produce. But there was a lack of coherence from senior leaders in translating a shared vision into practice.

4.4 Vision-Building and Identity as One Whole School

Question 2 explores the processes and practices that were used by leaders across the schools in developing a shared vision.

In the previous section I have analysed the findings from each of the different SWS, treating each as a different case. In this section the research findings shift a gear. Each of the interviews had two parts. In the latter part I explored leaders' and teachers' perspectives on the organisational vision for Thornville College; and how leaders within each SWS, and across them, forged a coherent shared vision together. The third research question, and perhaps the most interesting and unique, considered the challenges that existed for leaders in developing a shared vision in a SWS model. What processes and practices were leaders using to translate a central, guiding vision into practice?

Data were gathered from all 30 participants who were interviewed: leaders in each school, the principal of the college, three of the subject advisors and teachers. Advisors were cross-college subject leaders who monitored and evaluated the curriculum provision in each school and delivered subject-specific training to subject teams. College leadership was provided through the executive team and comprised of each of the HOS and the principal. Several executive team meetings and a residential were observed. Participants who taught in the post-16 SWS, Greyhill School, have been included in this section.

Table 16 Participant details

The table below shows the participants whose perspectives were analysed, and the role that they had within the organisation:

Participant	Role	Length of time in school	Teaching subject	Teaching years	Previous role prior to conversion	School or Cross School position
Isobel	Head of School	2 years	Sociology	12	Deputy Headteacher	Greenhill
Richard	Deputy Head of School	2 years	Maths	8	Head of Maths in a different school	Greenhill
Ben	Deputy Head of School	2 years	PE	9	Head of Year	Greenhill
Anne	Head of Learning	2 years	Geography	8	Head of Geography	Greenhill
Charles	Teacher	2 years	Maths	20	Maths teacher	Greenhill
Denise	Teacher	1 year	Science	1	NA	Greenhill

Susan	Lead teacher	2 years	Science	6	Science teacher	Greenhill
Mark	Head of School	1 year	PE	12	Assistant Head in another school	Brownhill
Craig	Deputy Head of School	6 months	PE	7	Head of PE in another school	Brownhill
Rachel	Deputy Head of School	2 years	Maths	8	Head of Maths	Brownhill
Cynthia	Head of learning	1 year	PE and Geography	9	Assistant Head in another school	Brownhill
Kim	Advisor	2 years	RE	5	Teacher in another school	Cross schools
Frances	Lead teacher	2 years	Science	8	Science leader	Brownhill
Roy	Teacher	1 year	Maths	1	NA	Brownhill
Madeline	Teacher	1 year	Spanish	8	Teacher in another school	Brownhill

Sandra	Head of School	2 years	English	9	Head of Year	Redhill
Stuart	Head of Learning	1 year	PE	10	AST in another school	Redhill
Mollie	Teacher	2 years	History	4	History teacher	Redhill
Graham	Teacher	2 years	Science	6	Science teacher	Redhill
Heather	Teacher	1 year	English	6	English teacher in another school	Redhill
Edward	Principal	2 years	History	30	Headteacher	Cross schools
Lara	Advisor	2 years	Science	8	Science leader	Cross schools
Ben	Head of Greyhill	2 years	ICT	10	Head of post 16 in another school	Greyhill
Clare	Deputy Head of School	2 years	Health and social care	20	Head of vocational	Greyhill

Faye	Head of Learning	2 years	Business	4	Business teacher	Greyhill
Abdul	Head of Learning	2 years	Business	8	Head of Business	Greyhill
Marlon	Advisor	2 years	Maths	20	AST in another school	Cross schools
Phillip	AST	2 years	Media	12	AST	Greyhill
Angela	Senior leader	2 years	Technology	24	Head of Technology in another school	Cross schools
Jessica	Senior leader	2 years	NA	NA	Head of community education	Cross schools

Data reduction took the same form which was used to answer question 1, namely, coding and re-coding data. Through a process of multiple readings and constant comparison, categories were created according to three main themes:

- Clarity in developing and translating organisational vision into practice in a SWS model;
- Interpersonal relationships between leaders;
- Structures that support the development of shared college vision.

Table 17 Data Matrix Displaying Leaders' and Teachers' Perspectives on Leadership Processes and Practices Used to Develop and Translate Shared Vision into Practice, across the SWS

Theme	Processes and practices included.	Number of informants	Frequency of occurrence	Link to shared vision	Quotation
Clarity in developing and translating organisational vision into practice.	Target-driven, competitive, vision personalised for each SWS, autonomy, diversity, multiple visions, leaders translate vision in different ways, each school was distinctive.	16	71	The college-wide vision is broad and each SWS had the autonomy to personalise this to meet the needs of different groups. Therefore multiple visions existed but under a broad banner of raising achievement for all in a small-school setting.	<p>'I am not a great one for pithy vision statements but any organisation needs to know what it's mission is. Ours is very clear: to develop resilient learners who achieve their academic and social potential through human scale education. The vision isn't 'schools within schools' but the outcomes achieved by fully exploiting its benefits.'</p> <p>(Edward)</p>
Interpersonal skills and relationships between leaders.	Strong relationships between principal and heads of school- negotiation, diplomacy, degree of autonomy, professional respect,	11	49	Strong interpersonal relationships existed between the principal and other leaders. These were based on trust, autonomy, professional respect, consensual leadership that led	<p>'The principal and I, we've known each other for about ten years or something. So I just talk to him about all the things that are going on in Greenhill and we just chat frequently. We don't</p>

	consensual, loyalty, trust, informal line management, positive, engaging.			to multiple visions within one framework.	have any formal meetings.' (Isobel)
Structures for disseminating a college wide vision.	Executive team, advisors, teaching and learning group, HOS meeting, progress and achievement meetings.	13	31	Few structures existed that allowed for college-wide strategy to be discussed or debated. Vision was very much focused on each SWS personalising the vision, although strong accountability structures were used to check the success of each SWS in terms of outcomes.	'The theory was that the college executive would be really important at dealing with strategic issues. Issues that would focus on that shared vision. The reality is that it is more of an operational forum.' (Edward)

4.41 Key Themes on Developing a Shared Organisational Vision

Clarity in developing and translating organisational vision into practice

The vision for the college (from the college website) was stated as:

Thornville College is a school based on the principles of human scale education. Pupils learn better in smaller schools, where the curriculum can be more effectively personalised and individual needs met. Our objective is that every pupil should make outstanding progress in subjects that suit them, which they enjoy and that will challenge them. The small school model allows for much greater support and challenge as every teacher knows every pupil and cares about their achievements.

This theme was concerned with how leaders achieved clarity of organisational vision. In other words, how did the multiple visions from each SWS tie in with the whole-college one? What framework existed?

Firstly, the college principal, He summarised the vision as ‘What we have created, the organisation’. This comment seemed somewhat general but the overarching vision was to raise achievement using the more personal relationships that existed within each small school:

I am not a great one for pithy vision statements but any organisation needs to know what it's mission is. Ours is very clear: to develop resilient learners who achieve their academic and social potential through human-scale education. The vision isn't 'schools within schools' but the outcomes achieved by fully exploiting its benefits.

(Edward)

The vision statement itself encouraged, and demanded, that each school developed its own distinctive vision within a whole-organisational one. So how was this vision reinforced? Were there specific ways of translating vision into practice that each school followed?

The principal was very clear that as much autonomy as possible should be given to each SWS leader:

The role and actions of the principal are obviously crucial in that s/he not only interprets the vision and sets the tone but also intervenes to ensure that the overall outcomes are achieved. The principal can be no more domineering than heads of school if the model is to work. The principal has to give leaders the space to lead. This does not mean the principal cannot be proactive. It does mean the principal may not micro-manage. This would destroy the underlying principles of the organisation. The principal must adjudicate and intervene when necessary.

(Edward)

So it was important to explore the processes of developing vision with the principal. All three heads of school saw the principal regularly in individual discussions. It was in these meetings where the key vision was said to be reinforced:

The most effective way of relaying that shared vision is in individual discussions with heads of school, deputy heads of school, and their leaders by talking directly with them and by talking through whatever developments they may have. Questioning how the things they do on a day-to-day basis relate to the wider vision.

(Edward)

The principal did, however, have views on the most effective ways that SWS leaders should be translating shared vision into practice:

The heads of school should have an open-door policy or no door at all. I mean Isobel is probably the best example of that. Her 'office' is in an open space at the centre of the school, where pupils and staff are all working. People know where she is and where they can speak to her. Regularly when I see her, she is talking to staff and kids, and this is the sort of dynamic communications that I would like to see in the other schools.

(Edward)

But, the principal went on to say, it was inevitable that schools would be slightly different as they were reflecting the leadership styles of the people within those schools, and not just the leaders, but the leadership team and the influential people within those small schools.

So they can develop their own vision and I am comfortable with it... so long as it doesn't cause problems with pupils outcomes.

(Edward)

The principal discussed extensively the challenge of negotiation in relation to developing vision:

I am trying to convey that I am in charge and ultimately responsible, whilst at the same time trying to give individuals a good deal of professional autonomy, so that they have real authority and power, for want of a better word. In working with individuals, I am trying to balance both. Most people understand that the most effective way of managing and leading is consensual, to take people with you, that people have a voice and that voice is listened to. That discussion is a proper discussion in which you compromise without losing sight.'

(Edward)

However, the principal did also explain that one HOS who was not interviewed, had not always remained committed to the central vision and had attempted to 'subvert' policy and practice that had been universally agreed. He explained in such a case as this that people did not always accept decisions they did not fully appreciate how much authority and autonomy they had.

The perspectives of the heads of school and the SWS senior teams were very similar to that of the principal. The heads of school were given the autonomy to develop the vision in a way that suited the needs of their pupils. Leaders interviewed all articulated the importance of allowing each SWS to personalise the vision and be distinctive. It could be argued that if this was not allowed it would undermine the purpose of the SWS structure and its vision, namely, 'to ensure the curriculum (what and how pupils learn) is personalised and individual needs met'. One deputy head of school reinforced this point:

We, the leaders, the teachers, support staff, learning support assistants-we are the guys working with our pupils on a day-to-day basis and the decisions we make are on the basis of what we see in front of us.

(Craig)

The heads of school discussed how consensus was reached, although they could not recall examples of strategies to which the principal had not agreed to. They felt that they had significant autonomy, which came with significant accountability, to develop their schools. There were examples described by some leaders of issues that had created debate and challenge: strategies, such as how homework was set and managed, how inclusions staff were deployed and managed, and staffing of classes. But whilst these could be related to translating the key vision into practice, they were more operational in nature and key values and vision were not really debated as part of these discussions. The principal gave schools the autonomy to develop distinctively but expected outcomes to be achieved. As one of the HOS stated; 'There are many different ways to become outstanding'. The processes of seeking college-wide 'approval' relied on the positive relationships that the principal had developed with leaders, discussed in the next subsection.

Finally, there were the perspectives of teachers on developing organisational vision. The college vision was clearly understood by the vast majority of participants, but how it translated into practice was the focus of this research.

As one teacher stated:

The essential vision is to improve progress and attainment. This is embedded. There, really, really high up. It's really visible. ... But you can't help but feel it's done in separate entities.

(Phillip)

However, teachers did not comment on how the organisational vision was converted into the different small-school visions or the processes that were undertaken by leaders. They did not have an understanding of the micro-political decision-making that took place within the organisation. Findings from many teachers indicated that SWS leaders focused solely on their own school's vision. However, those who crossed between

schools in their teaching accepted there were challenges created by autonomy and multiple visions, as discussed in later sections.

Interpersonal relationships

The principal emphasised the importance of personal qualities such as listening, sensitivity, being accessible and having an open-door policy, and not being instructive:

That is to be consensual, to take people with you, that people really do have a voice, and that that voice is listened to. That discussion on most things, if not all things, is a real proper discussion in which you compromise without losing sight.

(Edward)

But he also accepted that the role of principal came with ultimate responsibility and accountability:

You adjudicate. You listen, weigh up the pros and cons and then make a decision. Then that decision is final, whether people like it or not. As I said that in that kind of process, you are not going to satisfy everybody. Somebody is going to be upset.

(Edward)

From the perspectives of the SWS leaders the principal was described by the heads of School as an effective listener, accessible, inclusive, flexible, someone who valued people's opinions and was consensual. Within this structure, interpersonal relationships, talking informally and processes of negotiation were used rather than more formal line management. However, it was also clear that the principal held people firmly to account through cross-college meeting structures for raising attainment.

The Principal has a good set of skills where you feel fully involved in the development process.... It's very, very positive.

(Mark)

These personal relationships allowed leaders to navigate the potential challenges that this structure brings, as discussed in question 3, thereby maintaining each leader's commitment to the organisation, which was strongly evident in the interviews.

Structures for dispersing organisational vision

It was very clear that each school personalised the vision and that multiple visions existed. Therefore it was important to explore how key messages were conveyed, other than through individual meetings with leaders. There were very few structures used to reinforce the key vision and direction for the organisation. It was very much about small schools choosing their own direction. The senior staff of the college, heads of school and heads of service, made up the executive team, which was originally intended to develop strategy:

The theory was that the college executive would be really important at dealing with strategic issues. Issues that would focus on that shared vision. The reality is that it is more of an operational forum.

(Edward)

Certainly the principal accepted that leaders had not really debated the direction the organisation was taking. In the first year of opening the college received very poor GCSE results, below the government floor target and placing the school at risk in terms of its future. As soon as the college moved in it was on the defensive with the local authority regarding the structures for leading and managing in SWS. This led to a relentless focus on improving examination results, resulting in less time for reflection.

At the time of the research the principal recognised that there was a lack of strategic processes undertaken by the executive team and a residential had been arranged specifically for the purpose of building college-wide leadership practices and addressing some of the potential challenges that the structure was bringing to the surface. I participated in this meeting but also took field notes to contribute depth to this study. The principal had opened the residential with pertinent words on participation and reflection:

The aim is to reflect on what we are doing, how to become outstanding.... I would like honesty, focus, everyone to participate, be self-critical.

(Edward)

He had stressed understanding, sharing and reflecting and alluded to the challenges of focusing on the whole organisation. He had stated:

There is a tension between the sectionalism and the corporate nature of the college.... It is understandable but it needs addressing.

(Edward)

At the residential the leaders of each SWS had then presented their strengths, weaknesses and areas for development, allowing everyone to share knowledge relating to the college-wide vision.

Furthermore the principal had set up more SWS wide leadership groups in order to debate and discuss the central vision: improving teaching and raising attainment. For example participants referred to the newly formed teaching and learning group that involved leaders from each of the schools, and the strengthening of the role of the advisor and how the key purpose of this role was embedded.

In interviews, all but one leader explained that the executive team was not developing strategy. Over three executive team meetings I took field notes as a participant observer. The observation field notes corroborated what leaders had said regarding this strategy group. Shared vision was not discussed or debated, members of the group contributed little. Most meetings showed no evidence of how shared vision was discussed and debated, what the key values were, or 'why we are doing what we are doing'. Agendas tended to be operational. At one meeting, though, one of the SWS had been asked to make a proposal for everyone to agree upon. The field notes below are enlightening:

Real lack of active participation.... Leaders are still very protective. There is a debate about a cross-college initiative-homework-that one school has been asked to make a proposal on. 'Are we happy with the differences?' Tensions on the way forward are addressed by setting up a working group which all leaders can participate in before any decision is made. But only two participants out of ten members volunteer to attend.

(Field note extract)

One HOS explained the lack of open discussion as relating to the poor results of the year before when the college first opened:

I think it goes back to the dreadful results and that those meetings were like literally doom and gloom, no one would ever make eye contact with anyone. It would be good to talk about what we are doing... But we literally just sit down and are told things.

(Isobel)

Another colleague, though, felt that relationships did not exist between the leaders and that people did not always trust each other to be open and to debate key issues freely.

A third colleague explained that people did not have enough in common and that the group was too large. But a final explanation came from a colleague who raised the issue that people were not always interested in listening to what others were saying, that they were focused only on their own school.

One HOS reinforced the importance of debating organisational vision and how it was translated into practice:

We do not challenge each other's ideas on which is the best way forward or which is the best working practice.

(Ben)

Many of the HOS referred to the role of the advisor. This was a cross-college leadership position advising on the quality of subject provision and leading professional development of subject teachers across each of the SWS.

The advisors could, and in some cases do, knit the college together on a subject level. They knit them together through relationships, interpersonal skills, high quality CPD.

(Mark)

There were opinions from many leaders on how well the advisors developed a shared vision across the schools.

HOS also met informally together on a weekly basis to share ideas. One head of school described these as hugely collaborative and supportive. However, the other head of school believed these were not strategic and were not focused so much on shared vision as on more operational issues that were common to all.

Three of the advisors were interviewed in order to explore how shared vision was created across the schools. They described relationship-centred leadership practices, sharing best practice, working collaboratively, but there were not without significant challenges, as discussed in question 3.

There were no other ways that a shared organisational vision was developed and translated into practice. There were no assemblies, college briefings or staff meetings. There were no opportunities for staff to network with each other as most training was carried out in small schools or in subject teams.

Many of the participants, including those teachers more reticent at the start of the restructuring, emphasised how successful the model was. But it was not the purpose of this study to debate the strengths of SWS as a model of education. This has been done significantly in the USA. It was more useful in terms of organisational development also to discuss the challenges that this model brings in terms of developing shared vision and identity, which leads into the final research question.

4.5 The Challenges in Developing a Shared Organisational Vision in a SWS Model

Question 3. What are the challenges for leaders in developing shared vision?

In this section I report the main challenges articulated by leaders and teachers across all three SWS. There was a remarkable correlation between teachers and leaders and between participants from each SWS in identifying challenges, although there were differences in how the participants explained these key challenges. The same procedures of data reduction and presentation were used to identify the key challenges associated with building shared vision in a SWS configuration.

Table 18: Data Matrix Displaying Leaders' and Teachers' Perspectives on the Challenges on Developing and Translating Shared Vision into Practice in SWS

Theme	Challenges	Number of informants	Frequency of occurrence	Link to shared vision	Quotation
Competitiveness.	Self-interest, prioritising own school and own pupils, time was spent on own community.	18	20	Individual schools were competing. Competition was encouraged. This made it challenging to see the bigger, college-wide picture.	'I think the schools are quite territorial. There is a sense of competition between them. There is a sense of teachers will do the hard work first of all for the pupils that they teach. Then the school. Then the last call is for the college. It goes in that hierarchy.' (Susan)
Lack of sharing best practice and resources/developing partnerships	Lack of sharing stifled partnerships, best practice was not shared.	18	20	In each SWS sharing resources, strategies and teaching pedagogy was a strength. Between each SWS there was a lack of sharing. There was both a lack of time to do so and a lack of forums for this.	'If someone wants support, I am there. I am happy to share teaching and learning ideas regardless of which school. But naturally obviously being in Greenhill my priorities will always be there unless I'm given more time.' (Anne)

Separateness	Distinct entities, separate, disparity, some marginalisation.	13	18	This distinctiveness and separateness meant that each SWS worked mostly in isolation. This separateness created some feelings of marginalisation of those outside the SWS.	‘But I do think we need to have more of a shared culture, even if it’s just excellent practice. At least this would form bridges. I think there could be a potential for an ‘us and them’ culture arriving.... We need to know what’s going on as a college , as an entity. It’s like Barclays bank. The London branch knows what’s going on at Tokyo, and so on because it’s all one corporation. We got to strive to keep that going.’ (Phillip)
Multiple visions	Cross-college vision not shared, schools focused only on embedding their own vision, lack of genuine regard for whole college, challenge for pupils and staff who cross over.	13	16	Most participants stated they knew and understood the whole college vision. But it was translated into practice in many different ways.	‘I think they each have their own identity. I don’t think the college identity is there yet. I think that they understand – I think we all understand that we’re working for the college and what our main aim is, however, I don’t think – like some of the teaching practices are not consistent across the board, as a college perspective. So the ethos within each of the

					schools is completely different. So the college ethos is not there; there is no college ethos. I don't even think the kids feel like they're part of a college. I think they're part of a school.' (Lara)
Communication	Communication is a challenge between the schools, not within them.	12	17	Strong communication existed within the small SWS but not enough sharing related to what people were doing across them. This could lead to tensions between leaders and a lack of everyone seeing the bigger picture and reinforcing key vision.	'They (SWS leaders) have tighter relationships with their teams which is what education was supposed to be about.. It's just a shame we do not know as much. Different people know different things.' (Clare)
Interpersonal relationships	Many people did not know each other outside their own school. Relationships within the school were intense and could go wrong.	12	12	Interpersonal relationships were strong within SWS communities, although in one SWS this was a significant challenge. But people did not know each other across the SWS, therefore they did not feel part of a wider team committed to a shared college identity.	'I think you are more involved with the team of people you are working with but you work in more isolation from the people that you don't work with....There are a certain proportion of people in the organisation that I have no idea what they do... I have nothing to do with them.' (Ben)
Autonomy and decision making	Divisions were not clear. How much autonomy	9	15	The shared college identity was not used as a rationale	'The biggest conflict is having initiatives that you want to

	each SWS had was a challenge.			for decision-making and purpose within each SWS. Some leaders desired greater autonomy. Some accepted the challenges.	implement, but needing to go through the college and principal...I would like the schools to be given the autonomy....' (Craig)
Intensity for leaders and teachers.	In the SWS model, senior leaders had to be much more actively involved and the role was an intense one. Fewer positions of responsibility. Need more from staff	7	7	Although not explicitly related to translating vision into practice, the small school model created greater intensity for leaders and teachers with people often having to perform many different roles.	'I think the small school model does change things completely, you can throw in the bin half the job spec that people would traditionally do. I mean I do all sorts that you would have thought that you wouldn't, but in a small school, you just have to.' (Isobel)

4.51 Key Themes: The Challenges of Developing Shared Vision in SWS

The themes below are reported in order of their relative importance.

Competitiveness

School communities prioritised their own SWS.

Everyone in Brownhill is Brownhill, Brownhill, Brownhill-always-nothing else.

(Frances)

One teacher gave an example of leaders giving priority to their own community:

That's where you're required to be, to help them out..... but we are not going to expect any more from you than that. It was made clear that it wasn't a priority. Obviously they didn't want me doing that.

(James)

Although many participants felt that the bigger picture was not widely understood or accepted, some thought it was improving:

Everyone was very much looking at their own school and now I think that people realise that some things impact on other people.

(Angela)

But the prioritising of one's own community appeared, according to many participants, to extend to competitiveness and an unwillingness to share best practices.

There is a sense of competition... whereas I think the small school model works better when it's about recognising the differences between them.

(Clare)

If people have got a good idea that's going to work in their school, they are reticent to share because they don't want someone stealing their own thunder.

(Jessica)

People did this, according to one cross-college leader, because ' they want to stay unique, to try and become the best out of the three. I feel like they think it's a competition' (Lara).

Some leaders and teachers described this competitiveness as healthy, although most described unhealthy practices, an example being one SWS which had its electronic resources password-protected to make viewing and usage possible only by members of that community, leading to one teacher who claimed, 'We get resources on the sly'. It extended to staff prioritising their work with certain pupils.

People do not always want to feel part of the college if it means taking away from the small school.

(Rachel)

Lack of sharing best practice

This theme relates to the previous one in that the competitive element often manifested itself in a lack of sharing. The overwhelming number of participants, both leaders and teachers, described a lack of sharing best practice and resources in order to improve outcomes for the whole organisation, a key part of the central vision. 'There is no cross fertilisation of different people with different ideas' (Ben).

This can be explained in a number of different ways: firstly some leaders were reticent about sharing some of what they were doing because they felt they had put the work in, for the benefit of their own pupils. The principal said that,

If something good happens in one of the schools, there is still a tendency for the head of school to keep it because it's theirs. Initially I thought 'That's okay because competition will feed the organisation and others will try to outdo them by doing whatever they are doing better'. That's a nonsense, I think. It would be far more sensible for them to share that information so they can build on it....

(Edward)

One of the SWS leaders elaborated:

They feel very precious about those things and become more reluctant about sharing them with other people, because what they think is, 'Well, they've got people of their own. They've got experts of their own. Why aren't they doing it? Why should we have to share?' Now, that's not something that I agree with. I don't think that's right.

(Richard)

One senior leader openly stated openly that sharing resources potentially limits distinctiveness:

Talk openly with each other about what you are happy to share and what you think may be specific to your own area.

(Anne)

Secondly, many people described a lack of time to develop partnerships between the schools, and the lack of sharing was a symptom of the intense pressure leaders were under:

I know there is always a tension and conflict going on. I know the competition element of the small schools is great and does drive up standards. But it does make leaders very protective of their staff and their time. I do think that some staff feel that they are pulled in different directions and under pressure from all angles.

(Helen)

In all honesty, I am so wrapped up in what happens in Brownhill.... It is quite difficult to share the college vision.

(Craig)

The logistics of getting people to come together from all four schools is a nightmare. Our second session fell to pieces. There was nothing I could do. I was trying everything to meet in the day, going to people...

(Phillip)

Finally, in some cases it appeared that leaders did not want to share and did not feel the need to do so, for example if they felt they were doing well without collaboration:

It's hard to then say... But there are two other schools so we need to work together. With one person the enthusiasm and shared vision of the whole college is there. With somebody else that can be more difficult.

(Kim)

Furthermore, some leaders believed that the solutions lay in greater autonomy, and that each SWS should be resolving its own issues.

I want to build capacity. For example Sarah is developing into being brilliant and I think she will become a head of learning at some point in the future, because I want to develop it here. At the moment I am not gaining anything from other schools.... But I do think I could in the future.... At the moment I do not see what we are doing as sharing of practice. I see it as digging out of holes. Not to build long-term improvements but to react to situations because of the teaching not being good enough.

(Isobel)

Separateness

A common thread running through most participants' interviews was that schools operated distinctively and in isolation. The geography of the college campus perhaps also encouraged this as each SWS was separately housed with its own support staff and teaching staff.

I do think we need to have more of a shared culture, even if it's just excellent practice. At least this would form bridges. I think there could be a potential for an 'us and them' culture arriving.... We need to know what's going on as a college, as an entity. It's like Barclays bank. The London branch knows what's going on at Tokyo, and so on because it's all one corporation. We have got to strive to keep that going.

(Phillip)

This was, according to most participants, understandable and related to building strong communities: 'People do not always want to feel part of the college if it means taking away from the small school' (Rachel).

However, it was leading to marginalisation for some: 'The home schools are now working really closely together and we feel to a certain extent excluded' (Angela).

Jessica explained that these tensions were inevitable and staff had to go through a process, but in that process, people could become very upset or annoyed because they might think they were being excluded. Moreover, it could create challenges for building a college-wide ethos:

Honestly. I do feel left out. I wanted to go to the year 11 celebration events but there were three of them. If I was in the small school, I would definitely have gone. I know less about my pupils than if I was in the school, which is a shame as that is the real strength of the SWS model.

(Helen)

Multiple visions

Every participant stated that each SWS was distinctively translating vision into practice. There were several challenges associated with this with regard to developing a strong organisational vision too which all in the communities were committed.

Firstly, the context for this model of SWS should be considered. Each school was not autonomous. The organisation as a whole reported to external authorities and there was a principal who had overall responsibility and accountability. Whilst the majority of teachers belonged to one of the SWS communities, not all did. The performing arts, PE and technology subject teachers taught pupils from all three schools in separate buildings. Some staff in each SWS were also teaching in one or more of the other schools (mainly due to timetabling constraints). The post-16 teachers generally came from all three schools.

In addition the pupils were sometimes required to move. They spent seventy per cent of their time in the small school community. This created challenges, as identified by some staff who were teaching across the schools. There were differences in the way that they

thought the key vision translated into practice with regard to marking, teaching, professional development, behaviour management and relationships.

Each school will have its own vision, each school will have its own motto, and each school will have its own priorities. The two don't clash with each other but it's hard to drive forward one vision, if there are other kinds of priorities and things going on in different schools.... For example the push for grades in some of the schools can, at times, pull away from the development of the whole child.

(Kim)

Kim explained that the push and pull on members of staff who taught in more than one school, and the different ways that the vision was translated into practice could create real challenges. She referred to the difficulties for staff when policy and practice on marking, for example, was different.

Whilst this did not directly relate to discourse about values or the college's mission, this research was about how the vision was translated into practice-and these aspects of the differences in the ways things were approached all created ongoing challenges related to empowerment, autonomy, distinctiveness and sharing best practice. In an ideal SWS structure, all teachers would be part of one community.

Communication

Whilst some staff felt that communication between the schools was improving, many participants identified communication as a challenge. Participants explained that there was not enough knowledge sharing. This was particularly the case for staff that were required to teach across schools or outside the schools. But it also extended to communicating the different visions that existed in each school. Staff did not always know the policies and practices of each school.

If you are teaching a cross-college class, it's very, very difficult-the policies aren't communicated to you.

(Kim)

This notion relates to the next theme, how relationships were developed between each SWS.

Interpersonal relationships

People did not know their colleagues in other schools. Therefore since interpersonal relationships based on trust between the schools were deemed important, then this was a real challenge. Participants referred to the lack of opportunities to get to know each other better. One leader explained that she knew just two faces when attending a meeting in another school. Another participant explained that she had been in one of the other SWS just once in a year. This inhibited the development of a shared vision and identity. There were some strong relationships, but these tended to be relationships that already existed prior to restructuring, when staff had greater opportunity to interact.

There were few structures set up to develop relationships, collaboration and collegiality. There were no staff meetings, no briefings, no cross-college assemblies. Relationships, strong within two of the schools, collapsed to a certain extent outside them: 'The challenges are keeping relationships, building those relationships with the leaders... Because of the autonomy' (Angela). In addition a challenge was identified when relationships within the SWS breakdown, or as one participant explained:

If someone is having a bad day, you know, they're having a bad day and everyone gets to know about it within two minutes as you see each other all the time.

(Heather)

Autonomy and decision-making

Autonomy was emphasised as a significant challenge, particularly amongst leaders. How separate were the schools allowed to be? Some participants stated that there needed to be greater clarity with regard to decision-making, greater reinforcement of the college-wide vision and greater explanation of when things are allowed to diversify and when it is a college-wide agenda.

The challenge is, are we a college or are we three small schools? At the moment it is somewhere in between. But I do not think it is clear where the division is....

Do they have autonomy to create their own marking codes, schemes of work? If so this has to be stuck to. Or are we developing whole college, like the literacy code?

(Kim)

The principal emphasised that the schools were not autonomous and it was not a federation:

I perceive this as one entity. It's a college and I perceive the HOS and service as leading a particular part of the service we provide. This is why every now and again I get cranky and say, 'I wish I hadn't called them heads of schools... it is not a federation'. It's not a collection of autonomous schools. Leaders have greater authority, though-reflecting my view that people work better in small groups, in small teams and where they can really make a difference.

(Edward)

However holding SWS leaders to account and controlling how much ownership they were allowed could create tensions:

I think perhaps conflicting messages, that contradict, have come out. Very much you've got 450 pupils, you're responsible for them, you're accountable for them. You have autonomy. But then when things perhaps aren't going well for the college then it's, 'No, you're part of the college, deal with it!'

(Isobel)

One of the HOS recognised the challenge of distinctiveness but, like other leaders, expected this, and indeed would rather have had greater autonomy.

Always bearing in mind that wherever you want to take your school, you must feed into the overall college vision and always keeping that high on your agenda. Because it's very, very easy in this model to forget that. I don't know how many times I have said to members of staff, 'I wish I could just take Brownhill and put it five miles away from any school'.

(Mark)

But for some leaders there was frustration with respect to decision-making and levels of autonomy:

Now we have been ready to roll for ages, but it's been blocked because it's not whole-college policy. That if we have a SIMS page for reporting homework in Brownhill, well Greenhill and Redhill have to do the same.

(Craig)

However, another member of staff felt that this challenge might not be as significant as perceived:

I think it should be made explicit how distinctive schools can be. But I think it needs to be clearer in the sense that it doesn't really matter the shape and size of it-as long as it has impact.... I do not think there should be one rule for all. I don't think that works. There needs to be autonomy.

(Phillip)

Intensity and multiple roles

It was very evident from the interviews and shadowing that in SWS leaders performed many different roles; They had to be multi-skilled in a range of areas as the SWS was a small school and so there were fewer people undertaking more of the tasks of leadership. It was identified as a challenge by a small number of participants. In addition, the lack of opportunities for less-experienced members of staff to take on responsibility within a SWS structure was also highlighted by two participants.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

In this chapter I firstly summarise, in section one, my findings in relation to the three research questions. In section two, I synthesise these findings with respect to theoretical perspectives found in the literature. In section three, I present a methodological reflection on, and critique of the research, suggest further exploration and make recommendations for leadership and vision-building in SWS configurations. Finally, in section four, I reflect on how my own professional practice, skills, knowledge and understanding have developed through the course of the research. I turn now to a synthesis of my findings.

Section 5.1 Summary of Findings from each Research Question

Question 1. How do leaders develop and translate shared vision into practice within schools in a SWS model?

In developing shared vision, my findings, arising from interviews with leaders and teachers, showed that whilst there were some similarities in the approaches that leaders in each SWS took, there was also much variation between schools.

In Greenhill School, five main strategies were identified through analysis of teachers' and leaders' interview data:

1. Developing teaching pedagogy;
2. Relationship-centred leadership;
3. Direct vision-building;
4. Consulting and involving others;
5. Influence and decision-making.

This SWS tended to emphasise developing collective approaches to teaching. Professional development underpinned what leaders were doing. Leaders took advantage of the small school size to interact with teachers regularly, both formally and informally. A culture, therefore, had been created of openness and reflection, although

some findings suggested that there existed a 'one size fits all' approach to the collective approaches to teaching.

The second most important area was relationship-centred leadership. From teachers' and leaders' accounts, leaders tended to be approachable, less hierarchical and supportive. Again, from the perspectives of most participants, the head of school had strong personal skills and relied on boundless energy, optimism, passion and trust. The professional distance between leaders and teachers was smaller than one might typically find in a large secondary school. The HOS used common language and rituals to build vision. This was constantly reinforced with staff and pupils, with the vision for the school being continually revisited.

In terms of democratic participation, involvement and influence, there were some opportunities for teachers without an official leadership designation to take on leadership roles. However, it was also evident that leaders knew the direction in which they wished to take the school. This was not a case of contrived collegiality; it was though a model of persuasion. Interestingly, few formal systems were in place for consulting or seeking views on school improvement strategies. Scope for all members of staff to generate ideas and seek feedback on those ideas was established through the daily informal interactions that leaders had with staff and pupils as a routine part of their leadership approach.

There was little difference between leaders' perspectives and those of teachers. Teachers also emphasised both teaching pedagogy and relationships as critical strands of the shared vision they were building. Interestingly, in some cases they expected leaders to have the overall authority for establishing a sense of direction and building vision. Whilst senior leadership was deemed decisive and clear on vision-building, it was also clear that staff were completely committed to this central vision, as articulated by the HOS, and that teachers were translating this vision into practice. What I did not find was how leaders were engaging with all stakeholders, multiple voices, in order to improve the school and to change direction if necessary.

In summary, leaders in Greenhill School emphasised that their priority was to improve teaching. This was a central part of the vision-building strategy. Analysis of the accounts of teachers and leaders agreed that this was what bound the staff together

collectively. It was fun, enjoyable and built commitment. This work was strengthened by the glue of personal relationships which were firmly built on respect and passion, interest and ongoing interactions.

This had resulted in what could be described as a 'human-scale' school. But shared consultation, influence and decision-making appeared neither in the vision statement nor through the findings. Whilst there were many opportunities for teachers to engage with and influence vision and direction informally, there were no formal mechanisms for doing this and the vision, ultimately, came from the HOS, although it was very evidently shared with others, and the staff, in the main, tended to comply.

How did Greenhill compare to the other schools? At Brownhill, school approaches were, in some ways, similar to those of Greenhill but very different in others. Relationships were at the core of the SWS. Brownhill leaders had created a vision of strong team work, ethos, enthusiasm, care, visibility and camaraderie. They had utilised the small-school model to create these strong relationships. But very differently to Greenhill, Brownhill leaders had built explicit structures and organisation as a central way of enabling development of a shared vision.

At Brownhill tight line management structures existed in order to embed a shared vision and ensure that it was 'consistent'. But it was a vision that was determined by the head of school. Whilst staff were given some opportunities to take on leadership roles and to influence policy and practice, these opportunities were limited. There were no means of seeking feedback other than the opportunity to raise concerns through line management structures.

In terms of teaching and collective approaches there was some sharing of best practice, although it was not embedded in the same way as at Greenhill School. Leaders believed that there needed to be some flexibility. There were far fewer opportunities for staff to build a common vision for teaching and learning, work collegially and collaboratively together, evaluate collectively or have input into the shared vision for teaching.

Whilst it was evident that teachers could suggest ideas, these had to be run by the HOS first and agreed by him. Indeed there was some evidence that suggested that the processes of consultation were about seeking 'buy-in' to senior leader-led policy and practice, as opposed to genuine shared decision-making.

There were few differences between leaders' and teachers' perspectives at Brownhill in relation to developing shared vision. But despite the lack of real consultation, influence and decision-making, teachers were genuinely committed to the shared vision. They felt valued and they showed loyalty. These feelings had been built up by strong leaders' actions in developing a sense of personal identity as a school. It is a top-down vision but translated into practice by the development of identity, community and self-worth. Praise and recognition were strong features of Brownhill.

There was an expectation that leaders would lead, and make important decisions. The small size was important in creating greater accessibility, reduced professional distance and more personalised relationships. But hierarchies still existed, and were expected, by both leaders and teachers.

At the third school, Redhill, things were very different, although it must be acknowledged that the HOS was not part of the research. Many staff and leaders, through their accounts, reported that the vision for the school was not clear. There appeared to be a lack of ownership and influence. Some feelings of marginalisation, alienation and poor personal relationships existed. There were no systems for discussing key values, vision or direction either formally or informally. Hierarchies were very evident.

There was some sharing of best practice in developing a shared vision for teaching, but this generally came through informal networking of teachers who worked together, despite a lack of leadership strategy in this area. There was a lack of coherence in the way that the senior leadership team worked. Some leaders built strong and positive relationships based on valuing people. However, not all relationships between leaders and teachers were deemed to be inclusive.

Question two. What processes and practices are used across the schools in developing a shared college vision?

Three themes emerged from my research:

- Clarity in developing organisational vision;
- The importance of interpersonal relationships;

- Lack of structures that support a shared college-wide vision.

The college vision needed to be very broad. It had been intentionally created by the principal as wide-ranging, so that each SWS could develop and articulate its own distinctive vision within the parameters and coherence of these broad, overarching aims. Schools were given a great deal of autonomy to develop their own vision and strategies to realise their vision in practice. This was evident in the findings reported in relation to research question 1 above. The central college vision was reinforced by ongoing dialogue between the principal and SWS leaders, mainly in informal discussions.

There was the expectation that leadership in each SWS would be different. But there were evident challenges and tensions when decisions did not fit with the central policy or when leaders attempted to 'subvert' agreed central policy and practice. It was clear that negotiation was a key issue. It was clear too that strong personal relationships between the principal and SWS leaders were used to navigate the challenges of multiple voices and multiple perspectives. Personal qualities, such as good listening skills, sensitivity, accessibility and an open-door policy whereby SWS leaders could openly discuss issues, were deemed important.

However, what was also evident through this study was that the vision was very much about giving freedom to schools to develop in distinctive ways, and that there were no real systems or teams that worked collectively together on developing a shared vision for the whole organisation. There was an acceptance that there were very few opportunities to discuss and endorse centrally agreed policy and practice, due to historic poor examination results and the need to accelerate school improvement, although, at the time of the research, this appeared to be changing and developing as the organisation became more confident and more reflective about the best ways to embed shared vision.

But the strong interpersonal relationships that existed between the principal and SWS did not exist in the same way between leaders and teachers across each SWS. For example there were no assemblies, staff meetings, college-wide briefings or training that shared best practice or built a common vision among the whole staff. Staff from different schools did not appear to know each other well, if at all in some cases. The exception was those 'old' relationships and ties that had existed when the school was

still one large entity prior to the establishment of the SWS model. This had created challenges to which I turn now to discuss in relation to research question 3.

Question three. What challenges exist for leaders in developing a shared vision in a SWS structure?

There was remarkable consistency between the articulated perspectives of leaders and teachers with regard to the challenges they faced in developing a shared vision in a SWS configuration. These are summarised below:

Competitiveness

School leaders tended to prioritise their own SWS. Competition between SWS was encouraged. Whilst some of this could be explained as a means of developing camaraderie as in sports teams, it also had some quite negative implications.

There was a distinct lack of sharing best practice across the schools. Whilst a structure of 'advisors' existed whose leadership role was to share best practice, and this should, in theory, have been about building shared vision and shared commitment, this tended not to work consistently or effectively in practice. Priorities were still within an individual's own SWS and indeed, in some cases, these actually actively undermined the principles of sharing best practice. This tended to leave people feeling isolated or marginalised if they were not part of one of the small school communities. For example, about a fifth of the staff were teaching across the schools and some did not feel part of either the SWS visions or that of the whole-college.

There was a lack of processes and practices that brought together colleagues. The sense of collectivism and strong powerful vision as an institution did not seem to exist. Communication between schools, and with those outside them, was identified as a key challenge.

Multiple visions can be confusing

It was not always clear within this model how much autonomy leaders in SWS actually had. The whole-college identity and vision was not used explicitly as a rationale for decision-making, and so such a vision was not reinforced routinely. Consequently two SWS emerged with powerful identities, strong loyalties, a competitive ethos, with few

resources and best practices being shared between them. The competitiveness that had been created meant that leaders and teachers often felt they did not want to share for fear of losing their own personal distinctiveness or because they had been working tirelessly with, and investing so much in, the development of their own resources. They felt that leaders should be committed to developing internal capacity within their own schools rather than contributing to capacity at the college level.

Some evidence suggested the beginnings of a stronger college orientation and that this was strengthening. The problem confronting the development of a stronger college identity and vision appeared to be, on the basis of the analysis of data in this research study, a lack of time to support the partnerships needed to develop strong networking between schools.

Findings suggested that some people within each individual school did not want to feel part of the whole college because they feared that this risked diluting the distinctive spirit and ethos that, for them, characterised their particular schools. But whilst small schools with their own distinctiveness and powerful vision clearly helped to build strong professional communities, the individual schools at Thornville College were not autonomous. Some staff were teaching across schools or were not part of one individual school. For these participants, my findings suggested that the multiple visions of each individual school and a lack of a coherent central vision created challenges. This sometimes created feelings of marginalisation and isolation as well as a lack of direction.

Section 5.2 Relating Contextualised Findings to the Wider Literature: Development of a Tentative Model of Vision-Building in SWS

I am not suggesting that based on a single-site embedded case study that I can develop a general theory applicable to all contexts of SWS reform. To do so would be to ignore contextual differences between the SWS structures I studied and those that exist in other SWS contexts. But I present this model in the hope that it accurately reflects my findings, and is useful for further refinement and adaptation at Thornville College and by other leaders, bodies, educational leaders and those with an interest in the SWS model.

In the light of new understandings developed through consideration of my findings, I am introducing some new literature which I believe is important for helping conceptualise vision-building in SWS contexts. My conclusions below seek to explain and justify this study's original contribution to our knowledge of SWS, leadership and vision-building.

The core category is relationships-the basis and heart of each school's development and growth. My research has clearly identified that the strength of relationships is key to developing shared vision. I want to argue that particular kinds of relationships are needed. There has to be a balance between relationships that build care, support, trust, respect and those that help grow collegial relationships that will improve practice and embed shared vision (Levine and Marcus, 2010; Supovitz and Christman, 2005). You have to know pupils well (Sizer, 1999) and show care for them (Toch, 2003).

The SWS model requires strong interpersonal relationships between teachers and pupils, teachers with each other, and leaders and teachers. This study shows that the type of relationships that existed varied in each school. In one of the constituent schools of Thornville College, relationships were mainly formed through ongoing, frequent interactions between leaders and teachers. In another they were mainly built through forming allegiances and developing loyalty to the community through social gatherings and briefings. In the third school many of the relationships were fractured, which resulted in a lack of coherence and shared vision. However, trust appeared a central facet of relationships in all three constituent schools. Developing trusting relationships between leaders and followers was central (Gillespie and Mann, 2004).

But in two of the schools relationships were the cornerstones of the schools and appeared to be one of the main reasons that people showed commitment and loyalty to the small schools of which they were a part. This appears to be consistent with research on the SWS reform movement which emphasises the benefits derived from small size in terms of building constructive relationships (Copland and Boatright, 2004; NASSP, 2004; Meier, 2002). Relationships are a way of seeking support and collective ownership of vision from staff:

We do believe that if schools are not small enough or do not otherwise have the conditions that allow relationships to flourish ... and communication to keep everyone focused on the school mission, the status quo will prevail.

(Benitez et al., 2009).

Similarly in a large study of 105 restructured schools (Bloom et al., 2010) a repeating message endorsed the value of small schools:

..smaller, personalised units of adults and students, where students have a better chance of being known and noticed, and where teachers know enough about their charges to provide appropriate academic and social and emotional support.

(Bloom et al., 2010:9)

Other studies of SWS point to the benefits of strong relationships in developing powerful communities committed to shared vision (Lundsgaard, 2006; Raywid, 1998; Wasley et al., 2000)

To build these relationships requires strong interpersonal leadership skills. It does not work in every case, as illustrated in one of the SWS in this study, Redhill School. West-Burnham (2001) writes about the concept of interpersonal intelligence and points to empathy as an important aspect of such intelligence. He gives examples of specific behaviours linked to this leadership concept: the ability to respond to people with empathy; elucidating motivation of others; effective listening and the ability to engage with others. West-Burnham (2001) concludes that the basis of leadership is reciprocity and sharing. This appears to be central to the success of vision-building in SWS.

However, relationships have two purposes. The first area is about care and reducing isolation and feelings of alienation. As the principal at Thornville college explained:

The most important aspect of leadership and effectiveness is the relationships that you create between colleagues and between colleagues and pupils. It is the relationship that you can get through that professionally intimate contact that you can have, you know, in the schools within schools system.

(Edward)

Relationships between teachers must encourage collaboration and collegiality, not simply care. In an article by Gewertz (2001), Michelle Fine is quoted as saying:

“Small will produce a sense of belonging almost immediately. But hugging is not the same as algebra. Rigour and care must be braided together or we run the risk of creating small, nurturing environments that are not schools”

(Gewertz, 2001)

Certainly in Brownhill School there was little evidence to show that teachers were working systematically and collegially on improving teaching and pedagogy, although informal networks did exist. In Greenhill this appeared to be much stronger. This concurs with Lee and Ready (2007) whose findings show that leaders pay differing levels of attention in the small school model to improving teaching.

However, whilst relationships are deemed to be of real importance in these SWS, relationships across them were less well formed. Leaders need to develop the type of relationships both within and across each SWS that will lead to feelings of being part of both a smaller community, and a larger one. This research found that, in general, teachers felt a commitment to their own individual school (Sergiovanni, 1994; Sergiovanni, 1995). But very few expressed a real drive or commitment with respect to the whole organisation. This in itself is not the problem. It means that small, powerful learning communities have been developed within each SWS (Copland and Boatright, 2004; Mohr, 2000). But a consequence is that it has led to the sort of marginalisation and alienation that a significant number of staff described. There were two quite fundamental problems which surfaced:

1. There was strong alignment among teachers and leaders with their own SWS. High levels of accountability within a high-stakes, performance culture, deterred colleagues from collaborating and sharing ideas and resources, and fostered competition based on a defensive and individualistic ethic that benefits should accrue to the person who created the idea or the resource. In other words they were not for sharing.
2. Teachers who were not part of a single SWS community or who crossed over from one to another tended not to understand which vision they were attempting to

translate into practice. They often felt marginalised as a result of not having membership of a SWS community. Fragmentation of the whole organisation can result from such a weak college orientation.

I have explained the importance of developing interpersonal relationships in the pursuit of shared vision. I now argue that there are four critical components to building such relationships in SWS:

1. Social capital, within and across each SWS;
2. Power-distance dimensions;
3. An understanding of the challenges of multiple visions;
4. An understanding of the need for a repertoire of leadership approaches with a particular focus on those that enhance staff and pupil commitment, feelings of belonging and recognition, those that focus on collectively and collegially developing teaching and learning strategies and strategies that forge genuine participation and involvement through each SWS and across them.

5.21 Social capital

Previous research has shown that the SWS model does not guarantee improvements in pedagogy and practice as an automatic outcome of restructuring. Too often there has been a variable focus on teaching (Lee and Ready, 2007). Hargreaves's model of school effectiveness (2001) signals the importance of social capital-levels of trust, willingness to collaborate and invest time and resources in such collaboration between people and networks, for strengthening intellectual capital.

It is the cornerstone of developing professional capital (Hargreaves, 2001) that contributes to improved pedagogy and pupils' learning outcomes. One implication flowing from Hargreaves' (2001) analysis is that social capital development requires the centrality of enhanced relationships among colleagues between SWS as a precondition for improvements in pedagogy and learning outcomes. Building and sustaining relationships are critical to reaping the benefits of increased social capital (Fielding, 2008). Therefore leaders need to find ways to build networks and partnerships across the SWS with a view to cultivating among teachers a more outward-facing mode of

learning and collaboration and a stronger sense of college membership beyond the parochial limits of the individual school.

Social capital serves to act as a bond between groups (Portes, 1998) and is an important condition for establishing greater solidarity and exchange of expertise, ideas and resources among teachers across schools within an SWS structure. My research shows that social capital was largely weak between schools. This is an important conclusion. Leaders need to build networks of trust based on listening, collaboration and openness (Senge et al., 2015) that stretch across schools as well as across groupings of teachers within schools. Social capital is based on the principle that people most socially interact but they must also have a common set of shared values. It is these shared values that need embedding across the SWS organisation.

5.22 Power-Distance Dimension of School Culture

Hofstede's (1991) work on culture is relevant to the development of SWS. There are two aspects of his work that are pertinent to an understanding of vision-building in contexts of SWS: firstly there is the notion of collectivism, which must be replicated throughout the organisational culture. It is an understanding that the views, needs and goals of the group are more important than the individual. A focus is needed on cooperation between the schools as opposed to competition.

Secondly, the notion of power-distance should be considered. High power-distance indicates inequalities in power. There is an acceptance and expectation that leaders will separate themselves from the group. This dimension expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. Where small power-distances exist schools are student-centred, and hierarchy is viewed as a sign of inequality, with roles that have been established merely for convenience; in large power-distance cultures hierarchies are used to establish inequalities and as a result are teacher-centred, as oppose to student-centred.

Low power-distance points to flatter distributions of power and influence among people. Flat management structures exist. Managers are less concerned with status and distribution of decision-making is extensive. 'Open-door' policies are used, which means 'superiors' are open to challenge and suggestion.

My research suggested that one school, Greenhill, had the lowest power-distance and Redhill the highest. Moving towards lower power-distance would help to capitalise on the benefits of the small school configuration and particularly the embedding of shared vision and decision-making. In societies with low power distance there tends to be more autonomy. The principles behind the SWS concept of creating small, autonomous communities with shared vision appear to resonate with Hofstede's ideas of collectivity and low power-distance.

5.23 Balancing Multiple School Visions While Forging a Coherent College Vision

Leaders need to carefully balance the local autonomy and vision of each SWS with the development of a shared vision that is coherent and finds expression across them. Leaders need to develop collaboration and collegiality, both within each SWS and across them.

My research finds that there are real challenges evident with this model of schooling. The development of shared vision is important for school improvement (Senge, 2000; Fullan, 1992). The smaller scale of SWS can, more easily than in larger schools, develop strategies of relationship-centred leadership that are conducive to establishing shared vision. My findings show that in two of the three SWS there was a strong vision, and that staff were strongly committed to this vision. Processes and practices that leaders used in developing this shared vision were centred on interpersonal relationships. Leaders had developed autonomous SWS.

Evidence suggests that each SWS developed vision in different ways. The translation of vision into practice, which is critical, involved differences in the ways that leaders operated. Although leadership approaches were found to vary in different SWS contexts, certain practices were common to both Greenhill and Brownhill schools, such as trust, accessibility, care, support and the development of a distinct identity.

What was less clear was how successfully leaders could navigate the challenges of multiple visions and multiple perspectives. It was evident that some leaders and teachers found this challenging. But Raywid (1998) argues that the SWS model will diminish interest in the whole school and that this should be accepted. The creation of small learning communities and SWS that are autonomous will naturally empower relationships within the SWS and allegiance to the larger host school will be reduced.

I would partially accept this point if this model of SWS at Thornville College had fully autonomous schools. But even then it should require collaboration between SWS. But if some features of the implementation model mean that SWS do not have full autonomy, then there still needs to be a powerful whole-organisational vision that is used to move teaching and learning on, provide a rationale for decision making and ensure everyone in the whole community feels ownership. In the context of my research there was collaboration and some collegiality within the SWS, but only in very limited ways across schools. Strategies for cross-fertilisation of ideas and practices across the college organisation were limited. This resulted in some disempowerment of some staff.

This needs strategies for partnership and collegiality across the schools. One of the most interesting papers in relation to this cross-school theme was written by Mohr and Dichter (2001). Dichter was, at the time, the principal of a SWS model and experienced similar challenges:

It took an enormous amount of work to redesign the culture of the school to become one in which the greater good could be the deciding factor in how allocations were made. Sites began to see themselves as part of a whole instead of as rival factions. How was this done? The only way changes to a culture take place: over time and through constant reinforcement. Alan had to not only voice the new set of norms and beliefs, but also ensure that they were always being practiced. And he had to do this not as an authoritarian, but as someone whose responsibility it was to regularly remind the group of what it stood for and why it was there. And he had to do it over and over. It took several years; there just was no fast way. They all knew they had “arrived” when the management teams from all four sites readily agreed to a proposal from Alan that one site which was going through a particularly difficult transition be funded for an extra teacher for the entire year simply because they needed it. And rather than resent it, the members of the group spoke about feeling good about their collective ability to get beyond their individual interests.

(Mohr and Dichter, 2001:5)

Collaboration between schools is more likely to occur when colleagues are optimistic and when competition is rare (Chapman, 2015).

There are real benefits to be derived from collaboration, particularly in relation to the pooling of resources for the benefit of all pupils at Thornville College. Knowledge needs to be built and shared within and across schools (Hord and Hirsh, 2009). But collaboration cannot be forced. It must depend on the development of strong and trusting relationships over time and a shared vision.

The principal of the college was very clear that SWS leaders needed the ability to personalise their school vision and become distinctive. The majority of participants commented on how diverse and distinctive each SWS has become. The principal was clear about the importance of autonomy. In 'Cultures in the Making' (Lundsgaard, 2006), a study on three restructured SWS, building broad based leadership needed to allow for distinctiveness and autonomy:

...includes active leadership around, participation in, and support for the culture shifts that high school design requires, including a willingness to create a portfolio of schools that don't look the same.

(Lundsgaard, 2006:3)

There are extensive writings on SWS that explicitly state that each SWS should have as much autonomy as practically possible but that this can be challenging (Allen et al., 2001; Gregory, 2001; Vander Ark, 2002; Wallach, 2009, Wallach, 2010). Autonomy is important for developing strong communities (Wasley and Lear, 2001, Meier, 2002; Lee and Ready, 2007):

But there has been very little research, perhaps because the structure of SWS is so different in many SWS (Lee and Ready, 2007), on how leaders manage the issues concerning autonomy.

Catherine Wallach, in a case study at a restructured SWS, argues that:

What works for one school may not work for another, and having to bring ideas to a building leadership team adds a layer of bureaucracy that sometimes proves thick enough to stunt innovation.

(Wallach 2010:271)

There is a dichotomy between developing one's own distinctive vision (Strike, 2008) and also working collaboratively and collegially with others. The whole-organisational vision within this SWS model needs to both emphasise the power of small, autonomous SWS and promote their interdependence. Leaders need to embed the sharing of ideas through a moral obligation to collaborate and support each other.

It is not enough merely to have an overarching college-wide leadership team who meet, discuss strategy and work on policy and practice. A genuinely collaborative and collegial ethos requires the development of relationships and habits of working jointly, focusing on improving teaching and school improvement, both within and between schools. Wallach (2010) argues that deeper understandings are needed of how leaders should lead in small schools. I want to argue that a deepening of our understanding of how we promote these unique leadership practices is needed: fewer hierarchies, low power-distance and community development in small schools, alongside developing leadership practices across the SWS.

5.24 Participatory and Distributed Leadership Forms

My findings suggest that whilst staff generally felt committed to their own SWS vision, they had very little influence or direction in terms of developing strategy for school improvement. This is important because if leaders freed themselves up from the demands of decision-making, they would ensure the school remained reflective, engaging in new ways to do things and this would, in turn, improve teaching and outcomes. Leaders should systematically engage with all stakeholders. However, this cannot be achieved, as Meier (2002) states, by just sitting round a table with the whole staff and reaching a consensus. The schools are too big, and, anyway, someone does have to lead and make decisions (Mohr and Dichter, 2001).

But as the college becomes more confident, reflective and less concerned about rapid solutions to performance problems and embedding capacity and sustainability, it should systematically draw on the views, perspectives and opinions of all in the community. Leaders should get into the habit of regularly consulting (Allen and Glickman, 2005). There needs to be recognition that discourse and navigating this challenge is a positive strategy for school improvement (Hargreaves, 1994; Lieberman, 1995; Stoll, 1998; Stoll et al., 2006). Leaders need to have the confidence to ask questions and allow others to

do so (Fink and Stoll, 2005), whilst appreciating the messiness that this can result in. Otherwise teams become inward looking (Watson, 2014). At the moment none of the SWS in this study had really embedded this idea.

5.25 Instructional Leadership

It was evident that one SWS in this study had a powerful vision for teaching, that they were energised, passionate, engaged and collegial. Strong instructional leadership of the type advocated by Southworth (2002) was evident. School leaders should ensure that staff get the opportunity both to implement jointly common approaches to pedagogy and practice and, more importantly, collectively evaluate their success. All voices need to be heard to avoid ‘groupthink’ (Mulford, 2005). Each of the SWS needs to develop a powerful vision for teaching (Oxley and Luers, 2010); focus their time and attention on developing pedagogy and teacher collaboration; and promote high-leverage practices, as advocated by Supovitz and Buckley (2008). This was not evident across all three schools in this study.

Interestingly, a research study of a whole district of SWS, (Fink and Resnick, 2001) shows how nested relationships can exist that still keep a focus on best practice in instructional leadership. It is accepted that leaders need to consciously place teaching and learning at the forefront of what they do, otherwise they will spend more time dealing with pastoral issues, such as behaviour problems and thus will not make an impact on better teaching. It is clear from previous studies in SWS that there are increasing demands placed on both teachers and leaders, meaning that schools focus on day-to-day operational issues rather than sustaining improvement in teaching and developing a reflective, creative school that strives for the best (Lee and Ready, 2007; Sporte et al., 2004; Stevens, 2006).

Clearly accountability and the examination system result in increases in demand and leaders need to balance the need for better examination results against that for long-term sustainable teaching.

5.26 *Synthesis and Model of Vision Building in SWS*

I want to propose the following theoretical model, grounded in the views and perspectives of participants:

The core category is relationships. Relationships underpin everything that leaders are doing within this model. These relationships are closer, less hierarchical and must be focused on pedagogy and developing the collegiality of teachers. These relationships need to:

Be focused on seeking buy-in from the whole community through developing trusting, open, more personal relationships through more frequent interactions between leaders and followers.

Encourage participation, ensure people have a voice and that discourse and debate are used as a strategy for change, transformation and school improvement.

Be focused on developing capacity within their own SWS, as well as being part of the whole organisation. The concept of system leadership and reciprocity is of critical importance. Leaders must therefore navigate the challenge of being part of one organisation without sacrificing the distinctiveness and autonomy of small, autonomous schools.

There are two theoretical constructs I propose are central within this model for ensuring that the central mission is fulfilled:

Leadership must develop *professional capital* both within each small school and between them. This means developing highly committed teachers who are well networked to each other within and across each school so that intellectual capital and professional know-how can be shared and adapted to context as a powerful way of maximising improvements in the quality of learning. Social capital is critical in achieving this and requires leaders to develop strong partnerships and networks with teachers. Through these partnerships and networks teachers can develop decisional

capital by working closely with leaders who are responsive to teachers' new ideas and plans for further improving the quality of learning at school.

Low *power-distance* between leaders and teachers is central to the cultivation of professional capital outlined above. Establishing and sustaining low power-distance means leaders adopting more consultative, democratic relationships and extensive decision making responsibility. An 'open door' policy should be adopted in which leaders actively listen and where all members of the school community are willing to contribute, challenge and debate vision, values and school improvement strategies.

Section 5.3 Implications of Findings for Policy and Practice

This study is important primarily at a local level, that is, the site of this case study, as leaders seek to navigate the challenges of developing small, autonomous schools within a large school. There are a number of implications for policy and practice:

1. There should be an understanding that relationships are key. Leaders must be highly personable, accessible, have a desire to reduce power-distance relationships between leaders, teachers and pupils, and have the ability to develop trusting, respectful relationships.
2. Leaders must have the ability to make crucial and important decisions, be strategic, be decisive, and to also encourage greater participation and influence. They need to take risks in acknowledging that participation in the life of the school is not about teachers taking increased delegated responsibility; it is about thinking about how these practices of participation and distribution of leadership can be best embedded in the structure and operations of each of the small schools.
3. Leaders need to accept, within these parameters of keeping a focus on pedagogy, vision, personalised approaches and involvement of pupils and staff, that leaders can be different and their personalities are almost certainly different. To fail to acknowledge that leaders can and should be different, will lead to a lack of power and direction for each small school. Leaders need to feel empowered in developing distinctive strategies.

4. It is clear that none of the SWS had really embraced discourse and debate as an opportunity to consider the direction of the SWS. But part of this was because some staff did not seem to want to engage in dialogue and debate. My findings show little evidence of teachers feeling marginalised in two of the schools. It was more the case that they were not really involved in strategic decision making and that leaders needed to encourage staff to feel ownership of decision making.

Whilst structures and relationships appeared to be embedded, if the organisation is to develop into a reflective, forward-thinking organisation with a genuine and authentic shared vision, then leaders need to take greater risks with their own levels of authority and encourage greater levels of discourse and debate. This would result in a stronger vision of which all stakeholders would feel a part of.

5. Leaders need to understand and accept that multiple visions will be challenging and sometimes frustrating. Policy should make explicit the strong central guiding vision. This should then be used as a marker for decision-making.

6. Leaders need to develop relationships between the SWS, and with those outside them, without undermining the importance of being in a small school community. Therefore developing allegiances to both their own small school and the wider organisation, working collaboratively together, sharing best practice, but not sacrificing what is unique and special about your own organisation, are all required.

This requires intense negotiation and diplomacy, political and listening skills to reinforce the idea that everyone needs to improve together. Therefore further opportunities are required to develop the sort of relationships conducive to building social capital across the schools.

Whilst the primary importance of this thesis is to contribute to policy and practice at the site of the research, and contribute to the process of change management, reflection and school improvement, the study also has importance for leaders, educationalists and academics with an interest in school improvement strategy, change management and personalisation.

As government accountability measures for schools are changed to a focus on all pupils through 'progress 8', not an arbitrary measure of 'pass' at GCSE, and on the progress of

all pupils, whatever their ability, it will become increasingly important for leaders to reflect on how to ensure that all pupils optimise their potential and make exceptional progress in relation to their potential. Thankfully the performance accountability system has changed, but this shift raises issues for leaders, governors and educationalists to consider. How best can we focus on individual pupils, ensuring they are known, challenged and supported? How can we ensure that teachers work collaboratively and collegially in order to improve long-term, sustainable teaching that leads to higher outcomes for all?

I argue that the SWS configuration is worthy of consideration. But it is also important to reflect on the challenges of developing shared vision in a SWS model, if we are going to fully reap the benefits of small, highly personalised, distinctive schools within one organisation.

5.4 Methodological Critique

It was a strength of this research that colleagues wanted to be involved and a number of people approached me to request participation. It seemed that colleagues were open and honest and that my ethics and explanation about the purpose of the study, the of building trust, linking it to school improvement, and explanation about the ethics of confidentiality and anonymity, encouraged people to be involved.

From the outset I approached my research from an understanding that my role as both an insider and also a major advocate of SWS reform having been central to its development throughout the planning stages, and critically, my role as a deputy principal at the site at the time of the research, had the potential to create limitations. Limitations related both to the actual data that were collected and also the analysis, as described further on. Colleagues had openly told their stories, including when this would appear to be negative, for example, describing fragmented relationships or frustrations. It was this contextual detail that was an important part of this qualitative, exploratory study. I looked for negative cases based on my contextual understanding. By this, I mean colleagues who I felt might hold different perspectives from that of others. I tried to purposively sample those who were particularly interested in the study but also those who I felt might potentially have negative viewpoints. No colleagues refused to participate.

Data analysis was initially a challenge, and six months after starting the data analysis process, I started again. I re-read transcriptions, re-coded and drew out new themes. I had feedback from my supervisor that I was not penetrating beneath the surface, providing rich examples or critically analysing perspectives. I therefore approached the way that I presented the data in a different way using data matrices and separating each SWS and each group of participants.

Throughout the research I developed good listening skills, sensitivity, empathy and dialogue. It has been a journey for me in the way I reflect on leadership in the organisation and how vision is developed. I was non-defensive, kept a record of analytical memos and any changes in the direction of the research.

For example, it was necessary for the principal be re-interviewed as it was not obvious whether the college-wide vision was clear enough. Leaders in other schools were also re-interviewed if coherence was required in developing key themes. It was an iterative approach. I interviewed colleagues in any order, and whilst this created some initial confusion as I moved from one school to another or from teacher to teacher, I believe that this was the correct approach to ensure involvement of all at the same time. It also allowed for flexibility in the interviewing and observation stages.

Verbal feedback after interviews clarified whether participants had understood the questions, and that they were involved in a dialogue and could add further information should they need to. Participants were thanked for their input and given the opportunity to read transcriptions in order to check for accuracy. I also spent time discussing the key themes throughout the research with the principal and other school leaders.

Interview questions were well developed, broad and semi-structured with a probing strategy employed to delve deeper into experiences. A large sample of participants brought depth and breadth to the findings. This strategy was developed following a small-scale pilot study in which six participants were interviewed.

5.5 Potential Improvements

A shadowing element was introduced as part of the research strategy and provided richer contextualised data on everyday *in situ* practices of leaders. However, this data set would have been strengthened had I been able to shadow for longer than a day.

Leaders had already said it might not be a typical day, as the research was carried out during the summer term at the height of the examination period. However, shadowing is both time-consuming and somewhat intrusive.

It was unfortunate that during the data gathering phase one of the HOS left. It was therefore not possible to collect their perspectives. Consequently I report findings from one school on the understanding that the perspectives of the HOS who left are lacking. I discussed with my supervisor whether to drop one SWS from the study because of this, but it felt somewhat unfair. I was faced with a professional dilemma. However, I am convinced that it was important ethically to persevere and report findings from teachers and other leaders who had given up their time to be involved in my study and to portray their school from their perspectives. I felt I had a moral duty to include these voices.

Perhaps the biggest challenge was time. As a part-time researcher and a school leader the research study took significant time. I accept, therefore, that research findings are not necessarily 'current', particularly with respect to the embedding of a new reform. Therefore findings in one school could be quite different if the study were carried out again due to leadership and staff changes. But I report the findings as they were at the time. Perhaps a challenge with professional doctorates is that the final thesis does not show findings as they now exist. Things change, and indeed my own behaviour as a leader as well as a researcher changed as a consequence of my study.

Lack of generalisation could be considered a key limitation in this study, although I did not set out to create statistical generalisations or indeed transferability. However, particularisation is important, as is the concept of relatability. That is, other educational leaders outside the organisation should be able to relate to my study.

Whilst member-checking (Saldana, 2009) was carried out after each interview to check key ideas and offer the opportunity for further reflective commentary, the lack of a second person to agree coding, inter-coder agreement, may raise questions concerning the key themes that have been identified. However, I did go through the data analysis process several times. I also wrote analytical memos to help me on this challenging journey of identifying key thematic clusters.

It would have led to the development of more comprehensive data had I had further opportunities to observe meetings; staff meetings, briefings, team meetings and

individual meetings would all have brought greater depth and contextual detail to this study. Nevertheless, this would have raised difficulties relating to the volume of data and a practical plan of analysis in a solo research study.

It took me by surprise that participants were unequivocally prepared to talk openly about competitiveness, marginalisation and fighting one's own corner. I was working as a leader in the school at the time therefore I had contextual knowledge that the elements of sharing between schools was a real challenge. But the extent and concreteness to these findings did surprise me. Perhaps therefore it is of real importance to report back on this, and to use these data to reflect on ways to do things differently.

The study could have been improved had I not been researching as an individual. At times I felt slightly isolated, although positive relationships with HOS, and particularly the principal, did mean I could discuss on a regular basis key concepts and categories that were emerging.

If I were to improve the research the following strategies would enhance my study:

- Shadowing leaders for longer would have deepened and extended data on contextualised *in situ* practices and perspectives of leaders in relation to vision-building.
- I could have sought perspectives from a wider range of support staff, pupils, parents and governors. Whilst I interviewed one group of pupils in each school these were not representative of all pupils at the school. I also chose not to include pupils' perspectives in my final thesis submission for reasons of space constraints. Instead I decided to focus attention on the perspectives of leaders and teachers. Devoting scarce resources to collecting more pupil data would have required too much time and would have resulted in too much data for analysis for the purposes of this thesis. I accept that pupil perspectives would have strengthened this study and would inform further research in this area.
- I would have liked to have had more time to conduct a further set of interviews with the purpose of eliciting comments from key informants in relation to key themes emerging from the analysis of their interview accounts. This would have enabled me to access more detailed, textured understandings of their thinking

and points of view. However, this would have been too time-consuming and also intrusive of colleagues' time.

- It would have strengthened this study to do a cross-comparison with another SWS model, although my literature review and understanding of the SWS model meant that this would have required international travel to the USA where the model is widespread.

5.6 What New Questions Arise as a Result of this Study?

This small-scale, exploratory, embedded case study has provided a source of rich thought and reflection. But as much as it begins to answer the original research questions on how leaders develop shared vision in a SWS configuration, it also raises several more questions that would be worthy of further exploration.

My study has focused on developing shared vision in SWS from the perspectives of leaders, teachers and some pupils. It would be useful to extend this inquiry to support staff, governors, parents and the community. How involved are parents in developing shared vision? What contribution do they make towards school development? How actively do they participate in SWS life? The SWS are supposed to operate rather like a family. How does this family extend to all other stakeholders and cultivate a strong sense of membership?

How does pedagogy change as a result of a strong shared vision? I have discussed the importance of teachers working collaboratively and collegially in relation to developing a shared vision for teaching. But if leaders do keep a focus on processes and practices that support this, how could we evaluate changes in teaching pedagogy at classroom level? What would this shared, collegial view look like from classroom observation?

How can leadership roles be developed further to encourage cross-SWS leadership and shared vision? It is clearly a challenge to develop leadership, partnerships and networks across the SWS. What structures may help this? Further in-depth work might help, for example, considering how cross-college leaders could enhance leadership capacity across the schools.

How does pupil voice contribute to the development of shared vision in a SWS model? Whilst there was some involvement of pupils and their perspectives on developing

shared vision, it would be useful to extend this inquiry to pupil leadership in developing shared vision in a SWS configuration so that clear recommendations could be made to tap into pupils' voice fully and to ensure their contributions are valued and actively listened to.

Does the level of autonomy that is given within a SWS model impact on developing shared vision and how does this manifest itself? I have quite rightly shown that the issue of autonomy is arguably the most challenging one in this study. But it would be interesting to explore this through multiple case studies or a comparative case study in different schools that operate at different places on the SWS continuum that Raywid (1998) proposes, for example, a study that compares and contrasts this model of vision-building in SWS with a fully autonomous SWS (which would have to be in the USA).

How would the data have changed two years on and with different leaders in two of the SWS? How have leaders developed the model in the light of the research and practitioner knowledge?

5.7 Personal Reflections

My doctoral research has contributed original knowledge to our understanding of vision-building in a SWS configuration, but my own professional practice is equally important. The study has developed my own leadership practices and allowed me to reflect on a number of key issues in the SWS model:

- How, as leaders, we need to involve all in the development of small learning communities, which requires a different way of interacting and building relationships;
- Recognition of the importance of placing teaching pedagogy and teacher collaboration at the centre of leadership processes and practices;
- The need to develop deeper understandings of the challenges and frustrations of leaders and teachers within this model and to reflect on, and think through, changes that would enhance the small school communities, whilst also encouraging greater collaboration between the SWS.

As a result of the study Thornville College made a number of changes to the structure that will assist these areas above, such as building greater leadership capacity across the

schools without diminishing small schools' autonomy and accountability; building a separate individual community of post-16 teachers so that teachers move around less; building more cross-college staff training sessions on teaching and learning; and the advancement and expansion of the senior executive team to focus on embedding organisational vision.

APPENDIX ONE: Thornville College Performance Data Prior to Conversion 2009-2011

Contextual information	2009		2010		2011	
	School	National	School	National	School	National
Number on Roll Year 9	255		222		215	
Number on Roll Year 11	305		227		276	
Number on Roll Post 16	295		297		276	
% Free School Meals	25.3%	14.5%	26.5%	15.4%	25.4%	15.9%
% Special Educational Needs	31.1%	21.1%	27.9%	21.7%	28.8%	21.3%
% Absence	8%	7.2%	7.7%	6.8%	9%	6.4%
% Persistent Absence	6.6%	4.9%	5.8%	4.2%	10.6%	4.7%
OFSTED Judgement	Good					
% 5 A*-C inc. English and Maths	41%	49.8%	45%	53.5%	32%	58.9%
% 5 A*-C	60%	70%	69%	75.4%	63%	79.5%
% English Baccalaureate	3%	15.2%	5%	15.6%	5%	17.6%
% Any Qualifications	100%	98.9%	99%	99%	99%	99%
Value added KS2-KS4	1015.4	1000	999.6	1000	968.2	1000

Contextual information	2009		2010		2011	
	School	National	School	National	School	National
% 3 Levels English KS2 to KS4	63%	65%	68%	70%	46%	72%
% 3 Levels Maths KS2 to KS4	46%	58%	54%	63%	47%	65%
% A-Level A*-A Grades	10%	26.5%	11.9%	26.8%	9.3%	27.2%
% A-Level Grades A*-C	53.9%	66.9%	67.6%	75.1%	60.2%	76.6%
% A-Level Grades A*-E	100%	97.5%	100%	97.6%	100%	98.5%
% 3+ Entries a A*-C	15.5%		27.5%		13.6%	
APS Per Pupil	538.2	739.3	579.2	744.9	531.1	745.9
APS Per Entry	187.9	211.7	199.8	214.4	202.8	216.2
Value Added KS4 to KS5	1008	1000	1013.8	1000		

APPENDIX TWO: Performance Data by SWS and Whole School 2012-2013

School	Thornville College		Brownhill School		Greenhill School		Redhill School	
Pupils on roll	1550		400		430		395	
Prior attainment	Significantly below national		Significantly below national		Above national		Significantly below national	
Numbers of teachers	105		20		21		20	
	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
5 A*-C inc English and Maths	60%	58%	32%	31%	93%	92%	43%	48%
5 A*-C	94%	93%	89%	85%	100%	100%	97%	95%
5 A*-G	96%	97%	91%	94%	100%	100%	97%	95%
Value added KS2-KS4	1006	1009	998.5	1012	1002	1007	1021	1012

APPENDIX THREE: Supervision Notes

Supervision notes Tuesday 13th December 2011-initial lines of thought.

The schools within schools structure is being operated in a very limited number of schools in the UK, and to different extents. To different extents relates to how far the schools within schools model is actually taken forward. There are various different examples that may be classified as schools with schools:

- Small learning communities that are named ‘schools’
- Schools operating within one larger school-‘mini-schools’
- Schools operating within one school to varying degrees of autonomy.

The movement to SWS began in the USA, through the break-up of large High schools. This appears to be an attempt to deal with a number of pressing issues facing the US government and education nationally. The reasons for this movement are varying and include:

- Closing the educational achievement gap that exists between richer and poor students and students of different ethnic backgrounds.
- To transform education through a different model of schooling-with an innovative curriculum, distributed leadership and project-based learning.
- Safety and well-being.
- Improving other quantifiable outcomes, such as attendance, drop-out rates and graduation rates.
- To make education more ‘personal’

The definition of autonomy is an important one as the concept is considered very relevant to the development of SWS. Raywid would state that SWS can only be defined as such if they are fully autonomous. This, she defines, as being accountable directly to external authorities. Perhaps a better word to use is ‘independence’. If a school is fully independent, it will make decisions on issues such as timetable, staffing-hiring and firing, curriculum, leadership, budgets and with regards to accountability reports directly to authorities. Pupils are admitted to the school. Lee and Ready would state from this model that there are very few SWS that operate with this level of autonomy. There are no cases of this nature in the UK. SWS are usually several small schools within one institution. The schools operate with varying levels of decision-making powers and influence. The schools generally share some central facilities, such as sport, technologies and arts and dining halls. The institution is headed up by a leadership team

and each of the schools is then led by another team. The relationship between leaders at all levels of the organisation is therefore a very important one.

The argument used that the more autonomous the school within the school is, the greater the levels of success is based on several important concepts:

Small learning communities, if they are going to really make a difference to learning, need discrete groups of pupils and staff working closely together and with a sense of vision and common purpose. Some would suggest that the community aspect of SWS is the most important one. SWS need the decision-making powers to make changes to the structures, processes and practices that are used by the school to develop learning.

SWS are more successful if leaders encourage all to 'buy in'. Collective values that are behind the direction that the school is taking.

Accountability. How accountable are staff within the schools? Who are they reporting to? Who is offering the support and challenge needed? How does this internal/external accountability work? Accountability is, it could be argued, of real importance. Meiers, a founder of one of the first SWS, argues that the power of the SWS model is within accountability.

There are a number of competing tensions to this model within SWS that are not, as previously defined, 'fully autonomous'. On a practical level issues such as how to organise the timetable, what happens where you have to share staff, resources or rooms, how do you organise shared dining, sport and arts facilities? But there are issues of greater importance. It could be argued that practical complexities and challenges can be overcome if the staff are embracing this change, buying into it, wanting to solve the practical problems. Indeed these practical issues are certainly not unique to the SWS movement anyway. But they underline a bigger picture which is of greater significance- leadership and how leaders are changing the organisation and taking everyone with them. It is this that NPQH would call 'vision and values'.

What are the similarities and differences between how leadership teams in each of the schools embed their vision and values? How does this relate to the whole organisation

and its vision and values? How does the organisation take into account different perspectives in developing a shared purpose? What challenges exist?

Possible research questions:

Do senior leaders in SWS embody vision in the same way?

What processes and practices do they use?

How does the college take into account multiple perspectives in developing a shared purpose?

What are the challenges for leaders in college and in schools?

A case study approach is considered most appropriate so as to create depth and rigour to the process. It would be multiple cases within a broader case as the research would be exploring leadership in four schools and across the whole college. A case study allows for the collection of data through many different approaches. The approaches could be reflective diaries, observation, questionnaires and open-ended, qualitative interviews.

This study would be unique in that it is looking in depth, through inductive approach, at leadership within the SWS structure. Triangulation will be used but we should be wary of using the argument that triangulation leads to greater validity as you try to establish facts from a variety of different people and using different methods. This triangulation will be collecting rich data. The diversity of perspectives is an important and central feature of the study. It is not using triangulation through a positivist approach.

(Note-Hammersley-ethographic insider accounts, Robert Burgess)

Read-Yin Case study approaches, Elmore internal accountability.

The leadership file-John MacBeath

The literature review will start by discussing the differing meanings of key concepts and agreeing a definition for the purpose of the study. These include 'personalisation', 'Human Scale Education' and 'Schools within Schools'. It will evaluate research

through a 'long lens' mapping the field of these three broad concepts. It will critically evaluate studies on leadership in SWS models and similar models but where accountability is different, for example, federations and partnerships of schools. These are important to consider as, whilst they are not SWS, they perhaps face similar challenges with regard to leadership and common approaches.

There are several leadership 'models' that will be appropriate to discuss and debate including democratic, transformational, collaborative, servant, hierarchical, system.

APPENDIX FOUR: Interview Questions for Leaders

Main Question	Possible follow up	Purpose
1. Tell me briefly about your main areas of work and particularly who you lead.		To ease participant in. To give context to position in organisation and role. To get initial, general views about leadership practices on an average day.
<p>2. How do you develop:</p> <p>As a leader or a member of a senior leadership team</p> <p>Shared vision Mutual accountabilities Commitment of all?</p> <p>What processes and practices are you using?</p> <p>What processes and practices do colleagues who lead you use?</p> <p>What input do you have into how your school develops? Give examples.</p>	<p>Give some examples of practices that you use to develop a shared vision</p> <p>How do you ensure that all-pupils, parents, staff feel ownership?</p> <p>How do you encourage participation in the life of the school? Could you give some examples? For staff? Pupils? Parents?</p> <p>How do you deal with tensions or disagreements in developing this shared vision?</p> <p>(e.g. the way meetings are used, briefings, memos, teaching and learning groups etc.)</p>	To explore examples of how leaders develop shared vision within this structure, about ownership and structures of participation. Possibly aspects of distributed/dispersed leadership practices.
<p>3. How do you then translate this vision into practice?</p> <p>Individually or as a leadership team. Clarify.</p>	<p>Tell me about the things you do to embody your vision</p> <p>Give examples</p> <p>(e.g. memo, letters to staff, observation and feedback, use of meetings, interactions with others,</p>	<p>To explore examples of how leaders translate their vision into practice</p> <p>To explore differences in leadership practices between schools and the significance of this.</p>

	<p>build relationships, praise, walk the talk-how?, displays)</p> <p>Always link back to shared vision</p>	
<p>4. How do you develop a common vision for improving teaching and learning?</p>	<p>What processes and practices are you using to develop whole-school approaches to teaching and improvements in pedagogy? Why?</p> <p>How do you use staff meetings?</p> <p>E.g. staff training-in what form and why? Ownership, interaction, relationships, monitoring, constant dialogue.</p>	<p>To explore leadership practices that relate to improving teaching/instructional practices. This question may well be answered in question 3.</p>
<p>5. How does the SWS model help in developing and implementing shared approaches?</p>	<p>Give examples (e.g. communication, relationships-why are these important and in what form?, easier to get consistency and everyone on board-why? What are leaders doing to get this?</p>	<p>Participants' views on the structure of the organisation and how it may impact differently to a traditional one.</p>
<p>6. How do college leaders develop a shared vision across schools?</p> <p>How do leaders allow for diverse perspectives?</p> <p>What input do you have in how the college as an organisation develops? Give examples.</p>	<p>What processes and practices are used by leaders to develop a shared vision across the schools?</p> <p>(in other words how do leaders/teachers across the organisation work together on common themes?) What relationships exist between leaders in schools and how do these relationships work in developing the vision?</p> <p>e.g. executive meeting, schools meeting, dialogue</p>	<p>To specifically zoom in on how leadership across the college builds and develops leadership within schools and to explore the same as above questions but with college leaders.</p>

	between schools	
<p>7. What challenges exist for leaders in SWS?</p> <p>What processes and practices are used to overcome these challenges?</p> <p>Individually or as part of a team?</p>	<p>Give examples of some of the challenges that leaders face in developing and translating shared vision into practice.</p> <p>What practices do leaders use to overcome these challenges?</p> <p>How do you deal with any possible tensions?</p>	<p>Explore issues around the SWS structure and the challenges that may exist, for example, autonomy, accountability.</p>

APPENDIX FIVE: Interview Questions for Teachers

Main Question	Possible follow up	Purpose
1. Tell me briefly about your main areas of work. .		To ease participant in. To give context to position in organisation and role.
<p>2. How do leaders in the school develop a shared vision?</p> <p>How do they gain commitment of staff?</p> <p>What processes and practices are they using?</p> <p>What input do you have into how your school develops? Give examples.</p>	<p>Give some examples of practices that leaders use to develop a shared vision.</p> <p>How do leaders ensure that all-pupils, parents, staff feel ownership?</p> <p>How do your leaders encourage participation in the life of the school? Could you give some examples? For staff? Pupils? Parents?</p> <p>How do you deal with tensions or disagreements in developing this shared vision?</p> <p>(e.g. the way meetings are used, briefings, memos, teaching and learning groups etc.)</p>	To explore examples of how leaders develop shared vision within this structure, about ownership and structures of participation. Possibly aspects of distributed/dispersed leadership practices.
<p>3. How do your leaders then translate this vision into practice?</p> <p>What messages do leaders convey?</p> <p>What happens if you disagree with the key vision? How does this move forward?</p> <p>How do leaders gain real commitment?</p>	<p>Tell me about the things leaders do to embody the vision.</p> <p>Give examples.</p> <p>(e.g. memo, letters to staff, observation and feedback, use of meetings, interactions with others, build relationships, praise, walk the talk-how?, displays)</p>	<p>To explore examples of how leaders translate their vision into practice</p> <p>To explore differences in leadership practices between schools and the significance of this, from the perspectives of teachers.</p>
4. How do leaders develop a common vision for improving teaching and learning?	What processes and practices are leaders using to develop whole-school approaches to teaching and	To explore leadership practices that relate to improving teaching/instructional

	<p>improvements in pedagogy? Why?</p> <p>How are staff meetings used?</p> <p>e.g. staff training-in what form and why? Ownership, interaction, relationships, monitoring, constant dialogue.</p>	<p>practices. This question may well be answered in question 3.</p>
<p>5. How does the SWS model help in developing and implementing shared approaches</p>	<p>Give examples</p> <p>(e.g. communication, relationships-why are these important and in what form?, easier to get consistency and everyone on board-why? What are leaders doing to get this?</p>	<p>Participants' views on the structure of the organisation and how it may impact differently to a traditional one.</p>
<p>6. How do college leaders develop a shared vision across schools?</p> <p>How do leaders allow for diverse perspectives?</p> <p>What input do you have in how the college as an organisation develops? Give examples.</p>	<p>What processes and practices are used by leaders to develop a shared vision across the schools?</p> <p>(in other words how do leaders/teachers across the organisation work together on common themes?) What relationships exist between leaders and teachers in schools and how do these relationships work in developing the vision?</p> <p>e.g. executive meeting, schools meeting, dialogue between schools.</p>	<p>To specifically zoom in on how leadership across the college builds and develops leadership within schools from the perspectives of teachers.</p>
<p>7. What challenges exist for in SWS in developing shared vision?</p> <p>What processes and practices are used to</p>	<p>Give examples of some of the challenges that are faced in developing and translating shared vision into practice.</p>	<p>Explore issues around the SWS structure and the challenges that may exist, for example, autonomy, accountability.</p>

<p>overcome these challenges?</p> <p>Individually or as part of a team?</p>	<p>What practices do leaders use to overcome these challenges</p> <p>How do you deal with any possible tensions?</p>	
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APPENDIX SIX: Table of Participants

Table of all participants showing their role, experience and interview date.

Participant	Role	Length of time in school	Teaching subject	Teaching years	Previous role prior to conversion	School or cross school position	Date of interview
Isobel	Head of School	2 years	Sociology	12	Deputy Headteacher	Greenhill	11/3/2013
Richard	Deputy Head of school	2 years	Maths	8	Head of Maths in a different school	Greenhill	19/3/2013
Ben	Deputy Head of School	2 years	PE	9	Head of Year	Greenhill	26/2/2013
Anne	Head of Learning	2 years	Geography	8	Head of Geography	Greenhill	29/3/2013
Charles	Teacher	2 years	Maths	20	Maths teacher	Greenhill	20/5/2013
Denise	Teacher	1 year	Science	1	NA	Greenhill	24/5/2013
Susan	Lead teacher	2 years	Science	6	Science teacher	Greenhill	16/5/2013

Mark	Head of School	1 year	PE	12	Assistant Head in another school	Brownhill	7/3/2013
Craig	Deputy Head of School	6 months	PE	7	Head of PE in another school	Brownhill	12/6/2013
Rachel	Deputy Head of School	2 years	Maths	8	Head of Maths	Brownhill	27/3/2013
Cynthia	Head of learning	1 year	PE and Geography	9	Assistant Head in another school	Brownhill	4/3/2013
Kim	Advisor	2 years	RE	5	Teacher in another school	Cross schools	4/3/2013
Frances	Lead teacher	2 years	Science	8	Science leader	Brownhill	28/6/2013
Roy	Teacher	1 year	Maths	1	NA	Brownhill	28/6/2013
Madeline	Teacher	1 year	Spanish	8	Teacher in another school	Brownhill	22/5/2013
Sandra	Deputy Head of School	2 years	English	9	Head of Year	Redhill	5/3/2013

Stuart	Head of Learning	1 year	PE	10	AST in another school	Redhill	1/3/2013
Mollie	Teacher	2 years	History	4	History teacher	Redhill	11/6/2013
Graham	Teacher	2 years	Science	6	Science teacher	Redhill	22/5/2013
Heather	Teacher	1 year	English	6	English teacher in another school	Redhill	7/6/2013
Edward	Principal	2 years	History	30	Headteacher	Cross schools	4/3/2013 24/6/2013
Lara	Advisor	2 years	Science	8	Science leader	Cross schools	26/2/2013
Ben	Head of Greyhill	2 years	ICT	10	Head of post-16 in another school	Greyhill	2/12/2012
Eleanor	Deputy Head of school	2 years	Health and social care	20	Head of vocational education	Greyhill	29/10/2012
Helen	Head of Learning	2 years	Business	4	Business teacher	Greyhill	30/10/2012

John	Head of Learning	2 years	Business	8	Head of Business	Greyhill	23/5/2013
Nathaniel	Advisor	2 years	Maths	20	AST in another school	Cross schools	4/6/2013
Phillip	Advanced skills teacher	2 years	Media	12	AST	Greyhill	23/5/2013
Angela	Senior leader	2 years	Technology	24	Head of Technology in another school	Cross schools	29/10/2012
Jessica	Senior leader	2 years	NA	NA	Head of community education	Cross schools	27/2/2013

APPENDIX SEVEN: Student Focus Group

Main Question	Possible follow up	Purpose
1. Can you introduce yourselves, which school you are in, and a quick sentence about yourself?		To relax students a little and make it appear a little less formal or daunting. To get students talking.
2. SWS What is different in the new SWS to the old school?		To get pupils talking and to try to elicit how they view the differences with this model. Whilst this is not a direct research question, it should lead in and I do not want to use abstract ideas or concepts
3. Involvement in creating the vision of the school. How involved are you in the life of the school? Can you give examples? How much interaction do you have with staff and leaders?	Do you make suggestions about how you feel about the school's development? How and when? How often? What happens from this? If leaders do not agree, how do they deal with this? Can you make suggestions about improving teaching and learning?	To explore students involvement in the school-real involvement.
3. The processes that leaders are taking in SWS?	Can you talk about how your head of school and senior staff try to make you feel part of the school? What actions do they take? What makes your school distinctive and how have your head of school and senior staff developed this?	To explore examples of how leaders translate their vision into practice. To explore differences in leadership practices between schools and the significance of this.
4. How are teachers working together to improve teaching and learning in each SWS?	How are teachers working together and with you to improve teaching?	To explore leadership practices that relate to improving teaching/instructional practices.
5. Challenges What difficulties are there with the SWS model and		

how does everyone work to overcome these?		
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Appendix Eight: Informed Consent Form

Dear Colleague,

As part of my Doctor of Education at the University of Leicester, I am carrying out a research project into leadership in Schools within Schools. The focus of this project is how leaders within schools and across them develop a shared vision and translate this into practice. I wish to explore the processes and practices that leaders are using to develop shared vision, and the challenges that this brings.

Participation in the research would involve being interviewed, some observation and using a reflective journal. The aims of the research are to explore, in depth, leadership processes and practices, in schools within schools. The research field in this area is very sparse and hopefully the study will develop our knowledge and understanding. A further aim of the project is to encourage reflective dialogue and professional growth as well as contributing to college development and improvement.

Any views expressed would be given in confidence, and any quotes used would be anonymised and used solely to help us improve practice. The information collected will be held in a secure place. You will have the opportunity to read through, and comment on, interview transcriptions.

It is important to note that you can withdraw from the research at any time.

If you are willing to take part in this research, would you please sign below. Please feel free to discuss any questions you may have with me.

Thanks

Stuart Mundy

Deputy Principal

Thornville College.

Signature:

Date:

Print name

APPENDIX NINE: Example of Reflexivity

Reflexive account-the processes, problems, choices, errors

Craig says people comply? But why? Leaders say that they cannot think of examples where staff say they do not want to do something but:

Does this suggest they do not have a voice? Committed through loyalty and strong relationships?

It is important not to avoid a critical approach to the data.... Just because people are agreeing does not necessarily suggest strong commitment to shared vision. This needs greater scrutiny of the data itself. Equally, though, it should not be judged that more structures, line management and a 'department'-based system that exists in one of the schools is any less powerful. If I do come to this conclusion, it must come from the evidence itself, i.e. the data-and not preconceived ideas that the school is too bureaucratic. Otherwise it is not staying true to the philosophical assumptions laid out in the methodology section that multiple realities can exist and that the research is based on the perspectives of the participants and must not be influenced

Action: specifically explore examples of participation, vision-building. Go beneath the surface. Reread transcriptions.

Key themes that need exploring in the literature-interpersonal leadership. Empathy, effective listening, ability to show genuine regard. All these are key parts of interpersonal leadership which coding shows many references. But it needs to be illustrated firstly what these mean and how they actually manifest themselves in practice-both through interview transcriptions and also how they relate to the research question on vision-building.

The concept of reciprocity-the mutual obligation and value of sharing knowledge amongst organisational members appears to be a key theoretical concept that arises from the category of knowledge sharing.

It seems not to be as important what leadership theories are applied-it is more about the relational part.

Greenhill HOS could be described as 'immersed' but my tutor questions if this is the right word to use? Certainly the HOS appears to want to know everything. Is this too much to expect? What approaches allow for this level of immersion? What is it about the HOS and the actions that she takes that suggest both immersion and professional intimacy?

School leaders within this structure need to be relationship-focused, negotiate the line between accountability, professional distance and hierarchies whilst also being able to maintain overall decision making. What concept is this? It relates to distributed leadership to some degree but this is also about personalities and ego-it is about how leaders can navigate the challenge of closeness and professionalism. Be instructional. Be positive, optimistic, passionate-examples of how these look?

The concept of social capital seems of real importance. But Sergioivanni also writes about academic capital, intellectual capital and professional capital. Professional capital is about collegiality-a single practice of teaching. This is evident strongly in one school but does this stifle creativity? I need to ensure that I am not biasing my opinions on this school because they are deemed to be more successful. This study is not relating leadership to outcomes. If it was, it would require the control of a number of factors that could be impacting. We are merely looking for data that suggest processes leaders are using from leaders' and teachers' perspectives.

Having the opportunity to re-clarify concepts was a useful part of doing insider research. For example, even though many leaders in one school talked about empowerment, most could not give examples of how this looks in practice. Therefore two short interviews were carried out specifically looking at decision-making and how staff are empowered in terms of their contribution to the vision. Is this vision a vision created by the HOS? If so, what processes and practices lead to such high levels of commitment to this vision?

The aspect of data reduction is incredibly challenging. The purpose is not to 'flatten data' and participant voices need to be heard. A structure was created for writing up findings following an earlier draft which just was not critical enough. It was not, as the

supervisor commented, 'messy enough' We cannot expect uniformity and the narrative must not show this. Action was to redraft the whole data analysis section to include a data matrix. The structure was agreed to separate the different SWS and the perspectives of teachers. This made it much easier to focus on one school and one group and really get beneath the data in a much more critical way. Be open (Chenail, 1995)- present the story of method construction, tell it as a story, communicate as clearly as possible what you did and why. What were your choices along the way?

In qualitative studies 'thick description' is a way of seeking greater reliability. Is the probing strategy used in interviews enough to gain thick description?

Lots of prompts needed on developing a shared vision. Does the questioning need greater clarity or is this leader unable to give examples? Certainly my contextual understanding is that this leader is not really involved in strategy within the school. But it is the data that are important. Not for me to assume that people are not strategic in vision-building. Therefore the implications for the study are greater probes-for example, can you give me an example of....? In addition shadowing data should also shine further light on everyday practice.

The discussion through the interview flowed well, although it did steer off track a few times into areas that the study does not intend to focus on. I think it important to try to bring people back on track otherwise there will be a great deal of additional data which are not useful to the study question. However, it does bring into play ideas around showing the respect for opinions, listening to ideas whilst also guiding. This is a skill that I need to develop further.

How can you be sure that participants fully understand the question? Clearly questions should be amended for each group of pupils, teachers and leaders. Therefore it is a useful structure and an aide memoir but actually it needs flexibility – if, for example, a teacher has been given opportunity to contribute to the shared vision they must have the opportunity to talk about this in depth in order to create rich accounts. My interviewing skills got better over time.

After each interview I asked participants how they felt about the process and the type of questions being asked. Did they understand them all? Were they comfortable?

Participants generally stated that they were comfortable and understood. A few participants did say though that sometimes they could not recall in the interview. I also asked if they wanted to contribute anything additional that I had missed. Participants did not do this but did engage in brief conversation about the research. I did consider at this point if there were other ways to engage people in thinking about examples. For example, the use of diagrammatic representation or a task based around the senior team of each school discussing processes and practices. In the end I decided to leave this and focus just on interviews. Although the shadowing element brings in seeing people in their everyday, natural (as much as possible) context.

Shadowing. Generally participants were comfortable with the process. However, the closer personal and professional relationship with one colleague compared to the other should be accepted? How does this affect the data collected? Well it was important to stay professional and observer-orientated at all times. Equally important to seek clarification on why participants were doing what they were doing. At the end of the shadowing participants discussed if this was a typical day. One stated, 'No day is typical!' which I guess it isn't in the challenges of schools. However, she did say that at other points in time during the year you would see differences. For example the shadowing was carried out in the summer term during the examination season-this meant a lot of time was spent on year 11 pupils as opposed to more staff interactions and greater strategic work. One participant said it was very useful and could I shadow again in the autumn? There was one ethical issue which was around the shadowing of meetings with either staff or pupils that was confidential or difficult. For example, I did not attend a discussion regarding a pupil exclusion or a member of staff who had a meeting regarding pay and including their union. I did, however, ask participants how things went, what processes and practices they were using, and took field notes.

However, one participant, who was clearly quite anxious about what she could and couldn't say through the interview process, clearly felt quite uncomfortable. This was not the interviewer effect-it was actually talking about issues that were quite difficult to talk about. Sensitivity was needed as was stressing confidentiality. However, as the interview unfolded the participant almost treated it like a cathartic experience. This has

to be treated with caution at the analysis stages; at times it appeared almost like an opportunity to sound off. Lots of anxieties and issues had been raised to the forefront and now was the opportunity to talk about it.

Areas that I thought may cause tension did not. I think maybe the purpose of the research has been well explained and that because it contributes to overall school improvement and because it is a professional and honest approach, participants are comfortable to be talking about things that are not working, despite the fact that they know I am a major advocate. This is incredibly helpful as it means we are all being reflective, non-defensive. For example, partnerships and collaboration.

Sometimes during the interviews participants want to discuss the structure of leadership and responsibility (for example, what individual leaders do/ line manage/ advisors/ cross-college leaders) and wanted, I believe, to input into the structure, rather than discussing what colleagues are doing. In the data analysis stages I need to be very clear on the boundaries for this study-keeping the focus on coding against the research question and not allowing myself to get distracted into a focus not specifically answering the question (interesting and relevant as the subject may be).

We are all ' living and breathing' the structure. It is hard not to get involved and also challenging not to allow own work issues to do with leadership to muddy the waters with the study. It is fine to explain where context has informed research strategy. It is definitely not okay to include aspects from outside the data collection-unless field notes were taken and unless participants gave consent.

Following one interview I am not sure all questions are relevant to all participants. This was taken into account in further interviews. For example, it was difficult for teachers to talk about their contribution to the whole college as generally this is through their school. But this is an important area to define so the questions need to be included even if people say ' nothing'

Timing was appropriate. Most interviews were between 45 minutes and an hour but some key leaders, such as the HOS and principal, interviews were longer. Interviews were not rushed. Only one interview was interrupted.

I have to reflect on how you avoid participants feeling uncomfortable if there are pauses plus also allowing for wait time. I decided to adopt a strategy where I would ask if they wanted me to rephrase or they just wanted think time. I was also sensitive to participants, saying occasionally ' It is fine not to have the answers to everything' in order to reassure people and create an open and respectful climate.

From pilot interviews there appears to be an inherent tension in the model between autonomy and sharing/ collaborating that seems to impact on the development of shared vision.

Developments in methodology following pilot:

Observation/ shadowing will allow a greater focus on observing the processes and practices they are taking, as opposed to the structures that exist (which many participants keep moving into).

Following a trial of the ESM decided to do a follow-up interview to discuss the patterns that emerged. This is because the ESM record showed a list of tasks, as opposed to having an understanding of what people are actually doing and how it contributes to shared vision. In the end I decided that shadowing would have greater data.

Interview with Anne. What is the level of decision-making authority that SWS leaders have? This, perhaps, is an interview probe as it relates to how the shared vision is created for the college. This relates to how leaders personalise their own school whilst also overcoming the challenges of a college-wide shared vision.

Following an interview with Kim the theme of pseudo consultation by leaders came up again.... This needs to be tested out with teachers.

Interview with Charles. People are different and am I recognising that commitment comes in different shapes and forms? This interview is atypical of others. I deliberately selected this participant.

With regard to one school, does it matter that hierarchies are created? Is it okay to have different approaches and different personalities? I need to be careful not to either allow my own preconceived ideas on how leadership in small schools should look but also not to ignore the underlying issues. Data will need careful scrutiny as what appears on the surface may not be a true picture.

Explore with leaders Where does the competitive edge come from? Is it sometimes self-interest?

Redhill pupil interviews seemed to agree with what came from interviews. Pupils described leaders being:

Proactive, relationship-centred, deeply involved in their schooling, ... But specifically mention HOS is not. And they feel very self-conscious about saying this. Two vocal pupils just say that we are going to be honest and tell it the way it is, but a couple of individuals are not wanting to openly say this and it appears to be through a fear.

Pupils in Brownhill are giving feedback which suggests both similarities and also differences to the perspectives of teachers and leaders. For example that leaders are heavily involved, a massive community spirit, family feel). This makes it even more important for shadowing to see this in its everyday actions.

In Redhill I need to consider some quite major ethical issues. The HOS departs during the research carrying out stages. Should new interviews be carried out? Should participants be re interviewed? However, this was decided not to do this because this was what was seen at the time. The whole organisation is in fluid change-and to go back to the field means the project would be extended. Therefore I decided to tell the story as it stood at the time of the research over a twelve-month period. It should be noted, though, that this has negative connotations for the SWS and the college-as it may well show that the system does not work. It still needs reporting as I need to be true to the data.

The interviews with Greyhill teachers showed that the school community was not the same as before. Pupils do not benefit from the same philosophy of 'know and be known' as they had previously experienced in the SWS before. This is put down to the

fact that most teachers are coming in from outside the community, only do a bit of their teaching in Greyhill and have competing priorities. This is a major theme for this particular school.

What is the importance of in one school specific and ongoing references to ' departments' The focus of the inquiry should not be misled by my own bias about ' subject empires ' , the conflict that many SWS have in the USA around large faculties and the small school. It may be that some staff are using these labels and language without any connotations or implications. The question is are the schools freeing up levels of bureaucracy and ensuring everyone has a voice? Are they reducing professional distances? Is it intimate, if this is the right word? Do the approaches leaders are using still build a genuine shared vision that all are committed to?

The principal encourages competitiveness between each SWS and then expects collaboration. In my view this creates challenges as if you encourage direct competition then you reduce empathy for each other. This will be challenging to write up as it suggests that leadership at top level is not building a college-wide shared vision. This needs further exploration through a second interview. It also needs an honest discussion. The researched should not be surprised by the findings or the conclusions that are drawn from these. And short discussion in which I stated that not all of the research findings would be positive and that we cannot learn from the study if we do not report honestly what was seen. This project was not about showing the success of the model. But in many ways it exposes the challenges.

Due to specific challenges in one of the schools I intentionally put interviews on hold.

Analytical Memos.... So far.

Each SWS is in a different place with regard to developing learning communities (although needs better collaboration with pre-1st teachers)

Strong, powerful vision is underpinning the dev of the SWS.
Leadership & is different

Relationships are key. But what type. Some leaders are able to manage "hierarchical" influence and professional distance with the closeness that SWS require; others cannot

Leadership is unique. Through closeness.

Diplomacy + negotiation are key to encouraging ownership.
Recognising & valuing diverse and conflicting perspectives is key — needed to develop commitment, autonomy and accountability. This is throughout the organisation.

System leadership is important but underused. Leaders are still mostly protective, lack consensus, co-1 (these values co-1 where leaders simply have not paid attention or recognised the tensions that SWS would create

Leadership is fluid and changing all the time.

Each SWS researched simultaneously.

Embedded Subjects.

Tensions are more evident through smaller. This makes SW much more challenging. If you expect leaders to interact more then more conflict, more perspectives will result.

Processes take time. Decisions take time. Decisions take reflection, debate

APPENDIX ELEVEN: Observation Notes.

Wednesday 19th June.

Notice was not given in advance but permission was sought to shadow processes and practices for the day. Research logged what the leader was doing throughout the day and interactions were observed. Short conversations took place throughout the day between researcher and participant particularly areas such as why? What was the purpose of this? How does it link to school vision? No two days would be the same. Indeed participant teaches for one day a week. Plus there are other scheduled meetings. But participant was asked if the main actions/behaviours generally are reflective of how leaders operate.

Time	Actions	Notes/themes
7.55	Interacts with staff in small staffroom. Makes coffee for colleagues.	Lots of informal dialogue. Positive and engaging approaches.
7.56	Discussion with a cover supervisor about pupils.	Showing genuine interest in pupils activities.
7.57	Talks to a newly qualified teacher about his responsibility working with pupil leaders and meeting them.	Colleagues in the school are actively participating. Informal structures of communication. Non-hierarchical. Direct and accessible.
7.57	Signing off a trip form with the newly qualified teacher with responsibility for gifted and talented.	Proactive. Vision is to get the best possible progress outcomes . Part of this is seen as enriching pupils' lives and educational experiences.
7.57	Talking to a teacher trainee and two science teachers	Lots of humour is used. Relationships between Head of School are friendly, based on respect but also both formal and informal.
7.58	Talks to a teacher about putting best pieces of work into folders.	The best piece of work folders are set up as a way of celebrating and showcasing pupils' work. Reinforcing this shows aspects of recognising achievements but also placing pupil progress at the centre of everything.
7.59	Talks to the Maths lead teacher about a maths revision day for the pupils.	Positive interactions. Lots of humour and warmth. Uses relationships to reinforce core expectations with regard to vision.
8.00	Meeting and greeting pupils as they enter the school. Engages with most pupils-asking them how they are. Joins in with the applause for 'happy birthday' for a pupil who is celebrating their birthday.	Head of School models interactions that she expects from others. This is based on caring, close relationships.
8.10	Talking to pupils whilst having conversations about where they are going for activities day.	Informal relationships and interactions.
8.12	Interacts with teacher about going on	

	a trip today.	
8.12	Goes into most classrooms greeting pupils and staff.	
8.12	Tackles pupils about uniform expectations.	Uses these to reinforce Greenhill vision
8.15	Teacher brings a pupil up with best piece of work and this is read.	
8.15	Principal interacts with HOS briefly about important visitors coming in.	Dialogue is very positive, lots of humour. But professional.
8.15	Jokes with a support officer from the LA 'that tan hasn't dropped off yet' Then talks professionally about pupil. Interacts with pupils about uniform.	Seamless transition between what seems like 'informal' interactions and formal ones. It is clear that strong but professional relationships underpin leader's behaviours.
8.14	Discusses ICT coursework completion with Deputy.	Head of school is fully immersed in the life of the school and wants to know everything about everything.
8.14	Goes off to an office space to speak with a vulnerable pupil who has recently suffered a bereavement.	
8.14	Praises a pupil whose work is brought to Head of School.	
8.15	Talks to support officer to set up her work for the day.	
8.15	Gets a pupil a blazer.	
8.17	Organises a pastoral support plan meeting for an individual pupil with needs.	
8.20	Greets a Year 9 group doing sex education.	
8.20	Goes to sports day assembly with year 10.	Reinforces school vision. Sports day helps to build communities.
8.30	Meeting with an ICT teacher. This is a very difficult meeting as large numbers of pupils are failing their ICT coursework and procedures have not been followed as they should have done. Teacher is also distressed.	Direct, honest approaches are used. There is some empathy but it is a professional meeting focused on sorting out the problems.
8.50	Goes to a class to see how they are getting on with their 'speaking and listening' assessment/speeches.	This is very much about developing shared vision for doing the best we can. It is about showing genuine interest in pupils and their work in order to develop their commitment.
8.52	Interacts with teacher and pupil about their work. Lots of praise used.	
8.55	Runs upstairs to get planner as discussion with support officer about pupil planners for next year.	
9.00	Talks to a pupil about behaviour expectations.	This is done deliberately in public spaces so that the interaction is open

		and transparent, professional and focuses on a non-confrontational approach that builds relationships.
9.02	Talks to pupil about their work. Asks them what level it is at, how could it be improved and what would make it a Level 7 piece. Encourages pupil ownership by encouraging them to go and check if the piece can be redrafted for higher levels.	Again, interactions are modelled. Use of shared language linked to shared vision. Reinforcing that teaching and pupil progress is at the heart of everything the school does.
9.10	Looks at pupil's work. Places another pupil in Head of School 'book of pride'. Reinforces a shared language 'take it further'.	
9.13	Listens to pupils who come to show their work.	
9.19	Discusses English work with a group of pupils. Recaps English language techniques. Engages in a dialogue with a member of staff. Invites pupils to a staff meeting to deliver the speech.	Positivity. Shared language. Involving pupils. Developing a powerful learning community. Celebrating achievements.
9.30	A group of visitors-German headteachers-are introduced and Head of School talks through what pupils are doing.	Sense of openness that visitors are encouraged to look at all aspects of the school.
9.50	Discussion with MRO about resources.	
9.50	Leaves the school to go to another one of the schools for the 'Heads of School meeting'. Praises displays in the other school.	Meeting is focused very much on operational issues-staffing, graduation, new prefects, induction day, KS3 levels, CA year 10, action planning, SLT residential, ICT completion, 2012 day, KS3 exam week, INSET day. The meeting is very positive and mutually supportive. Warm relationships exist between leaders. But not focused on strategy, sharing best practice or on teaching and learning, for example. Operational rather than strategic. But necessary, it is felt, for communication between the schools.
10.15	Pupils are on break. HOS is also on break duty. Interacts with pupils and staff whilst supervising pupils.	
10.40	Pupils go back to classes and are greeted. Asks pupils about their lessons. Disciplines pupils. Talks to pupils about the extended project that they are involved in doing.	Immersion in school.

10.50	Discussion with Spanish teacher.	
10.52	Discussion with librarian.	
10.55	Speaks to parent on telephone.	
11.00	Deals with an 'on call' request from a member of staff.	Explains how follow-up takes place.
11.10	Arranges for pupils to be interviewed as part of a research project.	
11.20	In a classroom talking with pupils and teacher about their coursework marks for English. Particularly pupils who are not making expected progress yet.	Reinforces school vision of progress.
11.30	Went to the year 9 science lessons to praise pupils in year 9 on their science controlled assessment.	This is at the request of the lead teacher. HOS is accessible at all times and staff feel they can go up and make requests. As long as not in the middle of something, HOS sees this as very important to do-show interest in the achievements and progress of pupils.
11.35	Removes phone from a pupil, deals with behaviour in a class, places students in time debt with the teacher.	This is important for showing support to staff. It is not dealing with the issues-but is being proactive and supportive in ensuring that staff deal with issues-it is empowering them. They, in return, feel committed to leaders and the school.
11.35	Lunchtime. On duty throughout. Has discussions with Deputy about how many pupils have now passed ICT.	
12.20	Interacting with pupils as they come into lessons after lunch. Shows interest in what pupils are doing: Eg. 'How's that exam prep going?' 'Oh you have been auditioning for Charlie and the Choc factory.... I am very excited about the concert'.	
12.25	Goes into all classes and opens doors (college policy).	
12.30	Talks to year 11 pupil leaders about performances for graduation.	Involves pupils in the life of the school.
12.45	Goes over to GCSE exam hall to talk to GCSE pupils as they go into the examination.	
12.55	Doing orders for resources.	
1.00	Receptionist arrives. Talks to her about a family issue.	
1.03	Makes staff coffee. Interacts with staff. Has a discussion with Maths leader.	Again there is a seamless transition between open, friendly dialogue and professional demands. These informal/formal interactions take place

		throughout the day and deem formal line management meetings less important-as Head of School uses these interactions to find out, follow up, support and challenge. Formal line management systems are also used but less prevalent. This is arguably due to the size which deems this as unnecessary but it also about the Head of School wishing to immerse herself in all aspects of school life.
1.05	Checking and responding to e-mails.	
1.10	Goes to a year 9 lesson to meet representatives from a charity who are doing a citizenship lesson.	This is very much about the shared vision for the school-active citizenship/participation.
1.25	Talking to a pupil about disruptive behaviour and throwing paper.	
1.30	Checking e mails. Discussion with Deputy principal/researcher.	
1.45	On call.	
1.52	Spoke to Maths leader about sports day and supervision arrangements.	
1.55	Clearing paper work.	All admin is carried out in the centre of the school building to maintain accessibility and openness.
2.20	Discussion with a member of SEN about a statemented pupil and their annual review.	
2.40	Interacting with pupils whilst also checking e-mails inbetween.	

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