An autoethnographical study of leadership in a new Church of England free school.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of the West of England, Bristol for the degree of Professional Doctorate in Education.

School of Education and Childhood

November 2023

Abstract

Effective leadership in education is paramount given the amount of public expenditure dedicated to it (Daniels *et al.*, 2019) and because of the increasing accountability placed upon headteachers (Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Leithwood, 2010; Muijs, 2011). Faith school leadership is unique and considered by many as a form of ministry. However, there has been a paucity of research in faith school leadership and many leaders in faith-based settings feel ill-prepared for the role (Rieckhoff, 2014).

This research documented my emerging leadership as a new headteacher through autoethnography. The purpose of the autoethnography is to provide thick description. I explore school leadership from conceptual and practical perspectives to gain unique and meaningful insights. My unique position as insider-researcher allowed me to critically evaluate leadership by engaging with a range of conceptual frameworks. One predominant conceptual framework, the spiritual educative model (Luckcock, 2014), underpins the description of the first year of my headship. I explore realms of spiritual leadership: diakonos, presbyteros and episcope (Croft, 1999) and reflect on how they manifest themselves in my leadership.

Aware of some of the stated limitations of autoethnography, for example the propensity for autoethnographers to be self-obsessed and narcissistic (Winkler, 2017), I employed a mixed-methods approach. I convened three focus groups of leaders in similar settings and asked to them represent their view of leadership via collage. Combined, the autoethnography and focus groups, provided insights into leadership otherwise previously underexplored.

Thematic analysis of the data found that traditional models of leadership are helpful but limited, not least because many models relate to established or improving schools. I found that leadership development cannot be constrained by a single conceptual framework, rather it is complex and multifaceted. The focus groups provided new insights into leadership that broadened my understanding. The collage making process elicited thoughts and insights from participants that surprised even them.

The research concluded with five professional recommendations. Headship development programmes must consider the preparedness of participants for such a complex and lonely role. A commitment to ongoing coaching should be provided, as no programme can ever prepare a headteacher for the complexities and completeness of the role. New leaders of faith schools need unique extra support to build a culture. Finally, the call for more autoethnography amongst practitioners, especially headteachers, must be heard. There were moments in my headship when I felt completely alone, having access to insightful autoethnography would have helped ameliorate some of my feelings of apprehension and abandonment.

Dedication

To my mother who died just before the completion of this part of my studies and whom I know would have been immensely proud to see me finish. Mum, I promised you that I would get this done. This one is for you.

To my beautiful partner Penny, for your unwavering support and patience. I will be forever grateful to you for bringing out the very best in me. Tighe, Rufus and William, you bring me such joy and make me so proud. Always follow your dreams and never give in.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the members of the UWE EdD team and the dissertation committee for their time and support throughout this journey.

In particular, I would like to thank Dr Jane Andrews and Dr Dean Smart. Dr Jane Andrews inspired me to be a better academic than I believed I could ever be. Dr Dean Smart has been my patient guide and intellectual rock, I will miss the many hours we have spent meeting. This thesis has been with me through some of the most challenging days of my professional and personal life. Jane and Dean patiently stayed with me, encouraging and believing in me.

And a small tribute to the 'unseen' in schools. I see you. To cleaners, catering staff, support staff, pupils and parents, thank you.

Thank you to all the inspirational leaders whom I have had the pleasure of working for and with. You inspired me, challenged me and gave me a chance, even when I was not quite ready for the position you trusted me with. I imagined that when I became a headteacher it would be the end, but I have come to realise that it was just a new beginning.

Finally, my thanks go to the colleagues who began the EdD with me. Through the EdD we developed professional trust and dialogue. We kept each other going during the long and challenging hours and we even had a few laughs and many tears on the way. To Myra and Chris, I may not have got there as fast as you, but thank you, for helping, inspiring and believing in me until the very bittersweet end.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter introduces the research. First, the chapter establishes the purpose of the research, followed by a statement and exploration of the problem addressed. Next, the chapter sets out the context for the research: a new leader in a new faith-designation secondary school, followed by the intended aims of the study. The chapter then states the research questions which will be used to explore the problem that is being addressed. Next a description of the theoretical framework used in the study is given, followed by an outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 Purpose of the study

This is an autoethnographical study of me, the researcher, as the founding headteacher of a new Church of England (Anglican) faith-designation secondary school in England. At the start of conducting this research, I had been a school leader for over 20 years, working exclusively in secondary schools in England. Alongside my professional career, I had also been a lay minister in the Church of England for just under twenty years. This voluntary role afforded me the opportunity to teach and preach in the local churches where I lived and had grown up. Anglican ministry is not limited to the professional clergy, rather it includes laypeople, such as me, who volunteer for specific leadership roles in the organisation. Both points about me are relevant to the context of this study. At this point in my professional career, I was about to embark on a job as a novice and founding headteacher in a Church of England secondary school, thus combining my professional career with my personal vocation. I recognised that this was a unique opportunity to document and study these two elements. Unique because I would never be a novice headteacher again, and it was highly unlikely that I would be the founding headteacher of a new school again, especially not a faith-designation secondary school as they are relatively rare (see below). My strong personal faith must be acknowledged at the start of the study. Due to the nature of the faith school designation, a significant part of my professional duty was to ensure the Christian ethos of the school underpinned all the activities undertaken and was overtly and predominantly evident to those who engaged with the school. This will also be apparent in this study. As a Christian autoethnographer I refer to biblical texts and theological positions in the study. This forms part of my unique contribution to research in this area.

Leadership in education is of vital importance given the amount of public expenditure dedicated to it (Daniels *et al*., 2019). In 2018, the average of total public money spent on education in member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was 11%, with the United Kingdom spending 11.7% (OECD, 2018). Daniels *et al*. (2019, p. 110) point out that school leadership "often stands in the spotlight, mostly because of growing responsibilities for school

headteachers and the accountability-driven context they work in" (see also Hitt and Tucker, 2016; Leithwood, 2010; Muijs, 2011). However, leadership as a concept is hard to define (Daniels *et al.*, 2019; Leithwood and Riehl, 2005). Bush (2008) states that no single definition of leadership exists. Leithwood *et al.* (2004) view leadership activities as twofold: providing direction and exercising influence. O'Toole *et al.* (2003, p. 251) suggest, "shared leadership for most people is simply counterintuitive: leadership is obviously and manifestly an individual trait and activity". Counter to this Meindl (1995) states that the idea of an individual leader as having overall responsibility, influence and power may just exist as a state of the romance of leadership. Yukl (2002) posited that leadership is where an individual has intentional influence over others to structure activities and relationships in a group or organisation, whereas Bush and Glover (2003) contend that, especially in education, leadership is more than likely to be exercised by a group rather than one individual. Bush and Glover (2003) define leadership as being a process of influence designation on clear values and beliefs, setting vision for the school which is subsequently articulated by leaders. The vision is "articulated by all the school leaders who seek to gain the commitment of staff and stakeholders to the dream of a better future for the school, its pupils, and its stakeholders" (Bush and Glover, 2003, p.31). Grissom and Loeb (2011) describe effective school leaders as those who can combine and articulate the instructional needs of the school and skilfully allocate resources where they are needed, at the same times as recruiting and managing the personnel requisite for running an effective school. Given the importance of leadership in schools, I felt compelled to make a contribution to the research in this area.

Leadership in schools has become a rich ground for study, especially in the past 20 years (Leithwood *et al.*, 2020; Gumus *et al.*, 2016; Bush and Glover, 2014) not least because it is recognised to have such a significant impact on student achievement (Karadag *et al.*, 2015). Educational leadership is important in improving student outcomes and has become a priority for policymakers and researchers globally (Lopez 2021) and the role of a headteacher in a school is vital (Hursch, 2005; Bolden, 2004). Leadership has been shown to be second only to classroom teaching in its impact on student learning outcomes (Leithwood *et al.,* 2006). As discussed below, much of the focus in previous educational leadership research has been on the success or otherwise of pupil outcomes, especially research in the cognitive domain (Devos and Bouckenooghe, 2009). Roberts and Woods (2018), in their own words, sought to address this methodological problem in leadership research, namely that of uncovering a deeper understanding of the conceptual interpretation of leadership, especially by the social actors most affected by leadership, namely those being led. For the purposes of this study, leadership is defined as, "a process of social influence, which maximises the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal" (Kruse, 2013, p.2). I chose to use this definition as it

most closely resonates with my personal philosophy of leadership. I also recognised the importance of the combined efforts of a group of people, being significantly greater when working towards a common aim, rather than individuals working in isolation. Woods *et al* (2020, p.73) argue that school leadership is seen by "government as of central importance in achieving the policy of school-led and profession-led improvement". Cruddas (2018, p.15) states that "school leaders are the drivers of improvement".

Educational leadership is complex, as Woods *et al* (2020, p.84) state, "(school) leadership demands ethical reflection and decision-making and an openness to challenging received wisdom, and hence also self-awareness concerning one's most fundamental and worthy values and purposes." In addition to the leadership of teaching and learning, many diverse tasks require distinct leadership practices, for example, the management of resources, finances, and staff.   Complexity theory (Stacey, 2012; Uhl-Bien *et al*., 2007; Osborn and Hunt 2007) states that leadership is not reducible to the learning of techniques and procedures, rather it is a complex, multi-dimensional activity. While separate individuals may lead each of the distinct leadership practices, the initiator of all leadership in schools is usually the headteacher. As Gurr *et al* (2006, p.371) state, "a school headteacher is regarded as they key educational leader and the one particular person in a school who is in the best position to exercise school leadership". One crucial aspect of the role of a headteacher is to create and maintain a positive and productive school culture (Klingaman, 2012). As Peterson and Deal (2009, p. 35) state, "it is the culture of schools that really matters." Further Senge *et al* (2000, p.324) state, "a schools' culture is its most enduring aspect". Given that I was about to embark on opening a brand-new school, where there was no culture already in existence part of my responsibility as headteacher would be to create the culture. There was a significant emphasis placed on creating a school that would provide excellent pupil outcomes, see below. In addition, the school had a faith designation, hence part of my responsibility would be to create a Christian culture. My educational rationale or axiology led me to believe that if I created a productive and caring culture, rooted in Christian values but with excellence at its foundations, then pupils outcomes would be successful.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Faith school leadership is unique and distinctive (Scott and McNeish, 2012). Luckcock (2014) states it is a form of ministry, complementary to the lay and ordained ministry of the church. Earlier Luckcock (2007) pointed out that the conceptualisation of school leadership in the faith sector had mainly been determined by secular agencies such as the National College for School Leadership. It is only very recently that the Church of England has developed its own leadership training course for new headteachers (see below). Grace (2003) and Lawton and Cairns (2005) state that educational leadership research in faith-designation schools has been widely neglected. Similarly, Lucock (2014,

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p.11) stated, "there is a comparative dearth of material on Anglican school leadership". As Grace (2009, p.491) argued, "provision for the religious, spiritual and moral responsibilities of faith school leaders is much less extensive". Current research in faith school leadership found most (70%) new headteachers in faith settings felt ill-prepared for faith leadership (Rieckhoff, 2014). I found in my literature search that there tended to be a focus on systems and processes, not on creating a personal leadership style to develop and embed a culture in a new faith-designation context.

There are many things distinct about being a headteacher. The headteachers' standards (Department for Education (DfE), 2020a) divide the responsibilities of headteachers into ten areas. The first six standards build directly on the teachers' standards (DfE, 2020b), while the latter four focus on distinct leadership responsibilities specific to headteachers. These are: organisational management, school improvement, working in partnership and governance and accountability. In essence, a headteacher is not only responsible for the quality of education provided to pupils, but also their safety and welfare. Headteachers must also take account of their staff workforce and their wellbeing. Alongside these two crucial functions they must ensure the school is financially well-managed and all legislation is met, for example, with regards to health and safety. Combined, these functions are complex and potentially all-consuming. Indeed, as Klingaman, (2012, p.5) states, "beginning a new principalship (headship) is a complex endeavour". This study seeks to open up this complex endeavour, through the insights of an experienced practitioners (leaders) but also from my perspective as a novice headteacher.

My desire to complete this study was underpinned by my recognition that this would likely be a once-in-a-career opportunity due to the relative scarcity of new schools opening in the geographical area in which I wished to work. I felt compelled to document my journey of leadership from pre-opening to post-opening of the school, as I hoped my shared learning might benefit others, not just in a faith-designation context, but also those who found themselves in similar unchartered territory. Absence of practitioner research was a "surprising omission" (Thompson, 2017, p. 224) and ethnography was a method she "expected to see more of". Furthermore, Thompson goes onto say, "paucity of this kind of research points to the difficulty that practitioners might have in finding time to publish their research, or it might signal that they see little reason to write for scholarly journals" (Thompson, 2017). From the outset I knew that as a new headteacher establishing a new school, completing a substantial piece of research such as this would be challenging. However, as a headteacher I would have really valued such insights and as a researcher I felt passionately that this research voice should be heard. Autoethnography is used in this thesis as a form of thick description of emerging leadership in a values-driven context. Being *the* leader (my emphasis on "the" as being "headteacher" is usually, but not always, a role performed by only one person) can be a lonely role

and may be accompanied by feelings of isolation, introspection and self-indulgence, sometimes paralleled with the same experiences autoethnographers share (Winkler, 2017). Autoethnography can provide meaningful, accessible and evocative research, grounded in personal experience (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). I considered this to be a unique opportunity for study, as a new leader in a new school. Marzano *et al*. (2005) found in a meta-analysis of sixty-nine studies of school headteachers between 1978 and 2001, that in 2,802 schools containing more than 14,000 teachers, most of the research was done about headteachers not done by them. This study seeks therefore to add a voice from the perspective of novice-headteacher in a faith-designation setting and is a crucial part of my unique contribution to research in this area and to new knowledge.

I chose an autoethnographical approach, or rather it chose me, as "ethnography is for those of us who want to become storytellers, using a narrative approach to transport readers into our own lived experiences" (Klingaman, 2012, p.57). I recognised that the position of headteacher in a faith-based school was a restricted position, and the opportunity to be the founding headteacher of a faith-designation school is very rare. I had been looking for a headship in a faith-designation school for nearly five years prior to being appointed to this role and no such headships had arisen within a reasonable commutable distance of my home. Similarly, being the founding headteacher of a school was a relatively rare and privileged position. To be the headteacher who set the vision, and established every aspect of the school, from the colour of the walls to the educational vision and values, was an opportunity I felt not to be missed and one many headteachers desire at least once in their career. In my role as licensed lay minister in the Church of England, I regularly used storytelling as a form of preaching. My style of preaching was not specifically homiletic, it did not follow the traditional pattern of the reading of a passage of scripture followed by an explanation of the relevance of this and then a relatable exposition to current experience. Rather, I told stories in my preaching, usually related to events that had happened to me, which I then related to the doctrinal message I wished to portray. It was a natural progression for my development as a researcher to combine my professional career with my personal story-telling interest and blend the two styles in the development of myself as an autoethnographic researcher.

Autoethnography can be self-obsessed and narcissistic (Winkler, 2017) so I decided to use a mixed methods approach to mitigate this risk. I used focus groups (conducted using an arts-based method) to supplement, extend and clarify my personal thinking about leadership. The arts-based method I chose to use was collage construction. Collage can stimulate deeper conceptual understanding of leadership (Roberts and Woods, 2018) and since this study attempts to provide useful and transferable new knowledge for new leaders and/or in new contexts, I felt that this medium was well-suited to my aims. Constructing a collage is a reflective process, a form of elicitation, a way of

conceptualizing ideas (Butler-Kisber and Poldma, 2010); construction can elicit hitherto unknown, tacit knowledge.   The arts are especially effective in evoking and communicating social and emotional aspects of life, describing relational and spiritual matters (Chilton and Scotti, 2014). This study therefore is a combination of self-reflective writing and focus group participants' perceptions, describing leadership from conceptual to practical application. By discussing leadership with colleagues who had closely witnessed the development of my leadership, I hoped to gain insight into both my leadership development and other peoples' perception of leadership development as a concept.

1.4 Context

The study is set in the year before and the year after the opening of the school. The school was a new Church of England secondary free school built in a large (but mainly unfinished) housing development in the southwest of England. Free schools, established under the *Academies Act* (2010), are schools funded by the government and run by bodies other than the local council: they are usually run on a not-for-profit basis and are set up by groups such as charities, universities, independent schools, community and faith groups. Free schools have independence from certain constraints community schools (run by local authorities) have, such as being able to set their own pay and conditions for staff, change the length of school terms and the school day and like academies they can also opt out of the National Curriculum. Since the Academies Act was passed, just over 560 free schools opened, with another 240 planned to open (New Schools Network (NSN), 2021). The Church of England aspired to be running a quarter of these schools by the end of 2020 to "cement its place as the country's largest provider of education" (Sherwood, 2016, p. 12). The school in this study, which opened in September 2019, was overseen by a medium sized Church of England Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). The school, once full, would be of average size for the town, with a potential capacity of 1500 pupils. Part of the rationale for opening the school was to build an excellent provision for the town. There was a legacy of poor performance in some of the surrounding secondary schools in the town so the opening of a new school, it was hoped, would boost educational performance. The staff body began relatively small and was planned to grow organically with each new cohort of pupils admitted. Due to its faith-designation, the ethos of the school was rooted in the Bible and aimed to develop in pupils and staff the opportunity to experience "life abundant" (John 10:10).

Whilst there existed a comprehensive range of guidance available from both the DfE and the NSN detailing the logistics of building and opening a school, what policies to write, how to recruit a new headteacher, how to secure the admissions of pupils, how to produce a balanced five-year budget, at the time of commencing this study there existed little or no information on how to develop and

grow leadership in such a context. As Rieckhoff (2014, p. 25) points out, "school leaders assume a more critical role today than ever before." Rieckhoff goes onto say, "National leadership standards clearly articulate the requisite knowledge, skills and beliefs that headteachers must demonstrate in order to succeed" (p. 26), however, there is little literature or research on how to establish and develop a leadership style in a values-driven context such as at the school I was about to open. During my professional development as a headteacher I combined my personal interest in faith schools and searched for literature that would support both. A piece of seminal research stood out to me, that of Luckcock (2014), based on the Church of England's own Way Ahead report (Archbishop's Council, 2001). This research has been referred to throughout this report.

For much of the pre-opening year (from September 2018 through to September 2019) unusually for a school leader, I was the leader of no pupils and no staff; these were strange times. Arguably leadership was not new to me. I had held various positions of leadership throughout my school career, however, this was the first time that I had been a headteacher. I assumed that since I came to the role with qualifications, skills and knowledge I would be able to fulfil the role. I had been a leader in many different capacities for much of my life, ranging from being lead presenter of our class assembly at my primary school (aged nine), to captaining the south-west regional junior cricket squad (aged eighteen), to being a university student representative during my undergraduate studies (aged twenty one), to leading worship in my local group of churches (aged thirty one), to leading this multi-million pound project during the pre-opening stage of the building of the school (aged fifty one). However, nothing had prepared me for the task I was about to undertake. As a novice headteacher, as expected, I faced many challenges in the first year of opening the school, finally leading pupils, and staff after a long period of time of leading alone. There were many notable events in the first six months of opening the school, which will be discussed later in this study. These events shaped or were shaped by my leadership. The most significant event in the first year of my leadership was the Covid-19 pandemic, which, on 23rd March 2020 (almost exactly halfway through our opening year) partially closed the school for the remainder of the academic year. This had a direct influence on my leadership and formed part of the narrative of the development of me as a leader. During the period of lockdown in England, the school remained open to a small number of children whose parents were keyworkers (DfE, 2020c). I was unable to attend the school in person due to shielding family members, but like many others faced with the same circumstances, undertook my duties as leader in a virtual capacity, using alternative forms of communication to direct, encourage and lead pupils and staff. The lockdown had a significant impact on the way data collection for the study was able to be carried out. This led to unintended and unforeseen advantages alongside notable disadvantages as discussed later. The

autoethnography concludes with the school reopening fully (but with Covid restrictions still in place) to pupils exactly 1 year after the school opened.

1.4 Aims of the study
The aims of this research are:

1. To record distinctive dimensions of the development of leadership style in a values driven secondary school context using autoethnography and reflexive conversations with other leaders in similar contexts;
2. To study school leadership from conceptual and practical perspectives to gain unique and meaningful insights;
3. To critically evaluate leadership, by engaging with a range of conceptual models and conceptual frameworks.

1.5 Research questions
My research questions were revised in response to feedback from my supervisory team and progress reviewers. I also refined them after having completed my literature review to reflect the gaps I had identified in my literature review. My research questions are as follows:

1. What are the prevalent models and definitions of educational leadership relevant to current English state schooling and how well do they fit with my axiology?
2. What role can conceptual frameworks and models play in examining actions, development and growth of my leadership styles and activities?
3. What are the distinctive dimensions of emerging leadership in the context of a new faith-designation secondary school setting?
4. What insights can be gained when studying leadership as a conceptual model as an insider researcher?
5. How can autoethnography combined with an arts-designation method (collage) as a methodology contribute to research into the development of school leadership?

1.6 Theoretical framework
To frame the research questions under investigation, I used the spiritual educative theoretical model proposed by Luckcock (2014) (see figure 1). This section explains the development of the model.

Figure 1: Spiritual Educative Model (Luckcock, 2014, p. 139)

1.6.1 Croft's dimensions of spiritual leadership

Luckcock (2014) used Croft's (1999) three dimensions of spiritual leadership which are deliberately conveyed using Greek terminology to convey a sense of ethos rather than hierarchy. Croft contends that ministry exists in three dimensions: diakonos, presbyteros and episcope. Each dimension is unique but linked, cumulatively building on the previous in a continuum from diakonos to episcope.

Diakonos refers to simple, hidden acts of service, focusing on service within or to a community. It is closely likened to servant leadership (Luckcock, 2014) and develops from a genuine desire of serving and being served, and as Luckcock (2014) points out, the latter point is especially important as it acknowledges the vulnerability of leaders themselves and the expectation that others will also care for them. At the heart of diakonos is listening and responding to others.

Presbyteros is characterised by acts of priestly ministry, such as teaching and leading sacramental worship. It is the responsibility of ministers to continue to self-study in order to be equipped to preach. It is also the responsibility of priests to invite the faithful through baptism, confirmation and participation in holy communion. Similarly, headteachers in Anglican faith schools (and maintained

and voluntary controlled schools) are expected to conduct or oversee the provision of school worship and ensure the provision of religious education is compliant with the locally agreed syllabus. Luckcock (2014) likens presbyteros to invitational leadership, as described in The Way Ahead report (Archbishop's Council, 2001, p.60). This outlines the responsibility of the headteacher as "(taking) the lead in nurturing the development of a Christian community, encouraging its spiritual growth and awareness and offering a clear and recognisable sense of Christian purpose".

Episcope involves three related and vital aspects for ministry to be effective (Croft, 1999). The first of these is setting vision, unity and transformation in order to care for the identity and strategy of the community. The second relates to recognising and enabling the ministry of others, and the third aspect is the need for pastoral oversight of self and others. Luckcock (2007, p.17) likens this to transformational leadership, where the headteacher takes "the lead in nurturing the development of (the) Christian community, encouraging its spiritual growth and awareness and offering a clear and recognisable sense of Christian purpose".

1.6.2 Duignan and Macpherson's three metaphysical realms

As part of his work, Luckcock (2014) elaborated Duignan and Macpherson's (1992) work on educative leadership. Duignan and Macpherson's thinking (1992) drew heavily on Hodgkinson's (1983) realms of organisational reality to elaborate the conceptual terminology of administrative processes and the realms of reality in their model of educative leadership (see figure 1). This section will explain the combination of Hodgkinson's realms of organisational reality with Duignan and Macpherson's metaphysical realms of reality.

Duignan and Macpherson (1992) state that the realm of ideas focuses on the educational leader being a philosopher-in-action. This is a combination of the leader defining for themselves their understanding of the purposes of education with being an originator of values. The leader therefore has to, "develop a sense of morality and they will develop and decide on what is of importance or significance and what is right" (Duignan and Macpherson, 1992, p. 173).

Duignan and Macpherson (1992) identify the second realm as the realm of people, where political activity is concerned with the creation and realignment of social reality. This is closely affected by new policies, where subjective reality becomes aligned with the core values of the policy by a process of readjustment or incremental change. The sharing of values can lead to cultural destabilisation, especially after a period of disruption or change, just as new ideas and new policies can transform thinking and organisations. Duignan and Macpherson (1992) interpreted Hodgkinson's (1983) term as a form of leadership which legitimises changed practices. The leader's ability to achieve consensus in the implementation of a new policy will depend, according to

Duignan and Macpherson, on the leader's ability to reflect and act upon how new and shared ideas become reality.

Finally, Duignan and Macpherson (1992) present the realm of things, where the leader's actions are seen as two distinct activities: managerial and evaluative. Managerial activity is seen as bureaucratic, flexible, contestable and responsive to external stimuli. This is seen by Duignan and Macpherson as a leader's ability to be pragmatic and provide structures and practices that promote sound educational outcomes. Hodgkinson's stage of monitoring is developed by Duignan and Macpherson into evaluative activity, where the leader's actions are based on trust, responsibility, self-management and self-evaluation.

1.6.3 Luckcock's model of leadership as ministry

Luckcock (2014) developed his model based on Croft's (1999) three dimensions of spiritual leadership combined with Duignan and Macpherson's (1992) model of educative leadership and Hodgkinson's (1983) model of metaphysical realms (see figure 1). The benefit of this, Luckcock (2014) claimed, was to provide maximum benefit to practitioners in a values-based educative leadership settings, relating pastoral ministry to professional competence. In addition to this, Luckcock (2014) argued that the combined model demonstrated how educative leadership as ministry could be sustained through spiritual practices in addition to professional competences.

1.7 Thesis structure

This thesis is made up of seven chapters.

The first chapter provides an introduction to my research. It states the purpose of the study, states the problem that I have identified and then the context of the study. I state the aims of my research and develop five research questions to explore these aims. I end the first chapter by introducing the theoretical framework I have used in the study.

The second chapter is my review of literature pertaining to leadership in schools. I explore leadership and highlight areas where there are gaps in knowledge about faith school leadership. The literature regarding school leadership is vast, consequently I focussed on aspects that are most relevant to the study, given the context of the nature of the faith school and the seminal research into faith school leadership that existed prior to commencement of this thesis.

The third chapter explains the rationale for my chosen methodology of autoethnography. I explore the use of autoethnography and explore Anderson's approach to analytic autoethnography adopted in this study.

The fourth chapter is a more detailed description of the arts-based methods employed in phase 2 of the research. In the chapter I explain how participants for the arts-designation method were selected, my timeline for completing the study and how I intend to analyse the data. The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations I took in planning the thesis and the consideration I made to validity and reliability of my study.

The fifth chapter of findings is my autoethnographic account, followed by an account of the arts-designation focus groups I conducted. The fourth chapter is personal. The chapter describes why I became a headteacher using personal memory data. The chapter then documents my journey from being appointed as headteacher designate in the pre-opening phase of a new (not yet built) school, through the opening phase and then briefly documents the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on being an inexperienced headteacher faced with dealing with a global pandemic. The chapter is punctuated by quotes from songs that made the journey with me from pre-opening of the school to post-opening, my personal desert island discs. My rationale for including these is explained in the chapter. The chapter then describes and illustrates the arts-designation focus groups I conducted, giving a detailed account of the participants' contributions, both verbal (transcribed) and visual (digital photographs of their collages).

The sixth chapter discusses my findings, using a thematic approach I pull out themes and patterns that emerge to exemplify the themes (and sub-themes).

My final, seventh chapter, concludes the thesis, by pulling together the themes and findings and attempts to answer the research questions. I identify limitations to my study and highlight areas for further research. As this is a professional doctorate, this chapter also makes recommendations for professional practice for leadership development in novice headteachers in the future.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

2.1 Chapter introduction

The following chapter comprises a comprehensive review of the literature regarding the core foci of the research: leadership. The literature examined here is as follows: school leadership, training for school leadership, church education, leadership as ministry and models of leadership.

In response to research questions 1 and 2 the chapter begins by exploring the importance of school leadership. Then the chapter shifts to training for leadership in school. Bringing the two dimensions together and adding information to research questions 3 and 4, the chapter then focuses on leadership as ministry. The chapter then shifts to models of leadership in schools to further explore research question 1. The literature on autoethnography and the arts-based methods employed in this study, in response to research question 5, is reviewed in chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

2.2 Search description

This section describes how I utilised search criteria for this review of literature. The literature search was conducted using UWE Library search, EBSCOhost and JSTOR, utilising the keyword and synonym searches outlined as follows:

Table 1: Keyword and synonym search terms

Keyword	Synonyms
Headteacher	Head, leader, principal
School	College, school, academy, free school, faith school
Leader	Leadership, figurehead, boss, manager
Leadership	Model, style, theory

I used Boolean search terms "and" and "or" in order to make the searches more precise and was able to evaluate and select relevant sources as a result. I was able to identify themes in the literature and chose to organise my review by themes relating to my research questions. My search included research from other countries and went as far back as the year 2000 unless I found a piece of work that I considered to be seminal, which may pre-date the year 2000.

2.3 Review of research

2.3.1 Leadership in schools

This section explores the importance of the role of leadership in schools. Rieckhoff (2014, p. 25) states:

> While earlier models of leadership emphasized a headteacher's managerial role, today's headteachers have countless roles and responsibilities that cut across all aspects of schools…Headteachers are expected to lead and oversee a variety of functions.

The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted, 2019, p. 44), the school inspectorate and regulator, state that "there is no single appropriate way of leading a school", however, Reynolds *et al.* (2014) argue that "leadership is the most important school-level factor in most effectiveness studies." Sammons *et al.* (2011) support this contention and argue that whilst this may seem obvious, for many years not all research found a direct effect on pupil outcomes per se. The contention was, that this may have been a failure of the research methods, rather than a lack of impact: where leaders created the correct conditions for attainment and where teachers performed their primary functions to the best of their ability, pupil attainment and achievement was optimised, however, this was not always evident because of headteacher impact in the direct effect model. Many studies have found a direct and positive relationship between educational leadership and pupil outcomes (Boyer, 2012; Nelson 2012; Noe, 2012; Raines, 2012; Tindle, 2012; Troutman, 2012). Leithwood *et al.* (2008) found that school leadership accounted for 5-7% of the variation in pupil achievement with approximately 25% of the variation explained by school factors. A seminal paper, published by Leithwood *et al*. (2008) highlighted seven key features relating to school leadership. These are shown in the table below:

Table 2: Seven strong claims about school leadership (adapted from Leithwood et al., (2008))

1	School leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning
2	Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices
3	The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices – not the practices themselves – demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work
4	School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, ability and working condition
5	School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed
6	Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others
7	A small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., and Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. School Leadership and Management. 28, pp. 27-42 © copyright 2008. Reprinted by

Later Leithwood *et al.* (2010) found leadership effects to be primarily indirect, appearing to depend on organisational variables such as school mission, goals, variety in curricula and quality of teaching. Muijs (2011) supports this stating that it is the importance of creating school conditions where teachers can be optimally effective that has the most direct impact on achievement.   Day *et al.* (2010, p.5), in a longitudinal study of highly effective school leaders, found them to have a 'strong and clear vision and set of values for their school' which were shared widely with and understood by all staff. Karadag *et al.* (2015, p. 80), in a meta-analysis of the effect of educational leadership on pupil achievement, state that:

> The school leader is the person who plans and maintains programme development, allocates resources, improves the performance of employees and pupils by encouraging them, and guides them to meet the objectives of the school.

Contrary to this, Balci (2007) and Bulris (2009) contend that educational leadership has only an indirect influence on pupil outcomes: if the school is run well and in an orderly manner, working together to achieve a common goal, pupils will be successful. Many studies have shown that educational leadership does not necessarily have a direct effect on pupils' achievement in specific curriculum areas: For example, Gulbin (2008) and Maeyer *et al.* (2007) found that leadership does not influence mathematics achievement, while Braun (2008) and Estapa (2009) found that it does influence language achievement. Similarly, Gulbin (2008) and Odegaard (2008) found no link between leadership and pupil achievement at secondary level, whereas Ross and Gray (2006) recognise that whilst school leaders may not have direct influence over outcomes, they are usually (if not always) held responsible for them.

2.3.2 Training for leadership in schools

This section explores how teachers are trained for the role of headteacher. Training for senior school leadership posts in England is accredited by the DfE in the form of National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) and specifically for headteachers the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) which was updated during the completion of this study (DfE, 2020d). Originally the training undertaken by the researcher involved training in 'important leadership behaviours' alongside developing knowledge and skills across six content areas (DfE, 2014). This was subsequently updated to include training in ten key areas (DfE, 2020d).   In 2018 the Church of England Foundation for Educational Leadership launched the Church of England Qualification for

Headship (CofEPQH) which included content from the NPQH qualification and was designed specifically for those wishing to lead a Church of England school (CoEFEL, 2018).

In 2001, The Way Ahead report (Archbishops' Council, 2001) proposed a radical and distinctive model of Christian school leadership in the form of lay ministry, involving religious and spiritual leadership alongside all the other things a normal school leader would be involved in. Both the NPQH and the CofEPQH focus on skill development in the individual, but very little prescribed content exists for those setting up a new school: the courses assume that a new headteacher will enter an existing school.

Grace (2009, pp. 485-486) argued that there was a dearth of school leadership research in faith schools, specifically in relation to continuous professional development, stating that:

> …(faith school leadership programmes) were blind to religious differences in the philosophies, practices and challenges of faith school leadership. With the growing significance of faith-based schooling in the United Kingdom and internationally, this situation obviously cannot continue. The needs of faith school leaders from both a research perspective and a professional development perspective have to be met more adequately in the future.

As Rieckhoff (2014) points out there have been numerous studies conducted over the past two decades regarding the interpretations of the role of the leaders of faith school as 'faith leaders' (Moore, 1999; Wallace, 1995; Cirello, 1994; Drahmann, 1994) and much of this research found that the majority (70%) of headteachers felt they were inadequately prepared for faith leadership per se (Rieckhoff, 2014). Luckcock (2007) identified distinctive elements that are crucial tools in leadership in faith schools and later supports the portrayal of Anglican Church school leadership as a form of ecclesial ministry as outlined in The Way Ahead report (Archbishops' Council, 2001): the dual identity and responsibility of church school headteachers in relation to both academic and spiritual leadership of the school and ministry complementary to the Church's ordained ministry. The Way Ahead report (Archbishops' Council, 2001) advocates that the work of a church school headteacher can be conceived in terms of Servant Leadership (SVL), Invitational Leadership (IVL) and Transformational Leadership (TL). This literature review was extended to include Instructional Leadership (IL), Situational Leadership (SL) and Distributed Leadership (DL) as these models of leadership are also of personal interest to the researcher and pertinent to this thesis (see section 2.3.5 below).

2.3.3 Church education

This part of the literature review begins by exploring the relevant literature surrounding the development of church education in this country, since the study is set in a school with a faith-designation, that of the Church of England. The Church of England is the established church of England and has long been involved in education. With no formal state system of education in existence in the early 1800s, four voluntary societies were established by four distinct church organisations, see table 3 below:

Table 3: Voluntary societies and their involvement in education (Worsley, 2013, p. 10)

Year	Name	Church organisation
1808	The foundation of the Royal Lancasterian Society (later renamed the British and Foreign Schools Society in 1814)	Protestant
1811	The foundation of the National Society	Church of England
1838	The foundation of the Wesleyan Education Committee	Methodist
1847	The foundation of the Catholic Poor School Society	Roman Catholic

The full title of the Church of England's society was the 'National Society for the Promotion of the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church'. The National Society's vision was to open a church school in every ecclesiastical parish. In the first 2 years of the establishment of the National Society 30 schools were built and by 1815 every diocese in England was considering how it could provide education, despite the fact that over 100,000 pupils were already attending a church school (Worsley, 2013). It was largely due to this rapid expansion that Parliament established a universal right to education for all children. By 1835 pupil numbers in schools associated with the National Society had grown to one million, religious instruction was central to the curriculum and Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) were first established (Francis and Stone, 1995). After the initial period of rapid expansion of schools, it became clear that voluntary funding would not be able to provide sufficient schools or school places for the country's children, so the 1870 Education Act was designed to provide schools where the churches were unable to do so. Some thirty years later, it was recognised that the education system required a more organised structure of co-ordination and thus the 1902 Education Act was passed (Green, 2009). This act created Local Education Authorities (LEAs) which many claim led to the development of formal secondary education. The 1944 Education Act was passed to reconstruct education following the devastation caused by World War Two. Central to this act was the division of education into primary, secondary and tertiary stages. There was also the creation of two distinct statuses for Church schools: Voluntary Aided (VA) or Voluntary Controlled (VC). In a VA school, church-appointed managers principally took responsibility for the building costs, appointment of staff and the religious education curriculum. In a VC school, the

church and the LEA took equal responsibility for governance and staff appointments, and the religious education, if parents wished, could be provided 'according to the trust deed' (Worsley, 2013; Grace, 2009). The Church of England in most dioceses opted for a mixed provision of VA and VC schools, reflecting a tension of control versus partnership (Worsley, 2013). The 1944 Education Act also made provision for religious education, requiring every LEA to develop an agreed syllabus for use in all except VA schools. This, along with the requirement for collective worship in all maintained schools, strengthened the church as partners for curriculum development. The advent of the 11-plus examination determined where and how pupils would be educated (Green, 2009). Secondary provision was sub-divided into grammar (with an academic focus for the top 25% in the 11-plus examination); technical (with a more practical curriculum) and modern schools (providing a mixture of provision for the 75% who were not selected for the grammar stream and not deemed to possess specific practical ability). By 1965 it had become apparent that the tripartite system was divisive and did not offer equal benefit to all children, so LEAs were required to reorganise secondary education on comprehensive lines (Worsley, 2013).

Towards the end of the twentieth century various education acts were passed which focussed on governance, admission, curriculum reform, inspection and LEA provision with the national system. The church continued to be committed to education and developed their own system of church inspection. The Education Reform Act of 1988 saw the advent of the National Curriculum (NC), Standardised Assessment Tests (SATs), Local Management of Schools (LMS), Grant Maintained Schools (GMS) and open admissions (Grace, 2009; Green, 2009). The government (under the Conservative party) brought new levels of accountability to the system with the establishment of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspections in 1992, and church Section 13 (later called Section 23 and then Section 48) inspections were established. By the mid-1990s a significant number of pupils remained in full-time education until the age of 18, with many studying for the General Certificate in Secondary Education (GSCE) and some further studying for the Advanced Level (A level) qualifications. A broader focus was given to LEAs to identify a locally agreed religious education syllabus to reflect world faith and appropriate religious education along with the compulsory advent of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) to oversee this curriculum.

The 1988 Education Act clarified that schools with a religious character should be part of a, "menu of choice for parents selecting the best school for their child" (Worsley, 2013, p. X). This resulted in the General Synod and the Archbishops' Council (the bodies which provide strategic leadership of the church) commissioning a report with the aim of making recommendations for the development of Church schools. The resultant report, The Way Ahead, (The Archbishops' Council, 2001)

recommended a target to build 100 new church secondary schools, particularly in areas of deprivation, with the aim of the schools being both distinctly Christian and inclusive. It was widely recognised by the General Synod, at the start of the new millennium, that Church schools stood at the centre of the church's mission to the country (The Archbishops' Council, 2001). The report stated:

> No factor will be more important in determining the future of Church schools than the Church's ability to recruit Christian teachers and develop heads and deputy heads to provide the excellent leadership that will be needed in the additional secondary schools we propose (The Archbishops' Council, 2001, p. xi)

Given this context it is important to note that the school in this study was created under the free schools movement.

2.3.4 Leadership as ministry

This section explores leadership as ministry, as the role of a headteacher in a Church of England faith-designation school is distinctive and contains elements that do not exist in a secular school. The Way Ahead Report (Archbishops' Council, 2001) suggests that Church of England faith-designation school leadership can be portrayed as a form of ministry, more specifically ecclesial ministry. Ecclesial ministry is defined as the continuation of the ministry and mission of Christ (Archbishops' Council, 2001). Primarily the report suggests that a dual responsibility exists for headteachers in Anglican Church schools for both leadership of the spiritual and the academic. A Church of England faith-designation school is seen as a worshipping community, and the headteacher has wider professional responsibilities for academic progress that do not exist in the church per se. The distinctive nature of Church of England faith-designation school leadership is stated as:

> (Church school headteachers are) spiritual and academic leaders of the school. Excellence in headship requires visionary, inspired leadership and management centred on the school as a worshipping community, where educational and academic excellence for all pupils is pursued in a Christian context. Although not formally recognised as such by the Church, it is arguable since Church school headship involves religious and spiritual leadership, to the Christian it comprises a form of lay ministry, which is complementary to the Church's ordained ministry (Archbishops' Council, 2001, p. 60).

The nature of ecclesial ministry described above is one aspect of distinctiveness for Church of England faith-designation school headteachers, alongside the stated duty of the headteacher to build a community informed by Christian spirituality:

It is the creation of a distinctive Christian community that marks out the role of a headteacher in a Church school. It is particularly challenging and demanding role, and its purpose cannot be achieved by command. It is rather something that has to be achieved by the headteacher living out the values that she or he seeks to establish and winning a willing acceptance of those values by staff in particular, but also by children and parents, all of who, even though it may not be explicitly recognised, will relate individually to the headteacher (Archbishops' Council, 2001, p. 60).

The Way Ahead Report states clearly that there is not a proposal of one right model of leadership for church school headteachers, but it does outline a threefold approach encompassing servant (SVL), invitational (IL), and transformational (TL) leadership models respectively:

This suggestion is that one possible approach to understanding the headteacher's leadership role is to see it as encompassing three main aspects. Firstly, the headteacher can be viewed as a servant-leader, working to encourage the educational and spiritual growth of pupils. Secondly the headteacher has a pre-eminent role in setting the overall tone of the school, and in ensuring that Christian values permeate the whole life of the school. This role could be described as transformational leadership, in that the headteacher will take the lead in nurturing the development of a Christian community, encouraging its spiritual growth and awareness and offering a clear and recognisable sense of Christian purpose. Thirdly, the headteacher will provide invitational leadership welcoming all into the school, offering reassurance and affirmation, recognising the value of individuals, and inviting the school community to share the good news of the Kingdom. We do not offer these insights in a prescriptive sense, but as a basis for reflection by those preparing for, or reviewing, their own personal approach to leadership (Archbishops' Council, 2001, p. 60).

It is interesting to point out that whilst the report acknowledged the need for headteachers to be ecclasially distinctive, this was balanced using the inclusivity of recognisable models of leadership from secular fields of leadership and management. Luckcock (2014) contends that Church of England faith-designation school leadership cannot be limited to the trifold categorisation of SVL, IVL and TL to satisfy the necessary spiritual and pastoral conceptualisation of being an Church of England faith-designation school headteacher. To expand the study of leadership specifically in Church of England faith-designation schools, Luckcock (2014) uses Croft's three dimensions (Croft, 1999) of ministry as a theoretical framework: diakonos, presbyteros and episcope. Luckcock contends that the three dimensions relate directly to each SVL, IVL and TL respectively. Whilst Croft's three dimensions relate primarily to pastoral practical theology, the terms are useful and are used in this

study to explain the distinctive nature of some parts of the role of a headteacher in a Church of England faith-designation school.

2.3.5 Models of leadership in schools

This section explores research into models of leadership in schools. In educational research many models of leadership exist, with the main body of research being done after the 1900's (Gumus *et al.*, 2016; Yukl, 2006; Kezar, 2000; Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 2000; Hallinger and Heck, 1999). Typically research into school leadership remains in the conceptual domain (Rieckhoff, 2014; Klenke, 2008; Luckcock, 2007; Gunter and Ribbins, 2002). From the great man trait theory in the early 20th century (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1991) to the behavioural theory of leadership prevalent between post World War 2 and the 1990s (Derue *et al.*, 2011) to more recently the rise in popularity of the situational contingency models, research in this field has mostly been focussed on achieving more effective and efficient organisations, rather than establishing one from the beginning. The following models of leadership are explored below: instructional leadership (IL), situational leadership (SL), transformational leadership (TL), distributed leadership (DL), servant leadership (SVL) and invitational leadership (IVL). I selected these models to explore in depth in this literature review, as I found them to be the predominant models discussed in articles selected for my review of literature (as highlighted above) and they extend more broadly than the three proposed by The Way Ahead report (Archbishops' Council, 2001).

2.3.5.1 Instructional Leadership (IL)

A managerial model of leadership was favoured in the early 1900s, with the headteacher concerned mainly with functions, tasks and behaviours. IL became popular in the 1970s and 1980s (Hallinger, 2005), with headteachers moving from functions and tasks to giving direction and making improvements. To use a sailing analogy, headteachers' behaviour was more concerned with setting the course and trimming the sails, rather than reading the charts and steering the tiller. Development of this model occurred mainly during the late 1980s, when several different conceptualisations of IL emerged (van de Grift, 1990; Andrews and Soder, 1987; Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982). The conceptualisations were characterised by sharing common themes regarding IL. Notably, IL was deemed to be the sole role of the headteacher (Leithwood and Montgomery, 1982). Hallinger (2000) developed a conceptualisation of IL comprising three dimensions: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional programme and promoting a positive learning climate. These dimensions were sub-divided into ten instructional functions, using the three dimensions as the focus for the sub-divisions. Defining the school's mission comprises two sub-divisions, notably framing the school's goals and communicating these effectively. The function of the headteacher within this dimension, Hallinger (2000) argued, is to work with staff to ensure

that the school has clear, measurable goals that are focused on pupil academic progress and to ensure that these goals are well known and supported throughout the community. Managing the instructional programme, the second dimension of a headteacher's work incorporates three distinct functions related to teaching and curriculum. Primarily the supervision and evaluation of teaching rests with the headteacher, alongside co-ordinating the curriculum and monitoring pupil progress. Hallinger (2000) claims that these functions, more so than those that exist in the other two dimensions, require headteachers to be deeply involved in the classroom, making regular visits and engaging in the design and delivery of teacher continuing professional development (CPD). The third and final dimension included several functions relating to promoting a positive climate, including protecting learning time, further promoting CPD, maintaining high visibility, providing incentives for teachers and incentives for learning. As Hallinger and Heck (2010) later stated, it is the responsibility of the headteacher to ensure that the school's standards and practices (are aligned) with its mission and (to create a climate that) supports teaching and learning. Individual headteachers who followed the IL model were typically goal-orientated and focused on the improvement of academic outcomes (Hallinger and Heck, 2010), alongside building culture, creating high expectations and standards for teachers as well as pupils (Mortimore, 1993; Purkey and Smith, 1984). Hallinger and Murphy (1986) claimed that, whilst in a large school the headteacher could not take sole responsibility for every single classroom and the teaching that took place there, it was the overall responsibility of the headteacher, so any delegated powers should be very clearly monitored, and leaders held closely accountable to the headteacher. IL has ebbed and flowed in gaining attention, with Leithwood (1992) contending that its demise was probably due to the narrow focus of practices in the classroom, however, as Daniels, Hondeghem and Dochy (2019) state IL nowadays regains more attention as it focuses on the core process of schools: the quality of teaching and learning. Contemporary IL focuses not only on teaching and learning in the classroom per se, but also recognises the needs for the correct organisational conditions to exist for exceptional teaching and learning (Piot, 2015).

2.3.5.2 Situational Leadership (SL)
Emerging in the 1970s, situational leadership theories stated that employees should be treated according to the specific situation in which their employment was set. In addition it was necessary to consider the employee's skills and confidence to perform the tasks required of them (Thompson and Glasø, 2015). Situational leadership theory, developed by Hersey and Blanchard in the late 1970s/early 1980s, states that a leader adapts their style to the developmental needs and demands of the ones who are being led. A key basis on which this is founded is that there is no one preferred leadership style (Hakim *et al*., 2021), rather leadership is a combination of the leader's attributes and

the developing employees' attributes. Typically, situational leadership is divided into 4 styles: delegating, participating, selling and telling. The model developed from this is represented below, with task complexity represented on the x axis, from low to high, and relationship behaviour between the leader and employee represented on the y axis, again moving from low to high:

Figure 2: Situational leadership model (Hersey, Blanchard and Natemeyer, 1979, p. 421)
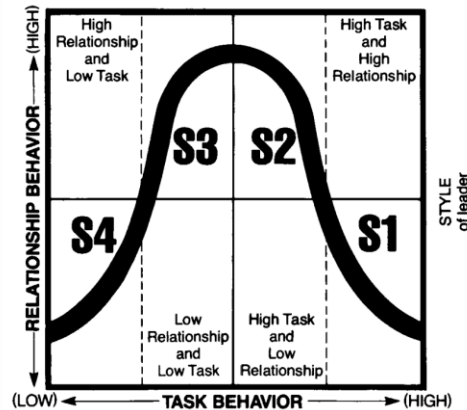
Telling or directing, occurs when the employees are less experienced or new and the relationship between the leader and the employees is at its earliest stages. Selling occurs when the employees are deemed to be ready for task completion in the way the leader desires, because the relationship has developed such that mutual trust and understanding is growing. Participating occurs when employees are ready for task completion and moderately motivated for autonomy. Finally, situational leaders are able to delegate tasks to employees when they are able to delegate decisions and implementation to employees.

Early criticism of SL studies questioned whether results of studies into school effectiveness in one area could be generalised and applied in a wider area (Bosset *et al.*, 1982), thus implicitly supporting the situational nature of leadership by defining it as specific to one area or even more specifically to one school. SL focuses on the behaviour and attitude of both the employees and the characteristics of the organisation, and it has become widely accepted that the outcomes of leadership are influenced directly by situational factors (Daniels, Hondeghem and Dochy, 2019). After a period of less attention being paid to SL, Hallinger (2011) acknowledged that the relationship between school context and leadership has been heightened.

2.3.5.3 Transformational Leadership (TL)
Still prevalent today, is the model of transformational or charismatic leader (TL), which has grown in kudos especially over the past three decades. This type of leadership demands that the leader transcends self-interest, exerting idealised influence over colleagues, providing inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and holding individual consideration for each of the team

members (Bass and Avolio, 1993). Bass (1985), in his seminal work in the business field, proposed two forms of leadership: transactional and transformational. Transactional leaders are characterised by the assumption that workers (employees) required direction since they lacked ambition and would avoid responsibility; workers could be rewarded for task completion and compliance to performance expectations. By contrast, transformational leaders are characterised by the belief that workers (employees) aspire to accomplish goals and can be motivated to perform above and beyond expectations, consequently achieving more responsibility and leading to increases in productivity (Bass and Avolio, 1993). It was widely considered that transactional leadership was not as effective in business as TL, and in education transactional leadership was intricately linked to the concept of IL, which involved strong and direct supervision and monitoring of teacher performance (Berkovich, 2018). Leithwood (1992) is credited with paving the way for TL becoming adopted in education, and along with other colleagues, Leithwood maintained that one of the main tasks of a school leader was to create an environment where teachers were inspirationally motivated to help the school attain its mission and goals. Leithwood (1992) adapted the general model of TL into an educational TL model, consisting of seven components: individualised support, shared goals, vision, intellectual stimulation, culture building, rewards, high expectations and modelling. This was later developed into a more comprehensive school specific model by Leithwood and Jantzi (1999a) which consisted of six leadership dimensions and four management dimensions. The leadership dimensions were building school vision and goals; providing intellectual stimulation; offering individualised support; symbolising professional practices and values; demonstrating high performance expectations and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions. The management dimensions were staffing; instructional support; monitoring school activities and community focus.

The acceptance that TL is different from IL has been researched from the perspective of investigating the respective effects on pupil outcomes in a meta-analysis (Robinson *et al.*, 2008). Leadership practices were categorised as instructional or transformational in accordance with, "the theoretical framework that informed the conceptualisation and measurement of leadership" (Robinson *et al.*, 2008, p. 654). Leadership practices that related directly to classroom teaching, for example, focus on disruption-free learning climate, clearly articulated learning objectives, high teacher expectations, were categorised as IL. In contrast, leadership practices that related directly to whole school development, for example, building common vision and collaborative practices were categorised as TL. Robinson *et al.* (2008) found that the effect of IL on pupil outcomes was four times greater than that of TL. Shatzer *et al.* (2014) reported similar results, stating that the quality of IL directly affected the outcomes of pupils. Marks and Printy (2003, p. 385) described TL as "necessary, although insufficient condition" for successful leadership in school and advocated for integrated leadership, a

combination of both TL and IL, based on their research in the United States of America. In a study of 309 secondary and 363 primary schools in the United Kingdom, Day at el (2016, p. 238) found that "neither IL strategies nor TL strategies alone were sufficient to promote improvement". Variables in the study that were found to influence leadership distribution, improved school and classroom processes and pupil intermediate outcomes were of a TL nature (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005), notably setting the direction of the school, redesigning the organisation, developing people, and growing leadership trust in the teachers. Hopkins (2003, p.57), a proponent of IL, argued that TL had been "focusing on the wrong variables" despite acknowledging that effective leadership should encourage "collaboration and working in teams … (and) inspire commitment to the school's mission" (p. 59). Hopkins defined IL as having three distinct domains: defining the values and purposes of the school; managing the programming of teaching and curriculum and establishing the school as a professional learning community', arguably a combination of elements of both IL and TL. Similarly, Hallinger and Heck (2010) advocated a collaborative approach despite Hallinger traditionally being an assiduous advocate of IL.

TL contrasts with IL as it is a shared leadership model and commonly aims to create change through bottom-up actions (Daniels, Hondeghem and Docy, 2019). Kwan (2019) claims that there is well-documented evidence in the literature that IL has a direct impact on pupil outcomes (for example, Robinson *et al.*, 2008), whereas the impact on pupil outcomes of TL comes through building teacher capacity (for example, Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999b).

2.3.5.4 Distributed Leadership (DL)
It has been suggested that Distributed Leadership (DL) has been traced as far back as 1250 BC (Oduro, 2004), however, it is really since the turn of the century that DL has become widely embraced by practitioners and scholars worldwide. Gibb (1954) was the first author to refer explicitly to DL when proposing that, "leadership is probably best conceived as a group quality, as a set of functions which must be carried out by the group" (in Gronn, 2000, p. 324). The concept of DL lay relatively dormant until its resurrection by Brown and Hosking (1986), despite a few mentions in articles in the 1980s and 1990s (for example, Leithwood *et al.* 1997, Gregory 1996 and Barry 1991). This was more than likely due to the growing appetite, especially in schools, for new leadership, founded on transformational and/or charismatic leadership. Spillane *et al.* (2004), exploring the origins of DL, identified distributed cognition and activity theory as conceptual foundations. Distributed cognition represents the human experience as a combination of physical, social and cultural experiences in the context in which leadership occurs (see also Lave and Wenger, 1991 and Resnick, 1991). Activity theory explores how human activity is both enabled and constrained by individual, material, cultural and social factors (see also Giddens, 1982 and Vygotsky, 1978). Gronn

(2000) recognised the importance of distributed cognition and activity theory as key concepts and draws specifically on the work of Engeström (1999) who offered a framework for analysing activity as the product of reciprocal and mediated interactions between instruments, subjects, objects, rules, community and division of labour. Later Gronn (2008) goes onto cite the significance of a stream of additional theory and research on different types of DL, notably Follett (2003) on reciprocal influence; French and Snyder (1959) on distribution of power and influence; Katz and Kahn (1978) on sharing leadership and Schein (1988) on the functions of leadership. Together with Leithwood *et al.* (2009) who highlight the significance of organisational learning theory (Hutchins 1995; Weick and Roberts 1993); distributed cognition (Jermier and Kerr, 1997; Perkins 1993; Salomon 1993); complexity science (Uhl-Bien *et al.*, 2007; Osborn and Hunt, 2007); and high involvement leadership (Yukl, 2002) these authors pave the way for greater and deeper exploration of DL, which resonates closely with the theoretical origins of Shared Leadership theory as outlined by Pearce and Conger (2003). Gronn (2000) outlined the concept of DL as being a potential solution to leadership thinking being divided into two distinct and opposing camps. First those who consider leadership to be the consequence of individual agency, that is one person as a figure head who leads from the front (for example, Bass, 1985) to those who consider leadership to be the result of the design of systems and presence of role and structure (for example, Jaques, 1989). DL represented a shift in focus away from attributes and behaviours of an individual leader to a more systematic perspective, whereby leadership is seen as a collection of social processes which emerge through a series of multiple interactions between multiple actors (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Spillane and Diamond (2007) state that DL involves two aspects: the leader plus aspect and the practice aspect. The leader plus aspect takes into account all the activities of leadership and management undertaken by any individual and the practice aspect focuses on the practice of leading and managing as an interaction between leaders and followers. According to Spillane and Diamond (2007), this approach allows focus to be on the actual practice of leading and managing rather than dwelling on leaders and leadership structures, functions and roles.

Despite the growing body of research into DL, it was not until the mid-1990s that "conditions were deemed to be right for the acceptance of this seemingly radical departure from the traditional view of leadership as something imparted to followers by a leader from above" (Pearce and Conger, 2003, p.13). DL was, however, seen to develop and widen the influence of senior teachers in the school during the late 20th and into the early 21st century, with the subtle but important change in title from Senior Management Team to Senior Leadership Team. DL involved learning together, co-constructing meaning, and knowledge collectively and collaboratively and naturally progressed into teacher leadership, which became popular in the United States of America in the late 1990s and the

United Kingdom in the early 2000s. Gronn (2000) stated that DL could help view leadership in the holistic sense, rather than as the aggregation of individual contributions; he asserted three forms of engagement, spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relationships and institutionalised practices each of which could be considered as a manifestation of conjoint agency. Gronn called for a "fundamental reframing of leadership" (Bolden, 2011, p. 252), stating that leadership is, "more appropriately understood as a fluid and emergent, rather than a fixed, phenomenon" (Gronn 2000, p. 324) . Pearce and Conger (2003) offer a number of reasons for the move towards DL away from the traditional leader as figure head, including the rise in cross-functional teams, an increase in the speed of delivery required, the availability of information and greater job complexity. Lipman-Blueman (1996) and Bolden (2011) both argue that increasing global interdependence and greater demands for inclusion and diversity may have highlighted the limitations of the individualistic leader-centric approach which it was previously considered worked "well enough" and offered a "promise of order and control" which was possibly illusory (Bolden, 2011, p. 253).

2.3.5.5 Servant Leadership (SVL)

Some argue that Servant leadership (SVL) as a concept has existed for thousands of years (Sendjaya and Sarros, 2008), as ancient monarchies believed that leadership existed for the service of people and country. Originally Greenleaf's seminal work (1977) introduced the concept of SVL and later Greenleaf (1991) in response to his questioning of authoritarian leadership styles, reinvigorated scholarly interest in SVL. SVL was based on the premise that leaders rely on one-to-one communication with those whom they are leading to bring out the best in them (Liden *et al.*, 2008). With knowledge of a follower's unique abilities, needs, desires, goals and potential, a leader can enable potential to be realised based on their unique characteristics and interests (Liden *et al.*, 2008). Servant Leaders selflessly serve others to build up trust (Greenleaf, 1977) and serve multiple stakeholders, including their communities and society as a whole (Phipps, 2010).

In 2008 two seminal papers bought SVL to the research arena (Sendajaya, Sarros and Santora, 2008 and Liden *et al.* 2008). SVL has influenced and been influenced by global communities (Jeyaraj and Gandolfi, 2019) and one of the best-recorded examples of SVL is derived from the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, pertinent to this study as the study is based in a Christian school. Many in contemporary culture feel that SVL is an oxymoron (Jeyaraj and Gandolfi, 2019), and even 2000 years ago Christ's actions and teachings were a revelation, in that leaders were assumed to be served and should not serve others per se.

According to Laub (2004) SVL can be described as six distinct leadership activities: valuing people; developing people; building community; displaying authenticity; providing leadership; sharing leadership. Laub (2004, p. 3) defines servant leadership as "an understanding and practice of

leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interests of the leader". Other models of servant leadership exist for example, Dierendonck and Patterson, 2010; Crippen, 2004; Page and Wong, 2003. I recognised that the lyrics of "Not to be served, but to serve" (Kendrick, 1983), a popular modern hymn, was a central tenet of my personal ethos and this led to the adoption of the SVL model in my leadership development prior to taking up my first headship; the model, as Brumley (2007, p. 30, cited by Steyn, 2012) points out "provides a clear framework for the underlying meaning and characteristics of servant leadership".

2.3.5.6 Invitational Leadership (IVL)

First designed by Purkey and Siegel (2003), based on invitational theory, invitational leadership (IVL) has its roots in a collection of assumptions that "intentionally summon people to realise their relatively boundless potential in all areas of worthwhile human endeavour" (Purkey, 1992, p.5). In the early 2000s, much research called for a change in leadership styles to support the rapidly changing educational landscape (for example, Bolman and Deal, 2002; Day *et al.*, 2001, Kouzes and Posner, 2003) and as Halpern (2004, p. 126) affirmed, "rapid change requires new leadership". With an increasing focus on teacher wellbeing, there was also a call for a leadership model that was more caring and ethical in its nature (for example, Bolman and Deal, 2002; Grogan, 2003; Halpin, 2003). Closely linked to the concept of SL, Grogan (2003, p. 24) called for leadership to be "predicated on caring about those he or she serves" and consequently Halpin (2003, p. 84) concluded that IVL could do this, in the way it "care(s) for and supports the efforts of others." Purkey and Siegel (2003, p.1) state that IVL "shifts from emphasising control and dominance to one that focuses on connectedness, cooperation and communication". The IVL model encourages leaders to use messages which seek to allow all interested stakeholders the opportunity to succeed, through comprehensive communication, policies, programmes, practices and physical environments (Burns and Martin, 2010). IVL is based on four characteristics that invitational leaders must possess as core values in order to participate in IVL: these are optimism, respect, trust and intentionality (Day *et al.*, 2001). Optimism in this context is based on the belief that other people have untapped potential for growth. Respect is concerned with the recognition of each person's individual worth. Trust relates to "possessing the confidence in the abilities, integrity and responsibilities of ourselves and others" (Purkey and Siegel, 2003, p. 12). Intention is with regard to a decision made purposely to act in a certain way, to achieve and carry out a certain goal. Optimism was seen as a key component of the model, as Gardner (1990, p. 1) pointed out, "a prime function of a leader is to keep hope alive." Respect is widely recognised as one of the innate needs of human nature (Purkey, 1992) and is closely related to trust. Belief in the value and worth of others in respect to colleagues, parents, pupils and other educational institutions is a key ideology of IVL. Trust is a crucial element in a

successful organisation (Burns and Martin, 2010), and conversely if trust is not evident in an organisation, team-work is not possible, as Lencioni (2002, p. 195) states, "trust lies at the heart of a functioning, cohesive team. Without it, teamwork is all but impossible". Intentionality facilitates the process of organisational growth and success, giving clarity and direction to work towards a common goal (Burns and Martin, 2010).

Purkey and Siegel (2003) suggest a framework by which a school could become invitational, by concentrating on five areas: places, policies, programmes, processes and people. Purkey and Siegel (2003) believed that each of these elements could contribute to a positive school climate, and a healthy organisation, conversely if any of these areas were neglected, the organisation may not have a positive climate. Place relates to the physical environment of the school and as such could be easily improved if necessary; as Burns and Martin (2010, p.32) point out, "since places are so visible, they are essential to promote in a positive manner". When considering policies, leaders who are following an IVL model, should determine if a school policy is positive and productive, or would restrict and confine. Successful schools are developed to encourage and seek a win-win approach (Covey, 1989), creating a cooperative rather than a competitive ethos (Burns and Martin, 2010). The programmes on offer in schools should be as varied and appealing to pupils as possible (Burns and Martin, 2010), for them not to feel 'disinvited' (Hansen, 1998). Culture often comes from the diverse and inclusive programmes on offer and rigorous academic courses taught by outstanding teachers help not only raise standards of achievement but levels of engagement as well (McCombs and Whisler, 1997). Processes that are transparent and inclusive contribute to a positive culture and allow for successful IVL (Hansen, 1998; Burns and Martin, 2010), permitting and encouraging pupils to take an active part in the school culture is vital in allowing the development of responsibility and ownership. Finally, the people employed by a school are crucial in "creating a positive school culture" (Burns and Martin, 2010, p. 34). Not only recruitment of people with the correct skills and attributes but allowing the people in the school or organisation to develop positive relationships, as Kelly *et al.* (1998, p.62) state, "every child deserves a place at a school that is inviting, academically challenging and safe. The overall ambiance of the school and quality of instruction are enhanced as the school develops a 'concordant relationship' among the pupils, parents, teachers and administrators."

2.4 Chapter summary

This literature review identified and examined the key areas pertaining to leadership in schools, the development of church education and models of leadership. The chapter began with a review of literature that examines the importance of leadership in schools. This was followed by a review of literature which examines training for school leadership and focused specifically on the role of the

headteacher. This was pertinent to this study since the study documents the researcher's first experience of headship since completing headship training. Next the chapter explored the development of Church education, as the study was set in a faith-designation school. The literature review then explored the development of leadership as ministry and the development of models of leadership which are predominantly applied to educational leadership.

Examining the literature enabled me to identify the following gaps in literature:

There are very few studies available that have been completed by serving headteachers and fewer that document the creation and opening of a faith-based school. These would have been of significance to this study and my professional development as a novice headteacher.

The importance of headteachers is widely recognised. As Rieckoff (2014) states school leaders are critical, but as Ofsted (2019) states there is no one right way to lead a school. Reynolds *at al.* (2014) argue leadership is the most important factor in school effectiveness. No specific guidance existed at the time of starting this study for how novice headteachers should or could set about building a culture in a new school.

Training for headteachers in faith-based settings is lacking as Grace (2009) highlights, consequently Rieckhoff (2014) points out most headteachers in faith-based settings felt inadequately prepared for faith school leadership per se.

Church education has developed over hundreds of years. Church schools stand at centre of the church's mission to the country (Archbishops' Council, 2001), and whilst the Church recognised in 2001 the importance of recruiting suitably training heads and deputies to run these additional secondary schools, it was not until this study was underway that the CofEPQH was launched.

Typically research remains in the conceptual domain (Rieckhoff, 2014; Klenke, 2008; Luckcock, 2007), much of the literature reviewed sees research done about headteachers not done by them.

My research will go some way to addressing these gaps.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Chapter introduction

The following chapter examines the research design through a thick description of the methodology used. The chapter explores the ontology and epistemology of the researcher to explain the choices made during research design and to critically evaluate the decisions taken for undertaking the qualitative research focus described below. The chapter then explores the methodological process of autoethnography through a literature review. The literature review examines different forms of autoethnography, the importance to the researcher of the insider status afforded by autoethnography and the use of personal experience. An exploration of the validity and reliability of autoethnography follows. In response to research question 5, the chapter concludes with an exploration of the chosen form of autoethnography for the research adopted in this study. The autoethnographical account relates to phase 1 of the research described below.

3.2 Research design

As stated above, school leadership studies have tended to remain in the conceptual domain (Rieckhoff, 2014; Klenke, 2008; Luckcock, 2007; Gunter and Ribbins, 2002). This study will add to a growing body of research and literature written from the perspective of the headteacher-practitioner. It is hoped that this insider perspective will offer unique insight into leadership development that has hitherto been lacking (Gumus *et al.*, 2016; Thompson, 2017; Steyn, 2012; Luckcock, 2007).   As has already been highlighted in the introduction, being a headteacher is a distinct position of leadership and it is hoped that by offering insights of personal experience others in similar positions may benefit.

3.2.1 Research paradigms

This section explores my ontology and epistemology to explain my research design. My subjectivist ontology leads me to believe that the world and the psychological world of my research participants (myself included) are unknowable, and the role of this research will be to construct an impression of the world as they (and I) see it (Ratner, 2008). Further, as Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 207) point out the "investigator and the object of the investigation are … interactively linked so that the 'findings' are literally created as the investigation proceeds". My constructivist epistemology stems from my belief that meaning is constructed by individuals as a result of their interactions with the world, which leads me to an interpretivist theoretical perspective. The precise meaning of constructivism varies according to one's perspective and opinion (Ultanir, 2012). My reasoning is inductive thus my data collection processes will allow me to construct links between the relationships and theories that exist in my data. My methodological approach is phenomenological: I believe that social reality is grounded in people's experiences, we construct meaning out of our experiences. Using

autoethnography to explore and reflect on my leadership (insider) status, and collage and focus

groups to reflect on leadership as a concept, my research is a blend of emic (from within the social

group, perspective of the subject) where I discuss my own leadership and etic (from outside,

perspective of the observer) where I discuss the perspectives of others. Therefore, this research was

a multimethod study. In the rest of this chapter, I outline the methodology used for the

autoethnography (phase 1) which leads to the next chapter, where I outline the methods used for

the focus groups (phase 2), collage creation and the subsequent data collection, analysis and write

up.

3.2.1.1 Positionality

Positionality refers in qualitative research to the consideration that is present when the researcher is

part of the social group being studied (Moore, 2012). Klingaman (2012, p.64) states that it is

"essential for the researcher to use self-reflective data to tell one's own story" in terms of the

phenomena being studied. Muncey (2010) reminds the reader of the importance of participant

observation strategies, where the researcher is the object of the social context in which their

research is taking place. Therefore, it could be argued that this type of research is wholly subjective

and as Coffey (1999) points out this could be an advantage. My personal perspectives, opinions and

experiences as a headteacher may be similar to others in this role and so may help inform the

development of their leadership style. Similarly, my research methodology and methods may be of

interest to other researchers who may wish to use a similar approach to their work, in a similar field

or a completely different field. I was aware of taking a reflexive approach, as Salzman (2002, p.806)

states, "constant awareness, assessment, and reassessment by the researcher of the researcher's

own contributions, influence shaping of intersubjective research and the consequent research

findings" are vital. Similarly, Mosselman (2010, p.479) states that "recognising the role of

subjectivity and bringing in the researcher's positionality can enhance the ethical integrity of the

data and enhance the research process and interpretation of the data."

3.2.2 Qualitative research focus

This section critically explores the qualitative research focus taken in this thesis. Traditionally

leadership research has been carried out in the objectivist, positivist, quantitative paradigm

(Klenke, 2008). However, as Burns (1978) and Barker (1997) point out, whilst leadership as a topic

has received much attention in, for example, empirical studies, books, articles, and conference

speeches, we know far more about leaders than we do about leadership per se. Fielder (1973)

proposed that headteacher's personal and school contextual factors have a bearing on leadership

behaviours in his classical contingency theory, therefore, qualitative studies should help explore

such factors. Day *et al.* (2016) proposed eighteen constructs in their dynamic representations of

leadership models and none of them were related to the headteacher's characteristics or school structure, thus making it harder for new headteachers to access and apply to their personal leadership style or leadership context. Both Marks and Printy (2003) and Urick and Bowers (2014), in their school leadership studies, categorise respondents by behavioural manifestations from the outset, followed by discussions of the difference of the school and personal background variables, rendering these studies more helpful to novice and developing headteachers such as the researcher. Some have claimed that research into leadership previously relied on quantitative methodologies to identify and understand leadership problems and develop testable, verifiable and replicable solutions. According to Klenke (2008), calls were made for an alternative focus with regards to leadership research, moving away from the dependence on quantitative and towards qualitative research because of dissatisfaction regarding the types of information provided by the focus on quantitative research. Klenke (2008) goes onto argue that quantitative research is not helpful for leadership studies as it fails to help leaders and followers understand the meanings of significant events or describe and understand the successes and failures of their organisations. Several researchers for example, Klenke (2008), Steiner (2002), Conger (1998) argue that qualitative studies have a valuable part to play in the study of leadership, due to the multidisciplinary nature of leadership as a construct. Guba and Lincoln (1994), argue that quantitative research studies of leadership, whilst possessing academic rigour, may lack contextual information and generalisability which is significant to those seeking to learn about and improve their own leadership. When conducted with the same degree of rigour and concern for quality and rigour, argues Steiner (2002, p.3) qualitative research has "the potential to restore respect for ontological integrity and the capacity to replace esoterica with relevance". Klenke (2008) points out the advantages of qualitative research when studying leadership as being threefold: having the opportunity to study leadership phenomena in significant depth; being able to ask 'why' questions as well as 'how' and 'what' (traditionally asked in quantitative research); and qualitative research offers the opportunity for longitudinal study.

3.3 Autoethnography

The purpose of this section is to explore the autoethnographical methodology I employed as the primary source of findings for phase 1 of this research. This is a study using qualitative research methods, "to understand some social phenomena as well as how the participants in a social setting construct the world around them" (Glesne, 2006, p.4). Autoethnography is a balance between the "auto" and the "ethno" with Roth (2009, p.5) arguing that neglecting the "ethno" within autoethnographic accounts happens regularly:

There are many examples in the public domain – books, refereed journal articles and other forms of representation – where the author associates with autoethnography but that have little to do with the "ethno" and everything with the "auto".

Roth (2009) goes on to argue that an over reliance on the "auto" may contradict the very fundamentals of ethnographic research namely, to learn about culture. And conversely the same may be true if there is too much emphasis placed on the "ethno", the account becomes much more an ethnography rather than an autoethnography. Thus, a careful balance must be struck between the "auto" and the "ethno", as Ellis (2004, p.37) states:

> Back and forth auto-ethnographers gaze. First, they look through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focussing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experiences and then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations.

This autoethnography documents the development of a new leader, the experiences of which should be transferable to other new leaders in different school settings. This is critical part of autoethnography, the "auto" part, formed a significant part of my motivation for the research. However, I also recognised the importance of focusing on the ethnographical dimension of the research. To do this, I maintained focus on the cultural experiences of both the research participants and me, and how subsequently my identity was shaped by the culture. I recognised the importance of engaging in reflexive introspection, switching from examining my own values and actions to how they were influencing and being influenced by the culture (the new school) around me. The setting was a new and developing one, but arguably the experiences described here could have been applied to a new leader in an established school, similarly they could be applied to a new leader setting up a new school.

3.3.1 Reflexive process

Autoethnography is research that describes and systematically analyses (-*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*-) in order to understand cultural experience (-*ethno*-) (Ellis, 2004). Some researchers consider personal narrative to be the same process as autoethnography (Ellis and Bochner, 2000), however, others use autoethnography as a means of explicitly linking concepts from literature to narrated personal experiences (Holt, 2003). Autoethnography combines characteristics of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis *et al.*, 2011) and is a specific form of critical enquiry that is embedded in theory and practice (McIlveen, 2008). It acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research (Ellis *et al.*, 2011). Further, Ellis at *al.* (2011) posit that the stories told by autoethnography can help people make sense of themselves and

of others, given that they are complex accounts, often containing complex phenomena and enlightening moral and ethical considerations (Adams, 2008; Bochner, 2001). Denshire (2014) reminds of the need to move beyond writing merely about self and Grant (2010) reminds of the need to use culture to understand how self is located in the world. Bochner (1994) recognised that autoethnography is not value free, rather is "self-consciously value-centred" (cited in Ellis *et al.*, 2011, p.2) and went on later to assert that this type of research could offer enlightenment not able to be elicited by other methods (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). Personal experience influences the research process, for example, when the researcher chooses where and when to research, who to include, who to leave out, condensing time scales and compressing timelines (Fine, 1993). There are still some researchers who believe that autoethnographers can take a neutral, impersonal and objective stance (Buzzard, 2003; Delamont, 2009), however, this is not a widely held view. Winkler (2017, p. 236) described the danger that autoethnographers can be either "self-indulged narcissists or self-reflexive and vulnerable scholars". Many researchers have argued the former view to some extent (for example Coffey, 1999; Holt 2003; Ellis *et al.*, 2011; Haynes, 2011) and Pelias (2013) goes further and provided a list of authors who were considered 'naval gazers' and 'self-indulgent'. Winkler (2017) points out that an interview that elicits passionate and truthful accounts is often revered, whereas passionate and truthful autoethnographies can be considered to be narcissistic. Goodall (2000, p. 137) states that autoethnography constitutes an approach, "of personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in ways that reveal deep connection between the writer and her or his subject", thus crediting autoethnographers with self-reflexivity and self-respecting scholarly ability. As Denzin (2003) points out, sometimes being so personally involved can lead to vulnerability, which can be problematic, with researchers addressing such difficult personal experiences as depression (Jago, 2002), kidney failure (Richards, 2008) and bullying (Tamas, 2011). Vulnerability can come from scrutiny or criticism (Muncey, 2010) and Tullis (2013) therefore reminds autoethnographers of the need not only to protect participants in their study, but also themselves. Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013, p. 76) remind autoethnographers to "be judicious and self-protective" in their published work and Medford (2006) cautions against the 'slippage' between the truth and an autoethnographer's remembered or edited version of events in order to protect themselves and others.

3.3.2 Forms of autoethnography
Many different forms of autoethnography exist depending on the emphasis being placed on the researcher's self and interaction with others, traditional analysis, the interview context, and power relationships (Ellis *et al.*, 2011). Indigenous or native ethnographies have developed from colonised or economically subordinated people and have been used to address or disrupt power relationships

in research (Denzin *et al.*, 2008). Interactive interviews can be used to develop "an in-depth and intimate understanding of people's experiences and emotionally charged and sensitive topics" (Ellis *et al.*, 1997, p. 121) and similarly community autoethnographies can be used to illustrate the personal experience of researchers exploring how a community manifests a particular social or cultural issue (Toyosaki *et al.*, 2009). The emphasis in both these research contexts is what can be learned from both the interview setting as well as the stories of the participants (Mey and Mruck, 2010). Co-constructed narratives illustrate the meanings of relational experiences and are usually viewed as jointly authored, incomplete, historically situated accounts (Toyosaki and Pensoneau, 2005), whereas personal narratives are accounts where the author takes on the persona of a phenomenon and writes an evocative narrative focused on themselves (Berry, 2007; Goodall, 2006). They aspire to understand and reflect on self or an aspect of life in conjunction with a cultural context. Narrative ethnographies join the researcher's experience with ethnographic descriptions and analysis of others, by attending to both self and members of the group (Tedlock, 1991). Reflexive ethnographies describe the way a researcher develops or changes because of the research process and can exist on a continuum from the researcher studying their life alongside the cultural context in which it is set, to becoming the focus of the investigation (Ellis, 2004). Reflexive didactic interviews focus on an interview producing meaning and emotion and whilst the focus is on the participant, the researcher adds personal reflection to bring about context, add knowledge and explore topics on a deeper level (Ellis, 2004). Layered accounts focus on the researchers' experience alongside data, abstract analysis, and literature. It is often likened to grounded theory in that it illustrates how data collection and analysis can proceed simultaneously (Ellis, 1991) but contrary to grounded theory it uses vignettes, reflexivity, multiple voices, and introspection to invite readers to join in the emergent process (Rambo, 2005; Ellis, 1991). This study is a combination of a reflexive autoethnography, supplemented by interactive interviews in the form of an arts-based method.

3.3.3 Insider status

Ethnography is often conducted using an emic, inductive design where the researcher is immersed in the study as an outsider; they observe and participate in order to try to gain an insider perspective of the cultural context of those being studied, including their identities and values. This immersion according to Geertz (1973) allows the ethnographer to give thick descriptive accounts of their observations and create 'webs of significance'; the proximity of the researcher is essential for 'thick participation' (Sarangi, 2006) and 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973; Goodall 2000).   Ellis (2004) argued that autoethnographers gaze back and forth through both an ethnographic wide-angle lens and inwardly being much more personal, exposing what could be a vulnerable self. Hammersley (2006) argues that the ethnographer remains as an outsider, observer and commentator and

therefore can retain a certain amount of detachedness from the study, thus producing 'good' ethnography. McNess *et al.* (2013) argues against Hammersley's (2006) stance, suggesting that qualitative researchers occupy multiple positions depending on their social, cultural or political values, which it is suggested, can develop over the course of the study.   Winkler (2017) claims that the majority of autoethnography exists at the latter end of the continuum. This does lead to an interesting ethical question, as Wall (2008) pointed out, that others are represented in autoethnography and may not actually even be aware that they exist in such contexts. Tolich (2010) and Tullis (2013) are strong proponents, therefore, of gaining participants informed consent prior to the autoethnographical process beginning, however, both acknowledge that other actors in the accounts may not have been considered for gaining consent prior to the write up, as they were merely 'present' in the culture, not necessarily 'active' members of the sample. Winkler (2013) states the importance therefore of retrospective informed consent, although Tullis (2013) questions whether this is realistic and, in some cases, maybe inappropriate.

3.3.4 Personal experience

There is a growing body of research that suggests autoethnography does not necessarily have to be a lone (auto) pursuit, although Chang *et al.* (2012) pointed out that collaborating when studying self appears to be a contradiction. Emerald and Carpenter (2014) offered one method for co-constructing a collaborative approach to autoethnography, with Carpenter providing a narrative commentary and Emerald offering interpretations of Carpenter's reflections.   There are many more and recent examples of collaborative autoethnography (for example, Garbatti and Rothschild, 2016; Kidd and Finlayson, 2015; Vande Berg and Trujillo, 2008). Winkler (2017) calls into question whether autoethnography is evocative or analytical, with Muncey (2010) reminding us that autoethnography has had an evocative tradition. Anderson (2006, p. 374) argued that the dominant mode of autoethnography being evocative may have the "unintended consequence of eclipsing other visions of what autoethnography can be". He reminds us, in his seminal article on analytic autoethnography, that the aim of (analytical) autoethnography should be to develop theoretical understandings of social phenomena, without distancing the autoethnography from the ethnographic tradition of realism. Anderson's (2006) five key principles for research of this kind (see below), encompass evocative autoethnography (complete member researcher status, analytic reflexivity and narrative visibility of self) and analytic concern (dialogue with informants beyond the self and commitment to theoretical analysis). Later Anderson points out that analytic and evocative autoethnography may not be mutually exclusive (Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013), acknowledging that they both share some common features. Tullis (2013) suggests autoethnography exists on a continuum from evocative to analytical as does Colyar (2013).

Ellis (2007b) refers to relational ethics when autoethnographers reflect on how to include others in their autoethnography, focusing on both the ethics of care and the ethics of responsibility (see also Ellis, 2009 and Ellis at al 2011). Roth (2009) reminded us that "being in the world requires respecting the inherently ethical nature of the relations one has toward others", and as Adams and Ellis (2012) state the interpersonal ties and responsibilities that the researcher has to the subjects of the research are unbreakable. Ellis (1995) and Medford (2006) pointed out that those who are referred to in any autoethnography have the right (and assumed interest) to read it, therefore, their representation in it should be appropriate, fair and measured and strategies such as pseudonyms and anonymisation must be used to protect their identity. Along with this, autoethnographers have grappled with the question of who has the right to tell the story about a particular culture; Roth (2009) and Winkler (2017) stress the importance of showing responsibility to those involved, ensuring that it is not just the researcher's view of the culture that is represented, but also those being researched. Roth (2009, p. 7) calls this, "w/ri(gh)ting of the world", and as Jackson and Mazzei (2008) earlier pointed out, this is one critique of autoethnography, that of the knowledgeable subject. To counter this, others suggest making autoethnography polyphonic (for example, Chang, 2013; Hernandez and Ngunjiri, 2013; see the many forms that exist utilising more than one voice). Seeking other perspectives, feedback and asking other people to comment on the autoethnography addresses some of these concerns, although as Winkler (2017, p.242) points out, simply adding more voices in qualitative research "only problematizes the tenet that adding more voices produces texts that are more real" (see also Maclure, 2009; Mazzei and Jackson, 2012). McNess *et al.* (2013) suggest that rather than a dichotomy, insider-outsider research can be viewed as a continuum, with the researcher occupying multiple positions, shifting freely from inbetweener to alongsider. As Kennedy (2018, p.3) states:

> Through their writing practices, ethnographers therefore can situate themselves along the continuum with styles ranging from the detached outsider (Hammersley, 2006), to more subjective approaches, including narratives of the self (Richardson, 1994), personal ethnography (Crawford, 1996) and reflexive ethnography (Bruner, 1993), all of which have more in common with autoethnography (Atkinson, 2006).

3.3.5 Validity and reliability of autoethnography and this study
Autoethnography concentrates on producing meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). This study attempts to do just that.

Winkler (2017, p.237) states that whilst autoethnographers study themselves, "their interest is (or should be) to learn about culture". Autoethnographers write evocative descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience (Ellis *et al.*, 2011), the purpose of which is to help develop an

understanding of the culture for both insiders and outsiders. This process occurs inductively, using feelings, stories, and events, often supplemented by field notes, interviews and/or artifacts (Jorgenson, 2002). In terms of reliability and validity this can pose problems. For autoethnographers, reliability often refers to the narrator's credibility (Bochner, 2002): valuing narrative truth based on what a story of experience does, how it is used, understood, and responded to. Autoethnographers acknowledge the importance of contingency, knowing that memory is fallible, and it is impossible to recall events or record them in language that exactly replicates the events that took place (Owen *et al.*, 2009). Chang (2008) cautions against solely relying on memory as a building block for autoethnography and recommends using diaries and journals to counter questions about reliability. Duncan (2004) emphasized the need for hard data as well as soft impression, as did Wall (2008) and Giorgio (2013) who points out the unreliability of memory. Chang (2013) and Giorgio (2013) both go on later to state that memory is a useful tool in the autoethnographer's methods, alongside other various forms of data, such as recalled events, conversations, feelings and experiences. Winkler (2017) questions whether having to provide hard data would actually call into questions the ontological and epistemological assumptions of autoethnographic work. To mitigate against this potential fallibility, on entering the research phase of this study, I kept a journal of field notes, in which I recorded daily events, my thoughts and feelings about those events and observations of the interactions I had with varying actors which I have called phase 1. Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2013) contend that field notes are a core method of inquiry in autoethnographic research as memory cannot be relied upon to be accurate or give the distinct richness of experience required in this method of research. Further, Duncan (2004) emphasizes the need to have "hard" evidence (notes, diary entries or journal notes) in order to support "soft" impressions made by autoethnographers. Muncey (2005) contends that memory and its distortions can turn into a problematic aspect of autoethnography, memories may be unruly and unreliable (Giorgio, 2013). The purpose of my personal reflexive journal was to record my leadership experiences and the development of my own personal leadership style.

Intricately linked to this is the question of validity, which for autoethnographers means writing a piece of work that seeks verisimilitude, hoping to evoke in readers feelings of believability, possibility, credibility, and truth (Plummer, 2001). Autobiographers often write about epiphanies, remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life (Bochner and Ellis, 1992), times of existential crises that forced a person to attend to and analyse lived experience (Zaner, 2004) and events after which life does not seem quite the same (Ellis *et al.*, 2011). Ethnographers retroactively and selectively write about and analyse, using theoretical and methodological tools, epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by, being part of a culture

and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity (Ellis *et al.*, 2011). Autobiography is usually a retroactive piece of writing, when the author selectively writes about past experiences (Ellis *et al.*, 2011). Ethnographers study a culture's relational practices, common values and beliefs, and shared experiences in order to help the cultural members (insiders) and cultural strangers (outsiders) better understand the culture (Maso, 2001). Ethnographers are participant observers in the culture, often taking field notes of cultural events as well as their part and others' engagement with these happenings (Geertz, 1973). Autoethnographers take their own personal experience, using their methodological tools and research literature, to analyse experience and use their personal experience to illustrate cultural experience (Ellis *et al.*, 2011). Part of the purpose of this autoethnography was to add my voice: to enable someone who had not been in position before to understand what it was like. As a novice headteacher I found immense value in speaking to colleagues who had recently experienced this, but the opportunity to do this was extremely limited, especially when seeking out novice headteachers in faith-designation settings. This study was designed to add my voice to this void.

Interviewing cultural members (Foster 2006; Marvasti, 2006) can aid the process of comparing and contrasting with personal experience when it comes to analysis.   This was part of the detailed consideration for phase 2 of the research – see below.

3.3.6 Autoethnography chose me

Autoethnographers study themselves and their lives to learn about culture (Winkler, 2017) thus distinguishing autoethnography from autobiography by using autobiographical methods retroactively and selectively writing about past experiences highlighting specific epiphanies deemed to have influence on the course of life, not just for the individual. Autoethnographers use various forms of data to create their account (Winkler, 2017), including memory, diary or journal entries, recalled events, conversations, feelings and experiences (Chang, 2008; Creswell, 1998). The experiences I selected to write about, which formed my autoethnography, were pivotal in the development of my leadership and in the development of the culture that became established in the school. The study was set in a school, which in itself can be viewed as a mini society with a unique culture full of a plethora of social interactions (Klingaman, 2012). There were two main reasons that autoethnography was selected as the primary research methodology. First, when completing the review of the literature, one seminal study into leadership development in a faith-designation setting elicited in me a deeply held connection on both a spiritual and intellectual level. The articulation of faith in school leadership study conducted by Luckcock (2014) cemented my belief that I had been called to be a leader in a faith school. Luckcock's exploration, blended with an intellectual exploration of leadership, resonated with me as my interest in leadership had developed

throughout my professional career. The second reason that autoethnography appealed so strongly as a research methodology was the opportunity to develop my natural story-telling skills, blending experiences from my professional context with observations of behaviour in the social group around me. Whilst I had considerable experience of being a leader, I had not yet been the headteacher of a school. There were no other staff appointed to the school yet. Like writing a book, I inherited a set of blank pages when I took up the post of headteacher. It was as if the chapters were planned, the characters existed in theory, but the story had not yet been written. I felt that this was an opportunity not to be missed to record the development of the story as the pages unfolded.

3.4 Anderson's approach to analytic autoethnography adopted in this study

In his seminal article on analytic autoethnography, Anderson (2006) proposes five key areas that should be considered when conducting autoethnography. These are: (1) complete member researcher status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis. Based on Anderson's (2006) key characteristics of analytic autoethnography, this study is a self-observation with complete immersion as researcher: a reflexive practitioner view of the development and growth as a leader, not limited to a conceptual description of leadership, but rather a description of the journey using the five characteristics of being a full member of the research setting, through to my end goal of developing theoretical understandings of the broader social phenomena which evolved in the new school.   This chapter now examines the five characteristics of Anderson's analytic autoethnography and how I apply it to this study.

3.4.1 Complete member researcher status

Autoethnography favours "emotional self-reflexivity as a rich data source" (Chang *et al.*, 2012, p. 9), consequently I began my personal reflexive journal in phase 1 of the research reflecting on my own status as a leader, critically evaluating the preparation and training I had completed prior to becoming a headteacher. The literature review constituted my formal analytic review of the leadership models I would possibly employ as a headteacher in the pre-opening phase and in my findings, I used the spiritual educative model (Luckcock, 2007) and other leadership models (see literature review) to critically evaluate my actions. In my reflexive journal I recorded interactions and personal observations, along with the interactions with those around me with the social actors engaged in my autoethnography, who were both those who I led and colleagues who were leaders.

3.4.2 Analytic reflexivity

I felt that the unique opportunity to be practitioner-researcher was one not to be missed, as Marzano *et al.* (2005) highlighted most research has been done about headteachers not done by them. Doloriert and Sambrook (2009) proposed a continuum on which autoethnography is located,

on one end of which is the researcher-and-researched and the other is researcher-is-researched. At the researcher-and-researched end the researcher is a participant in the study, not the focus of the study, and uses his/her voice to speak for the cultural group: this type of autoethnography combines own experiences and information gathered from the group in the form of interviews (e.g. Marschall, 2015) or questionnaires (e.g. Small, 2015). Initially I positioned myself at the researcher-is-researched end of the continuum, where autoethnographers turn the analytical lens towards themselves (Winkler, 2017). I chose to extend my reflexive process by not restricting my view to researcher-is-researched, eliciting insights from others to supplement my own reflections on my developing leadership. Moving towards the researcher-and-researched end of the continuum, using an arts-based method, I explored leadership as a concept (see below). Anderson (2006) asserts that the purpose of autoethnography is analytical, developing theoretical understandings of social phenomena. Colyar (2013) describes autoethnography as both expressive writing (evocative), which foregrounds energy and emotion and transactional writing (analytical) emphasizing analysis and theorizing.

3.4.3 Narrative visibility of researcher's self

Evoking a response affectively, aesthetically and rationally, Gannon (2013) reminds us of the descriptive nature of autoethnography, in order as Ellis and Bochner (2000) put it to understand a way of life. My narrative visibility was evident in my blogs written on the school website, speaking mostly in the first person and about my own experiences, whereas most headteachers write blogs about their pupils. In the blogs I deliberately explained how my leadership was developing for the prospective teachers, parents and pupils of the school to understand the school culture that I was attempting to build. Whilst not academic writing, as it turned out, writing these blogs became invaluable times of reflection on my developing style. Elllis and Bochner (1996, p.19) state that autoethnography appeals to people who prefer storytelling than recounting data, allowing the research to transform "data into an ethnographic text". Klingaman (2012, p.57) states that:

> Ethnographers believe it is possible to share our personal experiences in a way that will benefit the readers who may be going through a similar situation in their own lives or may be able to apply our experiences to make generalisations in other unrelated life situations.

Given the paucity of research that was available prior to opening the school, I hoped that recording my leadership development would do exactly this.

3.4.4 Dialogue with informants beyond self

To carry out dialogue with informants beyond myself I decided to explore leadership with two distinct groups of people who both knew me well and were leaders in their own right (see next

chapter). The purpose of dialogue with others was to supplement my own analytic reflexivity (Marschall, 2015; Small, 2015). All of the participants held some form of senior leadership role in a school. I conducted focus-groups, using collage construction as the medium for initiating reflection and conversation. Roberts and Woods (2018) describe non-linearity in leadership and remind us that images help open-up opportunities for participants to explore subtleties of profound feelings, responses and experiences (Loads, 2009; Leitch, 2006; Black, 2002; Spouse, 2000).

3.4.5 Commitment to theoretical analysis

Anderson (2006) states that the purpose of analytic autoethnography is not simply to document personal experience, rather it is to use empirical data to gain insights into broader social phenomena than those represented by the data themselves. Rather than produce what Ellis and Bochner (2000, p.388) claim as "unbeatable conclusions" from their data, analytic autoethnography contributes to a "spiralling refinement, elaboration, extension, and revision of theoretical understanding". In using analytic autoethnography I hoped to relate my experiences to Luckcock's (2014) spiritual educative model and add to the deepening understanding of the development of leadership in a faith-designation setting.

3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter examined the methodological choices I made in this study, specifically in phase 1. First, I explained the research design, looking at research paradigms and positionality, followed by an explanation of the qualitative research focus. From my subjectivist ontology I state how I intended to explore the previously unknowable worlds of both me and my research participants, constructing an impression of those worlds that seeks to understand the developing leadership of a new headteacher in a new school. My constructivist epistemology enabled me to construct meaning as a result of my interactions with the social world around me using inductive data collection.

The chapter then examined the literature surrounding autoethnography as a phenomenological methodology, looking at reflexivity, different forms of autoethnography, insider status and personal experience. Next, I examined the validity and reliability of autoethnography.

The next part of the chapter examined how I intend to use Anderson's approach to analytic autoethnography to construct meaning out of the experiences in the study. The unique insider status of both being researched and being researcher, it is hoped, will offer new insights to my developing leadership will be useful to others.

Examining the literature enabled me to identify the following gaps in literature:

- There has been a call to move away from the dependence on quantitative research into the impact of leadership in school (Klenke, 2008) and further studies argue that qualitative data have a valuable part to play in the study of leadership (Klenke, 2008; Steiner, 2002; Conger, 1998).

- Increasingly, qualitative research is viewed as having the potential to restore respect for ontological integrity (Steiner, 2002) and retore the balance between auto and ethno (Ellis, 2004).

- Helping outsiders better understand the culture of schools will help develop relational practices, common values, beliefs and shared experiences (Maso, 2001).

My research will go some way to addressing these gaps, especially for novice headteacher in faith-based settings.

Chapter 4 Methods

4.1 Chapter introduction

The following chapter explores the arts-based method employed in phase 2 of the research in response to research question 5. The chapter explores the theoretical underpinning of such a method and explains the rationale for choosing this method. The chapter describes how the participants, in phase 1 and phase 2, were chosen. The chapter then details the data gathering processes. What follows is a detailed explanation of the analysis and reporting methods that will be used to represent the data. The chapter then discusses the ethical considerations made prior to the study and brings together the validity and reliability of the study as a whole.

4.2 Arts-based method using focus groups

4.2.1 Theoretical underpinning

This section explores the use of focus groups and collage making as an arts-based method to elicit deep thinking in focus group participants. "Collage allows for a more holistic presentation, and thus a deep understanding of the complexities of the experiences of leadership" (Roberts and Woods, 2018, p. 639). Arts-based research uses artistic processes and forms to discover and explore new understanding within a research context and set of purposes (Kapitan, 2010). There has been a rapid growth in the body of literature surrounding arts-based research in the past twenty-five years (Chilton and Scotti, 2014; Finley, 2011; Kapitan, 2010; Knowles and Cole, 2008; Leavy, 2009; McNiff, 1998). More recently it has been demonstrated how arts-based methods can enable valid exploration of leadership (Chilton and Scotti, 2014; Barone and Eisner, 2012; Butler-Kisber, 2008; Leitch, 2006). Using this, Barone and Eisner (2012) define arts-based research as "a process that uses the expressive qualities of form to express meaning" (p. xii). Roberts and Woods (2018) demonstrate how illuminating an arts-based method may be in demonstrating the lived experience of being the subject of leadership, offering participants an alternative way of representing profound feelings, responses and understanding rather than having to articulate this in spoken or written words. Eisner (1993) argued that art is not simply an alternative method for representing knowledge as it allows for different forms of understanding. Chilton and Scotti (2014) agree, positing that the arts are especially effective for evoking and communicating social and emotional aspects of life and are therefore specifically helpful in describing socio-emotional, relational and spiritual matters, which are of particular relevance to this study. As Roberts and Woods (2018, p.627) state, "arts-based research offers participants an alternative way of representing … profound feelings, responses and understandings." Loads (2009) asserts that giving participants time to reflect enables them to make meaning from their experiences and in turn enables their contributions to be more valid.

4.2.2 Collage

A collage is a visual artwork, created by selecting items and arranging (or attaching) them to a support such as paper or cardboard (Chilton and Scotti, 2014). Collage is a popular technique used in therapy, as it "provides a safe and structured resource in the difficult self-expressive process" (Linesch, 1988, p. 47) and thus is deemed helpful for those who may be intimidated by making their own representational drawings or diagrams. Its move into being used in the field of research is gaining in attention and has been endorsed (Butler-Kisber, 2008; Leavy, 2009; Vaughan, 2005) for "its potential to produce embodied cognition from the joining and juxtaposing of visual and textual elements to produce associations that might otherwise remain hidden" (Chilton and Scotti, 2014, p. 170). Collage is seen as a method for joining multiple visual items to create a picture or diagram which allows for "associations and connections that might otherwise remain unconscious" (Butler-Kisber, 2008, p. 270). Collage allows participants to represent people, organisations, events, feelings and reactions through tangible objects (Roberts and Wood, 2018) and thus has a capacity to conceptualise ideas pertinent to this study. Sense-making of situations through 'building' a picture and then the subsequent ability to revise and revisit, with the ability to move parts of the collage, should enable participants to express tentative then deeper understandings of their view of leadership (Gauntlett, 2011). Sennett (2009) states that physical movements can positively impact on cognitive understanding and Horneckar (2011) notes the connection between physical movement and the expression of felt emotion. Corballis (2015) points to the value of mind-wandering as a catalyst to the development of new ideas and understanding through collage making, fuelled possibly by the opportunity to experiment with physical materials (Jarvis and Graham, 2015).

The actual process of creating a collage can bring together visually disparate items (Chilton and Scotti, 2014) and the non-linearity of constructing a collage to explore leadership, thus allowing for making connections, linking thoughts and feelings and making meaning (Roberts and Woods, 2018). Furthermore, in professional settings, the existence of tacit knowledge where "people know more than they can tell" (Sternberg and Horvarth, 2009, p.ix) supports the use of methods other than, for example, interview or questionnaire. One striking benefit of collage over, for example, interview is that participants can progress at their own pace. The collage can be constructed because of the stimulus and the participant has ownership of the pace of development in their own time, has the chance to reflect and change direction by moving items in the collage and respond as their own thinking develops. The researcher, once the collages are complete, also has the benefit of being able to take the artistic process further by systematically identifying recurring themes and can subsequently give form to ideas, intuitions, feeling and insights that might otherwise escape rational thought processes (Jongeward, 2009).

Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010) identify three specific uses of collage in qualitative research: as a reflective process, as a form of elicitation, and as a way of conceptualising ideas. Collage can be seen as an iterative process in which the processes of viewing, discussing, developing and amending the visual representation of ideas can lead to discussions of commonalities, differences and conceptualisation of the nuances under study (Allnutt *et al.*, 2005, cited in Butler-Kisber, 2008). These discussions, leading to multiple responses and producing a kaleidoscope of representations can generate additional and new ideas (Butler-Kisber, 2008) and this production of further observations, questions and conversations can be seen as one of the primary purposes of arts-based research (Barone and Eisner, 2012).   One of the significant properties of collage as a research method is its physicality, and as Merlieau-Ponty (1964) rejected mind/body dualism rather they posited that actions performed by a persons' physical body can be a representation of their ways of thinking. Further, Morganti (2008) believed that a persons' primary way of relating to something is neither purely cognitive or sensory, but rather a combination of both. Collage as a metaphor can be helpful to the individual, in that it allows a framing of their thinking, a way of ordering the internal chaos that they would otherwise not be able to make sense of.

Collages have been demonstrated to break down the potential for social injustices and inequalities embedded in the status quo (Bagley and Castro-Salazar, 2012) and can enable the opening up of dialogue amongst diverse individuals (Diaz, 2002). Gale and Wyatt (2006) point specifically to the emancipatory nature of the conflation between researcher and participants in arts-based research, leading to a desire for honest and open dialogue in the discussion stage of the focus groups. Roberts (2016) demonstrated how collage can stimulate playfulness and laughter, eliciting a relaxed approach to gathering data, thus bringing about authentic reflection on experiences of leadership. Van Manen (1990) defines authentic reflection as a genuine consideration of how to represent distinct experience, rather than the accepted view or perspective imagined (by participants) to be desired by the researcher. Roberts and Woods (2018) illustrate the benefit of using an arts-based method for specifically exploring leadership and developing deeper conceptual understanding given that "in human experience, there are points where words are inadequate to explain what is known, felt or believed" (Frosh, 2002, cited in Leitch, 2006). Arts-based approaches have the capacity to break-down power differences between the researchers and researched (Clandinin *et al.*, 2009).

4.2.3 Rationale for choosing collage as a method
I chose this method for data collection in my focus groups for several reasons. First, this was an extension of the work I completed investigating maths anxiety in my dissertation for my Masters which involved participants (children) drawing their feelings once they had been told they were going to be asked to complete a high stakes, timed task (test) in mathematics. This allowed

participants to express emotions and insights that they may not have articulated had I conducted a semi-structured interview or questionnaire.

In this study the participants in the focus groups were asked to create a collage about the broader concept of leadership. This afforded protection to any potential vulnerabilities of the participants as they were not asked to comment specifically on the leadership characteristics, known or unknown to the participants, of the researcher. The collages were used to open dialogue amongst diverse individuals (Diaz, 2002) and enabled the breaking down of social-injustices and inequalities that may have existed in the focus groups (Bagley and Castro-Salazar, 2012). They gave a voice to those who would perhaps otherwise remain marginalised in a focus group discussion (Gerstenblatt, 2013), allowing all participants to represent their feelings (through collage), even if they chose not to contribute a description of their collage. Holgraves (2004) cautions against social desirability bias in the discussion, where participants authentic responses are tempered by a consideration of the response that they consider will be most socially acceptable. However, Roberts (2016) has found that conversely this arts-based method is more likely to lead to authentic reflections.

Analysis of the collages and the dialogue associated with them will allow me to compare my own experiences with that of the focus groups to enable deeper reflexivity. Roberts and Woods (2018) affirm the value of collage in unlocking unconscious thoughts, feelings, realisations, judgements and opinions. They assert that using collage enables the exploration of leadership through the concepts of physicality, wholeness and participant agency. Unconscious thoughts about leadership for participants which are most deeply felt include "experiences, memories, thought-processes and motivations that have not been consciously reflected upon and understood" (Roberts and Woods, 2018, p. 627). Frosh (2002, cited in Leitch, 2006) states that there are experiences we have as human beings that are sometimes inadequately explained using words. Sternberg and Hovarth (2009, p. ix) call this tacit knowledge, or describe it as "people know more than they can tell".

Using Butler-Kisber and Poldma's (2010) three stages of collage production, I engaged the participants in the reflective process of creating their collage, elicited their response to the creation and then I conceptualised both their description of their elicitation and their collage. This enabled me to expand my thinking about my own leadership style, gaining valuable insights from leaders who both were leaders in their own right and also knew the setting in which I was leading well. The collage data collection process enabled me to reflect on the ethnographical views of colleagues in similar senior leadership positions and in similar contexts (faith-designation schools). It also provided me the valuable opportunity to interact with the data, in order to understand more deeply my views on developing my own leadership style.

4.3 Participants

This section describes how the participants for this study were selected. The author of the research is the main participant of the autoethnographic account. There were two distinct groups of participants in phase 1 (autoethnographical account) and phase 2 (arts-based method and focus groups).

4.3.1 Phase 1

This section explores how participants were engaged in the autoethnographic research in phase 1. Agency, a participant's ability to act with a degree of independence with their actions self-authored rather than wholly determined by others (Roberts and Woods, 2018), was particularly important in this study. It was recognised that this was a highly sensitive area, especially for a practitioner-researcher where there is a significant power dynamic. The researcher in this study was also the leader in the school (headteacher) and held a notably powerful position in terms of employment, strategy and resourcing. Chang (2013, p. 110) states that "mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between researcher and researched, and between researchers and the communities in which they live, and work should inform the ethical standards that auto-ethnographers follow". Goodall (2000, p.137) reminds us that autoethnography constitutes an approach of "personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in ways that reveal the deep connection between the writer and his or her subject". Thus, autoethnographers become self-reflexive, self-knowing and self-respectful scholars at the same time as becoming vulnerable subjects (Anderson and Glass-Coffin, 2013). They "strip away the veneer of self-protection that comes with professional title and position" (Denzin, 2003, p.137). The author was obviously well-aware of the potential vulnerabilities of participating and was willing to accept the autoethnographic lens being turned on her. However, the other participants in the autoethnographical account posed a different set of challenges.

How to manage the portrayal of others in an autoethnographic account or in any form of autobiographical writing constitutes a significant ethical challenge (Couser, 2004). Lapadat (2017, p. 594) states that "auto-ethnographers have a responsibility to themselves, implicated others, readers and society." To ensure that passive participants are not recognisable by name I used terms such as a colleague or an observer or a parent. Autoethnographic accounts of our experiences necessarily involve other people, therefore, are not wholly our own; they implicate relational others in our lives (Tullis, 2013; Ellis, 2009, 2007a, 2007b, 2004). Seeking consent for other participants in autoethnography is widely recognised as problematic (Lapadat, 2017; Winkler, 2017; Ellis, 2007a; Hole, 2007). Members of staff, pupils and their parents were made aware of the completion of this study through my blogs during the pre-opening phase, my introductory talk given at the start of the

academic year and through occasional reference to my work in subsequent blogs. No objections were raised to the study by any members of staff, pupils or parents. Any observations I made in my reflexive diary were anonymised at the time and the reflexive diary destroyed on completion of writing this study.

4.3.2 Phase 2

The selection of the participants in phase 2 of the study is explained below. For the focus groups, it was recognised that using participants who were colleagues from the school where the researcher was also the headteacher could be a highly sensitive area. The power dynamic was critical, as the researcher was also the leader in the school (headteacher) and held a powerful position in terms of employment, strategy and resourcing. I had previously received ethical approval to use participants from the employed staff body, however, once the school opened it became apparent that their voices would have been too distinct, and I may not have been able to use their data in such a way that they would not be recognisable by what they had said. I had not accounted for the fact that there would be single teachers of each subject and the group of teachers from which participants would be drawn would be very small (totalling just 8 in the first year). This made me feel uncomfortable regarding the power dynamics that existed between myself as the headteacher and the potential participants from the very small staff group: the power dynamics were intensified as the group was so small. The anonymity of participants in the study may not have been able to be maintained due to the very small number of staff employed at the school. Equally, since I was researcher and headteacher, they may have given responses that they felt the headteacher would like to hear, rather than honest responses to the questions I posed as researcher. There was a possibility that they may have wished to express opinions about my leadership as headteacher that may not have been viewed positively and this could have made them feel vulnerable. Valuable data for the researcher of this type could potentially have made the participants feel vulnerable in front of the headteacher. Hence, I decided not to use any members of staff who were employed either by the school or the MAT. Each member of staff could have been visible, being the only specialist in their area and forming a large percentage of a relatively small staff body. Therefore, it was decided to take participants for focus groups from staff outside the new school.

A pilot focus group comprising four teachers with leadership experience from neighbouring schools was convened at the start of the Covid-19 lockdown, using an online conferencing tool (Zoom). The subsequent focus groups were relatively small, consisting of between 4 and 6 participants in each as a result of the findings of the pilot focus group (see below). Participants were invited to participate individually by letter (see appendix 1). Each letter contained a separate participant information sheet (see appendix 2).

Focus group 1 comprised of six headteachers from other values-based secondary schools. I chose this focus groups as they "...have travelled this journey alongside me ... in an intellectual capacity, debating, guiding and articulating the complexity" (Kennedy *et al.*, 2018). As a new headteacher I relied on members of the group for guidance with various professional matters, such as dealing with a sensitive staffing issue early in my headship.

Focus group 2 group was comprised of six senior staff from local schools who had formed a professional learning community of which I had been a member of prior to the school opening. The group met once a week informally once every half-term, at intervals of approximately six to eight weeks. Outside of the calendared meetings the group members contacted each other for peer-to-peer support and for information sharing. Unfortunately, one participant in each of groups 1 and 2 did not received their collage making materials prior to the focus group due to circumstances resulting from Covid-19 restrictions, but they still wished to participate and committed to describing the collage they would have constructed had they had the materials.

Each participant was assigned a code for identification purposes in the subsequent transcription of the discussions that took place, see table 4 below (some letters were omitted so they were not easily confused with numbers which were used to identify collages).

Table 4: Participant codes

Pilot group participant code	Focus group 1 participant code	Focus group 2 participant code
A	E	L
B	F	M
C	G	N
D	H	P
	J	Q
	K	R

4.4 Data gathering process
This section explains how the data gathering process occurred and the changes made to the research as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4.4.1 Timeline for data gathering
This is an outline of the timeline I used for data gathering. The following data sources, both internal and external (Chang, 2008), were used. This was to, "enhance the content and accuracy of my autoethnographical writing" (Chang, 2008, p.55). My planned timeline underwent significant changes, mostly due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but partly due to personal circumstances as well.

Table 5: Timeline for gathering data

Data type	When collected	Date
Researcher field notes	Phase 1 and phase 2	June 2018-March 2020
Researcher blog	Phase 1	June 2018-March 2020
Researcher journal	Phase 1 and phase 2	June 2018-July 2020
Newspaper articles	Phase 1	Sept 2019-March 2020
Collage artifacts	Phase 2	Jan 2020-March 2020
Transcripts of focus groups	Phase 2	Jan 2020-July 2020

4.4.1.1 Personal memory data

In traditional ethnography, the participants in the studies provide personal memory data to the researcher (Klingaman, 2012), whereas in autoethnography according to Chang (2008) the researcher herself provides this data. This data can take the form of a written account of the experiences that have previously influenced the researcher and also provide a current context and perspective for the research taking place. Memories become "textual data … through chronicling the past and inventorying and visualising the self" (Klingaman, 2012, p.59). The data collected then provides the basis for the autoethnographic account. I used all three parts of Chang's model when collecting personal memory data, see figure 3 below:

Figure 3: Collecting Personal Memory Data (Chang, 2008, p.88)
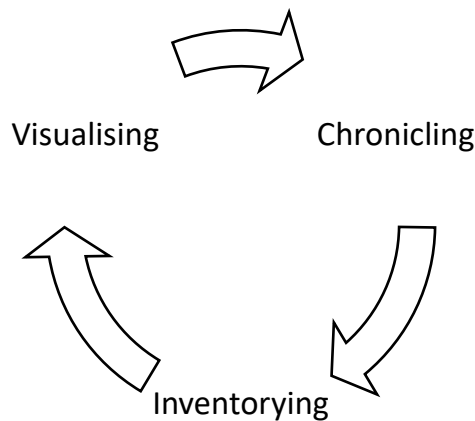
Chronicling or recalling the personal and social events and experiences and giving them a chronological structure took place because of the field journal I kept, alongside my work appointment schedule (diary). Inventorying, according to Chang, is concerned with listing and ranking autobiographical pieces of information according to their importance. In my journal I highlighted key events with titles which I imagined I may use in my autoethnographical account. This enabled me to keep a mental inventory of events of a similar nature and those that were

distinct. Naturally when I was inventorying my data, I chose which data to include and which to leave out of the autoethnographic account. Visualising consists of organising personal memories by charts and figures. I did not employ this part of Chang's model as much as I thought I would as I felt my data was better represented in the form of words.

4.4.1.2 Self-observational data

My self-observational data formed the main source of data for this study in phase 1. I was immersed in the culture of a new school; being immersed in the culture and producing self-observational data is typical of autoethnographic research (Fetterman, 2010). Unlike typical autoethnography, there was no previous culture in existence, one of my tasks as the founding headteacher was to create this culture. My field notes were "detailed slices of life, rather than comprehensive or literal objective renderings" (Emerson *et al*, 1995, p.8). Sometimes I made notes daily, to remember events accurately and in order for me to be able to look back later and analyse these events to attempt to see developmental themes or patterns.

My blog on the school website was a public eye view of my development of my leadership and was written approximately every fortnight. My original intention with the blog was not to provide data for this research project, however, I soon realised what a rich source of data it would be. Its purpose was to explain to potential staff, pupils and their parents the development of the school and this provided invaluable insights for this study.

My research journal was recorded separately from my field notes, to "keep thoughts running" (Chang, 2008, p.96) throughout my study. My journal consisted of personal thoughts, feelings and ideas about both the development of the school and the development of this study. They included notes from meetings with my supervisory team and personal reflections on the academic research.

4.4.1.3 External data

During phase 1 of the study, I was able to use local newspaper articles to supplement my field notes as the opening of the new school attracted attention from the media. Phase 2 of the study was deliberately designed to provide external data. As noted earlier this information was collected to further inform the researchers' understanding of the development of leadership. Detailed analysis of the products (collages) and transcripts of the focus groups provided valuable insights and expanded the thinking of the researcher.

4.4.2 Explanation of data gathering process

4.4.2.1 Phase 1

Data for phase 1, the autoethnography phase, was collected in the form of my personal journal, my diary (work appointment schedule), quotations from newspaper and online articles written about

the school, and anecdotes recalled from memory (personal memory data). The Covid-19 pandemic did not affect the method for collecting data in this phase of research, although the impact of the pandemic was clearly demonstrated in the changed circumstances of leading during the enforced national lockdown. There was active and passive involvement of participants in my autoethnographical observations as collaborators, colleagues, observers and members of staff or the parent body.

I set aside weekly time for personal data gathering. I chose to stay at my desk late on a Friday evening, after the other staff had left and I had completed my work as a headteacher for the week. I wrote my personal journal weekly, some weeks spending longer and writing more and others just writing up brief notes of what had happened and how I felt. I came to enjoy the ritual of closing my working week with a written self-reflective account of events. My research journalling became my companion and the punctuation to my week. Once my journal was complete, I closed my laptop, locked the school up and went home to enjoy my weekend.

4.4.2.3 Phase 2

During phase 2 of the research, the collage and focus group activities were able to continue despite the Covid-19 pandemic. Under normal circumstances the collage making process and focus group discussion would have taken place in person, at a selected physical venue, time and place. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, I amended the design of the collage making activity in order to comply with the appropriate legal and health and safety measures in place at the time. Participants were invited to engage in the focus groups, collage construction and subsequent discussion remotely, using an online conferencing tool (Zoom) from their own homes (or workplaces) via their own computer.

Both groups (and the pilot group) were provided with a range of collage-making materials prior to commencement of the focus groups. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I had to post the materials to participants in enough time so that the materials could be quarantined (48 hours) prior to the focus group; I did not want participants to think too deeply prior to the actual focus group, or to plan a response, so I asked all participants to keep the contents of the collage making materials closed until we met. The materials included tissue paper of varying colours, beads, ribbon, pasta shapes, sequins, elastic bands, treasury tags, paper clips, coloured sweet wrappers, small pegs, string, ribbon, geometrical shapes and plain white backing paper.

An invitation with a secure meeting code was sent to each participant prior to the focus group. Each participant was asked if they were confident in the use of the selected online conferencing tool, and they confirmed that they were. Participants were asked to log on five minutes prior to the focus

group commencing for video and audio checking purposes. The focus groups were video and audio recorded to support the analytical process; all participants were asked for their consent and all agreed for this to take place. Photographic records were shared of the collages during the focus group and also kept for subsequent analysis. Once all participants were successfully logged in to the confidential meeting and the technology was working, we began the focus group and collage creation.

At the start of the focus group, participants were asked to select materials of their own choice and place their chosen materials onto the large white backing papers in a configuration that would answer the question: "What does leadership look like in a values-based secondary school?" Participants were not asked to try to represent the organisational structure of leadership per-se in school, but rather to make a representation of it using the selected materials. To create their collage, participants were asked to place, not stick, their items on the large piece of paper provided (Roberts and Woods, 2018). By not sticking items, participants were able to move pieces, thus evolving their collage as they developed it or later as they explained their collage to other members of the focus group. They were asked to provide an explanation of their collages to the group once constructed and since the activity was done remotely, each participant was asked to photograph their collage and send it to the group so everyone could see it as they explained their thinking behind it.

I had envisaged participants thinking aloud (Boren and Ramsey, 2000) as they constructed their collages, however, due to being in dispersed locations, I found that most participants turned off their cameras and microphones in the pilot group during the construction of the collage. I chose not to ask participants specifically to either leave on or turn off cameras and microphones in the focus groups, however, I found that most naturally did leave their cameras on. Roberts and Woods (2018) suggest asking for commentary during the collage making process can increase the perceived difficulty of collage construction, although simultaneous enlightenment and light heartedness can enhance the creative process or mutual support and encouragement may aid those who perceived the process to be difficult. I chose to ask participants to explain their collages after they had finished constructing them so that I did not make my own interpretation of their collage.

4.5 Data analysis and reporting

This section describes how the data that I collected in both phase 1 and phase 2 of the research was analysed and reported. Data analysis has been described as "the most complex and mysterious of all the phases of a qualitative project, and the one that receives the least thoughtful discussion" (Thorne, 2000, p. 69). The nature of the data collection processes were such, that a large amount of

data was gathered. To manage this data effectively I used UWE One Drive and the Microsoft applications provided to enable data searching and scrutiny. My field notes and journal were kept in Microsoft One Note. The transcripts of the focus groups were kept in Microsoft Word. Both these applications are searchable, which proved invaluable when I came to combining the notes and journal into my autoethnographic account.

4.5.1 Phase 1

In order to report my findings in a sense which may prove useful to others in the same situation (either new to leadership or opening a new school), I decided to document the linear journey from when I qualified as a headteacher, through the pre-opening phase of the new school to post-opening in chronological order. I selected parts of my personal field notes and journal, supplemented by my blog and newspaper articles, to tell the narrative.

To construct my autoethnography I used thematic analysis on=f my raw data. Thematic analysis involves searching across data sets to identify, analyse and report repeated patterns, using codes and themes.   A theme is a "patterned response or meaning" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.82), derived from the data and used to inform the thinking surrounding the research questions. Themes are often categorised as semantic, which address more explicit or surface meanings or latent, which reflect deeper, more underlying meanings, assumptions or ideologies (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). I used a deductive approach to derive themes from my data (Kiger and Varpio, 2020) surrounding leadership styles and subsequent models. The process of analysis comprised six stages, see figure 4 below:

Figure 4: Deductive process for deriving themes in data (Kiger and Varpio, 2020)
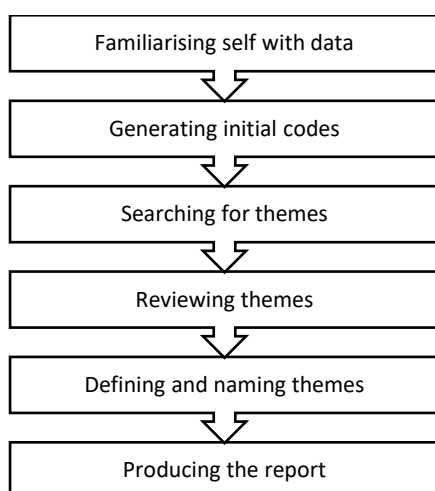
Kiger, M. E. and Varpio, L. (2020) Thematic analysis of qualitative data. Medical Teacher. 42 (8), pp. 846-854 © copyright 2020. Reprinted by permission of Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Taylor & Francis Group, http://www.tandfonline.com.

I used Kiger and Varpio's model to construct my autoethnography.

4.5.1.1 Familiarising self with the data

To familiarise myself with my raw data, I re-read my journal from start to finish. It was surprising when I re-read the primary data, as it elicited memories of events, thoughts and feelings that I had forgotten. I cross referenced events with my work schedule (appointment diary) and re-read my journal over a period of hours set aside in a school holiday. This was important, as I needed to see the raw data as a whole and there was a lot of raw data to read. I remained conscious that at this point I needed to ensure that I did not solely focus on the "auto" and neglect the "ethno". I ensured that the data included enough focus on the development of the culture of the school and also the impact that the culture was having on my leadership. This was a critical part of my editing at this stage. I found that amongst the substantial amount of data that I had collected, I had included memorable events, as a record that they had taken place. These were memorable to me, but not of significant importance to the research. For example, I recorded in detail the negotiations surrounding the computer network and how I selected the specific type of computer monitor and keyboard which would be installed. Data which was merely focused on a personal timeline or account of events that happened was edited out of my research data.

4.5.1.2 Generating initial codes

I codified parts as I read, using highlighting to identify initial codes and emerging thoughts of how I might represent sections of my account (later to be framed by my Desert Island discs). My initial codes were simply periods of notable chronological events, such as 'pre-opening', 'just before opening', 'opening', 'straight after opening' and 'settling into a routine'.

4.5.1.3 Searching for themes

I searched for themes as I read and re-read my weekly accounts. I wanted the initial themes that emerged to relate to my developing leadership and conceptual framework, so I made a separate list of the themes as they emerged.

4.5.1.4 Reviewing themes

I reviewed the themes and arranged the codes in what would become a first draft of my sub-chapter (chapter 5) headings. Once I constructed the first draft of the prose of my personal autoethnography I reviewed the initial themes cross-referencing them with the data from my personal field notes, journal, diary, blog and newspaper articles.

4.5.1.5 Defining and naming themes

In editing and re-writing my autoethnography I wove in a commentary of my emerging themes. I wrote freely. As I am sure many autoethnographers discover, my initial autoethnographic account was verbose and contributed nearly double the word count that I had apportioned to it. I re-read and re-drafted numerous drafts many times to generate the final draft of my autoethnographical

account. The naming convention of the chapters came to me as I drove to church one Sunday. I noted songs in my journal that had either been playing at notable times in my leadership journey or that resonated with my emerging chapters.

4.5.1.6 Producing the report

Once I had edited the initial autoethnographical account I constructed chapter 5. I took care to focus on how my leadership had been influenced by the developing culture of the school. This was a critical part of remining true to my selected methodology. In discussion with my supervisory team, there was discussion about the whether the sub-chapter headings were helpful. I concluded that the sub-headings being framed as my Desert Island discs were an important part of my autoethnographical account and so they remained. On reflection, they were both important to me personally and I felt some of the selected songs also helped to articulate in a small way my personal thoughts and feelings about the developing culture and the impact I had on it. This is explored more in section 5.1.1.

4.5.2 Phase 2

After completing the focus groups, I transcribed the commentaries from the focus groups. In analysing the collages and associated commentaries, I employed two analysis approaches based on Roberts and Woods (2018), namely empathetic understanding and structured analytical processes. Empathetic understanding derives from cognitive, emotional and compassionate empathy (Roberts and Woods, 2018). This is the ability to not only understand someone else's thoughts and emotions rationally (cognitive empathy), but also the ability to understand someone else's feelings (emotional empathy), combined with the ability to understand someone else's feelings (compassionate empathy). Combined these three features enabled me as researcher to empathetically understand the participants' collages. The structured analytical process I used is presented above, namely the deductive process to the derivation of themes (see table 6 below).

The empathetic understanding came about because of both being involved in the focus groups when the collages were created and then subsequently presented to the groups, as well as my deep reflection on the collages and subsequent transcription of the participants description of their collage. I reflected on the collages using structured analysis following completion of the transcription of the focus groups. The process of analysis followed a methodical process involving identifying patterns, grouping and comparing the images and their meanings, using Roberts and Woods (2018) five step process for complete analysis, which was very similar to the thematic analysis I used for my autoethnography. First, I re-read the accounts of the relevant collage from each participant, enabling me to recall any salient points they made about the collage that were not evident to me as an observer. Next, I read across (Roberts and Woods, 2018) the collages visually, having printed off digital photographs of the collages, I spread them out randomly and compared the

visual impressions, focusing on the visual image rather than the associated commentary. I was then able to group the collages according to the striking elements and overall impressions that presented themselves to me visually. This was when I grouped the collages into two groups: abstract and literal. I then revisited the grouped visual images with their associated transcribed notes and explored the common themes that existed in the visual representation and the transcripts within the groups. The themes that emerged were identified were as follows:

Table 6: Themes derived from collage analysis

Theme as observed in the collage	Description
Leading as a social story or process	The collage maker used artefacts placed in such a way as to tell a story or to describe the development of their description
Leading as holarchy	The collage maker uses holarchy, which is a connection between holons, where a holon is both the whole and a part. Unlike a hierarchy, where there is a distinct top and bottom to a model, a holarchy is interconnected, interlinked and interdependent.
Leading as a model or analogy	The collage maker created a distinct model in order to describe leadership or used analogy to describe correspondence or similarity.

Once I had grouped the collages into the three groups, I assigned each collage a number. The collages correspond to the participants as follows:

Table 7: Participant codes matched to corresponding collage codes

Leading as a social story or process						
Collage	1	2	3	4		
Participant	A	M	R	E		
Leading as holarchy						
Collage	5	6	7	8	9	10
Participant	C	F	G	H	J	P
Leading as a model or analogy						
Collage	11	12	13	14	15	16
Participant	L	D	B	Q	K	N

Finally, I constructed the commentary for each of the three collage groups which is found in the findings section of this study. I carefully constructed the commentary, remaining faithful to how the participants had described their collage.

4.6 Ethical considerations

This section considers ethical problems that may have arisen as a result of the research and the steps I took to ameliorate any harm that may have occurred as a result.

4.6.1 Guiding principles

As well as being potentially fraught with ethical issues to consider (Lapadat, 2017), qualitative research can bring many benefits to the participants and these will be maximised (BERA, 2018). Every effort was taken to minimise any potential reputational harm to the school and participants by sensitive editing and purposeful writing. Any information that was collected in the field was only done on computer hard drives that had encrypted password protection and all data was encrypted and not held on local storage. Due to the enforced absence of social contact as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, focus groups were conducted on a digital platform, with each participant joining using a webcam. The focus group discussions were recorded and transcribed to produce rich data for the comparing and contrasting of insights into leadership. All active participants were anonymised in the research, given a participant number which was used to correlate between participant verbal contributions and participant collages only. All information collected about any individual was kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations and child protection procedures). Confidentiality of the transcripts and digital photographs was kept by using secure storage for all visual and audio recordings on the UWE One Drive. Confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm (BERA, 2018) and this study therefore affords participants both confidentiality and privacy. Privacy was maintained, and anonymity was ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material by anonymising quotes and authorship of collages. Research data was always kept securely, especially when collected in the field, before being transferred onto the UWE One Drive. Participants will not be able to be recognised in this thesis or any presentations conducted as a result of the study. Complete anonymity may not be possible for the researcher, who is fully aware of this.

The research complied with Data Protection Act (1998) and GDPR (2018) in relation to any personal data stored, to what use it is being put and to whom it might be made available. The Freedom of Information Act (2000) has been adhered to where participants might have requested to view any data held about them. Secure storage of interview transcripts has been facilitated using UWE OneDrive.

4.6.2 Phase 1

Phase 1 of the research was an autoethnographic study, taking place in a school setting where I was the headteacher. My observations in my field notes and reflexive journal were about my own actions and behaviours as a leader and my perceptions of the impact of my leadership on culture. I was very aware of the power dynamics that existed, given the responsibilities and privileges the headteacher holds. I anonymised any observations I made of colleagues with relation to my leadership and any passive/active contributions colleagues made are not attributable to them.

The study aimed to protect the integrity and reputation of educational research by conducting the research to highest possible standards. The researcher recognised the inescapable subjectivity that such an ontological position implies (autoethnography) and the respective reflexive blind spots that may arise (Kuhn, 1970; Kennedy *et al.*, 2018). Reflexive researchers acknowledge that their own objectivity is a fiction and embrace the idea that any account they provide is a partial perspective as seen through their own point of view at a particular place and point in time. Autoethnographers say "I" in their research writing, aim for transparency, attend to voice, present their interpretations as constructed text, and resist the temptation to produce authoritative accounts or interpretations that generalize (Lapadat, 2017, p. 592). This is an account rooted in personal experience; therefore, it is recognised that this researcher-practitioner will "own this inscription of the story, the perspective, and the voice, rather than having them filtered through another's perspectives, agendas, interactions, and interpretations" (Lapadat, 2017, p. 593). Adoption of this method of reflexive research is a significant way in which some researchers have addressed some ethical concerns (Etherington, 2007) through their presence and actions, interactions with and influence over the people and social processes in the research site (Schwandt, 2015) and this therefore is part of the unique contribution that this research makes to this field.

4.6.3 Phase 2

During phase 2 of the research, I supplemented my autoethnography with an arts-based method, using focus groups who constructed collages in response to a question I posed to them at the start of the focus group. The research was designed and executed in order to put participants at ease and avoided making excessive demands on them, asking of them no more than a maximum of two hours of their time. In advance of data collection duty of care was carefully thought through (BERA, 2018) and no emotional or other harm to the participants came about as a result of participating it the focus groups.

At the start of the focus group, I asked participants to open the envelope containing the documentation I had sent them along with their collage materials. Contained within the envelope was a privacy notice (see appendix 3), a consent form (see appendix 4) and a focus group activity sheet (see appendix 5). I adopted an iterative approach to gaining consent for participation in the focus group: rather than a one-off signature of a consent form, in response to the call for more rigorous approaches to informed consent becoming customary practice (Etherington, 2007; Hole, 2007; Lapadat, 2017) participants were given a number of opportunities to withdraw from the study. I adhered to the latest UWE-BERA Code for undertaking research in relation to voluntary informed consent (BERA, 2018). Ellis (2007a) proposes a process approach toward consent, and I adopted this approach: I extended the question from a one-off signature to a discussion at the

beginning and the end of the focus group regarding the implications, advantages and disadvantages of taking part in the research.

Participants in all focus groups had the option to withdraw before, during the focus groups and up two months after the consent to participate form has been signed. I made it clear during the focus groups that participants could leave at any time and/or ask for the discussions to stop should they feel uncomfortable. Participants could choose to turn off their cameras and/or microphones during the completion of their collages and were asked to mute their microphones when someone else was describing their collage for sound quality purposes. In order to protect individuals, I asked participants to only name individuals by using forenames during the focus group discussions and I redacted the forenames when transcribing the conversations. Participants were sent a copy of the consent form prior to attending the focus group discussion. I began the focus group meeting by verbally explaining the consent form (see appendix 4) and then giving the participants time and asking the participants to sign the consent form if they were comfortable to do so. I asked them to send me a photographic copy of their signed consent form due to the Covid-19 restrictions, so I was only in possession of an electronic form.

Participants were reminded they could withdraw from the study voluntarily and without prejudice at the following times: prior to the focus group commencing (by not turning up to the focus group discussion); prior to commencement of the focus group activity (after my welcome explanation); prior to commencement of the focus group discussion (after the collage activity); and up to two months after the focus group activity.

I made it clear to the participants that after two months I had transcribed the discussion groups, anonymised the comments, and destroyed the securely stored notes/original data and withdrawal would not be possible as the comments will not be attributable to the participants. No participants requested to withdraw from the study.

4.7 Validity and reliability of the study as a whole

Validity is defined as "the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (Maxwell, 2005, p.106). Klingaman (2012) contends that verification is recommended for qualitative research, rather than validity. Creswell (1998, p.201) states that "verification underscores qualitative research as a distinct approach, a legitimate mode of inquiry in its own right". The aim of verifying this research is to correlate and connect the two phases – the autoethnography and the collage making – in order to help explain and make sense of the development of me as a novice headteacher. As Klingaman (2012, p.67) states, "most of all, it is

desired that this autoethnography (tells an) important story that will impact other(s)…in a similar situation of transition."

Positionality was considered throughout the study. My position of headteacher offered an emic perspective on the study, shaped also by my personal experiences and relevant to this study my position as a volunteer in the Church of England. Due to the nature of the study, therefore, there is potential for researcher bias, especially in phase 1 of the research. Researchers in the field of autoethnography are not in agreement as to whether autoethnography is subjective or objective. It is hoped that the blend of subjective researcher's personal data collected in phase 1 combined with the external data collected from focus group participants in phase 2 will produce a balance of data that will be both replicable and legitimate. However, it is worth reiterating the fact that the researcher chose to select participants from outside the group of employed staff at the school, due to the small size, agency and position of power that the headteacher has in such a situation.

4.8 Chapter summary

This chapter explored the use of collage as an arts-based method for data collection. The chapter explored how the participants were selected for the study. Next, the data gathering, and data analysis and reporting strategies employed in the study. Finally, having considered the ethical issues associated with this type of study, the chapter concludes with an exploration of validity and reliability.

Chapter 5: Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

The research findings in this chapter are split into two parts: phase 1 and phase 2. Phase 1 is the researcher's autoethnographic account. Phase 2 gives an account of the findings of the focus groups and includes digital photographs of the collages produced (also see appendices 6-21 for larger versions).

In the first part of this chapter, the autoethnographical account documents phase 1 over a 5-term period in the pre-opening and post-opening phase of the new school. Anecdotes from the researcher's field notes and research diary are included, as are personal memories that sprang back as a result either of the autoethnographical writing or from organising the chronology of events by looking in the researcher's work schedule.

The chapter then moves on to phase 2 of the research, where the collages that were constructed by the participants outlined above and the subsequent discussions of the focus groups are explored.

5.1.1 Desert Island discs

The sub-sections of this chapter are framed by lyrics from songs that journeyed with me from pre-opening to post-opening of the school. Desert Island Discs is the United Kingdom's longest running radio show on BBC radio 4. On the programme, aired once a week on a Sunday morning, invited 'castaways' are asked to select 8 pieces of music they would take with them to a desert island. I spent long periods of time in the new school building, a very large building, alone. Consequently, I always played music whilst working in the building so that I felt less lonely. During the preparation for the start of term and during the first few months of the school I encouraged staff to play music as well. Speakers had been strategically placed around the building, so it was natural for these to be utilised. Music was played in the corridors and in the reception area when the children were in the building and in the evenings when members of the public used the building for hire. The selection of songs that frame this chapter were my frequently played tunes, I used to imagine that they would become my own personal selection of Desert Islands discs. I found that the pre-opening phase was a lot busier than had been anticipated and I worked longer hours than even during a typical term in a fully open school. This was because much of the planning and preparation work for the school opening was completed during core hours and meetings and presentations had to be made outside core hours. Hence the Radio 4 programme, Desert Island discs became my moment of regularity and relaxation at weekends. It played it on the car radio each week as I drove to church and gave me a rare moment of solitude. I wrote in my diary, "at times I feel like I am metaphorically all alone,

drifting in a sea of uncertainty, with no direction, abandoned and lost. At other times I would give anything to be able to escape to a desert island, just to find peace, stillness and solitude".

5.2 Autoethnographical account

5.2.1 Towards leadership

> *Here I am Lord, is it I Lord? I have heard you calling in the night, I will go Lord, if you lead me, I will hold your people in my heart (Schutte, 1981)*

This section explores the development of my school leadership from undergraduate to headteacher using personal memory data. I did not record these anecdotes as they occurred but remembered them predominantly at the start of this research as I was examining both my motivation for becoming a headteacher and for conducting this research. When I was finally appointed to the post of headteacher, I realised that deep down I had always believed I was called to be a headteacher. I felt that the post of headteacher was a vocation and I believed that it was a vocation that I was drawn to. As O'Toole *et al.* (2003, p.51) state leadership can be an "individual trait" and I felt that I possessed that trait. Around me many of my peers, who entered the teaching profession at the same time as I had, were either already in positions of headship or had resolutely remained at the middle leadership stage. Prior to becoming a headteacher, I planned my career path through a series of strategic moves and by opportunities arising at times when I felt I was best placed to progress my career. As an 11-year-old, I decided that I wanted to be a teacher of Physical Education. Frustratingly my teachers at my secondary school tried to steer me towards a more academic path, which only made my resolve stronger. Some teachers told me that being a teacher of Physical Education was not, "academic enough" for me. My strengthened resolve, combined with my academic success and physical prowess in team sports afforded me the opportunity to secure a place at one of the most highly regarded physical training colleges in the late 1980s (Bedford College of Higher Education). During my teacher training on the Bachelor of Education (Honours) programme, if asked, I would have denied that I ever wanted to be a headteacher: I passionately believed that I would retire from a long and fulfilling teaching career having progressed, at most, to head of the Physical Education department. Once I began teaching, I found my passion: whenever I was asked, "what do you *do*?" I would proudly answer, "I *am* a teacher". I felt that I did not *do* my job (my italics), I *became* my job. I felt that I had been called into the teaching profession, it defined me as a person and when teaching, I was in flow state (Csíkszentmihályi, 2014). I felt like I was at my best when I was teaching a group of children and had regular and positive feedback from others confirming this. I took promotion opportunities when they arose and eventually realised that I aspired to being the person with ultimate intentional influence over the people I worked with (Yukl, 2002). Progression from main scale teacher to headteacher occurred naturally and gradually over a

period of 24 years. I observed the headteachers I worked for and with from a distance, looking for signs of job satisfaction, curious to see if they led in a way that was true to their values and characteristics. As I became a member of various Senior Leadership Teams (SLT), I sat quietly amongst groups of staff in various staffrooms who complained about the headteacher, realising that no matter what happened, sometimes the decisions that were taken, may not be popular, but they had to be made. I listened as colleagues complained, made personal comments about and belittled the headteachers they worked for and to myself I wondered if these members of staff realised how difficult the job might actually be. No matter how hard some leaders tried, they were not always successful in gaining the commitment of all their staff (Bush and Glover, 2003). I found it hard to understand why some colleagues had such a negative perspective of the leader, why they remained working somewhere where they were clearly unhappy, and it also played heavy on my mind as to whether the headteacher realised that they were the subject of so much negativity in the staffroom. And so, with a certain amount of trepidation, I completed my headship training (NPQH) in 2015.

I recall one rainy day in January 2014 when I was the deputy headteacher of a secondary school. A pupil who displayed challenging behaviour strode up to me whilst I was on duty at lunchtime and asked me where the headteacher was. I told him that the headteacher was absent, to which he replied, "does that mean you are **it** then?" (his emphasis in bold). "Yes," I replied, "I suppose it does". Striepe *et al.* (2014, p. 90) found that participants in their study of leadership in faith schools identified leadership by referring to such values as "trust, respect, support, empowerment and serving others". To the pupil that day, I was *it* (my italics)*;* I was empowered to be it, the leader. Empowerment: the biggest decisions that day lay with me. At the time, it was a challenging school, with disruptive pupil behaviour and a significant number of staff who needed support. These staff respected me to be able to help and support them if they called. If there was an accident, a disaster, or an emergency, it would be me who staff would turn to. I would be trusted to deal with it. If there was a problem, it would be me who they would look to. I would be required to support staff to deal with all of their needs. If there was a fight, it would be me who would split it up. In the summer term, the long grass just the other side of the school fence was left to grow long, and when it dried out, only a tiny amount of persuasion from a pupil on the school-side of the fence was needed to set it alight. Staff spent many lunch times running out to the field, armed with a fire extinguisher as large groups of pupils cheered and watched and laughed: if there was a fire that day, it would be me running.

As deputy headteacher, on the days I was it, I recall that a colleague once said to me, "I feel like there is a sense of calm that comes over the building when you are in charge". In my experience, the

perception of the headteacher held by most of the school staff seemed to be one of the key influences on whether the school was successful. Leithwood *et al.* (2008, p.24) stated that:

> …the most successful school leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others. They are also flexible rather than dogmatic in their thinking within a system of core values, persistent (e.g. in pursuit of high expectations of staff motivation, commitment, learning and achievement for all), resilient and optimistic.

I made a definite decision that should I be appointed as a headteacher, I would try my hardest to look calm, no matter what event or crisis presented itself to me. Instead of running out to the field with a fire extinguisher, I decided that I would walk purposefully. I resolved to always portray myself as resilient and incessantly optimistic. The staff noticed and so did the pupils. I put down my radio, took off my high-vis jacket and walked calmly and resolutely around the school. Coates (2015, p. 19) resounded in my ear, "to be a great head you need confidence, resilience and authenticity", so no matter how unsure I felt inside, I walked confidently, trying to portray authenticity, seeking to get staff to work towards a common aim (Kruse, 2013), working together to improve the school.

I learned from the experience of being deputy headteacher, that if staff did not share the same values, then it was incredibly challenging to bring them along with the culture a headteacher is trying to create, so I decided that when I was leader of a school, I would focus much of my energy on recruitment, in order to "get the right people on the bus" first (Collins, 2001, p. 41). Habitualisation describes how "any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern, which can then be … performed again in the future in the same manner" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 70).   We construct our own society and accept it as it is, often because others have created it before us, and we perpetuate the habits. Society is, therefore, a series of repeated habits and I found that, being deputy headteacher, it was exceedingly difficult to challenge or change the habits instilled by a different headteacher, hence the burning desire I developed to become the headteacher. Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) is the belief in one's capabilities to organise and execute courses of action to manage prospective situations: I would not have said that I had particularly high levels of self-efficacy with regards to leadership, but I knew that I had the capabilities to portray myself in the role.

The timing of the opening of a new faith-designation school, in the area where I worked, was in line with my career trajectory and I hoped that I had enough experience and skills to enable me to perform the duties of founding headteacher. I prayed about the job, poured my soul into the application, and once appointed felt finally that I had realised my calling by being enabled to combine my professional skills and qualifications with my personal beliefs and faith. I knew that it

would be my responsibility to create the culture in the building and in the group of people who constituted the school, to exert social influence and maximise the efforts of the staff towards the achievement of the goal of setting up a successful school (Kruse, 2013). I was aware that the school existed much less as just a building, but more a group of people associated with it: local community members, parents, support staff, suppliers. The culture that I sought to build on opening the school was one where staff and pupils worked together in a mutually respectful atmosphere; during the pre-opening phase, I would speak at length about this and have this as one of the key foundations. On reflection my leadership was IL, and part of my deliberate practice, whist operating in IL mode, (alongside the many managerial tasks associated with the building contract) was to articulate the vision, values and mission of the school, and to repeat these on every occasion possible. I always had a nagging doubt in my mind, I wrote in my journal, "I do not think I am ready, but then I never will be. There are so many things I don't know how to do, but I am learning". There was no way at this point to know just how unprepared I was.

5.2.2 Pre-opening (summer term)

> I'll do whatever it takes, falling too fast to prepare for this … everybody circling it's vulturous … I'll do whatever it takes (Reynolds. et al., 2017)

This section documents the period just before the school opened. As I kept my field notes, my leadership behaviours changed from instructional leadership (IL) to servant leadership (SVL). I realised prior to the opening of the school I had anticipated that I would work predominantly in IL (Hallinger and Heck, 2010). I had to fulfil several tasks for and with the Department for Education (DfE) regarding the articulation of the school's mission where I had to clearly define the curriculum, teaching requirements and how we would monitor pupil achievement and progress. From the esoteric nuances of the governance plan to the minutiae of the homework timetable, I had to plan, articulate the plan, re-plan and re-state my aims and intentions. What I had not prepared for was the need to perform all these tasks to distinct and hugely varied audiences. The message had to be the same to the disparate groups, but it had to be delivered in significantly different forms, to allow each group to access the required information. From one day to the next, I articulated the same message, first to the DfE, then next to a group of prospective pupils who were aged between 9 and 10 years old, then to a group of very interested Rotary Club members who had invited me to speak at their monthly club dinner. I had to develop a sense of intellectual dexterity, which would stand me in good stead for the days when, as a headteacher, I found myself teaching a group of 11-year-old pupils how to solve and simplify equations, then an hour later leave the lesson to be confronted by a staffing matter that required my immediate attention.

Arguably one of the most important functions of a headteacher designate, a headteacher who is in post but not yet performing the normal day to day functions of running an actual school, is to recruit pupils to the school. To do this, first I needed to define and articulate the school's mission (Hallinger and Heck, 2010). This was challenging, as I was speaking about a hypothetical school, one that only existed in proposal form and, prior to the ground being broken on the site of the school, architects' drawings. Soon, in the back of my mind, I knew that the shell of the school was being constructed, but it remained a cold, concrete shell, empty of all the trappings of a full-of-life-school. In an extract from my journal, I noted:

> The building is almost finished. The contractors have done an amazing job. No longer is the site full of builders, with saws and drills and buckets of nails. I can almost walk in the front door, that is the last thing to be finished apparently. But having worked in schools for all my professional life, I know that something is missing. It is too tidy – well almost tidy. Lots of concrete dust, bits of wires, but pretty tidy. No litter. No graffiti. It is cold. And most striking, there is no school noise. No children, excitedly chattering in the corridors, scraping chairs on the floor, banging doors. I can't hear them shouting at each other in the sports hall, giggling and chattering at break time, scraping plates and dropping cutlery in the canteen. It is so empty. So quiet and so un-school like. It exists as a building, only a building, there is no beating heart, no soul. No memories of fabulous lessons, of scraped knees and banged heads; the locker doors are all new, no scratches, they are crying out for a pen to leak or a sandwich to rot in them. I cannot explain how excited I am about the building, I already feel a sense of calm when I walk in there, as if I am 'home', but also such a sense of sadness, as the building has not yet come to life. It has not yet been allowed to do what it is meant to do, to contain, to hold, to be and to live, to breathe, to have life within, to protect those little minds and inspire them to go on and do amazing things. They are our future, and the building is waiting for them to find themselves within its walls.

I used several strategies to articulate the mission of the school, which ranged from leaflet drops, building and maintaining a new website, blogging, running two Twitter accounts and speaking at invited events. The speaking events came about as a result mainly of personal contacts, such as speaking at church breakfast for leaders and invited guests, and they gave me a chance to explain my ethos, vision and values to a usually interested audience. A visual presentation, with a mixture of architects' impressions and photographs from the building site, engaged the listeners and meant I was able to rehearse answers to some of the more testing questions that I would face in the future, notably from prospective parents. I made the decision to present to prospective pupils and parents in churches, church halls and community centres, in the area surrounding where the school was

located. This was a specific strategic decision since I was going to be leading a church school, so I wanted to situate myself very much within the local faith communities. It also gave me a sense of comfort and familiarity, since I was used to presenting in faith buildings having been a lay minister in the Church of England for nearly twenty years. Fortuitously, the sense of comfort and familiarity in my surroundings became hugely important to me. As soon as the presentations began, I learned how isolated I would feel as headteacher, how well informed and challenging new parents could be and how much detail I would need to know about every single aspect of the school. I was asked questions ranging from the legal decibel levels in classrooms and the associated acoustic balance of the hard surfaces, to precise locations of bus routes and relevant pickup points in all the local villages, to how many hours of physical education a child could expect in any one week. I became a visiting preacher, moving from church to church, dusty hall to dusty hall, carrying my own projector, laptop and screen, a couple of dummies both wearing sample school uniform, and a set of portable noticeboards, which contained as much information as I could cram onto them, to try to cut down the content of my presentation. I had made glossy prospectuses, after employing an expensive marketing consultant, and I took with me a team of volunteers, who would steward the masses of people we expected to arrive at each of the events. By event three, I travelled alone since the masses did not come. I spoke, often to at least ten people, sometimes to seventy, but mostly to around twenty-five people at a time. I became adept at answering the obvious questions, found I was regularly asked the same thing over and again (despite it being on a slide in my presentation and on a poster on my notice boards) and occasionally I was caught out by a technical question, often about pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) and the related legislation. The constitution of the audiences surprised me, they were prospective parents, but not just of those who were considering applying for the opening year, some were looking for one or maybe two years in advance; some were interested parties, usually church goers, who wanted to see how the school was being organised and run; some were prospective employees and some were prospective user groups, interested in the new facilities being provided for the town. Regardless of who was in the audience, at some point during each of the presentations, I remember feeling very isolated and alone. I was, after all, isolated and alone. I was the only paid employee at that time working solely on this project. So, anything and everything was down to me. I became politician, priest and manager. Prospective parents spoke to me in many different ways: some poured their hearts out about how misunderstood their child had been at primary school and how desperate they were for them to have a new start. Some told me a brief life history involving abuse and neglect, taking me into confidence immediately and asking for help, support and guidance. Some adults treated me as their own headteacher, a teacher, addressing me as "Miss" or even dipping a knee in a half-cocked

curtsy. I was shocked and slightly perplexed. When I spoke, I spoke honestly and from my heart. I did not think I should be afforded such respect, after all, I saw myself as a headteacher without a school, a headteacher who worked in a coffee shop, on a building site, from the back of her car, like a transient, a travelling salesperson. They saw me as a leader already, someone who held a position of authority, a person to be respected, trustworthy, important and crucial to the success (or otherwise) of their most precious son or daughter.

Working as a headteacher designate is a challenging and sometimes confusing position. Indeed, I was asked publicly on Twitter, "just exactly what does a headteacher with no pupils do?" (Wilkinson, 2018). The answer was "whatever it takes" to open the school. I found myself doing a bit of everything, from writing policies, to choosing furniture, researching local bus routes, procuring contracts for furniture and fire alarms, to public speaking. Balancing the many demands on my time was crucial, as everything that had to be done, had to be done primarily by me. Procurement and recruitment were the key drains on my time, but I had decided that they were two of the most important tasks and according to Hallinger (2000) were crucial parts of IL. First the learning environment had to be set up correctly to create the desired climate for learning. I researched and studied, spoke to other teachers, and visited other newly opened schools, taking ideas and inspiration and combining them with my experiences. Second, I focused a huge amount of time and energy on recruitment as I knew that appointing staff who shared my vision was vital, and my questions at interview were carefully structured to challenge the candidates' understanding of my vision and whether they would support it. Others suggested that I delegate recruitment once I had recruited some of the leaders to the school, but I preferred to appoint every single member of the new team myself, as I felt that this was crucial to creating the correct culture. It served an important purpose as well in listening to the successful candidates' vision of how they would like to build their role if successful: when appointed they found that I had implemented some of their suggestions, thus encouraging collaboration and pride in the systems and processes of the school from the outset. I knew that I could not possibly invent every system and process, so I decided to capitalise on the successful candidates' suggestions and experiences and in this way enabled them to feel that they had served me and the school by contributing to the set up. I believed I moved into TL and DL mode, whereas some staff were convinced that I remained in IL, occasionally members of staff even joked publicly with me long after opening that I still behaved as if I were alone and had to make every decision myself. I knew that I had appointed ambitious and capable teachers to the initial teaching posts, and so I used TL to capitalise on their expertise. I spoke openly about how we worked collaboratively, hoping that this would convince them of my desire to work with distributed leadership practices.

I was not content with working as a leader using TL and DL; I believed that I had been called to operate a model of SVL. This was best illustrated by how I planned to operate the cover for absent colleagues process. The budget for a new school, especially in the first few years is limited, and it is dependent on recruiting sufficient pupil numbers to attract the corresponding funding that accompanies the pupils. I had set out a curriculum model that was aspirational and would potentially be exhausting to deliver. The actual teaching hours for subjects would be in excess of guided learning hours and the extended school day may take some staff over their maximum number of directed hours in any one academic year. We would have to rely on volunteers to supplement the enrichment programme and we would have to fundraise for some activities to take place. I was sure that I wanted to offer activities to pupils that would be truly enriching, activities such as fencing and judo, golf and horse-riding: all these activities would need supplementary funding as the curriculum budget would never stretch to include them. In terms of responsible management, one specific operational decision I made, would definitely be efficient and effective, but only possibly achievable. I made a promise to parents that I would do all I could to avoid employing supply teachers in the opening years, as often supply lessons resulted in loss of learning time and quality. Instead my team of teachers and myself would cover any absences ourselves. The parents loved this idea, as they had heard horror stories of supply lessons from older siblings in other schools, and also remembered their own experiences of messing about for supply teachers: all agreed that this was a great idea. I learned, as the opening year progressed, that this was a personally expensive decision, but it did, as I had hoped, save money for the school budget and kept visiting supply teachers to zero. In September 2019 I told the staff that I would co-ordinate cover for absent colleagues, and I would take the bulk of any cover lessons needed, since I had the lightest of all teaching timetables. Schools with only one year group, open with an exceedingly small staff body, so I planned for minimal staff absence, either for sickness or CPD purposes. However, what I subsequently discovered was that with a small staff body, when one person is absent, that constitutes a high proportion of teaching time. And as we approached our first Christmas, exactly a third of the school population caught the norovirus, and this hit the teachers as well as the pupils. My SVL was seriously tested.

Quite apart from having to cover every single period of a teaching day, I found that I did not have enough maintenance staff to complete all of the deep cleaning and maintenance tasks that were required for combatting the norovirus (and this would be stretched again in three months' time with the COVID-19 virus), so I undertook some of these responsibilities myself. I wrote in my journal:

> Visited every single toilet block today, installing paper hand towel and soap dispensers, as we need to get the children to wash their hands more often. I really did not think that being

a head(teacher) would involve Rawl plugs and a drill, but if I don't do it, it won't get done today. One of the many glories of leading! Today I went from teaching, leading, and answering the phone, to cleaning, picking up litter and moving cones in the car park. Whatever next??

I was later told that I should not be performing "menial, manual tasks". I did not agree with this, and I explained that it was in line with my philosophy of not having a designated parking space. I remembered the construction meeting where the contractors asked me which parking-space I would like to designate as mine. I politely declined the offer, despite our DfE project manager insisting that it would be a good, future-proofed idea. Again, I politely turned down the offer and explained that I did not consider my car to be any more important than anyone else's and I did not mind if I had to walk different distances each day, by parking in different spaces. However, it was soon noticed that I usually parked in the same space everyday merely out of convenience, so this unofficially became 'the head's parking space'. I did not realise this until one day when a teacher made a specific journey to see me when I arrived late to school after attending an early morning meeting off-site: they rushed down the corridor waving their car keys at me, saying that they would go immediately and move their car. I realised that not only was my every move and action being observed and scrutinised, even if I did not want to create hierarchical leadership, it would be created by others. I explained that there was no need to move the car, I was happy with where I had parked my car, but still the staff member insisted on telling me how embarrassed they were for parking in 'my' space. I learned that staff found it hard for me to serve them; I once offered to make a member of staff a cup of tea, and they nearly pushed me over in the rush to get to the teacups first. I regularly pondered as to why staff found it so hard to let me serve them, and I decided that it was less about my desire to serve and more about their need to have a leader who would direct them, that they could take direction from.

5.2.3 First teacher joined

Lord the light of Your love is shining; In the midst of the darkness, shining; Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us; Set us free by the truth you now bring us … Fill this land with the Father's glory; Blaze, Spirit, blaze; Set our hearts on fire (Kendrick, 1987)

This section describes the period when I was first joined by a colleague and my leadership changed to invitational (IVL). It was the first day with a teaching member of staff working with and for me. I set about my mission, creating an excellent school, as Ozar (2010, p. 115) advocates, "you must be a strong leader...the school climate is created by the headteacher." I wrote in my journal:

My deputy began work with me today, the first time since I was appointed many months ago. I have spent the time prior to now planning, working with members of staff from the

MAT, the DfE and the contractors building the physical school, but today I was joined by a teacher. A colleague. A co-worker. A person on my team. A follower. A protégé. A person for whom I am responsible. It is real now.

I remember an instant change in myself. We met in a supermarket coffee shop, near the school, as the contractors' porta-cabins were not conducive to school planning meetings and there was nowhere else more appropriate to meet. I had many meetings in that and other coffee shops, one prerequisite for opening a new school as the headteacher should be that you like and can tolerate drinking a lot of coffee. I had planned the meeting with my deputy, had questions to ask and tasks to delegate, but the meeting went nothing like I had planned. We dotted around, followed no agenda, just merely shared our excitement and our fears, our joy and our trepidation.

And it was at that moment that it dawned on me. I was so unprepared for this role. I was operating firmly in the realm of ministry to people without having had much preparation for it: I was responsible for this colleague, his career, his personal wellbeing, his spiritual growth, his progression and ultimately his health. I would return to this feeling of responsibility time and time again, and especially each time I appointed a new member of staff. At that time, I could not have realised how important the management of the health and wellbeing of staff would become: it was not long until the Covid-19 pandemic hit, and I was forced to make decisions which may have resulted in my staff becoming infected with this new and potentially deadly virus.

Once we overcame our excitement and trepidation, we began work. It was clear both of us were task-orientated, preferring to be doing than discussing. Back and forth we went on the managerial continuum, between responsible management of time and resources, to responsive management, dealing with situations as they arose. And arise they did. Whilst the school was not open to pupils, it opened as a commercial building to begin bringing in much-needed revenue. I was courted pre-interview by the wonderful facilities at the school, and soon came to realise that with wonderful facilities came substantial overheads. A fund needed to be built up to maintain and ultimately replace the facilities, so we opened for commercial activities before we had a full team. Consequently, as a headteacher I found myself in responsive mode, moving chairs, setting up badminton courts, putting up fire escape notices and cleaning toilets. At the time I did not realise the impact this would have on the culture that was built in the school. Reickhoff (2014) found that building culture in novice headteachers was a high priority, especially for leaders in faith schools; I knew the importance of focussing my attention on establishing the right culture from the outset. Staff learned that whilst we all had our specific roles and tasks, the culture I was trying to create was one where we lived together as a family and supported each other in our respective roles. I took

people with me into the realm of people, realigning the social reality into one where we existed outside our conceived ideas of our school roles. I explained it to staff thus: if there was a mess at home, as an adult, we would (at the appropriate time) use a vacuum cleaner and clean it up. At school, we had learnt as teachers, that we were not to touch the vacuum cleaners, as the school employed cleaners to use these items. The implication was that teachers were better than cleaners, with more important roles to do, more important work. I considered having a clean and tidy school to be of paramount importance, so considered it a privilege and my duty to help keep the school tidy. Neither teachers' nor cleaners' jobs would be considered more important than the other. Neither teachers or cleaners would be considered more important than the other, so all adults in the building were to be addressed as Sir or Madam by the pupils. At the many 'meet the headteacher' events I completed prior to opening, I explained that I believed that God saw all staff as equally important and therefore we would build our culture from the outset with this in mind. This was noted by one of the prospective parents who was considering sending her child to a nearby school and this factor changed not only her mind about her child's place at secondary school, but this particular parent also became one of the first applicants for a cleaning job at the school and one of the most loyal and hardworking members of our team.

I understood that the way I spoke to and interacted with the Chair of Governors was as important as how I addressed the cleaners. Whilst accepting that hierarchies exist to attribute roles and responsibilities to different staff members, I wanted to build a society where mutual respect and tolerance was embedded from the outset. I found that I had not only to model this, but to change not only the perceptions of many of the staff that I appointed, but also their behaviour. On occasion, staff were surprised by my definite stance on inclusivity and participation by all. When I introduced the activities on the training days at the start of the new term, I outlined the fact that all staff were expected to be at all the events. A member of the teaching staff asked me, "do the cleaners and reception staff really need to be at the vision and values training session?" and a member of the Senior Leadership Team suggested that support staff should be excused from a teaching and learning session as it may not "relate directly to them". I corrected these members of staff and the support staff attended all the sessions. I accepted that inclusivity may not exist in other schools, but we had an opportunity to do things differently from the outset. It was late one afternoon in the first few weeks of term that I noticed two cleaners excusing themselves to go to the premises office to make themselves a cup of tea. I asked them why they were not using the coffee and tea facilities in the staff workroom next to the teaching wing. They said, "oh, that is the teachers' workroom, we can't make our drinks in there", to which I enquired, "why?" They explained that they had gone in to make a drink once, but had felt uncomfortable as a teacher

commented, "oh, are you using this workroom as well?" I remembered very vividly back to pre-opening, when I was told by the contractors that at a subsequent meeting, I would be required to meet the company who were providing signage for the doors in the school.   I had assumed that this would be an easy task. The classrooms would be numbered, office doors labelled, and toilets would have signs on them. What ensued was hours of careful and sometimes laborious planning, thought and deliberation. It was then that I learnt that every single decision that was to be made pre-opening was predicated by about one hundred more decisions. Labelling the classrooms entailed deciding the layout for the school, not just for year 1, but I needed to project 8 years forwards to when the school would be fully occupied. Balance this with the distribution of subject specialist rooms, where the year groups and subsequent Houses would be based, and the need to comply with fire safety regulations and the Equality Act (2010) and the Disability Discrimination Act (1995). In the end I found that naming the classrooms was a lot easier than naming all the other rooms that exist in a school, so I ended up with generic names such as 'office' and 'meeting room': we would decide who the office belonged to later. I had labelled the workroom, 'staff workroom', so who had decided this meant 'teaching staff' workroom and not 'all staff workroom'? I had to decide whether this was a battle that was worth fighting: did I insist the cleaners stand their ground and risk making them feel uncomfortable? Or did I concede and allow the teachers to create a divide between them and the cleaners?

And in this process, I discovered that there are some tasks and decisions that were best made autocratically. My natural leadership style at this point was not DL, as a new leader I felt that it was best that I took responsibility for the difficult decisions, since I would have to defend the rationale for each decision taken. Many staff offered different opinions to the room naming convention and I had to work hard in the opening weeks to insist that all staff used the given names for the rooms: some slipped into using terminology that had come from their previous schools, but I insisted we kept to ours. I decided that this was a subtle but important challenge to my leadership: I had decided the naming convention and even if the names being used colloquially made more sense, I could not let the members of the school society change the names, as this might be seen as weak or indecisive leadership. Sutherland (2010) states that based on behavioural economics and behaviour change studies, "what changes our behaviours and attitudes are not in proportion to the size of expense and force applied (we need to) sweat the small stuff". At the outset I felt that I had to be the decision maker and leader and I felt that once I had grown into my leadership role, then I could begin to distribute decisions and leadership. The perception of those around me was dichotomous, ranging from those who felt that I was paying too much attention to detail and should be less concerned about the physical environment, to those who felt it was necessary for the headteacher

to make every single decision. I remembered back to the days when I was not the headteacher and knew that many of the decisions I would take would not be popular: I had not anticipated that every single decision, every single detail, down even to the name and function of a room, would be put under such scrutiny.

I had imagined that when working with my deputy, we would work in the realm of things, spending time ordering equipment, choosing resources, finding suppliers, working out how we would responsibly spend our small budget on the extensive resources needed to fully equip a secondary school. Instead, we talked about transformation, how our philosophy of education had been worked out in the schools we had worked at previously. We were free from the usual restraints that held back Senior Leader discussions, we had the luxury of time to discuss philosophy, tease out the deepest meaning of what we were trying to achieve, we worked in the esoteric and the abstract. They were privileged times and enabled us to build together a strong bedrock on which the foundations of our educational philosophy would not be shaken. We chose the first hymn that we would use in assembly, Shine Jesus Shine, (Kendrick, 1987), or rather it chose us. Part of the purpose of the school was to inject excellence into the town, to rejuvenate and collaborate with other schools, we were to be the catalyst that set leaders free from the shackles of past poor performance and to inspire new generations of young, inexperienced, enthusiastic teachers to join the profession. Our school was designed to bring hope to the community, setting free the potential of the pupils who joined in order that they may live life in all its fulness. We created a norm, one of many, unusually for the town, we (a secondary school) sang in assembly, we played music in tutor time worship, and we acted as if this was norm. I wanted an uplifting hymn to become our signature hymn, so I chose one that I enjoyed singing and encapsulated my desires for the school. Our vision was to enable pupils and staff to flourish, to shine, so I felt it appropriate to embed this culture in assemblies and tutor worship. At the start and end of each term we would sing this hymn, reflecting on the words, "set our hearts on fire". This view of learning excited me, pupils whose hearts were set on fire with enthusiasm and curiosity, passion and inquisitiveness.

5.2.4 The opening: being

> *Look*
> *If you had one shot, or one opportunity*
> *To seize everything you ever wanted*
> *One moment*
> *Would you capture it or just let it slip?...*
> *...You can do anything you set your mind to, man (Mathers, 2002)*

This section explores the move from the pre-opening phase of the development of the school to the actual opening of the school: when I was actually *being* the headteacher. On the first day for pupils, I

had to fight back tears of fear and joy. I had waited for many months for this and there I was, standing in the middle of the road outside school, waiting for the parents and carers to hand over their children to me. I felt the weight of responsibility. I did not feel part of a body of staff, a profession; I felt alone. For a moment, as I stood there at the front door of the school, the words of the naughty boy back on the rainy day back in January 2014 resonated in my ears, I was **it**. People looked to me. And I was not sure that I was ready. I had got to school early that morning, to make sure my assembly was ready. This was going to be the most important assembly, speaking to not only the children but also the trustees, staff and visitors who were there to show their support.   As I walked into the assembly hall, I realised that no-one could get the electronic screen to work. The projector would not turn on. Sound worked on my laptop when it was not plugged into the projector, but when I plugged it in to the projector it became silent. We practiced this last week, so why did it have to stop working at this precise moment?   Eventually, as usually happens with computers, we got it to work, but it had eaten up all my extra time I had gained by getting to school early. Hence the actual beginning of school caught me off guard. And I will be honest, it happened a lot earlier than I had anticipated. School was due to start at 8.30 a.m., but children and their excited parents started arriving at 7.15 a.m.. Some parents were bursting with pride, some with joy and many with a degree of trepidation. A new school, a new headteacher, a new group of staff and a new start for their child.

The staff looked to me for how to be. For a moment I sensed that I might have looked nervous, and I saw one of the Newly Qualified Teachers take a breath of uncertainty, so I strode over, smiled and patted their shoulder and said, "come on, this is going to be fabulous", and the smile on their face returned. The Governors looked to me for how to be, or perhaps they were looking to sense if I really had it in me to lead in the way I had claimed at interview. I smiled at them reassuringly and they took up their position by the front door to welcome in our new pupils. The parents looked to me for how to be. Should they be strong for their nervous eleven-year-old, or should they be serious as this was a big moment, or should they be joyful as for some it was the much-welcomed new start, or should they be sad, as their little one was "entering the school as a child and would leave us as a young adult" as I had explained on many times at the numerous meet the headteacher evenings. I smiled, looked confident and the parents smiled back. But most of all I remember the pupils who looked to me for how to be. In all my planning, in the policies and the handbooks and the fire drill posters and the unwrapping of furniture, I had forgotten to consider the individual faces that would look at me on day one with those searching eyes. Some would be so excited that they could hardly contain themselves and some would be so nervous that they would wish they were not there. And I remember both. I remember vividly the boy who skipped in, desperately excited to finally have

made it to big school and to make the fresh start he needed. I remember vividly the little girl who was last to come in. She looked like me on my first day at secondary school, uniform slightly too big, eyes wide with fear, pupils dilated, the weight of the adult world in front of her weighing heavy on her shoulders. There was lots of noise and cheering and clapping, but this little girl walked into complete silence; she was silent, crying, afraid and alone. No-one else could make that walk into school for her, no-one else could take the steps along the journey she had to take and no-one else was in her shoes at that precise moment. Nor me mine. I stopped, and I realised, she was me and I was her. We were both scared and alone, facing challenges unknown, not sure if we would make it. Neither of us knew anyone really, neither of us really knew how to be or who to be. And for a second, I looked at her and I saw her look at me, look to me, for how to be, and so I smiled, walked beside her and we both strode into the unknown together.

No amount of training prepared me for that morning. No policy was written or required for those quiet and life-changing moments. And this, I reflected later, was why I was compelled to complete this thesis. I had written a checklist for just about every process in the school day (Gwande, 2011) and thought that we had planned for every eventuality: fire drill, lining up for assembly, how to get pupils into class, how to get them out of class, what to do with them while they were in class. But there was no checklist for the intuitive, the moment that I realised, no matter how well organised the staffing structure was, and no matter how informative the website was for parents or staff handbook was for staff, occasionally and often it would be me who people would look to, and often at the most unexpected moments. Imposter syndrome (Clarkson, 1994; Kets de Vries, 2006), the feeling of being in a role that perhaps one should not be due to a personal perception (usually incorrect) of not being sufficiently qualified to be there, was certainly evident in me from the minute the school bell rang on that first day. I had been told that most headteachers have this feeling at some time or another and some never lose it. I certainly felt it on that opening day but was carried along by a heady mixture of joy and adrenaline. If only I had known then what I know now, we were heading for a time in headship where I would be the same as every other headteacher in the country, where no one had ever been before, leading through a time of global pandemic, where experienced headteachers knew precisely the same about how to behave as newly qualified headteachers such as me. I had imposter syndrome on my first day of the academic year and halfway through the first year, everyone in the country had it as well. Fast forward to six months later, I was sat at my desk, with my head in my hands sobbing, having learnt that the school would have to close as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown, I realised just how much of myself I had invested in the project. In amongst the undeniable chaos bought about by the pandemic (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2020), I, like many other leaders, was "walking a tightrope with no safety net below" (Harris

and Jones, 2020, p. 244). I had lived in SVL, managing and evaluating as we rode the heady wave of being new and excited and good at what we were doing. Being a member of a small team of dedicated, handpicked staff, who were at the top of their game or desperately wanting to be, was an inspiring but exhausting team to lead. We created a culture from scratch and did things in our way, pretending that generations had done it like that. We had customs and practices that were well drilled, manners were the top priority, mutual respect, kindness, all aspiring to live abundantly. I inhabited the realms of TL when I spoke at invited events, telling the story of our philosophical stance and how our planning led to significant, strategic actions. At times I remember feeling like I was in the fast lane of the nearby motorway, occasionally I would be facing the oncoming traffic and a juggernaut would be approaching, so I would dodge to another lane, only to be confronted by another juggernaut. But nonetheless, I was still standing.

Management in the realm of people is at the heart of headship. I found that as soon as the school opened, I did not have time for anything else. Policies, emails, DfE submissions, preparation for Governor meetings, any administrative task would have to be completed at a time when there were no other people in the building. Even during times when I was the only person left in school, colleagues would send emails and parents and carers would telephone me. I had to make constant choices between being readily available and appearing distant and unobtainable and the reality was that I needed to operate somewhere in between. I made it very clear to colleagues and parents and carers that I was happy to take feedback and discuss matters, especially when one party felt that something was not going well, better to air it than leave it to escalate: this was at the detriment to my administrative time, as I had not anticipated the amount of feedback I would receive, or the extent to which all other interested parties wanted to contribute. The majority of the contributors were positive and genuinely trying to help, however, I had to balance the views and opinions of those who clearly had not grasped the vision and values, and this took a disproportionate amount of time. Some decisions that I had to take were for the benefit of a large group of people and were deemed by some to not be appropriate for individuals, some decisions were unpopular and as time went on in the majority of cases some opposition was always presented for any decision I made regarding people. Had I had a less open approach I may not have received feedback that the decisions were unpopular, but I felt at the time that this open approach was vital to moving from IL to DL, a journey I was determined to make as soon as possible as I believed it was in the best interests of the school to do so.

At the end of the first term, I stood at the front door saying goodbye to pupils as they left, and to my surprise two boys came over and gave me a hug and wished me a happy holiday. I had worked for many years in secondary education and whilst I appreciate that this may happen in primary schools,

secondary school pupils, let alone boys, rarely give headteachers unsolicited hugs. I decided that this impromptu act of kindness was as a result of the culture we had created and the opportunities we had afforded these two pupils, both of whom at one time and another had displayed extremely challenging behaviour.

5.2.5 Everything is a first

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, The holy One, is here (Evans, 1986).

This section explores how no matter how well planned a school is, by the nature of the institution and working with young adolescents, most days in the new term bought new situations and challenges for my leadership. No matter how much planning I had completed, I realised that there would always be a first for everything which would add adrenalin and complication to all events. This caught me off-guard every time. The first time I led staff worship at our first in-service training day, I wrote in my research journal:

> Today was a day I will never forget. I take church services all the time, have done for nearly 20 years now, but my hands were shaking leading morning prayer today. I actually had to look at the words of the Lord's prayer – I couldn't even remember that today I was so nervous! The building is so big, it is easy to find quiet spaces.

As a leader in a values-based and faith-designation school, I felt that I needed to ensure I was visibly leading by example, so I set aside an hour on each Monday morning to participate in and lead morning prayer. This was a seemingly simple decision but came at a cost. After a weekend there always seemed to be lots to catch up on, my time and attention was always in high demand first thing on a Monday, however, I made it very clear that I was not to be disturbed during worship, unless there was a safeguarding matter or other similarly serious emergency. I ended up feeling that my colleagues missed the point of my modelling of behaviour and turned my Monday morning ritual into an opportunity far removed from the intended purpose. I hoped some staff may join me in praying for the school. On the contrary, staff became aware that catching me at the end of worship, on the long walk back from the chapel to my office, was almost a guaranteed place and time for a conversation or some attention. First one, then a couple, until towards the end of the calendar year I came out of the chapel to a small gathering of staff, all vying for a small chunk of my time. I found that many conversations took place on the move, staff would often ask, "can I have a minute?", to which I would reply, "yes, let's walk and talk". I learnt that if we had the desired conversation on the way to my office, it would be briefer, more succinct and often a decision could be made before we even got to my office door. There were some staff who needed or wanted more of my time, and so I

learnt which ones to invite into my office and which ones just needed a door conversation, to supplement the walking conversation.

That was, until one day, when a member of the school community asked for a moment of my time, as usual I replied with, "sure, let's walk and talk", to which she replied, "something devasting happened to me yesterday," after which she shared a deeply personal account. For her the significant life event had come about with no warning, just like the conversation, wallop, straight out of the blue, right there in the middle of the corridor, I was hit with this news. This was the first, but not the last, time I would deal with information given to me in the corridor, the gravity of which did not match the time or the surroundings. I needed to turn instantly from line manager to spiritual leader and comforter. I calmly guided the member of the school community into the empty room we happened to be walking past (one of the benefits of a new school is that there were always a lot of empty rooms), where we sat and talked and cried and hugged.

This developed into a theme, that firsts often come when you least expect them. We had planned the first day and the first fire drill, but we had not planned for when the first ambulance would be called. We knew the postcode of the school and fortunately for us we were in a distinctive part of a new estate, so we were highly visible and easy to access. However, the events leading up to calling the first ambulance were unexpected, when a child had a seizure in the toilet, fainted and landed wedged firmly against the door. Fortuitously my deputy was on hand to shoulder charge the door sufficiently that we could gain access. We had been in the new building only a matter of weeks and already suffered wanton vandalism in the toilets! The first serious assembly I took on reducing knife crime in the town, a local initiative instigated by the local police, delivered an immediate and unexpected first: my first Fixed Term Exclusion (FTE). Prior to the day, I had told the Head of Year that I would deliver the anti-knife crime assembly and we had discussed whether it was appropriate to deliver to a year group of eleven-year-olds. Statistics were clear: the younger pupils were encouraged away from carrying knives, the more likely we would be successful. At the end of my assembly, which I had toned down somewhat from the hard-hitting assembly slides I had received from the police, a boy waited to speak to me. He stood nervously at the door, shifting uncomfortably from foot to foot, with a single tear running down his cheek. I was immediately worried that I had upset him, that I had been too graphic, I must have spoken about something that resonated with him, perhaps he had lost a family member to knife crime. He waited until all the other pupils had left the assembly hall and approached me, "I bought a knife into school yesterday", he said. "I'm sorry?" I replied, not quite understanding or registering what he had just said. "I bought a knife into school yesterday", he repeated, then sat down and cried unconsolably. I took my time, listened carefully to his account and took a statement from him. I called his parents. I invited

them in. It was the first time I had escorted parents on the long walk from the front door to the headteacher's office for a serious reason: I developed a different walk just for this occasion. I had taken to normally walking alongside parents and talking about the new school as we walked past different features, whereas that day I had walked in front of the parents, not speaking, just leading them to my office where I would break the news that the police would visit, and I would have no choice but to issue my first FTE. After the parents and pupil left the school, I needed to be alone.

> *Be still, for the power of the Lord*
> *Is moving in this place:*
> *He comes to cleanse and heal,*
> *To minister his grace (Evans, 1986).*

The seriousness of the incident, which had all taken place over a period of less than one hour right at the start of the day, sat heavy with me. I had imagined I would turn up to school as normal on a normal Wednesday, deliver my assembly and then go about my normal and calendared business. But a moment in time changed my day and changed the life of the pupil and family and it all happened before morning break. The enormity of the incident was heavy in my mind, I imagined what might have been, how different my day might have been the day before had events occurred differently. I sat in an empty classroom, thought hard about the events leading up to my assembly, re-ran my scripted speech in my head, pondered over the statistics and felt a shudder of relief trickle down my spine. I reflected on the words of the pupil after telling me he had carried a knife, "I know you are going to hate me now", to which I smiled and said, "of course I don't hate you, I am proud of you for telling me." I thought about his mother, who broke down and sobbed in my office, his father who looked shocked, then angry. I needed to minister to these people, they needed to receive my grace and know that this was being freely given, but that also repentance had to come before forgiveness.

5.2.6 Normal November

> *I can't sleep tonight*
> *Everybody's saying everything is alright*
> *Still I can't close my eyes*
> *I'm seeing a tunnel at the end of all these lights*
> *Sunny days*
> *Where have you gone?*
> *I get the strangest feeling you belong*
> *Why Does It Always Rain on Me? (Healy, 1999)*

This section explores how quickly the school became established: routines and behaviours appeared to be as they would in a school that was not as new as this one was. Some eight weeks into the new academic year and I wrote in my journal that it already felt like a normal November. There were many aspects of school life that already felt like they had been long established. We had regular

assemblies, we met regularly as a group of staff and participated in Continual Professional Development (CPD) activities as well as discussing items of practice that may need to be improved. We emailed each other slightly too much, we marked books slightly too little, held school fixtures, planned for our Christmas celebrations and made plans for our inaugural sports day. The day to day running of the school blended into a balance between operational and strategic. Try as hard as I might, my Leadership Team regularly needed re-focussing away from the operational and back to the strategic, as I felt that we were the custodians of the future and needed to deliver the vision I had set out prior to opening. I had to work hard with my team, as well as myself, to maintain the long-term focus on vision. As Bush and Glover (2003, p.5) state:

> Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision.

Towards the end of the term, a change in operational behaviour was forced upon us. A nasty infection entered the school, norovirus, affecting a third of pupils and staff. We talked openly to the children about the necessity to wash hands regularly and thoroughly, and with hindsight, if only handwashing then had been the thing it became as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, we may have avoided quite such a serious norovirus outbreak. We talked about compulsory handwashing, and we even created periods of the day where we escorted the children to the toilets to wash their hands. I found myself managing those staff who thought this was a bit too authoritarian: they were advocating that we should rely on the pupils' growing sense of responsibility and maturity, I, on the other hand, believed we had a responsibility to ensure the children washed their hands more often than they were prone to. Little did we know, that in less than 6 months' time, we would be ending lessons early, lining pupils up at the sinks and monitoring them washing their hands, to ensure that they had followed the correct hand-washing procedure as part of the Covid-19 pandemic protocol. In some ways I remember thinking that I had an uneasy sense that I felt that things were going too well. I had a nagging feeling at the back of my mind, that the culture we had created would be challenging to sustain, but that did not prevent me from being convinced that we were correct in building the culture in the way we were. We had external scrutiny who agreed that things were "remarkable" (Bennett, 2020). Tom Bennett, behaviour Tsar from the DfE, visited and dined with us, and watched as the pupils calmly found their places, laid the cutlery for each other, talked in a civil manner then fell silent whilst one pupil stood to say grace. Pupils were invited up, a table at a time, to receive their food and at the end of eating they cleared their tables and wiped them down as an

act of service. This was a far cry from many other school dinner halls that I visited, where pupils ran to be at the head of the queue, grabbed a takeaway meal in a cardboard packet, often left their litter on the tables and spent as little time as they could eating together. I insisted that mealtimes were an important part of our culture, and that staff would sit and eat dispersed amongst the pupils. This became a point on which I was challenged, with the teachers asking me if they could sit together as they "needed some adult company". I found that it was a culture shock for a group of secondary teachers to work solely with one year group (of eleven-year-olds) but I had been very explicit at interview that this would be the case in the opening year. I was confused and slightly frustrated when the request for a teachers' table was put to me, but after taking time to digest the request, I conceded. I felt that it was important to allow the staff to have influence on some of the decisions directly related to building the culture, there were some decisions I would not change, so I had chosen carefully and allowed their input in an area where I felt it was acceptable to compromise. We were learning together about how to distribute leadership. I invited staff to be leaders, relying on them to make decisions on a daily basis, so I had to allow them to be part of the cultural decisions. I had spoken at length about the culture that I wanted to create on the very first staff training day, choosing to focus on culture rather than processes and policies. This backfired when no-one knew how to use the photocopier, but everyone knew where my philosophy of education was rooted.

I had come to accept that headteachers are never off-duty, especially during term time, so it was no surprise to me when my work phone rang at 8.40 p.m. one evening. I answered to a member of the MAT staff who had been at the school for a meeting unrelated to school business, hence me not being in attendance. "Are you expecting 11 caravans to arrive in the school car park this evening?" came the rather exasperated voice on the end of the line. A group of travellers had arrived and were setting up in the car park and there they would remain for 3 nights and 4 days. I found that many colleagues of mine held a different view as to how they should be received, one colleague's initial reaction was to telephone the police and ask for them to be removed; one member of staff tried to refuse entry to the community toilet in our building to a pregnant member of the traveller community; some parents expressed their concern for the building's and children's safety. I held a very different view. When I arrived at school early the next morning, to assess whether we would be able to open safely, I was greeted by a peaceful and calm atmosphere. Later in the day I approached the travellers, with the local council welfare officer, and held civil conversations with many of the adults and children. As the days went on, we were able to go about our business without being disturbed and so were they. I felt very strongly that we would be welcoming and accommodating, so I held an assembly to reassure the pupils of our neighbours' good intentions and wrote to the

parents and carers, expressing my desire for the visitors in our car park to be treated with respect and tolerance. A local business experienced some petit theft and vandalism, however, since I had engaged with the travellers, they requested bin bags and brooms to clear the car park before they left and no damage was done to our premises or relationships with them. I made it very publicly known that this was the case, keen to reverse the stigma attached to the traveller community and very keen to portray the Christian attitude that we had adopted in line with our vision and values. It puzzled me that this behaviour was not as popular as I had imagined it would be, colleagues urged caution, parents looked at me perplexed, neighbours openly told me I was "deluded", but I knew that this first public challenge of us would set a precedent for how we were perceived. I felt that I had to be brave in the face of doubt, my resolve paid off and despite a large police presence (out of sight) on the day of departure, they were not needed, and we parted on amicable terms.

I knew that things would not be easy, opening a new school with new staff, setting up from the beginning. We had planned for a lot of eventualities, but even the most comprehensive risk register cannot account for all events that occur in the normal, everyday life of a new school. I listed the things that had gone wrong in the school by the end of the autumn term, and explained to the Governors, that whilst they were unfortunate, they were not all unexpected and they were certainly not insurmountable. What mattered, in my opinion, was how we responded to the challenges. I told the local newspaper I was delighted to be able to be hospitable to the travellers in our car park, which was such an unexpected comment the reporter failed to print it.

As I was planning the school, I questioned every single decision I made, and tried my very best to ensure that each item purchased, or routine established, was in keeping with our vision and values. Some decisions were seemingly small to the construction company and project planners, yet I knew from bitter experience of many years teaching, that they would have a profound impact on the operation of the school. I was tasked with choosing toilet paper dispensers, which the contractors thought would be a very simple, cost driven exercise. I was keen to explain that this was not the case, and that since I had asked for the toilets to be labelled gender neutral i.e., not differentiated between boys and girls, the toilet paper dispensers needed to be both robust and easily accessible. The gender-neutral toilets became a much talked about feature of the school, with the pupils finding it natural as I explained to them, our toilets in our homes are used by both genders; my experience after six months was that adults struggled more with this concept than the children did for reasons still unknown to me.

5.2.7 Dark clouds looming

So let us learn how to serve, And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer, For it is Christ we're serving
We bring our lives to you, A sacrifice for you
In view of love so true, We are changed, renewed (Kendrick, 1983)

This section explores the impact of global issues on me as a person and my leadership. In January 2020, five months after opening, we recognised our place in the inter-connected global context with two notable events. A choir from our partner diocese in Africa was on tour in England and asked if they could visit our school. I had imagined a small group of young adults with a keyboard to accompany them. When they arrived, they were semi-professional, having been performing together for well over twenty years. As I sat at the back of the auditorium and listened to them sing, a single tear rolled down my cheek. I was so moved by their singing, interspersed with testimony about the impact Christianity had on their lives, I realised how significant the impact of the Christian faith was and had been around the world. One artist told us of their childhood, how poverty was common in their village, but education and singing had provided a way out of the cycle for them. I gazed at the faces of the 11-year-old children in the audience, and whilst they listened intently, I wondered if they truly comprehended the enormity of the message that was being delivered. The artists were humble and generous with their praise of us, and genuinely wanted us to be successful.

Not long after the concert we learnt of terrible forest fires in Australia and the devastating impact this was having on the animals of the forests and the local economies. A small group of pupils knocked purposefully on my door and asked if they could organise a bake sale to raise some money for the emergency relief fund. Again, I imagined a small, understated affair, with maybe a few fairy cakes on sale at break time. What presented itself was a semi-professional bake sale, with enough stock to feed the school population twice over, such was the driven desire of the young people to raise much-needed funds for the relief effort. Not one pupil in the school had been to Australia, or had relatives or friends who lived in Australia, but they felt compelled to act out of compassion and righteousness. On the day the bake sale occurred I had been invited to speak at a New Schools Network (NSN) national conference. The NSN event was for headteachers and Governors in the pre-opening year of their new school ventures. I shared some of my learning from pre-opening and post-opening and ended with the words, "To quote a famous philosopher, theologian and musician, "I'm still standing"" (*John and Taupin, 1983*).

The words were intended as encouragement, as if I had been through a trial, but had managed to survive, as if the challenge of opening a new school was inescapably hard but survivable: if only I had known at that moment that the worst was yet to come. At the same conference, Chapleau (2020) reminded me of my core purpose, "We have a moral duty to build a school that becomes a representation of what we want the world to be like." I had sat in the audience a year previous and listened to the various speakers, and I imagined that once past opening, I would not need to attend another NSN event, or re-examine my vision and values: I believed that if I had set the school up

correctly, everything would fall neatly into place afterwards. The systems and processes that I had designed would take us into the years that followed with certainty and the exhausting pioneering work would be complete. As I reflected on my own keynote speech and the words of Chapleau, I realised that my hopes could not have been further from reality, opening a new school was necessarily an organic and fluid development.

5.2.8 Changed leadership forever

Don't you know I'm still standing better than I ever did
Looking like a true survivor, feeling like a little kid (John and Taupin, 1983)

This section covers the period of leadership through the uncertain days at the start of the temporary closure of the school as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. As we broke for the February half term in 2020, I rushed out of school, eager to get home and finish packing for my first trip to Canada skiing with my family. We had heard some reports of a terrible virus affecting parts of China but did not consider that it would have any impact on our holiday. Once at the airport, I began to get an uneasy feeling and wondered idly if our return to England may be affected by the virus. I felt that this would be catastrophic as I believed the school definitely needed the headteacher, the figure head, to be present or at least in the country at such crucial times. In early-March I wrote in my journal that there was a "national shortage of toilet paper" as we introduced "compulsory handwashing on entry to school, at the start and end of each lesson and prior to dining". In mid-March there was much speculation in the tabloid press that schools may need to close for a period of time (probably a week) either side of the school holidays and this served as an important warning to us, giving us time to prepare for home-learning and the provision of extra support for those families who we knew might need at extra bit of support with food and sustenance. Suddenly my leadership immediately transformed, from IL to SVL. I became acutely aware that I was going to need to serve my community; my leadership changed in my head over a period of a very few days.

The time approached for me to deliver an assembly which fell on the day exactly halfway through the first year. I spoke to the children about how proud I was of them, for all the wonderful things we had done and built together since opening. I made sure the teachers heard the message as well, I was proud of them too. Little did I know at that moment that less than a week later I would be holding another assembly informing the children and staff that we would be closing the school indefinitely, a little over halfway through our first year. I remember vividly the moment that the Prime Minister announced that schools would close: the whole staff had assembled in my office to hear the press conference, such was the gravity of the unfolding situation. Whilst it was not a popular decision to close schools, at that moment in time, as a collective staff body we all felt that it was the correct decision. As Netolicky (2020, p. 392) noted, "in a time of crisis, leaders must act

swiftly and with foresight but also with careful consideration of options, consequences and side effects of actions taken". As the staff departed, I sat alone in my office and cried, not for the first time and not for the last time that academic year. I cried for the opportunities that would now be lost; I cried for all that we had planned that now would not be able to take place; but most of all I cried because I was suddenly overcome with a wave of fear. I was terrified, responsible for the children and staff in my care, and the enormity of the disease felt like a burden too big too big for one person to bear. I felt that I had to perform to the best of my ability and even that may not be what was best or right for everyone, and as Harris and Jones (2020,p. 244) reminded us:

> This is a perfect storm with imperfect leadership responses…For school leaders working in these demanding and chaotic circumstances, the pressure is relentless, the options are limited, the sleepless nights are frequent.

I lived on adrenaline-fuelled energy for longer than I remember. I woke in the early hours of the morning, worrying about what I might have missed; I questioned my decision-making abilities; I doubted whether I had interpreted the guidance correctly and I read and re-read my risk assessments time and time again. The uncertainty of how the situation would unfold was one of the most challenging, as there was no indication of when things might return to near normal for us. Together we planned as best we could, using mobile platforms, speaking to each other in our homes, which with hindsight provided a welcome intimacy to our teambuilding. Ironically we got to know each other much better remotely than in-person. When it became apparent that we needed to re-open the school to vulnerable children and those whose parents and carers were keyworkers, I faced a moral dilemma. My direct family had two members who were considered clinically extremely vulnerable, so we were all advised to shield, which meant I should not return physically to work. My dilemma of possibly being stranded in Canada seemed insignificant now, worse, I was stranded less than 10 miles away from school, unable to travel there and be physically present, so close yet so far away. I wrote, "it is confusing that I am supposed to be the leader and I cannot be there to lead". I soon learned that it was a new way of working and that most staff and children would come to accept, and it continued for a lot longer than any of us had anticipated.

We fell into a routine for remote learning, with staff hosting events for pupils as well as meeting regularly themselves to discuss teaching and share pupil related concerns they had. I found that most staff meetings started with a catchup, non-work related, but a sharing of experiences and perspectives, and so we decided that we would schedule in time to meet socially, albeit remotely. As Harris and Jones (2020, p. 244) pointed out, "the staff meetings, coffee catch ups and corridor chats with colleagues, that made up a school day, have gone. All those informal, important,

moments where social relationships are built, and leadership is enacted simply vanished overnight", so I had to find new ways of keeping the staff body connected. This also became an important time for me to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff, since we found that all of us were working longer hours than normal, and parents and carers were placing more demands on our time than ever. Some parents were struggling with the home-learning so needed advice, some were struggling to motivate their children so needed support, and some were struggling to balance working from home with attempting to supervise their children, so needed moral support and advice. We found that none of us as a staff body had a definitive answer to any problem sent our way, but most staff managed to offer solutions to any problems shared with them. I wrote in my journal that:

> I have had an epiphany; I am only a problem solver. The problems come at me left, right and centre, sometimes from behind as well. Solve them. Get on with it. Never aim to please everyone. But remain true to yourself. There are those who will doubt, criticise, just do your best. Mum said, on the first day, "give it your best shot", that's all I can do. Give it my best shot.

I found that I had to shift my mindset, away from IL as my focus necessarily was on managing the school through a time of global pandemic. Extra demands were put on me and my time, so I needed to rely much sooner than I had anticipated on the knowledge, skills and expertise of my SLT. As Azorin, Harris and Jones (2020) stated:

> Distributed leadership has become the default leadership response in this current crisis requiring more school leaders, at all levels, to connect, share, learn and network their way through issues ... Through absolute necessity, rather than by design, effective school leadership is now connected, collaborative, creative and responsive. Most school leaders will be running on empty given the myriad of challenges that Covid-19 has created for them, so distributed leadership is a necessity to survive. (Harris and Jones, 2020, p. 246)

Most days I was exhausted. Physically exhausted. Mentally drained. Emotionally ragged. Over the course of three months, I learnt that I spent most of my cerebral activity in the realm of things, differentiating between what was achievable with the relatively small amount of resource (people) available, balanced with what was efficient and effective. Nothing had prepared me for this, as Harris and Jones (2020, p. 245) state, "most school leadership preparation and training programmes prior to Covid-19 are likely to be out of step with the challenges facing school leaders today".

Harris and Jones (2020, p. 246) go on to point out:

Crisis and change management are now essential skills of a school leader. Running an effective school in disruptive times will require more than routine problem solving or occasional firefighting. Instead, all school leaders will need to be engaged in constant crisis and change management which will require support and collaboration from all staff. The speed of change in this pandemic is unprecedented, hence a high degree of trust will be needed, as the collective glue, to ensure that issues are addressed collectively as they arise.

I had felt the ever-increasing pressure of crisis management as the year progressed and became adept at facing problems with a calm exterior, no matter how severe they first appeared and how shocked I was inside. I wrote in my journal:

No matter what rage or turmoil or sadness or apprehension inside, the outside calm 'game-face' has to be painted on and remain the same.

Prior to the pandemic, I felt that I had the support of my staff, as we were a very small and hand-picked team. We had open lines of communication, and I knew each member of staff personally and they knew me. I felt an exponential increase in the amount of mutual trust and openness that we shared once I closed the school. Colleagues rang me privately to ask advice on health matters, they waited until other staff members had left the online meetings to ask me how well I was coping, to ask after the health of my family and to ask if there was anything they could do to help. Instead of living at one or other end of the continuum from managerial to evaluative activity, I found that every decision I was making was a balance between being efficient and effective and ensuring tasks and targets were achievable. The goal had changed now, from setting up and maintaining an excellent school, to keeping everybody well, healthy and alive. I felt I was neither leader or manager, I felt that I was serving my staff and the school community. Helping them navigate through the unknown, an unknowing leader in an unknown landscape.

I felt emancipated in my leadership when I compared myself to other, established headteachers, as they knew as little as I did about leadership in such uncertain times. I had suffered from imposter syndrome (Clarkson, 1994; Kets de Vries, 2006) on many occasions, but mostly as a result of a lack of knowledge or experience about specific headship tasks. Now all headteachers were in a similar position, as Harris and Jones (2020, p. 245) state:

School leadership practices have changed considerably and maybe, irreversibly because of Covid-19. As a result of the pandemic, school leadership has shifted on its axis and is unlikely return to 'normal' anytime soon, if ever at all. Research underlines that the principles of

good leadership are a constant i.e. having a clear vision, developing others, managing people, building capacity etc.

I attempted to build the school on positive relationships, making personal connections with each and every family who sent their child to the school and building rapport and confidence with each member of staff who worked at the school. The pandemic and consequent lockdowns made this challenging, although not impossible, and I had to re-think the ways in which I would connect with each group.

The school re-opened in September 2020, under new government guidelines and social-distancing conventions. My leadership on returning to school was changed forever. If I thought I had not been prepared sufficiently well for opening a new school, I now knew that I had never been prepared for opening a school and then closing it. The trauma and heartache of unachieved hopes and dreams would rest with me for a very long time.

At this point my autoethnographical account finishes. The account now moves into an exploration of the findings of the focus groups and the construction of their collages.

5.3 Account of collage focus groups

5.3.1 Introduction

This section describes my findings from the collage focus-groups. Participants had two different approaches to constructing their collages. Some participants sat silently and constructed their collages without commentating. Others spoke as they created. After the allotted period of time, each participant was asked in turn to show their collage to the rest of the group and describe what the collage represented. Bell (2002, p. 209) states that collage can afford us a "window into people's beliefs and experiences" and thus I found that three areas of learning emerged from the collages. As explained in the methodology section, three separate focus groups were conducted, at three separate times. The groupings of the collages in this section correspond to the common themes of the collage, so the accounts below are blended, that is to say the commentaries from participants in different focus groups are interwoven for the purposes of reporting common themes.   The areas of learning I drew out from the collages were as follows. The first two areas were based on Roberts and Woods (2018) and the latter was a distinct area that emerged during this study. The three areas are: leading as social story or process, leading as holarchy, leading as a model or analogy. As with the models of leadership discussed in detail in the review of literature, I found that each collage was a representation that was not necessarily unique but did offer distinct features. Whilst the three focus groups were held at three separate times, for the purposes of this chapter the thematic analyses mixes the reporting of the participants and their collages. It is important to note that the focus groups were conducted during the first partial closure of schools in the Covid-19 pandemic. This event had a significant impact on participants' thinking and talking about leadership, given the immediacy of it. Participants were not specifically asked to talk about the pandemic, but many decided to as part of their discourse. Where participants questioned each other for clarification, this has been included if the two participants were grouped in the same thematic analysis.

5.3.2 Leading as a social story or process

This section describes the collages that the researcher identified retrospectively as representing leadership as a social story or process.   These participants constructed a narration of their understanding of leadership as they formed their collage and chose to share this as they went. They told their story, explained the process that they had gone through to frame their thinking and described leadership as an evolving process. It was interesting to note that most other participants in the focus groups constructed their collages in silence and spoke retrospectively about them, whereas these participants spoke as they created.

Figure 5: Images of leading as a social story or process

Collage 1	Collage 2	Collage 3
Participant A	Participant M	Participant R

Collage 4
Participant E

Two participants (Participants A and M) used different colours to represent part of their story associated with their collage. The creator of collage 1 (Participant A, 2020) described leadership on a continuum from IL to SVL.   They explained how the background of the collage had been selected:

> I'm going to use the gold tissue paper as my base and I am doing that because I think it represents the importance of good leadership … if you think of values, they are probably the most valuable thing, you've gotta have good values, good ethics, good morals, all of that to make great leadership, and because they are so valuable, I think the gold represents that as the basis.

The creator of the collage 2 (Participant M, 2020) described the gold colour as representative of God:

> So, the gold tissue paper represents the way in which God underpins the whole of the school in a very, actually a very reassuring way, that because we are grounded in faith and we believe that God has a purpose for us as a community, that gives us a sense of peace that

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comes in a way that it wouldn't or might not otherwise, er which holds us, even for those who don't share that faith.

In addition, there was a sense in both these collages (1 and 2) of a connected nature, a theme running through the collage, represented by a thread or ribbon. The connection was described in various ways. The creator of collage 2 (Participant M, 2020) saw it as a thread from the leader to members of the community that they were leading:

> …leaders have to be connected, they've gotta have a connection, coming from the top, but all being connected in some way and I see the ribbon as being that sort of connective line.

The creator of collage 1 (Participant A, 2020) described a connection between the way a leader goes about dealing with challenges, with softness and compassion, highlighting SVL characteristics:

> I'm looking at this wool and it is black, I'm not keen on black cos that always suggests, erm, maybe we should use the term 'challenges', but then we've got the fact that the texture of this is very soft, it really is quite soft … you're always gonna hit challenges and perhaps you've gotta hit those challenges with a little bit of compassion and softness, so maybe if we put that sort of along the same line as the string, weaving in and out, you've gotta bring that compassion and thoughtfulness into your dealings with everybody.

Leadership in the faith context was considered much more deeply by the creator of collage 2 (Participant M, 2020) who said:

> I was thinking more in terms of what makes leadership different in a church school to any other place and trying to kind of, cos ultimately, we are leaders and leaders in any school there is so much going on that is similar.

Participant M went on to say that they felt there was, "A sense of being underpinned by God holding us" and further "I like the sense of the Christian nature of the school being the ground that it inhabits, giving that sense of peace to what we do, and that thread running through it".

Participant A was keen to point out that leadership is a "team thing", and:

> It is never about one person, it is one person perhaps being the I suppose the string, that holds everything together, so the leader at the top of the chain I suppose would be like, and I'm going to put the string all around the erm paper, because, that all those leaders have to be connected, they've gotta have a connection, coming from the top, but all being connected in some way and I see the string as being that sort of connective line.

The creators of collages 3 and 4 used their collage items to tell a story of recent leadership experiences. Both participants viewed leadership as instructional (IL). In collage 3, participant R described the figure on the left of the picture as the headteacher (leader) and the paperclips represented the pupils. Participant R described a situation where the headteacher was "giving instructions and the pupils were dutifully following." Above the pupils were the staff and hanging over the staff was a black cloud of parents who might have lodged a complaint or felt at odds with the values of the headteacher. Participant R described how the parents who were "on-board" were not represented, as they were "supporting quietly in the background", whereas the prominent parents were the ones who were "in attention all the time". Participant E described collage 4 as representing leadership as a process, running from right to left. The black line of wool across the middle of the collage represented the challenges faced by leaders and the treasury tags represented personal qualities that the leader would need to overcome these challenges. Participant E (2021) felt that leadership was a "Challenge beyond me" as there were, "too many hoops to jump through", represented by the elastic bands placed just before the end of the leadership task. As I observed the construction of the collages and listened to the participants speak, I was struck by the relative ease with which they spoke once they began placing materials on the backing paper. Most participants had commented at the start of the focus group of feeling, 'nervous'.

5.3.3 Leading as holarchy

This section describes the collages that the researcher identified as representing 'leadership as holarchy'.   A holarchy is a connection between individual holons, where a holon is defined as both part and whole (Birle *et al*, 2021). Koestler (1968) first coined this phrase. Leadership is commonly referred to as a form of hierarchy so should therefore have a 'top' and a bottom'. This is not logically possible as a single holon is both a part and the whole. A distinct feature of holarchy as opposed to hierarchy is that the 'bottom' can exert as much influence as the 'top'. This is illustrated by the relationship between particles, atoms, molecules, organelles, cells, tissues, organs, organisms, communities, and societies. For example, the heart (an organ) is an entity in part, however, as an organ does not exist on its own. The heart is part of an organism which cannot exist without a heart, and the heart cannot 'exist' without the organism, so it is both part and whole.

Figure 6: Images of leading as holarchy

Collage 5	Collage 6	Collage 7
Participant C	Participant F	Participant G

Some participants were very direct in explaining leadership as holarchy, as did participant C who created collage 5:

> You've gotta have someone in charge, but you've also got to give, every part of that chain their own responsibility and they will all be slightly different because everybody is different, and I think that the differences have gotta be respected.

Participant C described leadership as a delicate balance, between leading and assimilating the views, demands and skills of the people being led. Participant C related an anecdote to illustrate the point and described a situation where it was felt that the leader had missed an opportunity of solving a complex issue as a result of not seeking the views and expertise of colleagues in the school. Participant C described eloquently the skills that colleagues possessed that would have been invaluable for solving the "issue", but participant C felt that the leader had not assimilated those views or asked for application of the skills for "fear of losing face". Participant C went on to say, "ironically, had [the leader] asked for help [they] would have gained a lot more respect as our leader, than ignoring the skills we all have and acting as if they [the leader] can and do know it all". Participant C referred to some leadership training that they had been participating in and described eloquently how a "distributed leader might have been better positioned to seek support and collaboration from school staff, rather than trying (and failing) to be a charismatic leader, as they possess neither the skills or the personality to pull this off!". Participant C pointed to the large triangle in collage 5, and added:

> I suppose it is all about your values. What underpins you as a person. Whether you trust and respect your colleagues enough to let them help and contribute, or if you just think they are beneath you. You are the leader and that is it. You are it.

The final point that participant C made was that the values triangle was not connected to the leadership attributes because, "I don't trust any of them (leaders)". Participant C added, "from a church school point of view I suppose your confidence comes from your faith, but it might be different for other people, and you have to respect that". Participant A asked participant C to explain further, participant C explained that in their opinion the disconnect between values and behaviours experienced recently in their setting would not exist in a faith school context.

Participant F had a similarly negative view of leadership and prefaced their explanation of collage 6 with an apology, "I am sorry, it looks like chaos, like a mess, but that is how I feel". Participant F said that despite having had many years of experience at senior leadership level in schools, they felt that currently leadership felt like an, "insurmountable challenge":

> I genuinely think it has been a very very challenging time to be a leader in the last 6 months to 12 months, I also struggle with how we've been led, in a time of challenge and I've never felt so vulnerable as a leader than I have in the last 3 months.

They felt there was no order to task setting, delivery or deadlines and they felt no sense of self-worth for their contribution to the leadership of the setting in which they worked. Participant F explained that they had recently experienced a change in leadership at headteacher level and they could not see why the new leader was not acting in the same way that the old one had, as their style of leadership had been so successful.   Participant F described their feelings of chaos as represented in collage 6:

> I don't feel calm in my leadership at the moment, I feel all over the place and so my picture is, exemplified that, and I've lost trust in being able to talk upwards, so I feel, I feel a little bit alone at the minute as a leader, because I don't feel like I can talk to my line manager when I'm struggling and I also feel like lots of us are struggling in our own aspects, so we've got our own world going on so as much as we're really a good team and we lean on each other, we're all fighting our own different things.

Participant F reflected and noticed that the previous headteacher had worked at the school for a period of 4 years and over that time had developed a sense of team with the senior leaders. Participant F felt that the leadership tasks had been appropriately distributed, the headteacher had acted both as "leader and director" and the school systems had run "harmoniously". They continued, "As soon as this new '[derogatory term used]' turned up, things have just turned to chaos." (Participant F, 2020). Participant G, who worked in the same school, agreed, however, they interrupted F and said, "I actually don't think it is that bad."

Participants C and F both projected negative feelings about leadership due to the context that they were experiencing in their current roles. Participant G sensed this and attempted to re-dress the balance, sensitively steering the conversation away from adverse experiences to a more theoretical approach and explanation of their collage. Participant G described their collage 7 as having, "Structure beneath the chaos". They qualified this by saying, "it's not supposed to be chaotic, the gold in the background is absolutely meaning something, for me it is gold standard, for me it is how it should be" (Participant G, 2020). Participant G went on to explain the top of the collage was "on board" and the bottom was "not on board". They described how the headteacher sat at the "top" of their hierarchy in collage 7 and stakeholders (pupils, teachers and parents) sat below. Participant G stated that vision and values were articulated by the headteacher, but that the "stakeholders" were responsible for enacting the vision and values:
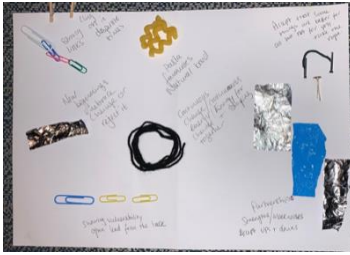
> I think today that for a school to be where it wants to be you need a really strong vision, erm and lots of schools talk about vision and they say they've got them, but actually when you dig deeper, have they really got them? Are they really demonstrating that vision at every level, so I've written about stakeholders on the same level with the gold and to the right-hand side there, the stakeholders go into the red, with a sense of, "do schools always value every stakeholder that they should?"

There was a clear sense of distributed leadership in the thick description given by participant G. They stated that to be effective:

> Everybody at every single level needs to lead in some capacity, but they are not going to lead effectively and with integrity unless the headteacher demonstrates that effectively, and has that same integrity about caring, looking after, nurturing, supporting and doing the best for the school apart from just results.

In stark contrast, participant H was very positive about leadership at all levels in their setting (see below) and explained the construction of collage 8.

Figure 7: Image of leading as holarchy

Collage 8	Collage 9	Collage 10
Participant H	Participant J	Participant P

They described how they have found leadership to be challenging, but felt they contributed to the larger institution by playing their part in leading a small team within the large organisation. Participant J asked if participant H felt valued and supported in their leadership role, to which participant H replied:

> I think leadership at the end of the day is quite a lonely thing, I mean I think I'm bloody lucky, because in my experience of leadership, I have a team around me and I must admit I've always since having a leadership role, I've always been part of a team, not just one other, a part of a team, quite a big team and I think that makes a huge difference to leadership, because our team, my team, is absolutely what keeps me at my school, it isn't the leadership above me...it's my team.

Participant H described how they had taken a different view on how to create their collage. They had thought of the elements that combine to make effective leadership and had matched an item to represent that in the collage. They stated that to be effective leaders sometimes had to lead from the back, strong links are essential and sometimes leaders have to accept that they cannot get everything correct. The description of leadership from participant H leaned towards a transformational (TL) approach, where they described not being concerned with self-interest but rather motivating and inspiring their team members. Participant H emphasised that role modelling desired behaviours was vital in their opinion for effective leadership. Participant J agreed and although very nervous at first, spoke openly about their collage (collage 9). They articulated the challenge they had faced when initially faced with creating a collage:

> I found it difficult to think about but when you start being active with it and being creative with it, I think it was easier. So, the thought of doing a collage was quite daunting, I'm not a leader, I don't have leadership responsibilities, but once I got going, I was thinking about the

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different types of leaders that I have worked for, worked with, and for a big picture what I would like leadership to look like for me (Participant J, 2020).

It was interesting to note that participant J considered themselves not to have leadership responsibility, when questioned they realised that they did have managerial responsibility but considered this to be quite distinct from leadership responsibility. They went on to say, "I'm proud of the work that I do and as part of the big picture I have a small part in in a larger experience for people that sometimes goes unnoticed but is still vital" (Participant J, 2020). In describing their collage, they talked about underpinning values (in line with the description given by Participant G) and the cyclical nature of connected characteristics that they felt should exist in effective leaders. Participant J gave a brief but comprehensive description of their collage 9:

Mine is cyclical. The colours represent different experience, different knowledge that came throughout my workplace, throughout school, the rubber bands were the leadership from the top but all linked, supportive and flexible. The string was to show the ideas and the feedback that went back through that chain of responsibility, and then the foil was to show the reflection and how the reflection throughout the team fed back.

Participant P, who constructed collage 10, took a different view. They waited while the other members of their focus group had finished their descriptions and then said, "can I tell you what I thought?":

I have listened to you all describing leadership as a person, I see it more as an organisation. Mine is a circle, the organisation and the leader and the people in the organisation are inside it. The leader effects everyone in the (points to the string) circle. There's pupils and staff, all mixing with each other. Getting on top of each other, in each other's way. Helping each other, supporting each other. And then there are those who aren't (points to black strips of paper). They are outside the organisation, not left or anything, just not buying into the way the organisation is being run. I feel like that sometimes. On the outside. Not buying into it. Looking on as if I was an outsider, but also wanting to be in, to be part of it.

One of the other participants asked if participant P knew why they felt like they were on the outside. Participant P said, "it's the leaders, I don't know how they expect us to do all that we have to do, they tell us they are trying to be like servant leaders, but I just don't see it". Another participant asked participant P to explain. Participant P replied,

I have read their (line manager's) vision statement. They say they are "called to serve", but all I see is them sitting in their offices and telling us what to do. They haven't tried to make

us feel part of the organisation, they just expect us to do everything for them and they'll take the credit.

Participant P then stated that they did not feel "angry" about this, just that they had actively decided to create their own "sphere of influence" and do "their very best by the people in it". They pointed to the string on collage 10 and said, "that's it, that's where my leadership ends" (Participant P, 2020).

5.3.4 Leading as a model or analogy

This final section describes the collages that the researcher identified as representing "leadership as a model or analogy".   Participants used either prior knowledge of models of leadership, or representations of models or analogies to explain their understanding of leadership represented by their collage.

Figure 8: Images of leading as a model or analogy

Collage 11	Collage 12	Collage 13
Participant L	Participant D	Participant B

Participant L was an experienced leader (headteacher) in a faith school and began by describing the model that they had created in their collage (collage 11). They started by stating, "the tree is in the sense, if you like, the whole network of church of England, all fitting together, we are all like little leaves, and we are all being spiritually nurtured" (Participant L, 2020).   Participant L explained that the circular representation on the bottom left of the collage was an "exploded view" of a cell stemming from the tree. They explained that their background in teaching science had influenced their choice of model and stated that they had some extra pieces of paper (cut into the shape of leaves) lying on their desk, so they had taken the liberty of including these in their collage. They described the construction of the collage whilst explaining the model:

> What's really interesting about what leadership is in this context I have used purple for
>
> leaders so the purple round the outside is the, like we are, we quite often keep out the

things that are not good for our school, so we are keeping out at the moment, keeping out coronavirus. We are keeping out some kind of government inappropriate policies that don't fit well with our vision and values and our Christian ethos (Participant L, 2020).

Participant N agreed and continued the theme of the leader as someone who was "filtering information", saying:

If you look at it within the theocentric context, the idea as a leader in a school within our leadership team, we are gatekeepers, we are protectors, we protect our staff again from outsiders and from a lot of stuff that goes on and I think that we filter huge amounts to keep our staff safe and to keep staff morale up a lot of the time.

Participant L went on to describe the "exploded" or magnified element of the collage,

And I really liked these paperclips, because they were just like little mitochondria, so that's where all the action is happening, that's all our staff like, all that whizzy energy of middle leaders, zipping about and doing lots of good stuff.

They likened leadership to the semi-permeable membrane that surrounds the cell wall and explained that this had been a vital part of their thinking about their own leadership over the past four months:

I think the thing for me, I think I've known more anxiety over the last period, just, and I think it has made me more angry with the government, because a lot of the time you can ignore the government and you just get on with running your school, but this makes you so dependent on the government, you know, and that thing about being a semi-permeable membrane is like, so one of the things I have done so much of is read ahead, so that I can anticipate what decisions they might make, what the scientists might make and then how the government will possibly interpret it.
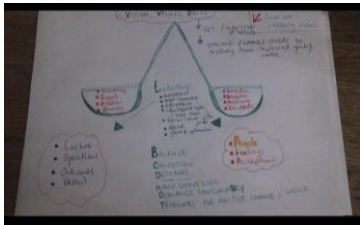
Participant L spoke at length about their deep-rooted sense of servant leadership, but also pointed out that, "I think it has been one of my most anxious periods of headship". This resonated with me, in a strange way felt reassuring for me, that such an experienced leader could experience feelings of anxiety matched to mine. However, it also reinforced feelings of emancipation as I had distinctly felt that as a new leader faced with the pandemic, I was in the same position as all other headteachers, this was a situation that no-one had experience of dealing with. Participant D gave a brief explanation of their collage (collage 12) saying that they felt sometimes leadership was, "over complicated leaders trying to justify their own worth". They described a hierarchical model, "with

pupils at the bottom, taking direction from the headteacher at the top and the silver strip is the teachers in between" (Participant D, 2020).

Participant B asked participant D if they had used colour to represent anything specific in their collage as participant B had chosen their background carefully, see collage 13. Participant B explained that since they worked in a faith school, they had placed the torn pieces of paper as the background such that the silhouette of a cross was left, as their faith underpinned everything that they did. Participant B went onto explain:

> I try to keep Christ at the centre of all the decisions I make when I am at school. It is important that I take myself out of the decisions, it is not what I want, but what is best for the staff and pupils in my care. The school was built on the basis that it is a church school, so surely that is the most important thing? My leadership should be led by the teachings of my faith and Christ should be at the centre.

Figure 9: Image of leading as a model or analogy

Collage 14	Collage 15	Collage 16
		No materials received in post due to pandemic, participant described 2 'pictures', one of DNA and one of a heart monitor displaying peaks and troughs
Participant Q	Participant K	Participant N

Participant N prefaced their thinking by saying, "when you are making decisions, there's a bit of you that's trying to bring yourself back to those theological questions". Participant N thought very carefully when asked how they would have constructed a collage. They started by describing a positive image of the trace of a healthy heart on a heart monitor, "on the positive side, I think within that, within leadership as well, I think there is that fantastic exhilaration when things are going well when you're, you know the stars are in alignment" (Participant N, 2020). The positive side of being a headteacher was very evident, when they described being a headteacher as "glorious" (see below). They also stated that they believed moral purpose underpins being a headteacher, especially in a faith school:

(it) is the moral responsibility, and that sense, that massive sense of

duty, isn't it, because we are there to promote good values to our [pupils] and to

give them a sense of empowerment within a moral framework within the framework of the

school (Participant N, 2020).

Participant Q agreed, saying, "we are looking at it through a different lens, because we are trying to look at it through that lens of faith I suppose." Participant N then began to describe the recent events of having to close their school due to the pandemic. They saw being the headteacher as very challenging, as an instructional activity, although the benefit of the pandemic had been that it had helped them grow in their leadership capacity:

You learn to ride those things, and you become much stronger and now it's almost like 'bring

it on' now. I think I'm much more secure, you know as a new Head, you need to kind of flex

your muscles or find your way around, navigate your way around in the first two years or so

don't you and I think for me, what it has done it despite all the horrors, it has very much

consolidated that this is my school and these are, you know the way forward for

the school and we've had to bring the school along enormously in some ways, and this is

what we've got, so in that bizarre sense it has been horrendous at the time and a massive

effect on my mental energy and my physical energy, but you know we are still here and we,

in the words of Elton John's, 'I'm still standing'! And actually, better than I ever did!

It was at this point that the account of participant N resonated most closely with the feelings of the researcher. I remember looking up from the process of transcribing the account by participant N and pausing. During the actual focus group, I had remembered being struck by the use of the quote, "I'm still standing, better than I ever did" (John and Taupin, 1983). I remembered feeling that I had flourished as a leader with the challenges, knowing that I had kept people safe and managed the unknown situations that arose every day. But something different happened as I completed the transcript. When I paused the audio recording, I realised I was crying. I sat in silence and looked at the screen. I realised that as I reflected on someone else capturing their own thoughts that were closely aligned to mine, I felt slightly cheated. Aggrieved that everyone had not understood how challenging the situation had been and how we had come through it and flourished. I felt as though I wanted everyone to know and celebrate with us. Instead, we were back in school and getting back to the core business of educating children and, since the pandemic had not yet ended, I felt that perhaps we had not marked our achievements as significant. This was likely because we were still contending with partial closures and reinfection. It did not feel like it was "over yet". Participant N went on to say that most likely we (as leaders) appreciated more and most the challenges we had been through and shared:

Our individual sense of place and the individual unit that we are, our individual school and

our leadership of that, through to being part of this bigger network, both driving from within

but also aware of our boundaries and also aware of our connections.

One of the striking similarities between the description of the process for participant N and the researcher, was the reflection on being a new headteacher. Participant N and Q had a discussion about whether it had been more challenging for new or established colleagues:

I don't know how anybody else felt, I was a relatively newbie, and then just we've all been

kind of hit with it, haven't we? You know I think that I had to make decisions and do terribly

difficult things at the time they were terribly unpopular, I had to cancel trips with parents

that have really never spoken to me again and said that I was trying to ruin the school when

we couldn't go to a netball match, I mean, horrendous, the amount of insults and complaints

I've had, honestly, unbelievable, but I've got through them and it's almost like water off a

ducks back now! (Participant N, 2020)

Participant Q, an established headteacher, said they felt that there were advantages to having been in post for a number of years, as some of the leadership functions came naturally, so the new leadership tasks during the pandemic were naturally assimilated to the "normal" functions required of headship. Participant N concluded by saying:

Within the role of the head the enormity of being a head at times, and also

the gloriousness of it, I don't think I've ever felt prouder of the school than the way we dealt

with it, you know, we dealt with it amazingly well, and you

know, particularly the online learning that we did and all the other stuff that the school

managed to do, erm so I did, I've got a great deal of pride, but I must say, I felt a LOT of fear

as well.

Participant Q reflected on their collage as, "A model of direction, because after all, that is what you are doing as a head isn't it, directing people?". Participant Q and N had a discussion about direction, likening it to, "Directing and conducting an orchestra, where different parts of the organisation need to be made louder or quieter at different times, i.e. you have to focus more on some people at times than others." (Participant Q, 2020). Participant Q went on to say that this was the complicated part about leadership as sometimes the louder parts of the orchestra represented the more confident staff who did not necessarily need the attention of the leader.

Participant K reflected on the model they had drawn, as they had not received collage materials through the post (due to the pandemic). They said, "I have taken an approach that attempts to

represent leadership in balance" (Participant K, 2020). They pointed out that, "Leadership is made up of many things, including deep thinking, drive and you have to have optimism" (Participant K, 2020). Whilst participant K described their collage the other members of the focus group listened intently. Towards the end of the description, participant K said, "actually I think being a headteacher, a leader, is much more than we have even began to think. It is actually about creating a whole culture." I will come back to this point in my next chapter.

5.4 Chapter Summary

In order to reflect on my own leadership, I kept a research journal, forming my own deep reflection. I chose parts of the journal and represented them here as my autoethnographic account of the journey from pre-opening to post-opening of the school. As I read and re-read my account, what struck me most was my feeling of being ill-prepared to be a headteacher. However, as I reflected, the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the fact that no headteacher was or could be prepared for everything and anything. My colleagues in the focus groups agrees.

The collage-making process allowed for more imaginative and reflexive connection-making than just words might allow (James and Brookfield, 2014). I found that the process of choosing materials to represent something, considering where the materials should be placed and why and the viewing of the completed picture had the capacity to elicit deep-reflection in the participants. The subsequent description of the collages brought forth new and different forms of understanding. This was further developed in me, the researcher, as I linked the reflexive nature of the process of listening to the descriptions by the participants themselves, transcribing their thoughts and then organising them into the three groups of similarly themed collages. Weber and Mitchell (1996) and Thaiss and Zawacki (2006) found that collage, more than other arts-based research methods, has the capacity to aid participants in uncovering hidden meaning or unconscious aspects of the recorded experience of leadership; I found this to be true and enlightening as I discuss in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Discussion of findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the research findings in relation to the research questions, the published literature, and the theoretical conceptual models used in the study through a series of 5 themes that emerged from my data and relating to the original Research Questions designed for the purpose of this study.

Theme 1 explores leadership models, the use of them in developing leadership and their limitations. Theme 2 further develops this theme, exploring the concept of leadership in relation to the conceptual framework offered earlier in the study. Theme 3 posits that leadership is important, complex and supports the findings of complexity theory, that leadership is not reducible to techniques and procedures. Theme 4 explores the multi-dimensional nature of leadership. Theme 5 examines the mixed-methods use of autoethnography and an arts-based method to help ameliorate some of the shortcomings of autoethnography. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the chosen conceptual frameworks.

6.2 Examining the research aims and research questions

I began this study with three distinct aims, see below:

1. To record distinctive dimensions of the development of leadership style in a values driven secondary school context using autoethnography and reflexive conversations with other leaders in similar contexts;
2. To study school leadership from conceptual and practical perspectives to gain unique and meaningful insights;
3. To critically evaluate leadership, by engaging with a range of conceptual models and conceptual frameworks.

To examine these aims, I framed five research questions, see below.

1. What are the prevalent models and definitions of educational leadership relevant to current English state schooling and how well do they fit with my axiology?
2. What role can conceptual frameworks and models play in examining actions, development and growth of my leadership styles and activities?
3. What are the distinctive dimensions of emerging leadership in the context of a new faith-designation secondary school setting?
4. What insights can be gained when studying leadership as a conceptual model as an insider researcher?
5. How can autoethnography combined with an arts-based method (collage) as a methodology contribute to research into the development of school leadership?

Following the 2 phases of research, the themes that emerged from my findings in relation to the research questions are illustrated in the table below:

Table 8: Research questions with related themes and sub-themes

Research aim	Research question	Theme of findings	Sub-theme of findings	Chapter
1, 2	1. What are the prevalent models and definitions of educational leadership relevant to current English state schooling and how well do they fit with my axiology?	Traditional models of leadership are helpful but limited		6.3
1, 2	2. What role can conceptual frameworks and models play in examining actions, development and growth of my leadership styles and activities?	Development of leadership cannot be constrained by a framework		6.4
2	3. What are the distinctive dimensions of emerging leadership in the context of a new faith-designation secondary school setting?	Leadership is important and complex	Preparedness Culture Role	6.5
2, 3	4. What insights can be gained when studying leadership as a conceptual model as an insider researcher?	Leadership is multifaceted	Fluidity Situational	6.6
2, 3	5. How can autoethnography combined with an arts-based method (collage) as a methodology contribute to research into the development of school leadership?	Autoethnography can be limited	Collage can plug the gaps	6.7

I will now examine the themes in relation to my findings in individual succession.

6.3 Theme 1: Traditional models of leadership are helpful but limited

The first theme in my findings is that traditional models of leadership are helpful to new leaders in new schools but do have their limitations.

6.3.1 Examining the theme

In the review of the literature for this thesis (chapter 2), I found that there is a plethora of research into school leadership which has taken place since the 1900's. Consequently, many models of leadership exist (Gumus *et al.*, 2016; Rieckhoff, 2014; Yukl, 2006; Kezar, 2000; Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 2000; Hallinger and Heck, 1999). One of the challenges that I faced as a novice leader was that I discovered that most literature and research focussed on established and improving schools, rather than constructing a school from the beginning. As I set out on the journey of creating my school and becoming a headteacher, I had envisaged utilising a single model of leadership to develop a successful team and organisation. I studied the literature available to me both for the purposes of this study and as part of my due diligence and noted a paucity of literature relating to establishing a faith-based school.

As a leader of a new faith school, I was drawn to the seminal work produced by the Church of England The Way Ahead report (The Archbishops' Council, 2001) which states that no single model of leadership is solely appropriate for effective school leadership, rather a tri-fold approach is more

suitable. The report advocates the combined use of servant leadership, invitational leadership and transformational leadership. I found the report's guidance to be of some use at critical times (mostly during the planning stage of activities) and less useful at other times (usually when acting in the moment). This discussion seeks to explain this point.

When at the planning stages of any activity prior to opening the school, I was careful to think through the activity. Looking back retrospectively, I realise that during the planning stages, I did not consider the approach to the activity as part of the formation of a model of leadership. This was true for the majority of the activities I undertook during the first year of my headship. My motivations, actions and values for the activity were centred on my aspiration for successful completion of the activity, rather than attempting to build and consolidate a specific model of leadership.

As explained in chapter 5 I distinctly remember planning the activities for bringing the team of staff together, and these were definitely motivated by my desire to build a model of leadership that was underpinned by the spiritual educative model identified for this study. I felt that I did not want to be constrained by one model, for example, distributed leadership, but my personal axiology drew me to the spiritual educative model (Luckcock, 2014). This was most likely predicated by this study, rather than my knowledge of how to build a successful model as a new leader. I question whether, as a new leader, I would have had the awareness to build a model of leadership had I not been completing this study.   I knew as an experienced leader that I had to bring the team together, but I was left with the question, "would I have chosen the specific activities I chose, had I not been seeking to build the spiritual educative model?" As researcher and researched I was not able to separate my conscious researcher self from my professional headteacher self.   My practice to build my leadership based on a model, may not have been so deliberate, had I not been completing this study. As Doloriert and Sambrook (2009) state, there is a continuum from researcher *and* researched at one end and researcher-*is*-researched at the other end (my italics). When operating at the researcher- *is*-researched end of the continuum I was influenced by the study. The Hawthorne effect (Wickstrom and Bendix, 2000, p. 363) states not only that there can be an "unwitting confounding of variables under study by the study itself", but also there may be "behaviour change due to an awareness of being observed." With my retrospective view as autoethnographer I realised that I was not motivated by attempting to build the model, I was actually attempting to gain the followship or commitment of my staff (Bush and Glover, 2003) as I believed this was a crucial part of being a successful leader.

In terms of my conceptual framework, I unwittingly 'became' Croft's three distinct roles in the pre-opening phase of the development of the school. In chapter 5.2.2 I state that I became "politician, priest and manager" (p. 77) in other words (correspondingly) I operated in the realms of episcope, presbyteros and diakone. At the time I was not conscious that I was moving between the realms, or even necessarily operating in them. However, I note now that I was not operating necessarily in the hierarchical order in which the realms are intended to develop. Episcope, ministry in the realm of ideas, was necessary from the outset. I found myself needing to answer philosophically sensitive questions regarding funding or how pupil places where strategically sourced at the very first 'meet the headteacher event' I convened. Croft's realms build sequentially and cumulatively, so operating in the realm of episcope should arguably have come once the realm of presbyteros was secure. I was not afforded this luxury at the time, of securing one realm before moving onto the next. Not only did I need to operate in each realm immediately, I also found that I had to switch between the realms as regularly as a new question was asked of me.

In the focus groups, my findings demonstrated that participants represented their leadership models in differing ways. Some participants chose to use a model or analogy on which to base their collage and subsequent explanation of their thinking around leadership (Chapter 5.3.4). One participant said they had chosen to represent leadership as a model specifically because they used to be a scientist and they naturally found a model would illustrate their thinking, as this was in keeping with their discipline. When reflecting on the models, it emerged that the participants attempted to have an end point or a closure to their representation of leadership. There was a pinnacle or a direction to the model, as opposed to a process, seen in the group who described leading as a social story or process (Chapter 5.3.2). In reading across the collages, as part of the analysis, this struck me as an important and distinct feature of the difference between the distinct groups of collages. Prior to conducting the research, if challenged, I would have been drawn to describing leadership as a model or analogy. This would likely have been as a result of the leadership training that I had received earlier in my career that focused on leadership models. I realise now that I did not have a personal commitment to developing a model of leadership. I, like many other novice faith leaders felt ill-prepared (Rieckhoff, 2014) for the leadership of a faith-based institution, however, I felt that with my personal experience and faith I would make my best efforts at being successful. What I had not prepared myself for was building a leadership model. The literature I reviewed focussed on established models, in established schools. This situation was completely different: a new school and a new leader. I suspect it may have been this fact alone that led other novice faith leaders to feel the same as me: ill-prepared. The advice and guidance available centred on established schools; new leaders in new settings find themselves in an abyss.

The models posited by The Way Ahead report (The Archbishops' Council, 2001) were useful in part to me as a novice headteacher, but they only went part of the way in describing the behaviours required of me in the early days of establishing a school and myself as a leader. Throughout the pre-opening and post-opening stages I was like an explorer. I explored different ways of being, changing leadership behaviours and consequently models of leadership as many times as I changed my mind on the colours of paint that would adorn the walls of the building.

6.3.2 Theme 1: summary

In this examination of theme 1, I have highlighted how traditional models of leadership are helpful but limited in the development of leadership for a novice headteacher in a faith-based setting. In the review of literature, I found that most research into models of leadership focussed on improving schools, rather than establishing a new one from the outset. As I set about establishing the school and completing the myriad of tasks required of me, my motivations, actions and values for the activities were centred on successful completion of the tasks, rather than attempting to build and consolidate a specific model of leadership. I found, like Bush (2008) stated that no single model of leadership was solely appropriate for the many facets of leadership required of me. As researcher and researched I was not able to separate my conscious researcher self from my professional headteacher self. I felt that my professional headteacher-self benefited from the reading I conducted as researcher for this study, and my researcher-self benefited from the experiential practice and understanding of attempting to exemplify the models in my practice. However, I note now that I was not restricting my practice to exclusive models, nor was I necessarily operating in the hierarchical order in which the realms are intended to develop. Not all those I spoke to in the focus groups represented leadership as a model. Some found this to be the most illustrative way to represent leadership, as more often than not they used models either because this is how they had been trained to conceptualise leadership or they used models in the way they worked, for example as a scientist. The most striking understanding that I was left with, having reviewed my findings to date, was they my leadership model did not develop in an emergent continuum, neither did it appear overnight. Which leads me to the next theme, that of leadership development.

6.4 Theme 2: Development of leadership cannot be constrained by a single framework

6.4.1 Examining the theme

As stated above, there is a plethora of research that found that leadership is an important factor in the success of a school, as Woods *et al* (2020, p. 74) state, "leadership is seen by government as of central importance … school leaders are the drivers of improvement". My leadership development at times during the study could be classified according to the various models of leadership I had

studied. However, it did not fit precisely into one. I found that I agreed with part of the Church of England's own report (Archbishops' Council, 2001) into leadership in faith schools, that stated there is no one right model for leadership. The report goes onto contend that a threefold approach encompassing SVL, IL and TL is appropriate to leadership in a faith-based setting. Luckcock (2014) stated that Anglican school leadership cannot be reduced to the proposed trifold categorisation proposed by the Archbishops' Council, and my findings supported this.

I stated earlier that complexity theory (Stacey, 2012; Uhl-Bien *et al*., 2007; Osborn and Hunt 2007) posits that leadership is not reducible to the learning of techniques and procedures, rather it is a complex, multi-dimensional activity. As discussed above, I found that my leadership style varied from situation to situation, moment to moment. Sometimes my leadership could be viewed as neatly fitting into one of the realms of Luckcock's (2014) conceptual framework and other times it was a combination of all three areas and more.

The distinct nature of this study is that I was a new leader in a new school setting. There were many decisions required prior to opening the school. The shape of the building, the height of the sports hall, the width of the corridors and the fence line of the playing field. Fortuitously when I joined the project, all of these decisions had been made. However, there were myriad other decisions that were left to me as the new and founding headteacher. As mentioned above, not only did I need to fully equip the building, I also had to recruit the staff and find the pupils who would breathe life into the school. This had to take place concurrently to me learning to be a leader. Unlike some, I did not inherit a school in which to bring my model of leadership, nor did I come with a preferred model of leadership as I was a novice. What I discovered, was that the development of the model was neither instant nor on a continuum. This meant that I could not break leadership down into small component parts and sequence them in a logical way which would take me from being a novice leader to being an accomplished leader. Had this been the case, I may have been able to systematically develop my leadership skills as I moved through the well-designed and well-sequenced plan of learning how to implement a model at the same time as learning to lead. On the contrary, I found, in line with Stacey (2012) and Uhl-Bien *et al* (2007) that leadership was not reducible to the systematic learning of techniques and procedures.

6.4.2 Theme 2: summary
I likened learning to be a new leader in a new school to building an aeroplane while it was in the air flying (Smith et al, 2017). I was a novice leader building a completely new school. I found that I had to be flexible and adaptable. Leadership was not reducible to a set of component parts that I could learn cumulatively. I found that it was not appropriate or sufficient to constrain my behaviour to

single leadership models, nor was it possible to systematically break leadership down into component parts and learn them individually as I went along, aspiring to a culmination where all the parts came together, and I emerged as a competent leader. What I found instead, was my leadership from the very first day I took post as headteacher was vital and extremely complicated.

6.5 Theme 3: Leadership is important and complex
6.5.1 Examining the theme
I understood the importance of the role I was undertaking (Gumus *et al*., 2016; Rieckhoff, 2014; Muijs, 2011; Leithwood *et al.*, 2010; Leithwood and Riehl, 2005). I was also aware that many contend that there is no single appropriate way to effectively lead a school (Ofsted, 2019) and others argue that leadership is the most important factor regarding school effectiveness (Reynolds *et al*., 2014). I had undergone training to fulfil the role of headteacher, gaining the NPQH prior to taking up the post. However, I, like many others in faith school leadership (Grace, 2009), still felt unprepared. I had planned for my leadership development to be a linear development. I assumed that the longer I was in post, the more I would learn and the more competent I would become as a headteacher. However, as I discovered during the course of this research, this was not necessarily the case. As discussed below, no-one enters headship as an entirely new leader and even the most experienced leaders frequently encounter new and unknown circumstances that require a leadership response.

Preparedness
As a new headteacher in a new faith-based school, I felt unprepared. This supports the research of Rieckhoff, 2014; Moore, 1999; Wallace, 1995; Cirello, 1994 and Drahmann, 1994. However, what has become very clear to me as both headteacher and researcher, this is not unusual nor should it come as a surprise. It would not be possible to prepare for everything that is required of a headteacher at the start of taking up the post in a new school or an established school. The findings of this study, both in terms of the autoethnography and the focus groups, are clear: new (and established) headteachers must anticipate the unexpected. This arguably is an unexpected benefit of pandemic that shook the world during this study. Harris and Jones (2020) stated that leaders in school had been forced to change as a result of the pandemic and that the speed of change was unprecedented. I felt emancipated, realising that I knew as much as an established headteacher did about running a school during a pandemic: in other words, no matter how much experience a headteacher had, these were such unprecedented times that no-one was an experienced leader in some aspects of the work we were called upon to do. As a novice headteacher I was as qualified as a headteacher with ten, twenty or even thirty years' experience. However, there is transferability in unpreparedness not limited to being faced with a pandemic. Arguably all situations in leadership could be construed as unique, especially given that many leadership tasks relate to dealing with

people. Perhaps the skill of a leader is not in being prepared for all situations, but in being prepared to feel unprepared and deal with any situation that arises anyway.

Culture

As I engaged with the focus groups, I found this process to be deeply illuminating and reflexive. The focus groups afforded me the time to reflect on my preconceptions and my deeply held beliefs about being able to fit my leadership into a conceptual framework. Later, when transcribing the discussions, I found that my feelings about leadership were both challenged and supported: I discovered similarities and differences to my own personal perspective. Prior to opening the school, as I already outlined, I had envisaged that as the founding headteacher of a new school I would be attempting to develop a model of leadership. As I wrote the autoethnographic account I discovered that, unbeknown to me, I had not attempted to build a leadership model, I had in fact attempted to build a culture. Culture within schools has been studied for a long period of time, dating back to the early twentieth century (Klingaman, 2012). Culture refers to ideas, customs and social behaviour. Geertz (1973, p. 11) states that a culture is "whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members". To become a native in a culture, the individual has to understand how to operate in ways that are acceptable and commensurate with the culture. Deal and Peterson (1999) identified eleven key elements that need to be present in order to build a positive culture. They pointed out that a positive culture is an essential component of a successful school. I realised as I recorded thoughts in my research journal, that I was creating the culture day by day. This was a unique element of this study, as I was attempting to build the culture as the headteacher and study the culture as the autoethnographer.

As Klingaman (2012, p. 25) points out, "schools are similar to snowflakes; there are hundreds of thousands of schools around the world, and each of them is unique." Having worked in and with a number of schools during my career I would agree with this. This was also reflected in my findings of the focus groups. Each participant had a slightly different view of how leadership was enacted. Some saw leadership as a social story, some as a holarchy and some viewed leadership more as a model or gave an analogy to explain concepts and distinctive features of leadership. Interestingly the school that I built and opened was like none other that I had worked in. Consciously and subconsciously, I had taken parts of each one and built them into the new school.

Whilst my findings support the findings of researchers who state that the headteacher builds the culture in a school (Klingaman, 2012; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999), my findings strongly support the work of Burns and Martin (2010) who state that it is not just the headteacher, but the staff in the school as well, who build the culture.   As Kelly *et al* (1998) stated it is vital to recruit the right people with the correct skills and attributes. I found that as headteacher I initially created the culture and

attempted to articulate it as best I could, for all to understand. However, I then went on to discover that the staff were much more responsible for creating and living out the culture than I was. Often, despite their obvious propensity to agree with my vision, they did not always understand how to create the culture we were all aspiring to work in. I found on occasions that some staff had a different articulation or understanding of elements of the culture, and this led to differences. This may be best illustrated by my articulation that the adults would make key decisions in the school, the culture would be one of perceived 'tough love' or 'warm strict' behaviour by the adults. When this was articulated with or without a smile it was interpreted very differently by pupils and parents, and I often found myself having to diffuse a misunderstanding or a concern raised by a parent. Maybe a member of staff had been a little less warm than I had intended, but plenty strict. I found that it was necessary to spend more time on the tiny details with the school staff, and since the tiny details are the outward manifestation of the culture: I willingly did this.

Role

As stated earlier, in the pre-opening phase of the school, I became politician, priest and manager. My role was defined by the activities I had to participate in to be successful. I was a politician when I was seeking to recruit pupils and families to the school, talking about the school of the future, making bold promises about how it would be. I was a priest to the potential flock or congregation of worshipping families who would make up the faith-based part of the cohort. I engaged in preaching the message that came with the faith school, that of offering a distinctive and inclusive school. And I was manager of my own time, the building project and the educational project, both of which had the potential to dominate my time. As the school opened my role changed. I became diplomat, pastor and figurehead. Diplomat as I navigated the plethora of situations that played out in ways slightly misaligned with my understanding of the culture I was trying to create. Pastor to the pupils, staff and parents for whom I was responsible. I cared for them in ways I had not imagined having to prior to ever taking up the post of headteacher. Sometimes I was called upon simply to listen, other times I had to offer suggestions for solutions to a problems, often I had to minister a caring word and occasionally when nothing else would suffice, I resorted to a hug. And unexpectedly I became a figurehead. It puzzled me somewhat, when I was contacted by local media outlets to comment on newsworthy items, changes in government educational policy, or even environmental issues. However, it slowly dawned on me, that being a headteacher in a community came with a certain social standing. People wanted to know what I thought, often they listened intently to what I thought and more often they challenged my thinking and occasionally my values and beliefs.

6.5.2 Theme 3: summary

I thought I was prepared for what was to come in my new role as novice headteacher. As soon as I took up the post, I realised that I, like many others, felt unprepared. The role was complex, there were many dimensions and intricacies, that in many circumstances I was left feeling lost and alone. However, this was not a feeling that would go away and the discussions with focus group participants reassured me as I discovered that established headteachers also felt unprepared for some of the situations they faced. There was not necessarily a linear relationship between competence and length of service as I had naturally assumed there would be. I discovered that, in leading people, there will always be unexpected events that occur and a headteacher has to react to these, usually unique situations. The pandemic taught all school leaders this. Preparedness is not always possible. I discovered, during the study, that instead of trying to build and embed a model or a combination of models of leadership, I was in fact trying to build and grow a culture. And the people I had along with me on the journey were as big a part of this as I was. Burns and Martin (2010) point out that the culture of the school is not just dependent on the headteacher and this was evident from the very beginning. My role as headteacher changed on many occasions. I had envisaged that my role would change from manager to leader on a continuum but had not accounted for the need to be politician, priest and manager, diplomat, pastor and figurehead as well as a leader. This, I grew to understand, was part of the uniqueness of working in a faith-based setting. However, the aspect that was most challenging was how adaptable and flexible I had to be, even with an awareness of the differing roles: changing from one to another did not happen sequentially, as I will explore in the next part of this chapter.

6.6 Theme 4: Leadership is multifaceted

6.6.1 Examining the theme

Fluidity

Throughout my career I had undergone leadership training and examined different models of leadership. I had completed extensive research for my NPQH. Prior to setting up the school I conducted research into how the (sparse) literature regarding church school leadership viewed successful models of leadership. It quickly became apparent to me when the school opened, that no matter how much preparation I had done, including pre-reading for this study, my leadership would not fit neatly into a specific model or model(s) as I had imagined it might.

A typical day as a headteacher in the new school for me involved, for example, helping a colleague to navigate their way through bereavement (episcope), offering my services to a parent who arrived at the school needing guidance on how to apply for free school meals (diakone), and then taking the lead on an assembly about an aspect of everyday life linked to the spiritual distinctiveness of the

school (presbyteros). At any point during the day, I could be called on to act in any one of the 3 different realms (Duignan and Macpherson, 1992) and the realms were not mutually exclusive. It was clear to me that the development of my spiritual leadership was not linear, it was fluid.

I found many resonances with the 2-dimensional models that I engaged with in the literature. However, as I journeyed through the period of leadership described in this study, I found that whilst the models were useful, they were too 2-dimensional (see figure 10 below).

Figure 10: 2-dimensional diagram of Luckcock's Spiritual Educative Model

Key:
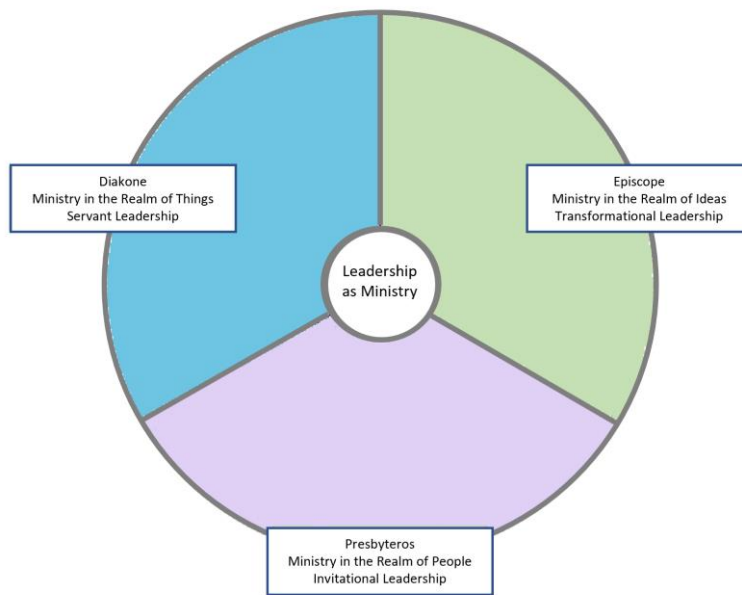
Episcope		Presbyteros		Diakone	

My experience of leadership through my conceptual framework chosen for this study was more 3-dimensional. On a simplistic level I have tried to represent this in the model below (see figure 11 below). The diagram on the left was my attempt to represent the realms as overlaying of each other. This represents my findings that the development of the realms are not linear, but may occur concurrently. The diagram on the right is my attempt at representing the model as fluid, where I was having to move not only in the vertical plane between diakone, presbyteros and episcope, but also in the horizontal plane, switching from one dimension and back again multiple times. I found that Croft's three dimensions of spiritual leadership were not in linear relationship and neither were they mutually exclusive.

Figure 11: 3-dimensional adapted diagram of Luckcock's Spiritual Educative Model

Key:

Episcope		Presbyteros		Diakone	

Further consideration of my adapted model led me to realise that the rigidity of the model misrepresented the fluidity required by a leader. Introducing overlaid segments into the model constrained the different realms to specific times, and my contention is that leaders do not operate in mutually exclusive realms, rather the boundaries between the realms are blurred. I subsequently made a further development of my model, see figure 12 below, where I represent the realms as a 'spinning top'. Leadership is best represented for me when the spinning top is actively spinning and the colours (realms) become blurred. As the top spins, different colours come into focus, representing different realms of leadership becoming more or less prominent.

Figure 12: spinning top adapted diagram of Luckcock's Spiritual Educative Model

Key:

Episcope		Presbyteros		Diakone	

For the purposes of this study, leadership is defined as, "a process of social influence, which maximises the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal" (Kruse, 2013, p.2). Arguably the biggest leadership task that emerged for me in this project was my ability to be able to articulate the needs of the goal. In order to influence those people around me, to achieve any part of the goals we engaged with, I had to clearly define and articulate exactly what it was we were seeking to achieve. This puzzled me, as I assumed that I had appointed a very talented group of staff who would all understand the tasks we sought to achieve together. For example, when I first alerted the staff to the fact that we were about to embark on our first fire drill, I naturally assumed all staff would understand both the rationale for this and how to enact their various roles within the drill. What I had not anticipated, in enough detail, was the minutiae of conducting the first ever fire drill in a new school. Although I had assembled a very small and skilled group of staff, there were inconsistencies in both the operational detail and also the way in which the drill was conducted. Some members of staff spoke to the pupils as we left the building supposedly in silence. I remember feeling incandescent inside, wondering how they thought talking to pupils in a relaxed and sociable manner was consistent with conducting a fire drill in silence. However, when asked, two members of staff explained to me that, "they knew it was a drill so they thought it would be ok to speak to the children, so they weren't too worried." Again, this forced me into leadership fluidity, darting between the three metaphysical realms (Duignan and Macpherson, 1992), having to act in all three realms and then focus attention on one, change and re-focus, all in a very short space of time.

As an insider researcher this gave me a unique insight into leadership. As an observer I may have missed the nuances of the motivation for the changes in leadership style or approach. As an insider I was aware of my motivation to act in one realm but having to react to the situation that confronted me and change and act in a different realm. My feelings and thoughts, fears and insecurities were known to me as researcher in ways they would not have been had I not been the leader as well. On occasions being the researcher-me assisted the headteacher-me in overcoming my leadership insecurities. When I felt that things had not gone as well as I would have hoped from a leadership perspective, I had a framework on which to unpick my concerns in the form of my research. This was a benefit I had not anticipated prior to undertaking the research. I also realised that it was these times that presented researcher-me with rich data, thus rendering the potentially negative leadership situations into positive research situations, which the researcher-me freely gave to the headteacher-me, thus making the situations not so bad after all.

Situational
As a further development of this point, I also found that as stated in previous research, educational leadership is not only very complex (Woods *et al*, 2020), but my leadership style was less determined

by me and more by others and how they reacted to me and my leadership style. Whilst I found that I became the initiator (Hursch, 2005; Leithwood and Riehl, 2005; Bolden, 2004) of most if not all leadership practices, I had to adapt my approach according to the needs of the people whom I was leading (either pupils, staff, parents) and also according to the situation we found ourselves confronting. This was in support of the literature I had reviewed regarding situational leadership (Hakim *et* al, 2021; Daniels, Hondeghem and Dochy, 2019; Thompson and Glasø, 2015). There was no pattern to the demands placed on my leadership style either. Some staff needed a consistent approach from me as a leader, whilst others had differing needs according to many different factors. These factors varied from their own personal needs, ambitions or lack of experience to the demands placed on the staff in terms of scope of the work they were leading, and the time pressures related to completing the work. Contrary to the work of Hallinger (2011) I found that SL was not confusing for the staff I was leading, they expected me to be adaptable and flexible in my approach on most occasions. However, occasionally staff would act as though they were surprised if I took an autocratic decision, having been much more familiar with my democratic approach.

6.6.2 Theme 4: summary

My intentions as a leader were to galvanise a team of teachers: I had assumed I would be using my expertise and influence to create a coherent group of staff who all shared and could articulate my vision and values. The goal of bringing these staff together was to run a successful school. In order to enact this my intention was to build a leadership model that would enable the coming together to be both rapid and successful, both necessary conditions as the school was going to be open and be the subject of much scrutiny. I found that the development of my leadership as new headteacher in the new setting was not a linear development from novice to expert, more it was a jumbled tangle of rapid learning and rapid growth. I was required to be a fluid leader, adapting my approach from day to day, hour to hour, and in some cases minute to minute. Most of the time my leadership style was determined for me, not by my planning, but by the requirements of the situation.

6.7 Theme 5: Mixed methods help ameliorate some of the limitations of autoethnography

6.7.1 Examining the theme

Typically research into school leadership has remained in the conceptual domain (Rieckhoff, 2014; Klenke, 2008; Luckcock, 2007). As stated in chapter 1, Mundell, (2010) found that most of the research done about headteachers was not done by them. My autoethnography afforded me the unique opportunity to reflect on my leadership both as it occurred and retrospectively. It is hoped this open reflection may be useful to other headteachers, both new and established. This was in line with Ellis and Bochner's (2000) view of autoethnography, that states autoethnography focuses on

producing meaningful and evocative research grounded in personal experience. The autoethnographic account produced an emotional reaction in myself, both as I wrote it and later as I re-read and edited it. I certainly found my account to be evocative (Elllis *et al.*, 2011) when I re-visited it, and members of my supervisory team stated similar feelings on reading it.

Prior to commencing the study, I considered myself to be a reflective practitioner, I sought professional feedback, both formal and informal. I listened to feedback from colleagues who were senior to me and those in positions less senior than me. I acted upon direct feedback, and I used my intuition to discern how my actions affected colleagues, parents and pupils and amended my actions as a result. However, nothing prepared me for the degree of self-examination and critical self-reflection involved in autoethnography.

Plug gaps
In my literature review I found a dearth of research conducted by new headteachers in new schools. It is hoped that using autoethnography to document my experiences may help plug some of these gaps. Having completed the data collection I realised that my autoethnography was full of useful insights that would have been useful to me had I read them prior to opening the school. However, the autoethnography was only my view of developing leadership. I wanted to widen my view, hence engaging in the focus group discussions. The method of asking focus group participants to create collage and reflect on their thinking as they did so, supported Loads' (2009) assertion that reflection time enables participants to make more valuable contributions that if simply asked a series of questions in an interview. Roberts and Woods (2018) state that collage enables participants to represent people, organisations and relationships through tangible objects and this was true in my focus groups. Some participants surprised themselves as they explained their collages, realising that they had very deliberately selected a material to represent something which meant a lot to them or their collage. This was otherwise consciously unknown to them.   The discussion of the collages produced rich data, that even the participants commented on. Many of the participants stated retrospectively that they did not feel qualified enough to take part in a focus group for a doctoral study, but once they were informed of the collage making activity, participation in the focus group became significantly more appealing to them.

6.7.2 Theme 5: summary
Prior to conducting this research, I had not envisaged myself completing autoethnographic research. My previous research (at Masters level) had been quantitative and whilst in my church role as lay minister and preacher I was comfortable with storytelling, I had never envisaged completing qualitative research. However, I found constructing the autoethnography to be one of the most fulfilling stories I have ever told. Contrary to Winkler (2017, p. 236) who asserted that

autoethnographers can be "self-indulged narcissists" for my own personal benefit I became a, "self-reflexive and vulnerable scholar" (Winkler, 2017, p. 236). If nothing else, the autoethnography helped me, in my own personal and professional capacity, to develop as a leader, professional and as a researcher. This was a definite benefit of the research. There were more benefits, instantly recognised whilst completing the research. One of the unintended consequences of conducting the focus groups was that many of these participants later revealed to me that the focus groups had caused them to become much more reflective practitioners themselves. One of the members of staff at the school came to me and asked if they could begin their doctorate, having been inspired by my work. And having completed this thesis, I resolve to realise a life-time ambition of writing and publishing a book.

6.8 Chapter summary

This chapter explored five themes that emerged during the course of the study. The themes were drawn out of the research questions of the study. The researcher found it necessary to develop sub-themes in exploring the depth of the themes that emerged. In summary the study highlighted the following themes. Traditional models of leadership are helpful but limited when considering the leadership development of novice headteachers. This development cannot be constrained by a single framework as the demands placed on novice and developing headteachers are fluid and complex. Leadership is vital and also complex, and consideration must be taken of preparedness, culture development and the role that the headteacher is required to assume. Insights gained by a headteacher as insider researcher are illuminating and will be useful and generalisable but may also be restricted to situation specific conditions. Collage is a extremely useful method to elicit discussion in a focus group and a mixed-methods approach can be extremely illuminating when supplementing an autoethnography.

Chapter 7: Conclusions, Discussion, and Suggestions for Future Research

7.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter presents the conclusions for the research followed by professional recommendations. The chapter builds on the findings that emerged in the research, both phase 1 and phase 2, and that were introduced and discussed in the previous chapter. Conclusions are described in detail, referencing the supporting research data and supporting literature. Each conclusion ends with a recommendations for professional practice. The chapter then discusses the limitations of the study and makes suggestions for further research that could develop this area of knowledge further.

The conclusions presented in this chapter are summarised in the table below:

Table 9: Professional recommendations related to conclusions drawn from findings

	Conclusion	Theme of findings	Sub-theme of findings	RA	RQ	Professional recommendations
7.2.1	There are limitations to attempting to embed a model of leadership as a novice headteacher	Traditional models of leadership are helpful but limited		1, 2	1	Leadership development needs to consider participant preparation, expertise and the setting in which leadership is enacted.
7.2.2	Leadership development is not necessarily linear	Development of leadership cannot be constrained by a single framework		1, 2	2	All leaders should be engaged in coaching which considers the many dimensions of leadership development, including academic and spiritual.
7.2.3	Leadership demands adaptable approaches and thoughtful responses	Leadership is important and complex	Preparedness Culture Role	2	3	Leaders, especially in faith-based settings, need support to consider how to set strong, shared values, policies and practice specific to their settings and how these will become enacted.
7.2.4	Leadership cannot be reduced to a conceptual framework, however, autoethnography can provide useful insights	Leadership is multi-dimensional and complex	Fluidity Situational	2, 3	4	Practitioner research using autoethnography should be encouraged in education, especially in headteachers.
7.2.5	Mixed methods can open up dialogue and ameliorate some of the limitations of autoethnography	Autoethnography can be limited	Collage can plug the gaps	2, 3	5	Using a mixed methods approach to research can supplement professional development as well as research development.

Key:
RA Research Aim
RQ Research Question

I will now examine the professional recommendations in relation to my conclusions in individual succession.

7.2 Summary of findings/conclusions

7.2.1 There are limitations when attempting to embed a model of leadership as a novice headteacher

Crucial elements of leadership in a new school are not developed solely through embedding a model of leadership. School leadership is complex (Woods *et al*, 2020). There are many demands placed on headteachers. Arguably many more skills are required for headship than are available to novice headteachers. This was my experience and that of others (Luckcock, 2014; Rieckhoff, 2014; Lawton and Cairns, 2005; Grace, 2003). When turning to a seminal work for leading in a faith-based setting, such as the Way Ahead report (Archbishop's Council, 2001), I found some but limited value in the recommendations. I was an experienced senior leader in secondary schools and had completed the relevant qualification to take up the post of a headteacher (NPQH), however, I still felt ill-prepared for the myriad tasks that confronted me. In terms of leading the staff at the school, choosing and embedding a model of leadership was not sufficient to enable successful leadership. Leadership defined as, "a process of social influence, which maximises the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal" (Kruse, 2013, p.2) is critical in a school setting. I recognised the importance of combining the efforts of my staff to set up and run the school. However, despite my deep understanding of the models of leadership available to me, it was not as straightforward as it may have at first seemed. Arguably, with no previous leadership models in existence, it was a less complex task then taking over a headship at an existing school and having to change an existing model. However, I found that not only did I need to switch frequently between leadership models, I also had to flex the boundaries between leadership realms, moving within and between these realms moment to moment.

Ofsted (2019, p. 44) state that there is "no single appropriate way of leading a school", however there are a number of features that have been identified in effective school leadership. Ofsted further states that leaders should have a clear and ambitious vision for all, realised through strong, shared values, policies and practice. As discussed above, I spent a significant proportion of my time in the pre-opening phase, designing and articulating the vision, values and policies for the school. I appointed staff who I felt understood and would adhere to these vision, values and policies. I deliberately selected leadership models that would enable all the staff, including myself, to work towards common vision and values. However, I found that the leadership they needed from me to enable them to enact these roles was more fluid than could sufficiently be ascribed to or restrained by particular leadership models.

Similarly, the 'Way Ahead' report (Archbishops' Council, 2001) proposed a dual identity for headteachers in faith-based schools and a combination of three models of leadership: servant, invitational and transformational leadership. The dual identity relates to the need for headteachers to exercise both academic and spiritual leadership, as distinct from headteachers in a secular school, who would not be expected to provide spiritual leadership. Whilst I found I possessed the necessary skills to operate in both spiritual and academic leadership realms, I was not prepared for the degree of fluidity required to enable me to switch between the identities so often. The report did not make it clear that the leadership models would need to be at times as distinct and at times invisible. Some situations demanded a more strategic approach which could contribute to the development of a model, while other situations demanded decisive action which may not necessarily relate to any of the models.

My conclusion is that whilst traditional models of leadership are helpful and they are also of limited value to novice leaders, particularly in a faith-based setting. What follows are my professional recommendations to attempt to support novice leaders and these recommendations should apply to all settings, not just faith-based ones.

Professional recommendation 1 **Leadership development needs to consider participant preparation, expertise and the setting in which leadership is enacted**

Whilst I was an experienced leader and qualified to take over as headteacher of a faith-based secondary school, the demands of being a novice headteacher are myriad. Significant preparation for the role is essential, alongside continuing professional development (see below). There are aspects of the job of a faith-based headteacher which will not have been able to be practised prior to being in the role, for example, being held to different and arguably more exacting moral standards and being able to articulate these to differing audiences. Preparation for leading a faith-based setting needs to include both professional academic and spiritual aspects, as these are unique to leading a faith-based school. With specific reference to the faith-based setting, my personal faith equipped me with many of the skills necessary for the role, however, on-going professional spiritual support should also be provided at every stage to supplement this. Proactive individuals will seek out the necessary skills and attributes required; however, effective leadership development should be proactively provided by the agencies running the school and not left to chance. Arguably the CofEPQH launched during the course of this study goes some way to accounting for this. However, professional spiritual direction would be a welcome addition to the conditions of leading a faith-based school, in line with the supervision ministers (both lay and ordained) are afforded. Data from both phases of the research supported this.

7.2.2 Leadership development is not necessarily linear

Given that leadership is such an important factor in the success of a school, it follows that there should be sufficient priority given to the development of leadership once in post. Complexity theory (Stacey, 2012; Uhl-Bien *et al*., 2007; Osborn and Hunt 2007) states that leadership is not reducible to the learning of techniques and procedures, rather it is a complex, multi-dimensional activity. No amount of preparedness can sufficiently cater for the innumerable decisions and actions required of headteachers, in either secular or especially in faith-based settings. I found that the decisions I made were subject to deeper scrutiny due to being a faith-leader in a faith-based setting.

The Anglican Church recognises that Anglican Church school leadership can be portrayed as a form of ministry (Archbishops' Council, 2001), however, as a new leader of a faith-based school I did not receive formal ministry training as part of my professional development. This was noted by participants in phase 2 of the research as a critical element of leading a faith-based school.

The leadership development I observed in myself, and the school did not follow a linear pattern. I was not able to definitively distinguish the linear development of leadership model in the school, despite my significant awareness that this was one of my stated aims. Similarly, it was not possible to distinguish one specific model of leadership that existed in the school, more a combination of many. There was not a discernible pattern to the models of leadership that existed. Both phases of the research confirmed this. In phase 2 of the research, participants in the focus groups broadened my consideration of leadership models to holarchy, social story and processes, and analogies, rather than limiting my views of leadership to specific models.

Professional recommendation 2 ***All leaders should be engaged in coaching which considers the many dimensions of leadership development, including academic and spiritual***

The results from this research highlight the importance of professional and spiritual development and support being available to novice and experienced headteachers in faith-based settings. The benefit of this study for me as researcher-is-researched was the privilege of being able to reflect on my developing leadership with colleagues and peers (in the focus groups); reflective and highly analytical professional inquisitors (my supervisory team) and myself. My leadership development definitely benefited from these three perspectives. Professional development opportunities, in my personal experience, focused on vision and values and not enough importance was placed on the specific leadership development of individuals. As found in the focus groups and my own personal experience, spiritual support and development was limited and often left to the individual to source. Organisations should take responsibility for developing the professional spiritual dimensions of faith-based leadership, especially for novice headteachers. Training and development for headteachers should be individually focused, using a coaching model. Similarly, there is a requirement for spiritual

direction and support for novice headteachers in faith-based settings. Alongside the professional spiritual development, novice headteachers should be offered spiritual support, in line with the pastoral support given to full-time professional ministers of religion. Setting up and being responsible for the pastoral and spiritual aspects of a school is demanding. This, combined with the complications of being a novice headteacher, demands specific support and guidance. Opportunities to receive spiritual guidance and ministerial training should be offered for all headteachers in faith-based contexts.

7.2.3 Leadership in a faith-based setting demands adaptable approaches and thoughtful responses

In support of other research in this area, I found that faith school leadership was unique (Archbishops' Council, 2001). The leadership experiences I encountered were new to me, despite being an experienced leader. I had held senior leadership positions in secular secondary schools, but had not encountered, for example, unique and extreme questions relating to my faith and sexuality prior to working in this faith-based setting. However, whilst I was a new headteacher in a new faith-based school, I was not a new leader. This was my first time of leading a faith-based school.

In other establishments I had been known for my faith, but this had never played a pivotal or explicit part of my daily practice. The opposite was true in this setting. The Anglican Church's own report into leading faith-based schools stated that it would be important to have leaders who are Christians (The Archbishops' Council, 2001, p. xi). In a positive way, I was enabled to talk about and live out aspects of my personal faith in ways I had not experienced before. And in fact, I was not just enabled to, I was expected to. I found that my faith enabled me to pray with and for people. This is not necessarily something a school leader would normally be expected to do in any of the other schools I had worked in. There was an expectation placed on me from the outset that I could and would lead reflective moments, for example in meetings with other faith-based leaders or in meetings with church leaders.

Along with the explicit extra demands placed upon me as a leader, I felt that I was looked to with higher ethical standards as a result of my explicit faith. For example, the local newspaper contacted me and asked whether I would take part in an interview about single-use plastic bags. Rather than simply pursue an environmental line of questioning, I was drawn into an ethical faith-based conversation. Had I been a headteacher in a local secular school, I pondered whether this would have been the case. Similarly, when the local council and police arrived to remove the traveller guests we had in our car park, they openly expressed their surprise at my warm welcome to the travellers and asked if it was related to the fact that this was a church school.

Professional recommendation 3 **Leaders, especially in faith-based settings, need support to consider how to set strong, shared values, policies and practice specific to their settings and how these will be enacted**

Leadership in a faith-based setting is unique. Being a headteacher is a demanding and vital role in the success of a school. It is important to set and maintain strong, shared values, policies and practices in order to establish and build a successful culture. Doing this takes a great deal of effort and requires a significant investment in time and resources. The format of leadership development courses is often theoretical and does not lead to effective development of pertinent knowledge, understanding and skills. The support given to novice headteachers should focus on how to establish, share and enact values, policies and practice. Those responsible for support will need to have a deep understanding of the setting in which the novice headteacher is operating, both in terms of the specific age-range and potential specialism(s) of the school. This support will need to be on-going, due to the rapid and ever changing demands put on headteachers, not least novice headteachers.

7.2.4 Leadership cannot be reduced to a conceptual framework, however, autoethnography can provide useful insights

As has already been discussed, both phases of this study found leadership in school to be complex, multi-dimensional and not reducible to a single model or conceptual framework. However, autoethnography can provide useful insights. The researcher found immeasurable benefit in reflecting on her own leadership as part of the research. As an insider researcher this was a significant benefit. Not only did the autoethnographical account add to the paucity of practitioner research, it helped to improve the practice of the researcher as a leader. As leader-me, I was able to reflect on the practices that headteacher-me wanted and needed to improve more objectively than had I been solely operating as headteacher-me.

Professional recommendation 4 **Practitioner research using autoethnography should be encouraged in education, especially in headteachers.**

It is recognised that some hold the view that autoethnographers are "self-indulged narcissists" (Winkler, 2017, p. 236). However, being a headteacher is a unique position in a school. There are some aspects of the role that cannot be prepared for, as only the headteacher experiences the totality of the role. So, hearing directly from the experience of others can serve in some ways to prepare novice headteachers for the role. The researcher noted that in constructing the autoethnography she wrote honestly and passionately. Winkler (2017) contends that if an interview elicits passionate and truthful accounts it is revered, whereas passionate and truthful autoethnographies can be considered narcissistic. The researcher did not find this to be the case in this study. On the contrary, when speaking openly with phase 2 participants, colleague

headteachers spoke positively of the opportunity to reflect and share experiences. This was not unique to novice headteachers but was true of all participants in the focus groups, regardless of length of service or relative leadership position.

7.2.5 There is an intrinsic benefit of using mixed methods to supplement autoethnography

Some researchers have criticised autoethnography stating that it can focus mostly on self (Roth, 2009). The researcher notes that the autoethnographical account of this study forms a considerable part of the word count. This is deliberate. The autoethnographical account was designed to be both personal and academically reflexive. In sharing experiences and reflections, it is hoped that the insights will be useful to other novice and experienced headteachers, in secular and faith-based settings. Transferable experiences, described and discussed, may elicit feelings and considerations in the readers hitherto unknown to them.

Professional recommendation 5 **Using a mixed methods approach to research can supplement professional development as well as research development.**

The arts-based method chosen to supplement the autoethnography in this study was done so in order to elicit "profound feelings, responses and understandings" (Roberts and Woods, 2018, p. 627). Many of the participants in the focus groups stated that they felt ill-prepared to participate in a doctoral study as they were not "clever enough". Indeed, the researcher experienced feelings similar to these at many stages of the recording of the autoethnography. However, as a development of the work done by Chilton and Scotti (2014), the joining and juxtaposing of autoethnography and collage, opened up insights into leadership for the researcher. Not only during collage construction did participants find "associations and connections that might otherwise remain unconscious" (Butler-Kisber, 2008, p. 270), but also the researcher experienced similar enlightenment in the construction of the autoethnographical account and in the completion of authoring the thesis.

7.3 Limitations of the research

Despite a rigorous and thorough approach to the design of this study, there are a number of limitations linked to this research. Limitations are numbered below, followed by potential mitigations of these limitations in italics.

1. The context in which the research was conducted is very specific: a novice headteacher, in a new secondary school, which has a faith-based designation. The nature of this autoethnography dictated that the autoethnography was necessarily dictated by the context in which the period of the autoethnographer's life occurred. This may reduce generalisability. *All school settings are unique. It is hoped that there are many elements to*

this autoethnography that will be transferable. The autoethnography was not designed specifically with solely novice headteachers in mind and as was discussed, when faced with a crisis such as the pandemic, all headteachers found themselves insufficiently prepared. This work has highlighted the need for all headteachers, regardless of experience, to be self-reflexive and at times vulnerable. The autoethnography was also not designed specifically with headteachers of new schools in mind. In the school system there are always new teams to be built, new policies and procedures to implement. This work has highlighted the need for all headteachers to be adaptable and flexible.

2. Some claim that autoethnography is insufficiently rigorous. *Ellis et al. (2011) state that autoethnography can be both rigorous and theoretical and the same time as emotional and evocative. This study mitigated some of the traditional criticisms by using the researcher's journal and work schedule (diary) to provide definite reference points, at the same time as memory and recall (Chang, 2013; Giorgio, 2013).*

3. As a result of the pandemic, the focus groups were conducted remotely. This had a significant impact on the ability of the participants to be able to collaborate and ask questions of each other during the collage construction. The physicality of collage construction taking place all in one room, with participants seeing each other's as they were being constructed, may have elicited different responses. However, in some cases in this study, participants spoke very openly and personally about their experiences and views of leadership. This may have occurred as a result of them feeling safe to share openly in their own environment. The benefits of being together may have outweighed the opportunities for open and honest discussion. However, collaboration was significantly impeded by the remote nature of the focus groups. *Collage construction could be done in a large collaborative space, where participants may benefit from more discussion than they entered into on screen.*

4. Anonymity of participants and confidentiality of their contributions was paramount. *My initial thesis design included participants from the school in which I was headteacher. I realised as soon as I opened the school that the participants would be unable to be taken from the extremely small staff body. Their views would not be able to remain confidential. My agency as headteacher would have had significant impact on the focus groups. This may not be the same in a fully open and operational secondary school. It is likely that the participants would be amongst a staff body of over one hundred and fifty (rather than fifteen which was the total staff size on opening the school in this study), so they would be less likely to be recognisable. Their thoughts and comments about leadership would be less likely to be*

attributable to them in this case. The relationship between a headteacher and a member of staff in a fully operational school tends to be different: in the school in this study every member of staff and the headteacher had a significant number of daily interactions; in a fully functional school it is highly likely that the headteacher may be unseen by some members of staff from day to day.

5. The nature of this study meant that there was a single person grouping and analysing collages. Roberts and Woods (2018) read across collages together in the seminal research on which phase 2 of this study was based. As researcher I knew what the participants meant by what they had said during the focus groups, I was there and had transcribed the spoken contributions each made. *A possible mitigation for this would be to ask the collage participants to group the collages at the end of the focus groups. The themes may have emerged sufficient to allow them to see them. Alternatively, this activity lends itself to collaborative work and could lead to a collaborative autoethnographic approach (Emerald and Carpenter, 2014) where both phases 1 and 2 of this research could be constructed collaboratively.*

7.4 Suggestions for future research

The importance of the development of novice and experienced headteachers using autoethnography is an area of specific interest. This coupled with an increase in the incidence of mixed method approaches completed by serving practitioners have created multiple possible future studies. There are many areas that could be explored further, the recommendations listed below are based upon my findings, limitations of my research and areas I would like to explore further.

- Similar autoethnography completed by other novice headteachers at the start of their headteacher careers may provide insights for other novice headteachers. A wider body of autoethnographical accounts would give other novice headteachers a greater understanding of some of the many challenges faced by other novice headteachers.

- A longitudinal study to follow novice headteachers of brand new schools from appointment to the completion of a specific landmark in their school (either five years or seven, depending if the school was growing to the end of Year 11 or sixth form) would be enlightening. This may provide useful insights into the development and growth of leadership models over a longer period of time.

- The use of collage to supplement autoethnography deserves further exploration. In a large, fully functional school (as discussed above) it should be possible to conduct focus groups from within the school where the headteacher completes an autoethnographical account of

their leadership. This could provide incredibly useful insights into the matching or mismatching perception of culture and leadership.

7.5 Personal reflections

When I began this research journey, I had not yet secured a post as a headteacher. Neither had I, nor the majority of the world, imagined that during the first year of my first headship a global pandemic would occur. Combined, these two facts steered my research into otherwise unanticipated territory. This thesis helped me to find my voice: through autoethnography I became the headteacher that steered a fledgling school through a global pandemic. I learned much about myself, the school which I was building, the people with whom I worked and those who knew my leadership and school leadership well. I discovered that not many headteachers who completed research did so using autoethnography. I remain surprised by this, as many headteachers with whom I have worked are natural story tellers.

I discovered that opening and building a school community was much harder than had been imagined. I envisaged that armed with the knowledge from this study, I would develop a culture and model of leadership using my chosen conceptual framework. What transpired was not as simple as that. A school is comprised of individual people who do not always follow directions as intended. Leadership cannot be constrained by a single model or a conceptual framework. Despite knowing what I was building, my approach necessarily become much more fluid than the constraints I had imagined I would work within.

7.6 Concluding remarks

As a result of this study, my assumptions of how to build a school from the very beginning have changed. I discovered that leadership cannot be constrained by a single model or conceptual framework. However, I identified some key themes in my research that may be useful to other headteachers in similar settings. These findings are not limited to new or faith-based schools, but may be helpful to new or experienced headteachers in faith-based or secular schools. The themes that I identified are as follows:

- Traditional leadership models are helpful but limited. Headteachers need to have an awareness of models of leadership but should not be constrained by trying to fit their staff body or their leadership style to one single model. Leadership can be viewed in many ways.
- The development of leadership cannot be constrained by a single framework. Leadership is a dynamic and fluid process. I became a leader a long time before I became a headteacher. And I am still becoming a leader today. Maybe I am becoming a better, different, wiser, bolder, more resilient leader. I am certainly not the leader that I had imagined I would be

when I set out on this study. As has already been mentioned, I thought that I would arrive at an end point. On the contrary I think perhaps this is just the beginning.

- Leadership is important and complex. There are many thoughts that have been thought about leadership and accounts about leadership development written. This unique contribution charted the beginning of a specific type of educational leadership in a very specific, but growing, context.

- Leadership is multi-dimensional and 'complex'. There are professional qualifications that can be gained prior to becoming a headteacher, but these will not necessarily prepare headteachers for the unique position. Once in the position of headteacher, ongoing coaching and reflection are vital components of effective practice. Leadership can be viewed as a model or analogy, but equally it can be viewed as a social story or process. Those who are being led who see leadership thus will need a different type of leader to lead them. Similarly, leadership as holarchy, where the leader is viewed as both the most and least important part of the structure, but totally inseparable, demands a different interpretation of leadership from, for example, instructional leadership.

- I found that using mixed methods helped ameliorate some of the limitations of autoethnography. I found new insights to my leadership as did the participants of the focus groups. Collage was a powerful tool to help elicit hitherto unknown insights that the participants of the focus groups possessed.

- Schools are mini-cultures and as Klingaman (2012, p. 25) points out, "schools are similar to snowflakes; there are hundreds of thousands of schools around the world, and each of them is unique".

I have identified areas of study which may inspire future researchers to continue this work. I would commend the use of collage in focus groups to open discussion and elicit unknown experience and insights. Autoethnography is sadly lacking from the field of educational research. My hope is that by providing deeply personal and meaningful insights into my developing leadership in a new school with a faith-based context will go some way to closing the gap that exists in the knowledge of other novice headteachers. I hope that the contribution I have made to this area inspires others to research using these chosen methods and also reassures novice headteachers, that no matter what challenges they face in their first few years of headship, if I am still standing, they can be similarly successful.

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Participant K (2021) Focus study group. Interviewed by Linda Culling. *Autoethnography: a mixed methods study of a new headteacher exploring leadership in a faith-based school.* 14 May 2021 [Zoom focus group].

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Appendices

Study title

An auto-ethnographical study of leadership in a new Church of England free school.

I am writing to you to ask if you would consider participating in my research for my professional doctorate. I am studying leadership and your knowledge and experience in this area is of particular interest to me. I have included information which I hope you will find helpful in making your decision to participate or not.

I would be most grateful if you could spare the time to participate in one of the focus groups. I also completely understand that due to the nature of your work is such that you may not have the time.

If you have any questions, please ask.

Study title

An auto-ethnographical study of leadership in a new Church of England free school.

What makes leadership distinctive in our school?

I am hoping you will agree to take part in my (self-funded) doctoral research study, which I am undertaking at the University of the West of England, Bristol. This information is to help possible participants decide if they will agree to take part. Auto-ethnography is a form of research where self-reflection and writing are used to connect autobiographical study to wider meanings.

Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the study is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and if you have any queries or would like more information please contact me at the email address below.

Who is organising the research?

Research student: Linda Culling Email: Linda2.Culling@live.uwe.ac.uk

What is the aim of the research?

I am interested in studying leadership as I was the founding headteacher of XXXXXXX in XXXXXXX. I am aiming to record distinctive features of the development of leadership and this is a unique opportunity for me to do this as an insider-researcher. Whilst the focus of the study will be my autoethnography, I am going to compare and contrast my thoughts about leadership development and understanding with a range of other people, yourself included.

The research is looking at how my leadership has developed in setting up the XXXXXXX from the earliest stages. My aims are:

1. To record the development of leadership style in a values driven school;
2. To study school leadership at the conceptual and practical levels;
3. To critically evaluate leadership using models and frameworks to help.

To help me answer these questions I will be keeping a journal of my own reflections on my leadership (the 'autoethnography' part) and conducting focus groups, such as the one I wish you to be involved in, to get other people's perspectives on leadership. The aim of the focus groups will be to collect information that will be made anonymous.

The results of my study will be analysed and used in my thesis for my Professional Doctorate. The anonymised results may also be used in conference papers and peer-reviewed academic papers.

Why have you been invited to take part?

As a member of the team who worked with me pre-opening, I am interested in gaining information about your experience and views of leadership, so the focus group will ask you about these things. I will not be asking any questions about my leadership specifically but focussing on leadership in general. The purpose of the questions will be to gain information about your views and experiences.

Do you have to take part?

You do not have to take part in this research. It is up to you to decide whether or not you want to be involved. If you do decide to take part, you will be given a copy of this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. If you do decide to take part, you are able to withdraw from the research without giving a reason until the point at which your data is anonymised and can therefore no longer be traced back to you. This point will take place two months from the date you signed your consent form. If you want to withdraw from the study within this period, please email me. **Deciding not to take part or to withdrawal from the study does not have any penalty associated with it.**

What will happen if you take part and what do you have to do?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to take part in a focus group discussion, where you will be asked to create a collage that represents leadership. The focus group will be conducted by Linda Culling. I am experienced in the subject matter and am sensitive to any issues that may raise. The focus group will take approximately one hour and will take place via Zoom. The subject and focus of the discussion will be 'Leadership in a values driven context'. Your answers will be fully anonymised. There will be a focus group discussion after you have created your collage and this will be recorded on Zoom, but the recording will not contain your name. After the point of transcription, the Zoom recording will be deleted. Your data will be anonymised at this point and will be analysed with interview data from other anonymised participants. Photographs of the collages will be taken and linked to you via an anonymised unique identifier.

What are the benefits of taking part?

Most research into leadership in schools is either done by external researchers and/or by looking at established leaders. Being an insider should give me a unique view, that of a full-time leader, rather than professional researcher and a new headteacher, rather than an established one.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

I do not foresee or anticipate any significant risk to you in taking part in this study. If, however, you feel uncomfortable at any time you can ask to leave the focus group. If you need any support during or after the focus group, then the researcher will be able to put you in touch with suitable support agencies. The researcher is experienced in conducting focus groups and is sensitive to the subject area. The focus groups have been designed with these considerations in mind.

What will happen to your information?

All the information that you give will be kept confidential and anonymised at the time of transcription of the focus groups. The only circumstance where we may not be able to keep your information confidential is if you talk about a specific example of a situation where you have been involved in a leadership decision: if this situation arises, the example would not be used in the project. Hard copy research material will be kept in a locked and secure setting to which only the researcher and university supervisors will have access in accordance with the University's and the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation requirements. Voice recordings will be destroyed securely immediately after anonymised transcription. Your anonymised data (photographs of the collages) will be analysed together with other interview and file data, and I will ensure that there is no possibility of identification or re-identification from this point.

Where will the results of the research study be published?

The results of my study will be analysed and used in my thesis for my Professional Doctorate. The anonymised results may also be used in conference papers and peer-reviewed academic papers.

Who has ethically approved this research?

The project has been reviewed and approved by the University of the West of England University Faculty Research Ethics Committee. Any comments, questions or complaints about the ethical conduct of this study can be addressed to the Research Ethics Committee at the University of the West of England at:

Researchethics@uwe.ac.uk

What if something goes wrong?

Concerns, queries and/or complaints will be handled by the Director of Studies in the first instance. The Director of Studies is Dr Dean Smart Email: Dean.Smart@uwe.ac.uk

What if I have more questions or do not understand something?

If you would like any further information about the research, please contact me in the first instance:

Email: Linda2.Culling@live.uwe.ac.uk

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Sheet and your signed Consent Form to keep.

Director of Studies: Dr Dean Smart Email: Dean.SmartEDU@uwe.ac.uk

v.4, Linda Culling, February 2020

Purpose of the Privacy Notice

This privacy notice explains how the University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE) collects, manages and uses your personal data before, during and after you participate in 'An autoethnographical study of leadership in a new Church of England free school'. 'Personal data' means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (the data subject). An 'identifiable natural person' is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, including by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier, or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person.

This privacy notice adheres to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) principle of transparency. This means it gives information about:

- How and why your data will be used for the research;

- What your rights are under GDPR; and

- How to contact UWE Bristol and the project lead in relation to questions, concerns or exercising your rights regarding the use of your personal data.

This Privacy Notice should be read in conjunction with the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form provided to you before you agree to take part in the research.

Why are we processing your personal data?

UWE Bristol undertakes research under its public function to provide research for the benefit of society. As a data controller we are committed to protecting the privacy and security of your personal data in accordance with the (EU) 2016/679 the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 (or any successor legislation) and any other legislation directly relating to privacy laws that apply (together "the Data Protection Legislation"). General information on Data Protection law is available from the Information Commissioner's Office (https://ico.org.uk/).

How do we use your personal data?

We use your personal data for research with appropriate safeguards in place on the lawful bases of fulfilling tasks in the public interest, and for archiving purposes in the public interest, for scientific or historical research purposes.

We will always tell you about the information we wish to collect from you and how we will use it.

We will not use your personal data for automated decision making about you or for profiling purposes.

Our research is governed by robust policies and procedures and, where human participants are involved, is subject to ethical approval from the University Research Ethics Committees. This research has been approved by *the Faculty of ACE Research Ethics Committee.* The research team adhere to the **Ethical guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (and/or the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki, 2013) and the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).**

For more information about UWE Bristol's research ethics approval process please see our Research Ethics webpages at:

www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchethics

What data do we collect?

The data we collect will vary from project to project. Researchers will only collect data that is essential for their project. The specific categories of personal data processed are described in the Participant Information Sheet provided to you with this Privacy Notice.

Who do we share your data with?

We will only share your personal data in accordance with the attached Participant Information Sheet and your Consent.

How do we keep your data secure?

We take a robust approach to protecting your information with secure electronic and physical storage areas for research data with controlled access. If you are participating in a particularly sensitive project UWE Bristol puts into place additional layers of security. UWE Bristol has Cyber Essentials information security certification.

Alongside these technical measures there are comprehensive and effective policies and processes in place to ensure that users and administrators of information are aware of their obligations and responsibilities for the data they have access to. By default, people are only granted access to the information they require to perform their duties. Mandatory data protection and information security training is provided to staff and expert advice available if needed.

How long do we keep your data for?

Your personal data will only be retained for as long as is necessary to fulfil the cited purpose of the research. The length of time we keep your personal data will depend on several factors including the significance of the data, funder requirements, and the nature of the study. Specific details are provided in the attached Participant Information Sheet, all field notes will be shredded, and information held on secure storage on a computer will be deleted on completion of award. Anonymised data that falls outside the scope of data protection legislation as it contains no identifying or identifiable information may be stored in UWE Bristol's research data archive or another carefully selected appropriate data archive.

Your Rights and how to exercise them

Under the Data Protection legislation, you have the following **qualified** rights:

1. The right to access your personal data held by or on behalf of the University;
2. The right to rectification if the information is inaccurate or incomplete;
3. The right to restrict processing and/or erasure of your personal data;
4. The right to data portability;
5. The right to object to processing;
6. The right to object to automated decision making and profiling;
7. The right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Please note, however, that some of these rights do not apply when the data is being used for research purposes if appropriate safeguards have been put in place.

We will always respond to concerns or queries you may have. If you wish to exercise your rights or have any other general data protection queries, please contact UWE Bristol's Data Protection Officer (dataprotection@uwe.ac.uk).

If you have any complaints or queries relating to the research in which you are taking part please contact either the research project lead, whose details are in the attached Participant Information Sheet, UWE Bristol's Research Ethics Committees (research.ethics@uwe.ac.uk) or UWE Bristol's research governance manager (Ros.Rouse@uwe.ac.uk).

v.1: This Privacy Notice was issued in April 2019 and will be subject to regular review/update.

An auto-ethnographical study of leadership in a new Church of England free school

The Participant Information Sheet you have been given tells you about my research, and this form is your way of showing you have read about what I plan to do and if you sign and return it agree to take part.

Please therefore:

- ✓ Read the information.
- ✓ Ask any questions you need answered about the research.
- ✓ And if you are comfortable with taking part please sign and return a copy of this form.

- ✓ I have read and understood the information in the Participant Information Sheet which I have been given to read before asked to sign this form;
- ✓ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study;
- ✓ I have had my questions answered satisfactorily by the research team;
- ✓ I agree that anonymised quotes may be used in the final Report of this study;
- ✓ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time until the data has been anonymised, without giving a reason;
- ✓ I agree to take part in the research.

Name (Printed)……………………………………………………………………………….

Signature…………………………………………………………. Date…………………….

v.3, Linda Culling, February 2020

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this focus group.

You are being asked to create your own collage based on the question:

"What does leadership look like in a church secondary school?"

1. Select some raw materials for our collages from the range of materials provided:
   a. Pasta shapes, buttons, string, straws, paper clips, tissue paper, sequins, coloured beads, stones, balloons, ribbon, geometrical shapes

2. Place the materials on your paper in front of you in a collage that best represents your response to the question

3. Be ready and prepared to describe your collage to the group after you are finished

4. You should look at other collages and be prepared to ask questions (if you wish) about them

You will have about 10 minutes to make your collage and the time afterwards will be used for discussion and questions.

As you know, the discussion and questions are being audio-recorded. This dialogue will be transcribed afterwards, and your contributions will be completely anonymised. Digital photographs will be taken of the collages as a record of them, you will remain anonymous as the creator of the collage and only identified by a participant number in the subsequent written account.

If you have any questions about the activity, you should ask them now.

Thank you

v.2, Linda Culling, 19th October 2019

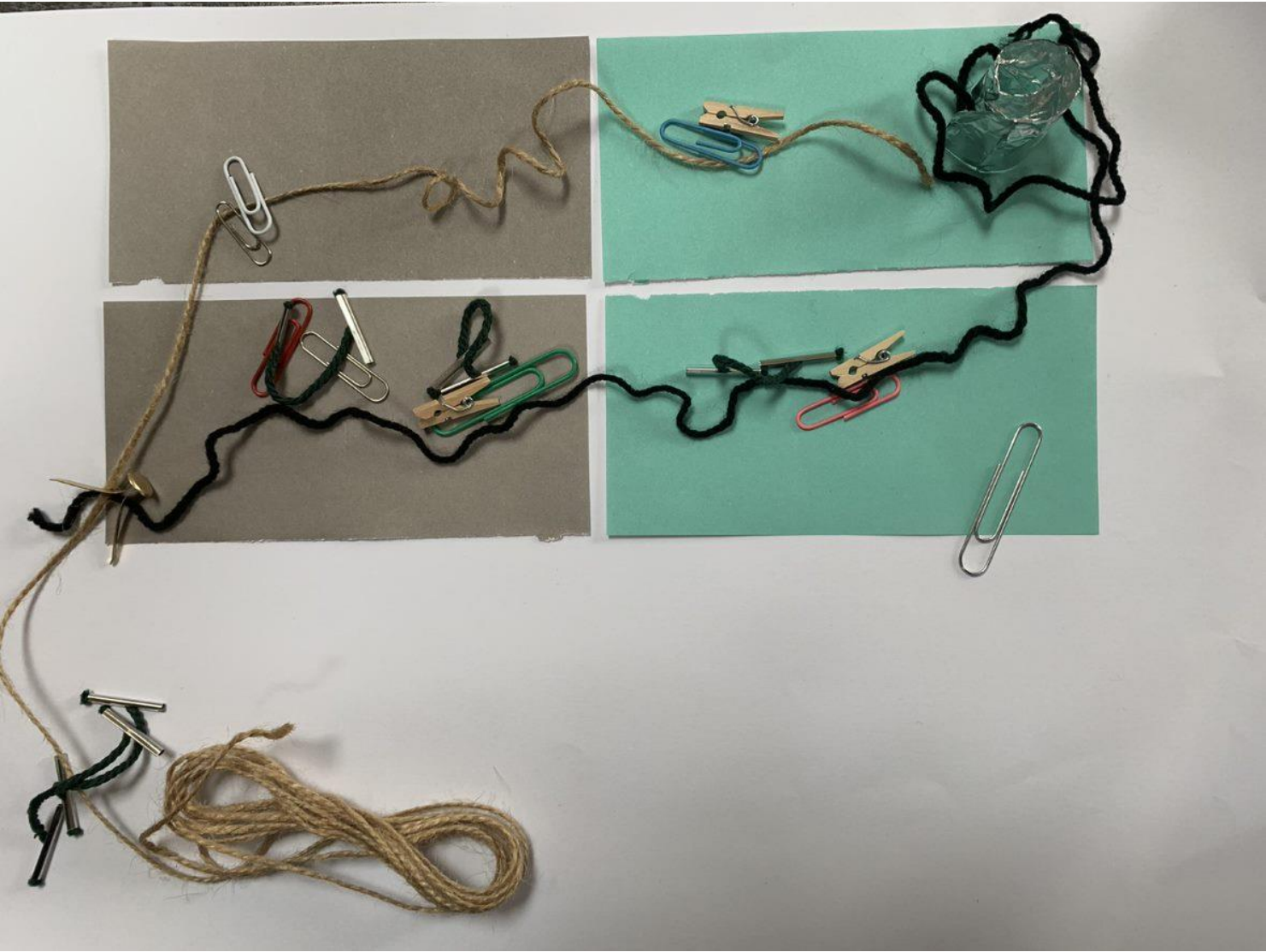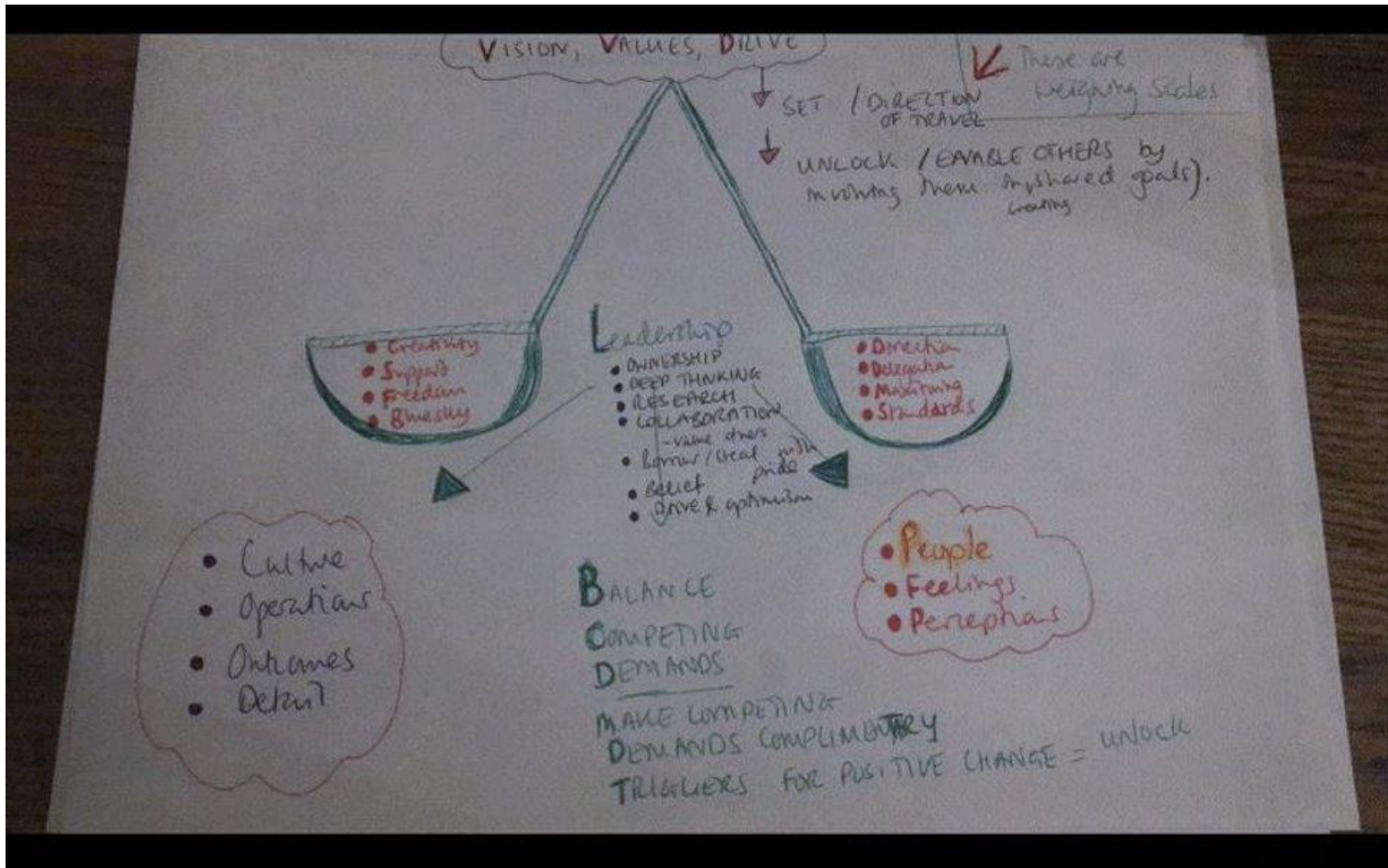*Appendix 13: Collage 8*

Appendix 16: Collage 11

No materials received in post due to pandemic, participant described 2 'pictures', one of DNA and one of a heart monitor displaying peaks and troughs