

**Curriculum Leadership in Times of Change:
A Maltese Case Study**

Alexia Abela Cascun

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of Education
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
in Educational Leadership and Management at the
University of Malta

May 2020



L-Universit 
ta' Malta

University of Malta Library – Electronic Thesis & Dissertations (ETD) Repository

The copyright of this thesis/dissertation belongs to the author. The author's rights in respect of this work are as defined by the Copyright Act (Chapter 415) of the Laws of Malta or as modified by any successive legislation.

Users may access this full-text thesis/dissertation and can make use of the information contained in accordance with the Copyright Act provided that the author must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the prior permission of the copyright holder.



FACULTY OF EDUCATION

DECLARATIONS BY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

Student's Code: 20MAELM001

Student's Name & Surname: Alexia Abela Cascun

Course: Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management

Title of Dissertation: Curriculum Leadership in Times of Change:
A Maltese Case Study

(a) Authenticity of Dissertation

I hereby declare that I am the legitimate author of this Dissertation and that it is my original work.

No portion of this work has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institution of higher education.

I hold the University of Malta harmless against any third party claims with regard to copyright violation, breach of confidentiality, defamation and any other third party right infringement.

(b) Research Code of Practice and Ethics Review Procedure

I declare that I have abided by the University's Code of Practice and Research Ethics Review Procedures.

As a Master's student, as per Regulation 58 of the General Regulations for University Postgraduate Awards, I accept that should my dissertation be awarded a Grade A, it will be made publicly available on the University of Malta Institutional Repository.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Alexia Abela Cascun".

Signature of Student

ALEXIA ABELA CASCUN

Name of Student (in Caps)

18/05/2020

Date

Abstract

Alexia Abela Cascun

Curriculum Leadership in Times of Change:

A Maltese Case Study

This study adopts a case study approach to explore curriculum leadership in a changing, educational context. The study aims to (i) understand how curriculum leadership functions are perceived and enacted locally; (ii) identify ways how such practices can be refined; and (iii) explore how proficient curriculum leadership actions can heighten effective curriculum development and renewal. This study draws on insider researcher methodology. Data was collected between June and November 2019, gathered through (i) semi-structured interviews with policymakers, college leaders and heads of school; (ii) focus group interviews with middle leaders and teachers; (iii) observations of meetings; and (iv) a review of the School Development Plan of participating schools. An inductive, thematic analytic approach was used for data analysis. The research findings advocate for a leadership for learning model as a vehicle for curriculum leadership. The study indicates that better resource provision, enhanced continuous professional development opportunities and increased shared governance can augment curriculum leadership practices. The development of expertise and the allocation of more time for collaboration can develop professional learning environments within which quality learning abounds.

Master of Arts

May 2020

Keywords:

Curriculum Leadership - Case Study- Collaborative Learning- Curriculum Change

Dedication

To my pride and joy, *Jake* ...

... and the rest of my beloved ones,
for standing by me through thick and thin.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of individuals without whose support, this thesis would never have been completed.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Christopher Bezzina B. Ed. (Hons), M. Ed. Admin. (Hons) (Massey), Ph.D. (Brunel), FCCEAM who critiqued my work, offered insightful feedback and guided me throughout this journey.

I would also like to thank the Head College Network for granting me permission to conduct research within his college, for being a participant and for providing his support.

Heartfelt thanks to all research participants who took the time to engage with this research. This study would not have been possible without their invaluable insight.

I also wish to thank those friends and colleagues who were there for me in many different ways.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank my husband, Keith, my parents, my sister and my in-laws for their unconditional love and relentless support. Without them, I would not be where I am today.

Thank you all.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Figures.....	x
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Abbreviations.....	xii
Introduction.....	2
1.0 Introduction.....	2
1.1 Context and Background.....	2
1.2 Rationale.....	6
1.3 Research Area and Objectives.....	6
1.4 Thesis Overview.....	7
Literature Review.....	10
2.0 Introduction.....	10
2.1 Local Educational Reforms.....	10
2.1.1 Past reforms.....	11
2.1.2 Present reforms.....	12
2.2 Contemporary School Leadership.....	13
2.2.1 Management versus leadership.....	14
2.2.2 Basics of successful school leadership.....	15
2.2.2.1 Developing value-based visions.....	16
2.2.2.2 Fostering collegial relationships.....	17
2.2.2.3 Developing professional learning communities.....	18
2.2.2.4. Managing the teaching and learning programme.....	19
2.3 Leadership for Learning.....	21
2.3.1 Challenges to leadership for learning.....	22
2.3.2 Adopting a leadership for learning model.....	23
2.3.3 Leadership for learning practices.....	24
2.3.3.1 Investment in capacity building.....	25
2.4 Curriculum Leadership.....	26
2.4.1 Curriculum development.....	26

2.4.2 Curriculum implementation and evaluation.....	27
2.4.2.1 Nourishing teachers' learning.....	28
2.4.2.2 Nourishing curriculum leaders' learning.....	30
2.4.3 Curriculum renewal.....	31
2.4.3.1 A successful renewal process.....	33
2.4.3.2 Prospects for sustainable curriculum change.....	33
2.5 Conclusion.....	34
Research Methodology.....	36
3.0 Introduction.....	36
3.1 Research Framework.....	36
3.1.1 Philosophical worldview.....	37
3.1.2 Researcher's identity.....	37
3.1.3 Researcher's insider role.....	38
3.2 Research Approach.....	38
3.3 Research Design.....	39
3.3.1 Case study typology.....	40
3.4 Research Method.....	41
3.4.1 Research participants.....	41
3.4.2 Data collection methods.....	42
3.4.2.1 Interviews.....	42
3.4.2.2 Observation sessions.....	45
3.4.2.3 Documents.....	46
3.5 Analytic Approach.....	46
3.6 Validity and Reliability Measures.....	49
3.6.1 Construct validity.....	49
3.6.2 Internal validity.....	50
3.6.3 External validity.....	50
3.6.4 Reliability.....	51
3.7 Piloting the Study.....	52
3.8 Research Ethical and Privacy considerations.....	52
3.9 Conclusion.....	54
Research Findings.....	56
4.0 Introduction.....	56
4.1 Leading Learning.....	56
4.1.1 Challenges to curriculum leadership.....	58
4.1.2 Shared curriculum leadership.....	59
4.1.2.1 Visionary and strategic headship.....	59

4.1.2.2 Delegation and empowerment.....	61
4.1.2.3 SDP as a tool for curriculum leadership.	64
4.2 Collaborative Learning Environments	65
4.2.1 Nurturing collegial relationships.....	66
4.2.2 Curriculum development, implementation and innovation.....	68
4.2.3 Curriculum monitoring and evaluation.	70
4.2.4 Fostering networking practices.	72
4.3 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)	73
4.3.1 Teachers' CPD.....	73
4.3.2 Middle leaders' CPD.....	75
4.3.3 Heads of schools' CPD.....	76
4.4 Curriculum Renewal	77
4.4.1 Valuing curriculum change.....	78
4.4.2 Challenges to curriculum change.....	78
4.4.2.1 Rate and pace of change.....	79
4.4.2.2 Inadequate structures.....	80
4.4.2.3 Insufficient training.....	80
4.4.2.4 A top-down approach.....	82
4.4.3 Allowing time for change.....	83
4.5 Conclusion	83
Discussion	85
5.0 Introduction.....	85
5.1 Leading Learning.....	85
5.1.1 Shared curriculum leadership.....	87
5.1.2 Leadership for learning.....	88
5.2 Collaborative Learning Environments	89
5.2.1 Scheduling time for collaboration.....	90
5.2.2 Development of expertise.....	92
5.2.3 Access to expertise.....	93
5.2.4 Transforming school cultures.....	95
5.3 Continuous Professional Development.....	96
5.3.1 College-based CPD.....	97
5.3.2 Enhanced networking practices.....	98
5.3.3 Shared governance.....	99
5.4 Curriculum Renewal	100
5.4.1 Valuing leaders and teachers.....	101
5.4.2 A bottom-up approach.....	102

5.4.3 Allowing time for consolidation.....	103
5.5 Conclusion.....	104
Conclusion and Recommendations.....	106
6.0 Introduction.....	106
6.1 Conclusions.....	106
6.2 Recommendations.....	108
6.2.1 Recommendations at ministerial level.....	108
6.2.2 Recommendations at college level.....	110
6.2.3 Recommendations at school level.....	111
6.3 Study limitations and recommendations for further research.....	113
6.4 Reflections on the Personal and Professional Impact of the Study.....	114
6.5 Conclusion.....	116
References.....	118
Appendix A Research Time Frame.....	135
Appendix B Interview Protocol.....	137
Appendix C Translation of Quotations.....	140
Appendix D Observation Template.....	147
Appendix E Field Notes Sample.....	149
Appendix F Coding System Sample.....	153
Appendix G FREC Ethical Clearance.....	155
Appendix H Institutional Permission.....	157
Appendix I Request for Gatekeeper Permission - HCN.....	159
Appendix J Gatekeeper Permission - HCN.....	162
Appendix K Request for Gatekeeper Permission - HoS.....	164
Appendix L FREC Permission to Collect Data.....	167
Appendix M Information Letter.....	169
Appendix N Consent Form.....	171

List of Figures

Figure3.1 Final Thematic Map.....	48
Figure3.2 Convergence of Multiple Sources of Evidence (single study)	49

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Schedule of Interviews.....	43
Table 3.2 Schedule of Observation Sessions.	45
Table 3.3 Phases of Thematic Analysis	47

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Explanation
AfL	Assessment for Learning
AHC	Assistant Head Curriculum
AHoS	Assistant Head of School
CoPE	Communities of Professional Educators
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CT	Curriculum Time
CL	College Leader
DCRILL	Directorate for Curriculum, Research, Innovation and Lifelong Learning
EO	Education Officer
EU	European Union
FG	Focus Group
FACTS	For All Children To Succeed
FREC	Faculty Research Ethics Committee
HCN	Head College Network
HoD	Head of Department
HoS	Head of School
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IfE	Institute for Education
LOF	Learning Outcomes Framework

LOs	Learning Outcomes
MEDE	Ministry for Education and Employment
MEYE	Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment
MUT	Malta Union of Teachers
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NMC	National Minimum Curriculum
OBE	Outcome-Based Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
P	Policymaker
PD	Professional Development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLC	Professional Learning Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDP	School Development Plan
SIRSU	School Internal Review and Support Unit
SMT	School Management Team
SLT	School Leadership Team
SL	School Leader
T	Teacher
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UoM	University of Malta
UREC	University Research Ethics Committee

Chapter 1:

Introduction

Introduction

The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity.

The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty.

-Sir Winston Churchill, former U.K. Prime Minister

1.0 Introduction

The introductory chapter starts by setting the context and background to the study. This is followed by the study's rationale. The next section focuses on the research area and objectives of the study. Finally, an overview of the thesis chapters is presented.

1.1 Context and Background

Contemporary school leaders operate during a time of prodigious social, cultural and political change (Fullan, 2014; Harris, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). As Fullan (2001) has stated, change is "a double-edged sword" (p. 1), offering numerous challenges and limitless possibilities. Working in a dynamic environment makes school leadership increasingly onerous yet immeasurably rewarding.

Local contemporary leaders function within such a demanding context. These experience pressures brought about by a dynamic, social context coupled with those spurred on by the inception of educational reform policies, aimed at renewing the local educational system and improving educational outcomes. Contemporary school leaders are being held increasingly accountable for students' high-achievement, adding to the burdens that leading schools in a complex, rapidly changing environment entails (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

For more than twenty years, the Maltese educational system has experienced “wave after wave of reforms” (Bezzina, 2019a, p. 369), all pursuing one unique goal: educational excellence. This ambitious goal was set way back in 1988, with the inception of the *Education Act* (Act XXIV of 1988), which pledged to make educational provision accessible to all, bolstering all local citizens’ propensity for success (Cutajar, 2007). The ACT laid the foundations for the local, educational system, declaring:

It is the right of every citizen of the Republic of Malta to receive education and instruction without any distinction of age, sex, disability, belief or economic means. (Education Act, 1988, CAP 327, p. 5)

This vision was explicated in numerous seminal documents including *Creating the Future Together - National Minimum Curriculum* (NMC) (MEYE, 2000), *For All Children to Succeed: A New Network Organisation for Quality Education in Malta* (FACTS) (MEYE, 2005), *A National Curriculum Framework for All* (NCF) (MEDE, 2012) and *Respect for All Framework* (MEDE, 2014). Such policies have envisioned the creation of a more inclusive and just educational system.

Despite upholding such transformational educational visions, 2013 dealt a serious blow to previous reform efforts, by portraying a vivid picture of a failing educational system. Local students’ performance at international tests was poor, leading Mr Bartolo, then Minister for Education and Employment, to announce a new wave of reforms aiming to address lacunas in the local educational system (MEDE, 2014).

These new educational goals, manifested in the *Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024: Sustaining Foundations, Creating Alternatives, Increasing Employability* (The Strategy) (MEDE, 2014) and explicated in the policy document *My Journey: Achieving through Different Paths* (My Journey) (MEDE, 2016) and the *Learning Outcomes Framework* (LOF) (MEDE, 2015) envision quality and equitable educational provision for all. Such student-centred policies aim to foster functional and employable local and global citizens of the 21st century.

As Dr. Frank Fabri, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) stated, in a press release dated December 5, 2018 (MEDE, 2018), the *Strategy* has aligned the local educational system with UNESCO's vision for Education 2030, specifically Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4): Quality Teaching which aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (United Nations, 2015, p. 17).

It is such educational outcomes that past and present reforms pursue. The local educational system is at a crucial moment in its history. Current reforms in Malta aim for a paradigm shift from a highly selective, exam-oriented system towards a more comprehensive and equitable system that secures high achievement for all students.

However, as Fullan (2007) has claimed, whilst policy documents may exhort change, sustainable change relies on the interplay between three key aspects, these being new policies, different approaches and changed mind-sets. Policymakers may set the educational vision, but it is key practitioners who catalyse change, transforming said visions into tangible outcomes. Effective change is not a solitary endeavour, but one that requires the joint effort of policymakers, educational leaders, teachers, students and parents alike (Fullan, 2007).

School leaders' "change agency" (Fullan, 2014, p. 123) and their ability to transform schools into institutions that pursue continuous progress, despite the challenges met, are central to effective change. As Fullan (2002) has stated:

only principals who are equipped to handle a complex, rapidly changing environment can implement the reforms that lead to sustained improvement for student achievement. (p. 16)

Having numerous researchers strongly linking educational leaders' influence to students' achievement has increased school leaders' accountability for quality teaching and student learning and augmented the need for leadership practices that increasingly focus on learning (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2006; Louis et al., 2010; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson et al., 2008).

As Glatthorn, Jailall & Jailall (2017) have claimed, curriculum leadership is crucial to quality educational provision. Curriculum leadership functions centre on "maximizing student learning by providing quality content" (ibid, p. 62). Leading schools in times of curriculum change banks on having leaders who skilfully facilitate collaborative curriculum development, including curriculum design, implementation and evaluation which lead to innovation (Glatthorn et al., 2017; Wiles, 2009).

It is the perceived need for such leadership practices that led to this study. The local, curriculum reform context was deemed most propitious for research about leadership that supports learning. This study has sought to explore ways how curriculum leadership practices could reinforce educational leaders' and teachers' efforts to propel both school-based and national curriculum initiatives forward. With the local, changing context in mind and the desire for further exploration into the realms of leadership practices that promulgate learning, this research process ensued.

1.2 Rationale

At the onset of my career as an educational leader, I eagerly embarked on this new journey. Being multi-faceted and dynamic, the role of assistant head of school proved to be engaging, rewarding but also highly demanding. Handling the myriad responsibilities of being a school leader provoked a daily challenge, one that offered food for thought. As I went about my daily duties, I became increasingly aware that such demands progressively pulled me away from the classroom, from what is often referred to as the core business of schooling, that being teaching and learning.

Experiencing such a reality within the local context of curriculum reform, one that I felt obliged to partake in, heightened my concern and increased my interest in this phenomenon. Such thoughts led me on a reflective journey in pursuit of ways how, as an educational leader, I could prioritise curriculum leadership practices whilst conducting the varied responsibilities related to being a school leader. Several years down the line and having taken up studies in educational leadership and management, such reflections transformed into this inquiry process.

1.3 Research Area and Objectives

A review of pre-existing international and local literature about curriculum leadership functions has revealed a scarcity of such knowledge base. Acknowledging the dearth of literature in this area, Glatthorn et al. (2017) have claimed “principals do not seem to be receiving much help from experts in understanding curriculum leadership” (p. 64), making performing such functions all the more challenging.

Whilst local studies about leadership roles abound, yet, to date, little research has sought to understand what constitutes effective curriculum leadership. Fava Galea’s (2015) quantitative study about local principals’ instructional leadership roles

has touched upon this area. Yet, instructional leadership and curriculum leadership are diverse areas. Whilst instructional leadership focuses on the way content is taught, curriculum leadership centres on learning (Glatthorn et al., 2017).

This study aims to address this gap in the literature, by exploring leadership that sustains learning. This qualitative case study is guided by one major, exploratory question, namely:

- How is curriculum leadership perceived and enacted in the local, changing educational context?

In addressing this research question, the following sub-questions are considered:

- How can curriculum leadership practices be refined?
- How can curriculum leadership functions heighten curriculum development and renewal efforts?

The study seeks to shed light on curriculum leadership practices as adopted within the local context, with a view to discover strengths, weaknesses and strategies that could inform and possibly refine current practice. By advancing knowledge about this relatively unexplored area, it is hoped that key practitioners are offered enriching insights that inspire stronger curriculum leadership efforts, aspiring for enhanced quality curriculum provision.

1.4 Thesis Overview

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Whilst this introductory chapter has set the background to the research and explored the rationale and aims of the research, the ensuing chapter offers a review of literature that highlights local reform processes, identifies what constitutes successful school leadership, explores curriculum leadership functions and delves into curriculum change.

The third chapter deals with the methodological approach that guided this research process. Chapter four presents the research findings that have emerged from the data collected. This is followed by the discussion chapter, which provides an interpretation of such findings with a view of existing literature.

The final chapter concludes the research by drawing study conclusions and providing recommendations that can inform present and future practice. It also highlights the study's strengths and its limitations, suggests areas for further research and ends with the researcher's reflection about the whole research process.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

Literature Review

As we look ahead into the 21st century,
leaders will be those who empower others.

– *Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft*

2.0 Introduction

The literature review chapter delves into four main aspects. It starts with an overview of the local context of educational change, exploring past and present reforms that have shaped the Maltese educational system. The review considers the changing role of contemporary leaders and then explores the key principles of the leadership for learning model. Ultimately, it delves into curriculum leadership functions conducive to quality curriculum provision.

2.1 Local Educational Reforms

Education is all about change. It transforms people's hearts, minds and lives. Educational institutions are equally dynamic, continuously reinventing themselves to mirror changing, societal demographics (Fullan, 2001, 2007, 2014; Harris, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Changing economic, cultural and political realities all influence curriculum provision, making curriculum renewal a continuous process. A relevant curriculum is one that constantly renews itself to furnish students with meaningful and beneficial educational experiences (Moon & Murphy, 2006; Sorenson et al., 2011).

Aspiring to provide quality curriculum provision and enhanced educational outcomes, has led the Maltese educational system on a lengthy, reform process. Such a renewal process persists, being that, so far, these coveted educational aims have proven to be elusive.

2.1.1 Past reforms.

Quality education has always been at the heart of the local educational agenda, featuring centrally in all seminal policy documents. The NMC has focused its vision on the individual, pledging “to contribute to the best possible formation of every person so that good Maltese and world citizens can be produced” (p. 47). Developing on such principles, the NCF has sought to offer quality education that nourishes students’ abilities and beliefs, enhancing their opportunities and bettering their future prospects.

Despite such fervent educational visions and numerous zealous efforts to transform the local educational system into a highly functioning system, 2013 offered harsh evidence of a failed attempt at reform. Published outcomes of international comparative tests (MEDE, 2013a; MEDE, 2013b; MEDE, 2013c), including Programme for International Student Assessment 2012 (PISA) developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), developed by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), indicated that Maltese students fared poorly in mathematics, science, languages and literacy, with their performance being exceedingly low compared to that of students from other European Union (EU) countries.

Concurrently, statistics published by Eurostat portrayed Malta as having the second highest rate of early school leavers in the EU. Figures for 2013 showed that Malta had an early school leavers’ rate of 20.9%, which was much higher than the EU average of 11.9% (European Commission, 2013).

Such dismal reports presented the Maltese education authorities with a dilemma. On one hand, the educational system had been experiencing a reform process for more than a decade; one that Borg and Giordmaina (2012) argued was leaving a negative impact on key practitioners. Yet, on the other hand, a need for reform persisted. As Borg and Giordmaina (2012) claimed at the time, despite the visible signs of reform fatigue, the only viable option was to keep on striving to turn the local educational system around. Due to such a need, new curriculum reforms have ensued.

2.1.2 Present reforms.

In a press release dated January 25, 2014, then Minister Bartolo set new educational priorities aimed to “minimise skill gaps for the benefit of the next generations” (MEDE, 2014). Such educational priorities set the local educational system on a journey aiming for equitable, quality education for all, one that transformed learners into employable and functional citizens of the 21st century.

These educational goals have resulted in the *Respect for All Framework* (MEDE, 2014), based on four pillars, namely social justice, equity, diversity and inclusivity, and the *Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024: Sustaining Foundations, Creating Alternatives, Increasing Employability* (MEDE, 2014) which aspires to enable students to:

develop their personal and social potential and acquire the appropriate knowledge, key skills, competences and attitudes through a value-oriented formation including equity, social justice, diversity, and inclusivity. (p. 3)

These educational goals were translated into the policy document *My Journey: Achieving through different paths* (My Journey) (MEDE, 2016) and the *Learning Outcomes Framework* (LOF) (MEDE, 2015). My Journey aspires to provide equitable academic, vocational and applied learning programmes within one comprehensive and inclusive secondary school.

As Attard Tonna and Bugeja (2016) have stated, the LOF aims for an overhaul in teaching, learning and assessment practices, by shifting from content-based teaching to student-centred learning. This framework supports an outcome-based approach to learning (OBE) (Spady, 1994), encourages assessment for learning strategies (AfL) (Black & William, 2009) and the development of 21st century skills (Wagner, 2008), seeking to make schooling more meaningful and relevant.

As Wagner (2008) has noted, teaching methodologies and examination systems adopted to date were created in a different century. Whilst these have served the needs of past societies, today “they are hopelessly outdated” (p. 9). Aspiring to address the needs of present day learners, by offering quality learning and high-standards of achievement, has made curriculum renewal central to the local improvement agenda.

2.2 Contemporary School Leadership

Changing times lead to changing perspectives, roles and actions. Besides influencing curriculum work, changing societal, cultural and political realities equally affect school leadership practices. Scholars agree that shifting external contexts have influenced school leaders’ roles, making them increasingly complex and diverse (Bezzina, 2013; Fullan, 2001; Harris, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2001).

Such challenging realities force school leaders to constantly shift between numerous roles, acting as educational visionaries, curriculum leaders, assessment specialists, people leaders, change facilitators and facility managers (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005). The need to constantly switch between such diverse responsibilities has led to a role overload (Fullan, 2007), urging Bezzina (2013) to claim that, contemporary leadership is indeed a taxing endeavour.

2.2.1 Management versus leadership.

Dimmock (1999) has argued that contemporary school leaders face the daily challenge of having to choose between leading initiatives that pursue the school's overall progress, managing the school's daily operations and handling administrative tasks. School leaders face such quandaries because, although such responsibilities are very diverse, yet they all pertain to one, complex role, that of being a school leader.

As Bezzina (2013) has observed, although contemporary school leaders may wish to focus on leadership actions, these invariably gravitate towards managerial duties. Indeed, Bush (2008) has questioned whether the change in nomenclature used to refer to school leaders, namely using the term senior leadership team instead of the term senior management team, has resulted in a change in practice or whether this has been purely "a semantic shift" (p. 276), with no real bearing on leaders' actions.

The distinction between leadership and management has been a cause of disagreement for years (Bush, 2011, Lunenburg, 2011). Zaleznik (1977) has clearly distinguished between the two, associating leaders with change and managers with maintaining the status quo. Similarly, Bennis (1989) has stated that organisations need "leaders, not managers" (p. 7), as leaders bring about change whilst managers maintain stability.

A more recent line of research has favoured equipoise between these two aspects. Coleman and Glover (2010) have avoided distinguishing between the two, as usually the same person enacts both responsibilities. Similarly, Lunenburg (2011) has noted that effective organisations require individuals with a combination of both skills-sets, whereby whilst leadership shapes the organisation's vision, management transforms it into a reality.

Fullan (2001, 2014) has shared similar beliefs, arguing that successful institutions require transformational leaders who also possess good management skills. Pont, Nusche, & Moorman (OECD, 2008) have declared that 'successful schools need effective leadership, management *and* administration' (p. 18, emphasis in original), which are all co-dependent. The NCF has harboured similar views, urging heads of school to perform "both a visionary and strategic role" (p. 44).

Whilst concurring with such a line of thought, Bush, Bell, & Middlewood (2010) have added that balancing between management and leadership requires "managing towards clear educational purposes, rather than regarding management as an end in itself" (p. 6), with effective management practices being those aimed at supporting the schools' improvement efforts.

2.2.2 Basics of successful school leadership.

It is generally agreed that strong leadership practices are central to any school's success. Researchers have provided empirical evidence indicating that leaders of successful schools, across countries and organisations, adopt a common set of actions. Such practices, referred to as "basics" (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 18) to successful leadership, centre on having leaders providing organisational direction, supporting community members, enacting organisational re-structuring and guiding teaching and

learning practices. School leaders affect their schools' improvement process by influencing their school members' motivation and commitment to their work (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2006; Louis et al., 2010).

Harvey and Holland (2012) have drawn similar conclusions, declaring that school leaders can influence the quality of teaching and learning offered within their schools by maintaining high educational standards, fostering climates conducive to learning, distributing leadership and focusing on enhancing teaching practices and overall school improvement.

2.2.2.1 Developing value-based visions.

According to Handy (2012), "A leader shapes and shares a vision which gives point to the work of others" (p. 106). Harbouring strong visions and widely sharing them with the school community, allows school leaders to nourish a sense of purpose and direction. Such shared visions guide the school members' concerted actions towards achieving common goals (Duignan, 2006).

As Bush (2011) has asserted, compelling visions are founded on the leaders' moral standards and beliefs. According to Sergiovanni (2001), strong visions, based on strong ethical values, transform leadership into an act of moral responsibility, whereby leaders aspire for school improvement whilst equally preserving the common good. Indeed, Sergiovanni (2001) defines value-based visions as 'the glue that connects people together in meaningful ways' (p. 15), giving purpose and meaning to the actions taken by the school community.

It is through the school leaders' influence on their school members, that visions become shared (Northouse 2010; Yukl, 2010). As Senge (1990) has pointed out, shared visions can powerfully garner peoples' commitment to their organisational goals, compelling them to labour to achieve shared goals.

2.2.2.2 Fostering collegial relationships.

Shared visions thrive within school environments that have collegial relationships at their core. As Sergiovanni (2009) has pointed out, "The quality of relationships is an important ingredient in the makeup of a good school" (p. 113), greatly impinging on the work done within the organisation. Whilst vision, values and moral purpose offer direction, relationships are the vehicles through which such aims become shared (Fullan, 2001).

Nurturing authentic relationships takes time and commitment. Such vested time and energy fosters collegial relationships. By being honest, empathic, trustworthy and respectful, school leaders develop people's sense of ownership and belonging. By being equally committed to their school's aims and their school members' interests, leaders gain their members' trust and loyalty, securing their commitment to their organisation's improvement agenda (Bezzina, 2013; Bezzina & Bufalino, 2014; Crippen, 2012).

According to Sergiovanni (2001), such collegial relationships transform school members into a "community of practice" (p. 53), where members share goals and closely collaborate to analyse and reflect on their practice. Through such actions, these practitioners equally improve their teaching skills and their students' learning.

2.2.2.3 Developing professional learning communities.

According to DuFour and Eaker (1998)'s seminal study in the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) literature, PLCs are founded on:

- Shared mission, vision and values,
- Collective inquiry,
- Collaborative teams,
- Action orientation and experimentation,
- Continuous improvement,
- Results orientation.

Inherent to such communities is the notion that shared visions and joint inquiry about the practice generate cooperative learning, leading to on-going improvement. As DuFour and Eaker (1998) have stated, functional PLCs reshape school cultures. These transform schools into institutions that continuously pursue learning and progress through joint, critical reflection on practice.

Numerous international and local scholars in the educational field have acclaimed PLCs as agents for continuous school progress. It is generally agreed that successful PLCs combat isolation and enhance schools' achievement and success. Being founded on mutual trust, support and collaboration, school environments become places that develop personal and professional growth. A strong commitment to working and learning together, results in success beyond that attainable through individual effort (Bezzina 2019; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fullan, 2001, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2001, 2009).

Although local scholars have vouched for PLCs as vehicles for continuous learning and improvement, these have also maintained that fostering collaborative cultures within the local context is particularly challenging. With the vast majority of teachers still working in isolation, a culture of collaboration is somewhat alien to local schools (Attard Tonna & Calleja, 2010; Attard Tonna & Calleja, 2018; Bezzina, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2019b; Calleja, 2019).

As Bezzina (2019) has stated, transforming local school cultures may require “principals and teachers to confront longstanding traditions and may involve profound changes in attitudes and practices” (p. 180). Fostering such communities locally requires the strong commitment of school leaders who work hand in hand to develop self-improving schools. Although Fullan (2008) has described the effort to change school cultures as “the principal’s hardest job” (p. 17), yet persisting with such an endeavour is central to school’s improvement agendas.

2.2.2.4. Managing the teaching and learning programme.

Glatthorn et al. (2017) have stated, “A quality curriculum is essential in achieving educational excellence” (p. 64). Nowadays, it is widely agreed that a quality curriculum is one that nourishes students’ twenty-first century skills including “cognitive skills, practical skills, creative skills – skills that make them both employable but also able to function well in a democratic society” (ibid, p.64).

Both the NCF and the Strategy have made similar claims, linking quality curriculum provision to enhanced learning and achievement. As leading scholars in the field have claimed, providing a quality curriculum involves the careful planning and guidance of students’ learning, which transforms set standards, principles and mandates into students’ classroom lived experiences (Glatthorn, Boschee & Whitehead, 2006; Sorenson, et al, 2011; Wiles, 2009).

Although teachers are those directly responsible for teaching and learning, yet numerous influential studies have established a strong link between school leadership and student achievement. Through their meta-analysis of 35 years of research, Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) have concluded that heads of school can exert a strong influence on students' achievement. Similarly, Louis et al. (2010) have determined that successful schools, ones that enjoy high student achievement, all have competent leaders at their helm.

Leithwood et al. (2006) have made the strong claim that "school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning" (p. 27), with school leaders affecting student achievement indirectly through their influence on the school environment and the people working within it. Hallinger and Heck (2003) have concurred stating that the indirect influence heads of school exert on the school's structures and processes results in a direct effect on student learning. Similarly, Robinson et al. (2008) have concluded that:

the closer educational leaders get to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely they are to have a positive impact on students' outcomes.
(p.664)

Scholars agree that successful management of the school's teaching and learning programme requires leaders' concerted actions that support the work conducted by those directly responsible for curriculum provision. Such supportive measures include sustaining teachers' abilities to fulfil the schools' goals, monitoring students' progress and protecting instructional time (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2006; Louis et al., 2010).

A focus on quality curriculum provision requires school leaders' commitment to directing their schools' missions, structures and actions towards enhancing teaching and learning, "the central core of the school business" (Sorenson et al., 2011, p. 93). Leaders influence achievement by maintaining high expectations whilst overseeing curricular development, evaluation, innovation and assessment practices and guiding the community's actions aimed at quality teaching and learning (Fullan, 2008; Glatthorn et al., 2017; Sorenson et al., 2011; Wiles, 2009). Such actions transform schools into places of learning, where learning at different levels of the organisation abounds (Middlewood, 2001).

2.3 Leadership for Learning

The strong correlation between leadership and achievement has added impetus to the need for leadership that focuses on learning. Since leaders' accountability for learning has increased (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), leading within "a high-expectations accountability environment" (Glatthorn, et al., 2017, p. 15) has made curriculum leadership central to schools' improvement agendas, and a vital aspect of school leadership (Glatthorn, et al., 2017; Wiles, 2009).

Locally, both the NMC and the NCF have urged school leaders to increasingly prioritise curriculum work over other aspects of leadership. The NCF has exhorted leaders to focus on:

the primary function of education – the achievement of learning goals by children and young people, in an atmosphere which caters for the total well-being of each individual. (p. 44)

School leaders are encouraged to transform school members into “curriculum leaders and managers” (p.44), by nourishing their skills and expertise and actively supporting their curricular initiatives. In line with such visions, the job description of Maltese heads of school (MEYE, 2007) also delineates numerous curriculum responsibilities, amongst which is the promotion of collaborative curriculum implementation practices, and the adoption of quality assurance strategies aimed at providing quality teaching and learning.

2.3.1 Challenges to leadership for learning.

Although scholars and policy agendas equally urge school leaders to centre their leadership practices on teaching and learning, literature highlights a number of limiting factors that restrict school leaders’ propensity to prioritise learning. As Glatthorn et al. (2017) have stated, role ambiguity is one inhibiting factor. Time constraints is another. Even if leaders are familiar with curriculum leadership functions, these lack the time to fulfil such practices. A third barrier is the scarcity of literature in this area. Lacking expert guidance makes executing such leadership responsibilities even more challenging.

A review of international and local empirical research about curriculum leadership roles has shown that leaders mainly influence curriculum work indirectly. Through their case study in an Australian secondary school, Dimmock and Wildy (1995) have established that heads of school exercise indirect curricular influence, through their collaboration with heads of department and by influencing the school culture. Lee and Dimmock’s (1999) Hong Kong case study in secondary schools corroborated these outcomes, portraying principals’ indirectly affecting curriculum matters through the work carried out by senior teachers.

In contrast, Lee and Dimmock's (2009) research about principal's influence on curriculum, carried out in Hong Kong primary schools, has portrayed school leaders who employed more direct influence on teaching and learning. Such differing outcomes were attributed to the fact that the study was conducted in a primary and not a secondary school.

Locally, investigations about curriculum leadership functions are rather limited. Fava Galea's (2015) quantitative study about local principals' instructional leadership roles has come closest to this topic. Through this study, Fava Galea has concluded that heads of school lack autonomy with respect to curriculum design and development. Moreover, being inundated by administrative work, afforded school leaders limited time for instructional leadership.

2.3.2 Adopting a leadership for learning model.

Current literature suggests that the pursuit of educational excellence necessitates a focus on "leadership of the curriculum, or learning, since this is the core purpose of the organisation" (Middlewood, 2001, p. 118). Focusing on learning, improvement and achievement calls for a shift from traditional styles of leadership (Day et al., 2000) to the adoption of an integrated model of leadership (Hallinger, 2003).

Traditionally, school leaders engrossed in instructional leadership targeted classroom practices (Leithwood, 1994). In their drive towards academic achievement, heads of school acted as instructional experts, "coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school" (Hallinger, 2003, p. 331; Hallinger, 2009).

Current research on leadership that prioritises learning strongly advocates for a “leadership for learning” model (Clarke & Clarke, 2002; Glatthorn, et al., 2017; Hallinger, 2003, 2009, 2011). This model combines concepts of instructional leadership with features of transformational leadership, which are enacted in a distributed manner (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2006; Marks & Printy, 2003; Robinson et al., 2008).

Distributed leadership is a leadership style closely linked to organisational improvement and change (Fullan, 2001; Harris, 2008; Leithwood et al, 2006; Spillane, 2005, 2006) and is the leadership model espoused by the NCF. According to Spillane (2006), distributed leadership is the outcome of the sustained interactions between leaders, followers and the environment, defined as “leadership practice” (p. 3). As Harris (2008) has clarified, adopting distributed leadership does not mean “*everyone leads*” (p. 33, emphasis in original), but results from the combined actions of school leaders and members functioning within their particular school environment.

2.3.3 Leadership for learning practices.

Hallinger (2011), a lead proponent of the leadership for learning model, has defined it as “the persistent focus on improving the conditions for learning and creating coherence in values and actions” (p. 137). School leaders who lead learning do so by channelling people’s actions and beliefs towards enhanced educational achievement. This is accomplished by fostering school environments conducive to learning. Adopting such a model, school leaders become “lead learners” (Fullan, 2014, p. 55), whose mission is to ensure that good quality teaching is the order of the day (Hoerr, 2005). Such leaders delegate managerial work and focus on the distribution of instructional work.

In contrast to traditional instructional leadership practices, leaders of learning do not act as instructional experts but strive for improved teaching, learning and assessment practices by joining teachers in a communal inquiry process (Hoerr, 2005; Fullan, 2014; Robinson et al., 2008). Being actively engaged in curriculum planning, implementation, evaluation and innovation, allows school leaders to participate in curriculum leadership practices, directly supporting their school's progress (Glatthorn, et al., 2017; Sorenson et al., 2011; Wiles, 2009).

2.3.3.1 Investment in capacity building.

Scholars agree that a focus on quality learning demands an investment in teachers' knowledge, skills and abilities, as it is such capacity building that leads to school progress and quality learning opportunities (Fink et al., 2011; Fullan, 2008, 2014; Sorenson et al., 2011).

Furnishing teachers with such expertise fosters teacher leadership, allowing leadership for learning to be more widely distributed (Harris & Muijs, 2005). Enabling teachers to extend their influence beyond the classroom, indeed transforms them into professionals who ably contribute to their school's advancement (Barth 2001; Bezzina & Bufalino, 2018; Harris & Muijs, 2005; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). An investment in members' professional capacities enriches schools with highly skilled individuals who can lead learning: their own and that of their students (Fullan, 2008, 2014; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

2.4 Curriculum Leadership

Leadership for learning is the leadership model on which curriculum leadership practices are founded. Glatthorn et al. (2017) have defined curriculum leadership as “the exercise of those functions that enable school systems and the schools to achieve their goals of ensuring quality in what students learn” (p. 62). Whilst instructional leadership focuses on how content information is taught, curriculum leadership centres on students’ learning, by linking curriculum, instruction, assessment and evaluation (Glatthorn et al., 2017; Sorenson et al., 2011; Wiles, 2009).

2.4.1 Curriculum development.

As leading scholars in this field have stated, curriculum leadership is a shared responsibility. Rather than being tied to a role, curriculum leadership encompasses functions performed by different members of the school community. Such members may include the head of school, acting as lead learner, assistant heads in charge of curriculum, department heads and teacher leaders (Glatthorn et al., 2017; Sorenson et al., 2011; Wiles, 2009).

Curriculum development involves a cycle of planning, implementation, evaluation and innovation that continuously seeks to offer a relevant curriculum. Such a vital process relies on the skills of capable curriculum leaders, who expertly guide curriculum teams as these define curriculum programmes, devise plans of action, coordinate activities and evaluate their outcomes. Collaboration is intrinsic to such functions. Scholars have observed that, whilst shared curriculum responsibilities foster cooperative implementation and enhance outcomes, a lack of such teamwork may result in resistance and poorer results (Glatthorn et al., 2017; Sorenson et al., 2011; Wiles, 2009).

Capable curriculum leaders guide curriculum development practices by coordinating “space, people, time and products” (Wiles, 2009, p. 20). These do not lead curriculum work but facilitate it. They guide joint curriculum efforts by fostering collegial relationships and developing a climate of sharing in pursuit of common goals. Such collaborative practices equally nourish curriculum leaders’ and teachers’ learning, resulting in increased students’ learning (Sorenson et al., 2011; Wiles, 2009).

2.4.2 Curriculum implementation and evaluation.

Shared curriculum implementation and evaluation practices are enacted by teams of teachers and curriculum leaders who cooperatively implement teaching strategies and critically reflect on ways how to improve them (Fink et al., 2011; Glatthorn et al., 2017; Sorenson et al., 2011; Wiles, 2009).

Numerous international and local scholars have strongly vouched for practices such as lesson study (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Calleja, 2017), co-teaching (Bacharach, Heck, & Dahlberg; 2010), peer observation, coaching (Attard Tonna, 2013; Fink et al., 2011; Sergiovanni, 2009) and instructional rounds (City, Elmore et al., 2009; City, 2011), as vehicles for enriching in-house continuous professional development (CPD) experiences that promote learning and improvement.

When adopting such cooperative practices, groups of curriculum leaders and teachers jointly observe lessons and share descriptive insights about their observations. Such critical reflections deepen their understanding about quality teaching and develop shared meanings that enhance the practice (Fink et al., 2011).

International studies have attested to the benefits of such practices. On reviewing OECD’s 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) (OECD, 2014) reports, Director for Education and Skills at the OECD, Andreas

Schleicher (2018) observed that teachers who demonstrated high professional autonomy were those who had participated in collaborative work and benefitted from in-house professional development opportunities.

PISA data has consistently earmarked Finland and Singapore as two high-performing educational systems, with students hailing from both countries being amongst the top performers in international comparative tests (OECD, 2013). Such results, achieved by students benefitting from educational systems that heavily invest in teachers' cooperative learning, have proven that collaborative curriculum practices augment teachers' learning, enhance achievement and propel educational institutions forward (Schleicher, 2012; 2018).

2.4.2.1 Nourishing teachers' learning.

Literature indicates that CPD opportunities occurring within school environments offer the best opportunities for teachers' learning. As Elmore (2004) has declared, "improvement is more a function of learning to do the right thing in the setting which you work" (p. 73). Allowing time for such collaborate learning, transforms teachers into "enquirers, problem solvers and researchers of their own practice" (Sergiovanni, 2009, p. 277).

Local scholars concur, strongly promoting teacher learning that stems from professional collaboration and reflective practices (Attard Tonna & Calleja, 2010; Attard Tonna, 2013; Bezzina & Calleja, 2017; Calleja, 2018). Such cooperative learning nourishes PLCs that pursue learning and improvement (Bezzina, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2019b).

Yet, despite scholars' fervent beliefs in the power of PLCs, both international and local scholars have observed that teachers are rarely offered CPD opportunities during which these critically reflect about their practice whilst interacting with their school environment (Calleja, 2018; Elmore, 2004; Schleicher, 2018). As Schleicher (2018) has observed, teachers across countries often interact informally, yet are rarely involved in professional development (PD) sessions that enhance teacher effectiveness, practices such as classroom observation, lesson study and team teaching.

Locally, Calleja (2018) has made similar observations, stating that teachers' CPD is still "a one-off venture of off-site workshop training disconnected from practice" (p. 8), adding that on-going learning, founded on collegiality and collaboration offers teachers better CPD opportunities than those provided by traditional lecture-like sessions (Calleja, 2019).

Different scholars have maintained that shared curriculum practices can be enhanced by adopting a "learning-centred schedule" (Glatthorn, et al., 2017, p. 139), one that allows time for cooperative learning. Calleja, Mizzi and Riolo (2018) have claimed that by scheduling time for reflective practice, PD opportunities can become part of the school's daily routine, making teachers' learning a continuous process.

According to Attard Tonna (2013), allocating more time for collaboration could transform school development planning (SDP) into another venue for collective reflection and learning. By focusing SDP planning on discussions about teaching and learning, this process can be enhanced, increasingly contributing to their schools' advancement.

2.4.2.2 Nourishing curriculum leaders' learning.

Besides nourishing teachers' learning, shared implementation practices also develop curriculum leaders' learning and effectiveness. As Fink et al. (2011) have observed, joint implementation of curriculum work transforms monitoring into learning-centred evaluation, a practice that equally feeds teachers' learning and nourishes leaders' knowledge, skills and expertise.

Enacting evaluation as a communal inquiry process, allows curriculum leaders and teachers to jointly devise their curricular philosophy, take informed decisions about teaching and learning practices, evaluate their practices and propose curricular changes (Fink et al., 2011; Glatthorn et al., 2017). Moreover, such a practice increases leaders' understanding about what constitutes quality teaching, enabling such practitioners to better guide and support teachers.

By transforming classroom observations into "learning walkthroughs" (Fink et al., 2011, p. 89), curriculum leaders gain clearer insights about teachers' strengths and areas for improvement, allowing them to devise training that addresses teachers' learning needs. By adopting such walkthroughs, leaders connect class visits to CPD provision, with such CPD opportunities supporting the school's improvement agenda and students' performance. Adopting such a process allows schools to maintain high-expectations whilst offering high standards of learning, for teachers and students alike. As Sorenson et al. (2011) have stated, by strongly investing in teachers' expertise, curriculum leaders can "apply pressure to high-leverage points" (p. 206) whilst offering adequate training and support that enables teachers to meet such expectations.

Yet, as Fink et al. (2011) have aptly claimed, having the power and resources to influence teaching and learning practices, but lacking the curriculum leadership

expertise necessary to guide teachers' learning, diminishes the effectiveness of joint, evaluation practices. Only if curriculum leaders are knowledgeable about quality teaching, and able to infer meanings from observations, can these capably guide teachers' improvement processes. Likewise, using evaluative practices as effective tools for planning and improvement requires having skill and expertise.

The development of expertise takes time and requires commitment (Fink et al., 2011). Locally scholars have shared similar beliefs, stating that the nourishment of teachers' and leaders' expertise requires continuous renewal. Bezzina (2001) and Farrugia (2013) have emphasised the need for leaders' CPD, arguing that on-going PD opportunities maintain leaders' effectiveness and efficacy over time. Similarly, Attard Tonna and Calleja (2018) have stated that the nourishment of teachers' expertise requires the provision of CPD opportunities throughout teachers' careers. The continuous development of expertise allows schools to profit from proficient, curriculum leaders and teachers, who ably implement and evaluate curriculum practices. In so doing, these equally nourish their learning and improve the practice. By drawing valuable lessons from such approaches, curriculum innovation abounds.

2.4.3 Curriculum renewal.

As Sorenson et al. (2011) have shrewdly observed, "The only constant in life is change" (p. 87). Such changing external realities make curriculum renewal a must and a necessity (Moon & Murphy, 2006; Sorenson, 2017). Scholars have noted that, despite being central to improved teaching and learning, yet curriculum change may cause resistance. Curbing such resistance requires founding change processes on strong communication and cooperation (Lumby, 2001; Sorenson et al., 2011).

As Wiles (2009) has observed, all schools are unique and tending to their human factor is central to a successful curriculum innovation process. Whilst fostering a climate based on trust, respect, shared power and shared ownership reduces teachers' resistance to curriculum change, failing to garner teachers' support hinders the renewal process (Lumby 2001; Sorenson et al., 2011).

As Day et al. (2007) have declared, successful change processes "must all take into account the needs, concerns and well-being of the teachers who are expected to implement them, if they are to meet with success" (p. 236). Placing teachers at the centre of the curriculum process enhances its propensity for success.

Bezzina and Camilleri (2001) have vouched for the adoption of a "bottom-up approach to change" (p. 166), whereby teachers are furnished with the necessary skills and opportunities to lead change efforts. As researchers have pointed out, whilst top-down approaches exclude teachers and cause resistance, founding such processes on collaboration, generates commitment and augments to prospects for effective renewal. (Bezzina & Camilleri, 2001; Lumby, 2001; Sorenson et al., 2011)

Glatthorn, et al (2017) have argued that effective curriculum change is a lengthy process, one that cannot be hastened but thrives when an "incremental change" (p. 243) approach is adopted. Sharing similar views, Sorenson et al. (2011) have stated that proficient curriculum leaders harbour huge aspirations yet take gradual, measured actions to achieve such desired outcomes. It is the slow, yet steady execution of well-planned renewal processes that leads to successful outcomes.

2.4.3.1 A successful renewal process.

As Fullan (2007) has asserted, an effective renewal process is one that results in sustainable change. Such long-term change is brought about when innovative practices under three fundamental phases, these being “initiation”, “implementation” and “institutionalization” (p. 65). These phases are inextricably linked to one another, and are all crucial to continued change. Although change may be initiated through the inception of a new policy or the introduction of a new initiative, resulting in its initial implementation, yet it is when such innovation is embedded in the school’s culture and becomes part of the school’s norms and practices that it becomes long-lasting.

Sustainable change banks on the “*reculturing*” (Fullan 2001, emphasis in original) of school environments. Transforming school cultures into cooperative learning communities that valorise learning and innovation is central to any curriculum leaders’ actions, as “it is in the recultured school that the work towards curriculum renewal and instructional change finds fertile ground” (Sorenson et al., 2011, p. 218).

Capable curriculum leaders successfully foster “a culture of change” (Fullan, 2001, p. 44), whereby school members continuously identify, analyse and integrate new practices in an effort to innovate. Such communities view curriculum renewal as a venue for learning and development. And, it is within such communities that quality learning flourishes and successful curriculum renewal thrives.

2.4.3.2 Prospects for sustainable curriculum change.

As Fullan (2007) has declared, driving a successful whole-system reform, whilst functioning within a complex, educational environment, is a gruelling venture. Yet, the scholar inspires hope adding that “successful change is possible in the real

world, even under difficult conditions” (p. 118). In the same vein, Fink et al. (2011) have stated that fostering educational institutions that nourish learning is an achievable goal. Yet, such an objective is only attainable if curriculum renewal efforts are guided by a shared vision for quality learning, one that is founded on professional collaboration and is bolstered by supportive strategies.

Developing such educational institutions transforms them into centres for educational excellence, organisations that successfully translate coveted educational goals, such as SDG 4 (United Nations, 2015) into lived realities for all students. These educational institutions endow leaders, teachers and students with enriching learning experiences, boundless opportunities and limitless possibilities. Ultimately, this is what quality education is all about! This is why quality learning matters!

2.5 Conclusion

This review of the literature delved into the local context of educational change, explored the principles underpinning successful school leadership and identified the need for contemporary school leadership practices to increasingly focus on learning. Furthermore, it explored curriculum leadership functions that bolster curriculum development and renewal, improve learning and enhance achievement. In the upcoming chapter, the research methodology chapter, the procedures followed in conducting this research are explicated.

Chapter 3:

Research Methodology

Research Methodology

Research means that you do not know,
but are willing to find out.
-Charles F. Kettering, American inventor

3.0 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a detailed overview of the research methodology employed in the completion of this study. This chapter starts by describing the research framework and the research approach espoused in this study. It then defines the research method adopted, the data collection methods used and the analytic approach enacted for data analysis. The ensuing sections explicate the validity and reliability measures implemented and the ethical procedures followed throughout the research.

3.1 Research Framework

The study was undertaken over a 20-month period between September 2018 and May 2020 and data was collected between June and November 2019. A detailed research time frame, indicating the different phases of the research process, is provided in the Appendices section (see Appendix A).

The research framework was guided by Creswell's (2014) Framework for Research. The study has embraced a social constructivist philosophical worldview and adopted a qualitative approach to inquiry. The research design was founded on case study methodology and drew on insider-researcher methodology. Data was primarily generated through interviews, observations and documentary analysis. An inductive thematic approach to data analysis was used to draw research findings, interpretations and conclusions.

3.1.1 Philosophical worldview.

According to Creswell (2007), in a social constructivist worldview, “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (p. 20), by giving subjective meanings to their experiences. In line with this philosophical worldview, the researcher sought to develop knowledge through an in-depth understanding of the meanings participants attributed to their lived experiences. The interpretations made were developed through the researcher’s interactions with the participants and the context in which they work, leading to “a consensus construction” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111).

3.1.2 Researcher’s identity.

According to Creswell (2007), when adopting a social constructivist approach, the researcher’s own personal experiences influence interpretations made. Therefore, the researcher must declare their positionality in the research. Particular to this research, being an assistant head of school has invariably shaped the researcher’s life, views and perspectives and exerted some influence on the conclusions drawn.

Knowing that the interpretations may be tinged by the researcher’s own experiences and background, various measures were adopted to curb such an influence, offering a fair and just representation of the participants’ meanings. One such measure was adopting a position of “response-ability” (Aasland, 2010, p. 44), an ethical position founded on the philosophical teachings of Emanuel Levinas. Adopting such a position, the researcher was open to learning from the research participants and conducted research that responded to the needs of the researched, enabling them to profit from the research outcomes.

3.1.3 Researcher's insider role.

Since the research was conducted within the college the researcher works at, the study drew onto insider-researcher methodology. According to Creswell (2007), being an insider researcher offers advantages, such as easier access, yet may also pose power issues and risks to those researched, the researcher and the research field. Unluer (2012) has added that familiarity with the research site might limit objectivity and lead to potential bias.

Due to such possible threats, this insider role was given careful consideration throughout the research process. A neutral position was adopted to preserve objectivity. Furthermore, interpretations were mainly based on the participants' personal views. Although such meanings were invariably influenced by the researcher's prior knowledge, experience and insider role, according to Unluer (2012), such influence is legitimate. Being that social scientific research studies people, all the different participants offer their views, the researcher included.

Nonetheless, the researcher's ethical stance, the multiple sources of evidence adopted, the broad perspectives solicited and the multiple strategies of validation enacted, sought to provide a faithful rendition of the participants' lived realities.

3.2 Research Approach

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011) whilst quantitative research focuses on "the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes", qualitative research "seeks answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning" (p. 8, emphasis in original). As Creswell (2007) has stated, qualitative research helps when an "issue needs to be explored" (p. 39).

Being that the aim of this research was to offer a thorough understanding of the way curriculum leadership is perceived and enacted in the local, changing, educational context, a qualitative approach to inquiry was deemed most appropriate. Rather than testing a theory, the research sought to develop a hypothesis about curricular leadership practices conducive to enhanced quality curriculum provision.

In line with Creswell's (2007, 2014) characteristics of qualitative research, specifically case study methodology, the researcher was the key instrument for data collection. Data was collected from the participants' natural setting. Multiple perspectives were accessed using varied data collection methods. The data was analysed inductively, by focusing on both individual meanings and an analysis of the setting. This analysis resulted in a "thick description" of the participants' views, with the discussion offering "lessons to be learned" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 362) from the study.

3.3 Research Design

Due to the nature and aims of the study, a case study design was adopted. According to Yin (2018), a particular strength of case studies is their ability to offer the researcher a thorough understanding about a complex issue by focusing on a "case", which may be a person, institution, group or community. The case is bounded by time and activity with the researcher collecting detailed information from multiple sources, using various data collection procedures, over a long period of time. Interpretations focus on the meanings the participants attribute to the area under investigation.

For the purposes of this study, the “case” investigated was an institution, a state college in Malta. For confidentiality purposes, this college was referred to as Sunnyvale College. This case was observed over a period of 6 months. Such investigation offered an in-depth exploration of curriculum leadership functions as perceived and enacted within all levels of the institution. Conclusions drawn sought to shed light on local, curriculum leadership practices aiming to advance knowledge about such phenomenon.

According to Yin (2018), the research strategy adopted depends on: (i) the type of research question made; (ii) the degree to which the investigator can control actual behavioural events; and (iii) the extent to which the issue investigated is contemporary rather than historical. Case study methods are preferred when a “how” or “why” question is being asked (Yin, 2018, p. 13). All these criteria were fulfilled by this study, which sought to answer its pressing ‘how’ research questions, whilst investigating a contemporary issue the researcher had little control over, that being curriculum leadership functions as performed at a time of curriculum change.

3.3.1 Case study typology.

Case study methods offer a wide range of designs. In line with Yin (2003, 2018), given the dearth of local research about curriculum leadership functions, an “exploratory” case study was conducted, aiming to illuminate a relatively unexplored area. According to Yin (2018), single-case designs are useful “to determine whether the propositions are correct or whether some alternative set of explanations might be more relevant” (p.49), with a holistic design being adopted when “no logical subunits can be identified” (ibid, p. 52). Since the study sought to explore curriculum leadership practices across the college, there were no embedded sub-units. Therefore, the holistic, single-case design was deemed most fitting for this research.

3.4 Research Method

Primary data was collected from multiple data sources using varied data collection methods. As Hamilton (2001) has declared, accessing multiple views and diverse data collection methods “is characteristic of high quality case study and lends weight to the validity of the findings” (p. 2). Additionally, a few secondary data sources were used, including relevant legislation, newspaper articles, press releases and dissertations.

3.4.1 Research participants.

In selecting the research participants, Yin (2018) urges researchers to pursue diverse views by seeking “those alternatives that most seriously challenge the assumptions of the case study” (p. 245). Aiming for a broad research perspective, the study accessed a wide array of participants at all levels of the institution.

Research participants included the Head College Network (HCN), the Education Officer Curriculum (EO Curriculum), Heads of School (HoSs), middle leaders, including both Assistant Heads of School (AHoSs) and Heads of Department (HoDs) and teachers (T) working within the two primary and two secondary schools forming part of Sunnyvale College. Additionally, the views of two policymakers (P) involved in curriculum development and implementation were gauged, thus contextualising the study by positioning the college within its wider curriculum reform context.

“Purposeful maximal sampling” (Creswell, 2007, p.75) was used, with the selected participants being those who had reasonable knowledge about the issue, providing varied, insightful and reliable information. The sample was selected based on participants’ relevance to the issue, privileged knowledge and experience about the

topic (Denscombe, 2010). Such sampling ensured that the people selected were the ones most likely to benefit from the study, ensuring reciprocity (Creswell, 2007).

3.4.2 Data collection methods.

As Yin (2014) has stated, case studies have the “ability to deal with a full variety of evidence - documents, artefacts, interviews and observations” (Yin, 2014, p. 12). Given the scarce research in the area being investigated, the use of different methods of data collection enhanced the study’s analytic value.

3.4.2.1 Interviews.

According to Yin (2018), since case studies deal with people, interviews are a commonly used data collection method, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the participants’ views about the subject being investigated. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were carried out with policymakers, college leaders and heads of schools. Such interviews enabled participants to elaborate on their views and opinions, whilst allowing the researcher to probe deeply into particular issues (Groundwater-Smith, Dockett, & Bottrell, 2015).

According to Creswell (2007), focus group (FG) interviews are useful when better information can be gained through the participants’ discussions with one another and when these participants hold similar roles and cooperate with each other. Additionally, such a method provides “an economical and efficient means of generating data” (Groundwater-Smith et al., 2015, p.121), bringing about multiple perspectives, whilst allowing participants to express themselves freely.

Aiming to profit from the advantages offered by such a method, focus group interviews were conducted with a group of middle leaders and a group of teachers hailing from each participating school. The schedule of all interviews conducted is indicated in Table 3.1 below.

Participant	Type of Interview	Date	Duration
HoS 1	Semi-structured	17 th June 2019	1 hr 7 minutes
HoS 2	Semi-structured	28 th June 2019	39 minutes
HoS 3	Semi-structured	7 th August 2019	1 hr 38 minutes
HoS 4	Semi-structured	29 th October 2019	42 minutes
CL 1	Semi-structured	13 th September 2019	58 minutes
CL 2	Semi-structured	13 th September 2019	58 minutes
P 1	Semi-structured	26 th August 2019	1 hr 8 mins
P 2	Semi-structured	30 th September 2019	33 mins
AHoS/HoDs	Focus group 1 (FG 1)	17 th June 2019	58 mins
AHoS/HoDs	Focus group 2 (FG 2)	26 th June 2019	1 hr 27 mins
AHoS/HoDs	Focus group 3 (FG 3)	3 rd July 2019	56 mins
AHoS/HoDs	Focus group 4 (FG 4)	19 th November 2019	30 mins
T	Focus group 1 (FG 1)	20 th November 2019	1hr 6 mins
T	Focus group 2 (FG 2)	27 th June 2019	59 mins
T	Focus group 3 (FG 3)	2 nd July 2019	1 hr 5 mins
T	Focus group 4 (FG 4)	19 th November 2019	35 mins

Table 3.1 Schedule of Interviews.

3.4.2.1.1 Interview structure.

In line with Yin (2018), the interviews were guided by an interview protocol, which helped with maintaining focus, ensuring that all important aspects were covered. Although the interview protocol offered guidance, yet questions were not always asked sequentially but according to the way the issues were brought up by the interviewee, resulting in “guided conversations” (Yin, 2018, p. 118).

Ten open-ended questions were asked, affording the researcher a more in-depth understanding of the participants’ views (Creswell, 2007). Since the questions varied slightly depending on the interviewee, six very similar interview protocols were designed. Each interview protocol had an English and a Maltese version, as indicated in Appendix B. The participants were provided with both versions and were invited to respond in their preferred language.

The interview duration was approximately one hour and was conducted at a time and place chosen by the participants, typically offices and classrooms within the college. The interview length allowed for arguments to develop whilst avoiding *reflexivity* (Yin, 2018), whereby the researcher’s views unwittingly shape the participants replies. The participants seemed at ease and were forthcoming in their replies.

Having gained prior informed consent, the sixteen interviews were audio-recorded, thus ensuring accurate recollection of interview data and a precise representation of information. Direct quotations used in Chapter 4, the research findings chapter, and which were originally stated in Maltese, were translated into English. The Maltese original version of each statement is provided as Appendix C.

3.4.2.2 Observation sessions.

Observation sessions provided the study with an additional source of evidence. As Groundwater-Smith et al. (2015) have stated, such observations added a new dimension to the study. Indeed, these allowed the researcher to explore the setting, both words and actions. Moreover, in line with Yin (2014), such observation sessions enabled the researcher to collect data from the natural context in real time, providing authentic data in a short span of time. The non-participant observation sessions of senior leadership team (SLT) meetings, subject meetings and curriculum time meetings (CT) were guided by an observation template, which is provided as Appendix D. The schedule of observations conducted is displayed in Table 3.2 below.

Meeting	Date	Participants
SLT	10 th June, 2019	HoS 3 and 3 HoDs
SLT	14 th June, 2019	HoS 3, 6 AHoSs and 3 HoDs
SLT	17 th June, 2019	HoS 1 and 1 AHoS
CT	29 th October, 2019	AHoS (Numeracy), Maths Support HoD, 3 teachers
SLT	6 th November, 2019	HoS 2, 5 AHoSs
SLT (Curriculum Team)	6 th November, 2019	HoS 2, 1 AH Curriculum, 7 HoDs
CT	19 th November, 2019	3 teachers
CT	19 th November, 2019	AHoS (Literacy), 3 teachers

Table 3.2 Schedule of Observation Sessions.

It was noted that participants were at ease during such observation sessions. Perhaps, the researcher's insider role, made her presence feel quite unintrusive. Although participants were almost oblivious to the researcher's presence, detailed field notes were written on the observation template in order to reduce biases and ensure an accurate representation of the events observed. A sample of such field notes is provided as Appendix E.

3.4.2.3 Documents.

According to Yin (2018), within case study researches, documentation helps “to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (Yin, 2018, p, 15). Combining interview data, observations of events and an analysis of documents, the study benefitted from richer data aimed to enhance its validity and reliability.

The School Development Plans for 2019-2020 of each participating school were analysed. The analysis involved an identification of ways how curriculum policies and initiatives were embedded into the school's vision and translated into tangible teaching and learning practices. The analysis delved into both school-based innovations and national reform initiatives, such as those brought about by the LOF. The strategies adopted were noted, and information extracted was corroborated by comparing it to data gathered through interviews and observation sessions.

3.5 Analytic Approach

An inductive, thematic analytic approach to data analysis was adopted. This was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for conducting thematic analysis, a framework that provided “systematic procedures for generating codes and themes from qualitative data” (Braun & Clarke, 2017, p. 297).

Being an exploratory case study intending to draw onto the participants' meanings, a "bottom-up" (Creswell, 2007, p. 38) approach was adopted, moving from particular to general themes, generating data using an inductive style. Adopting this "data-driven" analytic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83), enabled the researcher to generate meaning by finding patterns in the data and linking them to the researcher's own interpretations of the field experience, ultimately drawing lessons from such understanding. Table 3.3 below indicates the six phases of thematic analysis adopted, in line with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for conducting thematic analysis.

Step 1: Become familiar with the data	Step 4: Review themes
Step 2: Generate initial codes	Step 5: Define themes
Step 3: Search for themes	Step 6: Write-up

Table 3.3 Phases of Thematic Analysis

Note. Adapted from "Using thematic analysis in psychology," by V. Braun and V. Clarke, 2006, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), p. 87.

Following the data collection stage, observation notes were organised and the interviews were manually transcribed verbatim. These were read several times for familiarisation purposes. Data was transformed into meaningful extracts, through the creation of initial codes. An open coding system was adopted, with codes being created during the coding process (Maguire & Delahaunt, 2017). Such coding was done manually using Word™. Striking utterances were highlighted on the transcripts and comments were written on the side, as shown in Appendix F.

Although coding manually was very time-consuming, yet it provided the researcher with a more tangible grasp of the research data, allowing the researcher to identify the most striking codes and group them into themes that portrayed the salient aspects of each topic. The final themes were linked to each other as indicated in the thematic map shown in Figure 3.1 below.

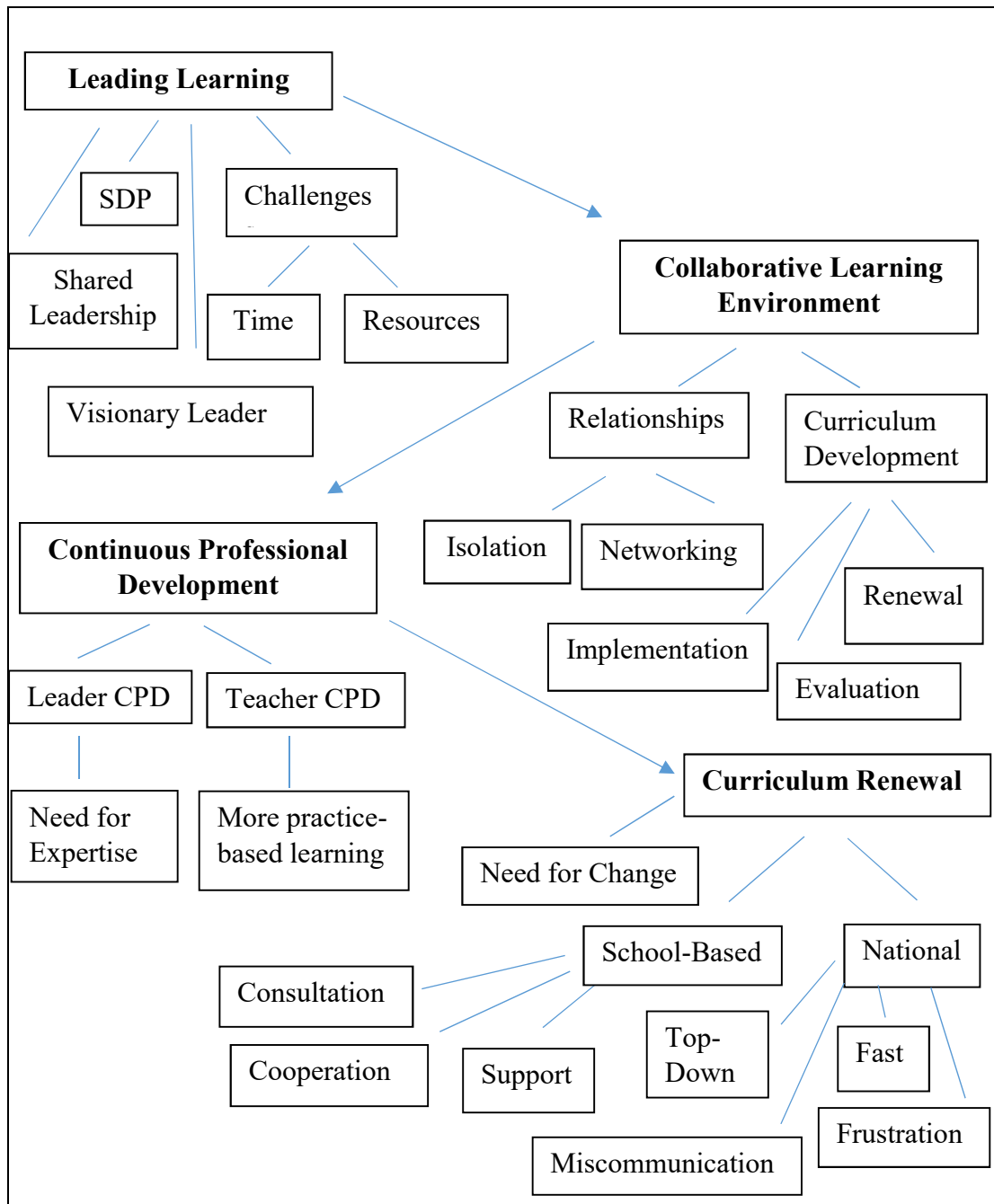


Figure 3.1 Final Thematic Map

This led to an interpretation of the data prevalent across the different data sources. The themes were compared to the literature previously reviewed, with both similarities and singularities pertaining to this study being noted. Research findings were obtained, generalised statements were formulated, and study conclusions were drawn. Ultimately, a ‘linear-analytic’ report (Yin, 2018, p. 229) was written.

3.6 Validity and Reliability Measures

To ensure the validity and reliability of the case analysis, the study prevalently adopted the three tests that Yin (2018) deems most applicable to exploratory case study, namely construct validity, external validity and reliability.

3.6.1 Construct validity.

According to Yin (2018), construct validity involves adopting measures to match concepts being studied. Employing multiple sources of evidence fulfils data triangulation purposes, resulting in “convergent lines of inquiry” (ibid, p. 44). The study used a wide array of data sources, all triangulating on the same research questions. Such corroboration of data findings strengthened the construct validity of the case. Figure 3.2 below indicates the convergence of the multiple data sources used.

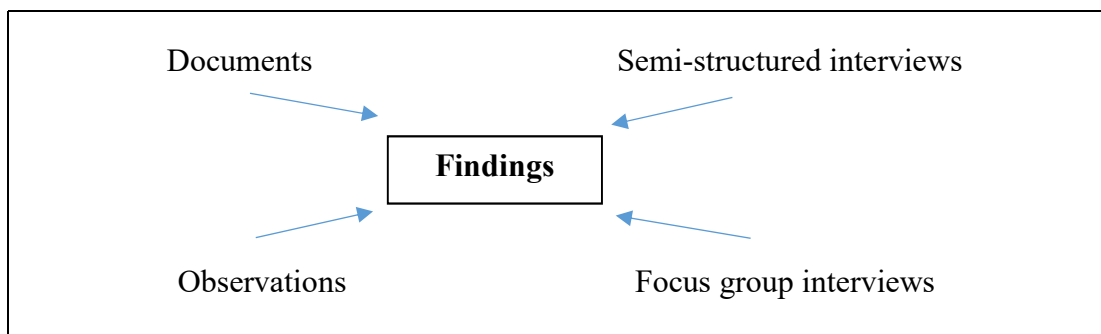


Figure 3.2 Convergence of Multiple Sources of Evidence (single study)

Note. Adapted from “Case Study Research and Applications Design and Methods,” by R.K. Yin, 2018, p.129

In line with Yin (2018), another two measures adopted to increase the construct validity of the study were the creation of a “case study database” (p. 130), containing all the documentation collected, and the establishment of “a chain of evidence” (p. 134), where a record of the evidence collected leading to the research findings was kept. The data was stored in a database indicating how the data was collected and interpreted.

3.6.2 Internal validity.

Although Yin (2018) has stated that internal validity tests seek to establish a relationship between factors and mainly apply to explanatory and not exploratory case studies, yet the research sought to establish internal validity through pattern matching. By adopting such an analytic technique, the findings of the case study were matched to those found in the literature, identifying both similarities and peculiarities.

3.6.3 External validity.

External validity relates to generalisability beyond the study. In drawing generalisations from case studies, Yin (2013) argues for “analytic or conceptual generalization, rather than of reaching for a numeric one” (p. 327). Findings explain how the issue investigated produces its results or fails to do so. The case study gives “the opportunity to shed empirical light on some theoretical concepts or principles” (Yin, 2018, p. 38). Such generalisations can be based on confirming, altering, discarding or developing existing theories already cited in the study and/or developing new concepts that emerge from the study.

This study’s strong ‘how’ research question, allowed for analytical generalisations to be made. Although this single case study was not representative of all state colleges, it may still shed light on significant issues pertaining to local

curriculum leadership practices. In line with Yin (2013), the findings were used “to explain the gaps” in the literature and in so doing “the generalizations from a single case study can be interpreted with greater meaning and lead to a desired cumulative knowledge” (p. 327). As Haradhan (2018) has stated, “Case studies are not used to test hypotheses, but hypotheses may be generated from case studies” (p. 11). Such analytic generalisations are used to draw lessons from this case study.

3.6.4 Reliability.

Measures undertaken to ensure reliable research findings, included the creation and adherence to the interview protocol and observation template. The interviews were audio-recording and extensive field notes were taken, ensuring that facts were remembered precisely, thus providing accurate interpretations and more valid and reliable findings.

As commended by Creswell (2007), the researcher attempted to reduce biases by declaring her position from the outset of the research study. Whilst acknowledging that the researcher’s identity may have influenced the research process, as it was physically impossible for the researcher to detach herself completely from her identity and background, yet the research conducted followed a very rigorous process, with a clear explanation of how interpretations were made, ensuring their reliability.

To enhance reliable findings, member checking was adopted, whereby “data or results are returned to participants to check for accuracy and resonance with their experience” (Birt et al., 2016, p. 1802). The transcripts with the initial codes generated and the field notes were returned to the participants for verification and the final interpretations made were discussed with all key participants, ensuring that these interpretations offered a fair rendition of the participants’ lived realities.

The advantages of an insider status were used to benefit the research. As stated by Creswell, 2007, ease of access to the site afforded the researcher “prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field” (p. 207), interacting with the participants and observing the context. In line with Saidin and Yaakub (2016), the researcher profited from her insider role by spending extensive field time, sharpening her insights, allowing for more accurate, objective and unbiased interpretations.

Additionally, the research supervisor was consulted throughout the whole research process, ensuring appropriate research conduct. A log book recording such interactions was kept. This log book was presented with the study.

3.7 Piloting the Study

In line with Yin (2018), in order to “refine” the research process, both its content and processes, a pilot study was conducted. The draft questions were pilot-tested with a HoS, an AHoS and a group of teachers external to the study. This sought to ensure that the research objectives would be met. Such piloting allowed the researcher to re-formulate some ambiguous questions (Creswell, 2007), and afforded a clearer estimate about the duration of each interview and the time required for the whole data collection process.

3.8 Research Ethical and Privacy considerations

Due ethical consideration was given to the protection of the participants’ identities, views and contributions, with the safeguards employed to protect their rights being in line with the University of Malta Research Code of Ethics (UREC).

Being granted research ethics clearance by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC), as shown in Appendix G, a request to carry out research within

the state school sector was made to the Directorate for Curriculum, Research, Innovation and Lifelong Learning (DCRILL). Once DCRILL acceded (Appendix H), permission to conduct research within a state college was sought and obtained from the HCN, as shown in Appendix I and Appendix J.

With the HCN as gatekeeper to the HoSs, HoSs were gatekeepers to the middle leaders and teachers, ensuring that no participant felt coerced to take part in the research. Permission letters, requesting consent to conduct research within their schools, were distributed to all HoSs (see Appendix K). All HoSs approved such a request. Having all permissions at hand and following FREC's approval to proceed with the study, as indicated in Appendix L, the data collection process commenced.

Acting as gatekeepers, HoSs were provided with all necessary documentation to be passed on to prospective participants. These documents included an information letter, a consent form and the interview questions. The information letter (see Appendix M) gave a brief overview of the study, indicating the nature and purpose of the study and what participation in the study entailed. Prospective participants were given time to review the documents and clarify any matters with the researcher and research supervisor prior to giving their consent.

Following their verbal consent, research participants were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix N), through which they formally consented to the terms listed. The consent form explicated any associated risks and benefits of participation. It also indicated the participants' right to terminate their participation at any stage of the research and listed the safeguards employed to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Research participants were notified that the name of the college, the schools and the subjects would not appear anywhere in the study, with pseudonyms protecting the real case and the real participants' identity. However, participants were informed that, due to its particular characteristics, the college might still be identified. In view of such a possibility, during data reporting, identities were further protected by referring to roles using generic rather than specific terms, such as using the term college leaders, instead of referring to specific roles like HCN or EO Curriculum.

All the participants were informed about and agreed to being audio-recorded, with transcribed interviews and field notes being sent to the participants for their perusal. The participants' rights and wishes were consulted and prioritised when deciding about data reporting. Data processing was conducted in a just and lawful manner and data collected was only used for the purpose of the study.

Data collected was saved on a password-protected hard-drive, with all data to be destroyed six months after the study's publication. Language used was non-discriminatory and no fraudulent practices like suppressing, falsifying or making up findings were undertaken. Ultimately, the study was passed through *Turnitin*, ensuring that the work was not plagiarised.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the methodology that was adopted in this study, including the validity and reliability measures adopted and the ethical considerations made. The next chapter provides an in-depth look into the research findings that emerged from the data collected.

Chapter 4:

Research Findings

Research Findings

Alone we can do so little,
Together we can do so much.
– *Helen Keller, author; activist*

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings generated from the three data sources: (i) interviews with policymakers (P), college leaders (CL) and school leaders (SL) including heads of school (HoSs), assistant heads of school (AHoSs) and heads of department (HoDs) as well as teachers (T); observations of senior leadership team (SLT), subject and curriculum time (CT) meetings; and a review of the School Development Plan (SDP) documents of participating schools. Such reflections portray the lived experiences of key practitioners working within Sunnyvale College as shared with the researcher.

Four main themes have emerged from the analysis process: (i) leading learning; (ii) collaborative learning environments; (iii) continuous professional development; and (iv) curriculum renewal. Each theme was further divided into a number of sub-themes. What follows is a presentation and review of the findings.

4.1 Leading Learning

That curriculum leadership was central to what all SLs do was no bone of contention. Yet, local school contexts strongly tested such convictions. As P1 stated, whilst “*ideally he [HoS] is the main curriculum leader*”, such a position was untenable as all MEDE departments “*bombarded them*” (P1) with numerous demands

that required their attention. Such pressures shifted HoSs' focus away from curriculum work, which was "*unintentionally given second priority*" (HoS3).

Handling maintenance, finances and attending external meetings took away from the time leaders could otherwise dedicate to walk-throughs, class visits, SDP and subject meetings. P2 acknowledged that, locally "*we ask our Head to try to do everything*" (P2), whereas HoSs leading foreign schools benefitted from ample ancillary staff affording them more direct involvement in curricular efforts.

Dedicating time to curriculum work was a daily challenge. Whilst wishing to focus their attention on such work, HoSs felt that "*unfortunately you do not always have enough time*" (HoS3). All participants chorused that "*ideally*" HoSs led curriculum work by "*being familiar with the curriculum, knowing the students' level, where they are at and where they can improve*" (P1). Yet, HoSs were unable to "*give curriculum leadership the importance that they know it deserves*" (P1). In sustaining such views, a HoS stated:

The curriculum is central to schooling...yet the time available for curriculum work is an issue...at meetings we always mention the curriculum and then everyone says that they lack time for curriculum work. (Head 2; Interview; 28th June 2019)

Observing such a reality, a teacher rhetorically asked, "*We have changed the term SMT to SLT...but have we really shifted from management to leadership?*" (T1:FG2), wondering whether there was any real depth to this change. Such realities revealed a chasm between the way curriculum leadership was perceived and its enactment within local schools.

4.1.1 Challenges to curriculum leadership.

Though “*curriculum work is the core business of schools*” (P1), school contexts portrayed a different reality. The running of daily school operations overshadowed such work. Leaders prioritised matters such as a leaking roof, deemed “*not more important but more urgent*” (CL1). Despite the increase in number of AHoSs per school, SLs still struggled to prioritise curriculum leadership. AHoSs argued that insufficient human resources, including the lack of “*competent clerical staff*” (AHoS4:FG1), “*maintenance people and cleaners*” (AHoS2:FG1) meant “*assistant heads end up doing all the work*” (AHoS2:FG1).

AHoS stated that, by being given onus for numerous things, some “*educational leaders are being sacrificed*” (AHoS5:FG2). Having to conduct clerical and manual duties resulted in curriculum work taking second priority. Whilst AHoSs believed that “*all middle leaders should have a duty that connects them to the classroom*” (AHoS4:F3), yet these added that their curricular involvement was mostly logistical, such as coordinating examinations, which was “*not strictly related like class visits and following the syllabus being taught*” (AHoS5:FG3).

Teachers also experienced numerous challenges to enacting their curriculum leadership responsibilities. Students’ challenging behaviour and emotional needs, a lack of parental support, insufficient support staff and tasks like collecting money or following public address announcements were all “*disruptions*”(T3:FG1) that challenged teachers’ efforts to offer quality curriculum provision.

4.1.2 Shared curriculum leadership.

Despite such challenges, curriculum work was still valued. Unable to lead curriculum work directly, HoSs adopted measures to protect instructional time, maximise quality teaching and learning, minimise challenges and monitor curriculum implementation, all done whilst being away from the classrooms. An economical strategy adopted across schools studied was shared curriculum leadership, whereby:

the head of school, the assistant heads, the heads of department in secondary and middle schools are the school's curriculum leaders together with teachers. (Policymaker 1; Interview; 30th September 2019)

Being “*a collective responsibility*” (P2), curriculum leadership functions were shared amongst key practitioners. Such practices were guided by Sunnyvale college’s vision and translated into each school’s aims for teaching and learning. These were transformed into classroom practices through the joint effort of numerous curricular leaders.

Such efforts were perceived as being co-dependant, forming part of an “*interlocking chain*” (CL2; P2; HoS2; HoS3). The HCN, subject EOs and the college’s EO Curriculum were external curriculum leaders “*who all played a different but important role in curriculum work*” (P2). Whilst being a critical link in the chain, the HoS was not the only one.

4.1.2.1 Visionary and strategic headship.

Although curriculum leadership was a shared responsibility, yet the leader’s curricular vision was crucial, adding impetus to all other curricular efforts. HoSs were pivotal to the establishment of a shared vision, purpose and direction. Adopting strategies that bolstered curriculum development facilitated the work done by AHoSs

and HoDs who, together with the teachers, led curriculum work more directly. Despite being at the forefront of such work, middle leaders required HoSs who adopted a “*supportive role*” (AH4:FG4).

Whilst knowing that local HoSs “*do not have much say*” (HoS1) in curriculum design, which was “*centralised*” (CL1), yet they had “*to ensure that it [the curriculum] is implemented well, finding ways of supporting teachers morally and by providing resources*” (HoS1). Tapping into available resources, maintaining discipline, enacting incisive timetabling, supporting people and sustaining initiatives were all indirect actions that influenced school members’ attitudes and work, motivating them to strive to achieve curricular excellence.

Teachers valued SLs’ influence on curriculum work. Whilst stating that teachers were “*those who actually put the curriculum into practice*”, SLTs were deemed as being “*second in line*” (T2:FG3), adopting actions that made curriculum initiatives “*possible and plausible*” (T3:FG3). Such actions were highly motivational and empowering because:

When you enact your ideas you get motivated to create more stuff...when you face obstacles...you give up and stop thinking of ways of creating new things and taking different initiatives. (Teacher 4; Focus Group 3; 3rd July 2019)

Despite having limited ways of exerting direct influence on curricular work, yet some SLs successfully managed to adapt the prescribed curriculum to the needs of their schools. Whilst leading an increasingly multicultural school, HoS3 noticed a sharp drop in students’ academic results in subjects traditionally taught in Maltese. Following thorough planning, ample consultation and MEDE approval, HoS3 added Ethics, Maltese as a Foreign Language and the teaching of Humanities subjects in both

Maltese and English, to the existing curriculum. Such subjects, offered in parallel with standard provision, sustained all students' entitlement to learning and simplified the teachers' jobs. As HoS3 claimed, such efforts "*had a positive impact... not just academically*".

Although these practices exerted a positive influence on curricular work, yet such actions were still viewed as administrative, with key practitioners desiring HoSs' increased input by "*following what is being taught and how it is being taught*" (HoD4:FG3). These called for HoSs' increased presence within the school's classrooms, interacting with teachers and students, providing feedback and support.

Since HoSs faced pressures that limited their capacity for direct involvement in curricular work, such duties were delegated to middle leaders and some teacher leaders. Although HoSs delegated most curriculum leadership responsibilities, these still guided and monitored all efforts being undertaken, ensuring that the teaching and learning goals specified in the SDP were reached.

4.1.2.2 Delegation and empowerment.

Delegation was central to effective curriculum leadership, with SLTs coordinating such work. As a college leader stated, effective delegation was fundamental because:

if they [HoS] can't have a good team of teachers with their HoDs and SLTs who are continuously thinking how to put the curriculum into practice for that particular class, student, cohort, year group ...and thinking how to make it more accessible to each and every one of them, then we will not succeed.
(College Leader 1; Interview; 13th September, 2019)

Such delegation, founded on a “*shared vision*” (HoS4), provided purpose and gave the team a clear sense of direction. Adopting a positive attitude and good coordination were deemed central to such teamwork. Having “*clearly designated roles*” (AHoS5:FG2) and channelling duties led to increased efficacy. Although all HoSs adopted a shared curriculum leadership model, HoSs distributed such responsibilities differently, depending on their school’s needs and available resources.

In one primary school studied, AHoSs had “*an area of specialisation when it comes to curriculum*” (HoS4). Every AHoS led a teaching and learning area specified in the SDP, such as literacy and numeracy, and AHoSs were “*almost 100% responsible for it*” (AHoS3:FG4). Overseeing their area of responsibility across year groups offered cohesion and preserved continuity. It provided teachers with “*a link person*” (T3:FG4) who offered specialised support leading to more efficacious curricular work.

At a different primary school, AHoSs were in charge of a particular year group, catering for all the year group’s needs. Such a practical system enabled the HoS to get feedback about a particular year group, by simply liaising with one AHoS. Each AHoS daily met the teachers they were in charge of and provided the HoS with information that guided her curricular decisions.

At secondary level, the distribution of curriculum leadership responsibilities depended on the number of HoDs forming part of the school’s staff. With fewer HoDs available, both AHoSs and HoDs were involved in curricular work. Middle leaders led SDP and subject meetings, facilitated initiatives and used SLT meetings to brief the HoSs about their group’s progress. Yet, it was observed that such meetings covered numerous school matters, affording little time for in-depth discussions about curriculum work.

At another secondary school, curriculum leadership practices were led by a curriculum team, comprising of the HoS, an Assistant Head Curriculum (AHC) and HoDs. Each middle leader led a team of teachers, guiding their implementation of SDP goals, pertaining to both teaching and learning and school ethos. This team held meetings, whose agendas were “*purely curricular, not related to school problems*” (HoS2). Discussions focused on each group’s progress and difficulties met.

Having an AHC was central to this system’s success. HoS2 stated that “*he [AHC] does a lot of work that I am supposed to do*”, including attending SDP and subject meetings, overseeing the SDP process and coordinating PD sessions. The AHC then liaised with the HoS to forge the way forward. Freeing the role of unrelated duties, transformed the AHC into a “*point of reference*” for curricular matters. The trust vested in this role empowered the AHC to lead curriculum work effectively.

As HoS2 stated, having a curriculum team which “*kept working regularly*” in his absence, alleviated his “*stinging conscious*” when he was inevitably pulled away from curriculum work. Indeed, whilst observing such curriculum team meeting, the HoS was called away from the meeting. This meeting progressed as planned, chaired by the AHC, with the HoS being briefed and providing feedback upon his return - long after the meeting had ended!

Establishing a curriculum team sent a message that the HoS “*strongly believes in curriculum work*” (AH4:FG2) and gave it top priority. Having an AHC “*makes a lot of sense*” (AH4:FG2) as it offers homogeneity and continuity. Yet, whilst acclaiming such a system, HoS2 acknowledged that adopting such a strategy was possible because he enjoyed “*the luxury of having a good number of HODs*”, a reality that was not available across all schools within Sunnyvale College.

4.1.2.3 SDP as a tool for curriculum leadership.

The SDP guided curriculum development practices, mapping each school's shared vision, serving as "*a critical tool by which the head of school together with all the staff implement the school's vision*" (P1). Although HoSs adopted a shared approach to SDP planning, yet these guided the planning process by disseminating useful information such as exam results data, observations, trends and feedback obtained from key stakeholders. HoSs encouraged teachers to be "*the lead practitioners*" (HoS1), with SLs facilitating rather than coordinating the process.

Implementation and monitoring were guided by the middle leaders. Whilst primary schools developed specific action plans per year group, based on general SDP goals, secondary schools translated these SDP objectives into action plans per subject. Observations of curriculum time (CT), subject and SDP meetings portrayed teachers and middle leaders striving to embed SDP visions into their teaching practices.

Such SDP goals, shaped by national policies and transformed into school-based initiatives included LOF implementation, adopting formative assessment methods, AfL strategies and digital media usage. Other goals included fostering a dyslexia-friendly school, enhancing problem-solving skills, adopting guided reading and addressing the needs of gifted students.

In creating action plans about the implementation and assessment of LOs, middle leaders and teachers "*identified teaching methods, strategies they could adopt and types of assessment*" to be carried out. Since "*teachers came up with ways of assessing particular topics*" (HoD4:FG3), such a process developed their sense of ownership, direction and motivation to reach shared goals.

Guided by the belief that “*there might be teachers who are curricular leaders*” (HoS3), HoSs encouraged teachers to take curricular decisions and provide constructive feedback to ameliorate their practice. Fostering teacher leadership was deemed central to effective policy implementation, as “*upon closing the classroom door, it is the teacher who is leading the students that are in front of him*” (P2).

When school-based innovations were introduced into each school’s SDP, SLs provided teachers with prior training. Such training sessions were “*tasters*” through which SLs got “*feedback from the teachers*” (HoS4) about their practicality. If teachers valued such innovations, these were developed into SDP objectives for the following year. Their implementation was sustained by continuous training, provided by SLs, college support teachers and external units.

Successful curriculum leadership required visionary leaders who were proactive and innovative. Yet, is also required strategic leaders who created functional teams and empowered them to lead curriculum work. The path to such success also relied on the successful transformation of the leader’s vision into shared aims. This was mainly achieved through the shared implementation of each school’s SDP.

4.2 Collaborative Learning Environments

SLs shared the belief that “*relationships have an impact on all aspects of our role*” (AH2:FG3). These sought to develop collegial relationships so as to lay the foundations for collaboration. Whilst curricular work was important, yet as HoS1 stated “*the most important thing in a school anywhere is emotional intelligence*” as without it “*you cannot work with people, you cannot work with staff, you cannot work with children...that’s number one...curriculum comes second*”.

HoSs stated that trust, respect and appreciation fostered people's loyalty and commitment, fuelled their passion and fired up their motivation – all central to effective teaching and learning. Valorising individuals had a positive ripple effect on numerous aspects of school life, including teaching and learning.

4.2.1 Nurturing collegial relationships.

To foster a sense of community, SLs modelled collegial behaviour themselves. They maintained open-channels of communication, both vertical and lateral. Adopting an open door policy and offering continuous support fostered positive school environments, strengthened relationships and enhanced curricular work. As HoS2 stated, *“you must take care of teachers, respect them and give them what they deserve”*. Prioritising teachers' needs greatly benefitted students, as it was by having *“happy teachers and a happy school”* (HoS2) that teaching and learning flourished.

Similarly, HoS1 stated that unless you value the whole person, *“you can forget about teaching, forget about the curriculum and forget about loyalty as you will not get it”*. To strengthen the bonds with her staff, HoS1 held a yearly one-to-one meeting with each staff member. During such meetings personal interests, concerns and suggestions were discussed and the HoS took notes *“to act upon them”* (HoS1). This was *“a little thing that made a big difference”*. It increased teachers' cooperation and collaboration, truly fostering a shared vision.

Whilst key practitioners at all levels of the institution desired increased opportunities for lateral communication, greatly valuing networking practices, busy schedules offered limited time for such connections. In viewing headship as *“a lonely job”* (HoS3), the monthly Council of Heads (CoH) meetings enabled HoSs to liaise with each other. Whilst being *“highly advantageous”* (HoS3), such networking

practices were deemed “*somewhat limited*” within local school cultures. A college-based initiative aimed to enhance these practices involved pairing up HoSs, encouraging them to “*discuss curricular ideas with a buddy*” (CL1). Yet, school commitments limited HoSs’ propensity to fully benefit from such initiative.

Despite working on the same premises, AHoSs working in larger schools struggled to meet regularly. As one AHoS stated, the SLT meeting enabled “*all of us to meet and share difficulties pertaining to our duties*” (AHoS3:FG2). Yet, having pre-set agendas, such meetings offered very limited time to connect.

Teachers greatly valued time for communication and collaboration. Such communication allowed them to share knowledge, ideas and resources and it offered some burden sharing. A teacher who was undergoing her first year of LO implementation, claimed “*I still feel much better this year because we are working together*” (T3:FG4). However, time to meet colleagues was limited, with teachers often interacting “*in a hurry, along the corridor*” (T1:FG4).

Official meetings were slotted in the timetable. Yet, in primary schools, CT meetings fell through if peripatetic teachers were absent. Secondary school teachers felt that “*a forty-five minute slot is hardly enough*” (T6:FG2) to engage in teamwork. Teachers worked individually at home and used social media platforms to give each other feedback about work uploaded. Teachers were frustrated at having to constantly resort to such methods of communication, favouring opportunities for collaboration at school.

4.2.2 Curriculum development, implementation and innovation.

Teamwork was deemed central to effective curriculum development. Yet, having limited time for such collaboration was an issue that reverberated amongst all respondents. Despite such limitations, SLs encouraged cooperative practices because *“having good collegial relationships is important as schemes of work and lesson planning is shared”* (HoS1). Fostering such bonds was challenging, as solitary practices still engulfed the practice with some teachers *“refusing to share their file with others”* (HoS3).

HoSs persisted with such efforts, encouraging teachers to use meetings to share planning and preparation. HoS noticed that *“departments that worked collaboratively did well...those who did not, struggled more”* (HoS3). Burden sharing preserved teachers' energy for the classroom. It inspired creativity and led to more hands-on activities. Such collaboration had a synergistic effect, with SLs noticing that *“they are taking more initiatives”*, including cooking lessons and outdoor learning, adding *“they are managing to do so because they are working together”* (HoS1).

School life offered limited opportunities for collaborative practices such as peer observation, co-teaching and lesson study. Whilst teachers acknowledged that such practices were beneficial, current school contexts prevented them from indulging in such processes regularly. Having experienced co-teaching in the past, teachers said *“it worked and students enjoyed it”* (T3:FG3), adding that *“we used to join classes and someone would go round the students to see what they were doing and someone would explain and it helped students”* (T2:FG3). Yet, teachers stated that co-teaching had been done when they had smaller groups of students.

Similarly, whilst claiming that “*sometimes as colleagues we observed one another*” (T2:FG3), the introduction of setting in core subjects limited such a practice because teachers were on duty simultaneously. Having increasingly higher loads, meetings, corrections and lesson preparation, teachers were reluctant to “*sacrifice a free lesson*” (T1:FG3) to conduct peer observations.

Having participated in lesson study, a teacher described it as an enriching experience yet added:

it is a luxury as you are allocated slots to meet your colleagues and develop a detailed lesson plan, one that you would not plan on your own, as you need a lot of resources and energy. (Teacher 1; Focus Group 3; 3rd July 2019)

This experience was beneficial as “*in the process you discuss and learn certain things*”, then someone delivers the lesson and all observe it and reflect on it. Yet, persisting with such a practice long-term was “*not realistic*” (T1:FG3), given the lack of available time and scarce resources.

SLs recognised the pros of such shared practices, yet were cautious about introducing them within their SDP, because “*teachers are fed up and when we try to introduce new things they pull out all the stops*” (AHoS1:FG4). Introducing such practices would strain existing resources, deemed already stretched to their limits. As HoS4 stated, “*due to changes occurring centrally, we cannot introduce other things and expect them to work like clockwork*” (HoS4), favouring consolidation of current practices over innovation.

4.2.3 Curriculum monitoring and evaluation.

As CL2 claimed “*Monitoring and evaluation are the central core of everything*” and needed to be conducted “*regularly and continuously*” through class visits. Such visits enabled SLs to ensure that the school’s SDP goals “*are being implemented in the classroom*” (CL2). Being effective curriculum leaders necessitated “*knowing students individually if possible, knowing their abilities and skills*, insights that were gained “*by being present in the classroom*” (AH 4:FG1). Such visits helped SLs “*identify teaching flaws and difficulties students faced*”, enabling them to offer support by organising targeted PD sessions or students’ activities “*based on the evidence collected*” (AH 2:FG1).

Although class visits were viewed as tools for effective planning and evaluation, daily school realities resulted in classroom observations being neglected. Having HoSs conducting class visits for all school members was an impossible feat. A HoS who had attempted to do so said she “*failed miserably*” (HoS1). HoS2 described such visits as “*a huge problem*”. Besides being unable to conduct observations themselves, some HoSs also refrained from delegating this duty to their AHoSs, citing their AHoSs’ lack of training in the area and a lack of clear parameters agreed upon with the teachers’ union as reasons for this.

Some HoSs did delegate class visit to the AHoS. Yet, AHoSs who were bestowed with such a responsibility also faced numerous barriers to conducting such observations. Having to handle varied administrative duties, afforded them little time to “*sit down and understand and observe and give your input*”, making class visits seem “*burdensome*” (AHoS7:FG3). Although AHoSs remembered a time when they “*used to do three class visits a year with every teacher of the year group*”

(AHoS2:FG1), present realities limited such actions. Such lack of presence in the classroom meant that insights to be gained from curriculum evaluation were being lost. This concerned AHoSs who wondered:

If I am in charge of AfL, or promoting a dyslexia-friendly school but I do not visit classrooms to monitor and evaluate what is being done, how can I know what is going on well and where I need to try to improve the practice?
(Assistant Head 2, Focus Group 1; 17th June 2019)

Another challenge AHoS faced was teachers' perceptions about such visits. Whilst some teachers "*invite you to their classroom*" (AHoS3:FG2), many dreaded such visits. Since visits held in the past involved criticism and judgement, teachers had developed a "*learned behaviour*" (AHoS5:FG2) and still believed that "*visitors come to point out mistakes*" (AHoS3:FG2). An AHoS stated, "*there is a certain fear of classroom visits*", which was deemed unfortunate as their aim was to "*see that learning is happening which is important and get feedback from students and teachers*" (AHoS4:FG2).

Schools facing less challenging scenarios offered more fertile ground for such visits to prosper. Within one particular school, classroom visits offered opportunities for growth. Visits were conducted regularly and constructive feedback was provided. As a teacher noted, "*it's a question of attitude*", adding that she sought to learn "*from the feedback I get from the observer*" (T1:FG4). Being conducted regularly and adopting a positive attitude helped normalise such a practice, transforming it into a positive learning experience. As a teacher said, "*At first I did not like it but now I do not mind it as I know I will get constructive feedback*" (T2: FG4).

Since both leaders and teachers had received prior training about innovative practices to be implemented and observed, both teachers and leaders felt more confident implementing and evaluating such practices. Initiatives observed were those related to the school's priority areas for a particular year, such as clearly identifying the lesson's learning intentions, adopting dyslexia-friendly measures and using the interactive whiteboard. AHoSs observed such innovations being implemented in the classroom, and used CT time to reflect on their observations with the teachers, jointly seeking to draw useful lessons from these class visits.

4.2.4 Fostering networking practices.

Whilst SLs were directly responsible for leading their teachers' curricular efforts, yet these required the guidance of external curricular experts such as subject EOs, the EO curriculum and college support teachers that sustained school-based curriculum leadership practices.

Subject EOs contributed to one-off management-driven CPD sessions, especially prior to the introduction of new curricular policies. These also corresponded with leaders and teachers via e-mail, usually to clarify matters. Yet, such communication was deemed too impersonal to foster collegiality. Teachers "*feel uncomfortable*" (AHoS4:FG2) during EOs visits, viewing these as "*inspections rather than to provide support*" (HoD1:FG3).

Although subject EOs' primary role was to "*promote their subject and expose their teachers to appropriate content and pedagogy*" ensuring that "*the subject is taught adopting latest techniques*" (P2) and available technology, yet such input was lacking. Being "*few in number*" (HoS4) and heavily involved in the introduction of new curricular policies, meant "*they are not present enough in schools to monitor*

implementation and support teachers in curricular issues these might have" (HoS3). Such lack of guidance from those deemed "*experts in their subject*" (HoS3), resulted in both teachers and leaders feeling ill-equipped to lead curriculum renewal effectively.

In contrast, the EO curriculum was for SLs, '*a focal point where to direct our queries*' (HoS4), someone who "*helped as much as she could*" (AHoS2:FG3) and who "*put teachers' minds at rest*" (HoS1). The college-based EO was "*more accessible*" (HoS4) and helped by "*suggesting speakers*" (HoS2) for training sessions. Despite offering increased guidance and support, yet key practitioners hoped this new role would "*focus more on curricular work done in schools*" (HoS3). Being viewed as "*the link person between schools and the department*" (AHoS2:FG3), it was hoped such a role could enhance networking practices that nourished learning.

4.3 Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

Central to effective curriculum leadership was the provision of CPD opportunities that nourished key practitioners' knowledge, skills and capacities to be proficient curriculum leaders. CPD opportunities that focused on curriculum development, implementation, evaluation and innovation were scarce, leading HoS3 to state, "*It is useless having the time unless you have the right preparation for it*".

4.3.1 Teachers' CPD.

Community of Professional Educators (CoPE) training offered to teachers was twofold; partly centrally-driven and partly provided by the school management. Both centrally-driven training and in-house CPD mainly focused on the implementation of curricular reform policies currently being introduced within the local educational system.

Centrally-driven PD sessions, led by subject EOs, were highly prescriptive. Teachers were informed about the LOs to be taught, the tasks to set, the percentage weighting of formative and summative assessments and the formative report to be compiled per student. Whilst such information was useful, yet key practitioners wanted training in pedagogy, asking for specialised workshops where experts modelled practices which teachers could emulate in the classroom. Since curricular reforms involved a change in content, pedagogy and assessment, they asked for “*more hands-on training*” as “*skills need to be practiced*” (AHoS2:FG4).

Policymakers and leaders acknowledged that training offered had failed to nourish such expertise, resulting in teachers feeling “*panicked*” (HoS1; HoS3; P2) and overwhelmed. They struggled to adopt innovative pedagogies and formative assessment methods, “*still resorting to tests as assessment methods*” (P2). Many shared the belief that “*any training teachers are benefitting from, is that provided at school level as unfortunately the department is not offering training*” (AH1:FG4).

School-based training formed part of each school’s SDP. School members benefitted from CoPE sessions that developed their capacities to implement their SDP goals; goals shaped on national policies. SLs and teachers valued such sessions more, as these better catered for their needs. If teachers experienced difficulties during the implementation of innovative practices, SLs sought external support to provide additional training. In valorising such training, a policymaker stated “*school-based training is more effective for professional development*” (P1), adding that, when CoPE sessions were an integral part of the SDP, these fostered a greater sense of ownership.

In secondary schools, teachers’ PD was limited to official SDP sessions, with subject and SDP meetings being used to discuss the implementation of SDP goals. In

contrast, primary schools regularly used CT meetings to provide teachers with on-going professional development, supported by experts from within and beyond the college including “*Maths support, Literacy support, SpLD, AfL and Digital Literacy*” (HoS1; HoS4). Observations of a CT meeting, which involved the Maths support teacher and teachers who were implementing LOs for the first time, took the shape of an interactive session during which teachers actively discussed and clarified matters, whilst being offered innovative strategies to adopt in class.

4.3.2 Middle leaders’ CPD.

Becoming an AHoS required no prior training or qualifications in leadership and management. Newly appointed AHoSs joined SLTs as ‘*a tabula rasa*’ (HoS3). HoSs delegated curriculum guidance and monitoring to AHoSs who had “*no experience and no training*”. Hence, “*only assistant heads with a few years of experience can have an impact on curricular work*” (HoS3).

Induction training offered to AHoS was “*vague*” (HoS3) and not related to curriculum leadership functions. Provision of CPD for AHoS was “*very remote*” (HoS3). Whilst both AHoSs and HoDs played a central role in guiding curriculum work and SDP processes, the former were at a disadvantage. Whilst HoDs spent a day per week working directly with their subject EOs, focusing on curriculum-related matters, AHoSs were deeply entrenched in their school’s daily operations and benefitted from little training that enhanced their curriculum leadership capabilities.

The provision of centrally-driven CPD for middle leaders posed a dilemma. Whilst a lack of such provision was criticised, yet on offering such opportunities, HoSs “*complained*” (P1; P2) about having AHoSs taken away from schools for a long stretch of time. Yet, as CL2 claimed, developing AHoS who could guide curriculum

development effectively required an “*investment in their [AHoSs] training*”, a responsibility to be jointly shared by policymakers, school leaders and college leaders.

In acknowledging that “*training is lacking*” (HoS2), most HoSs offered specialised in-house training and mentored AHoSs themselves. Observations of an SLT meeting between a HoS and an AHoS, who were finalising the SDP document, portrayed HoS1 adopting a dual role. Whilst reviewing the action plans of a particular year group, she mentored the AHoS who admitted feeling uncertain about how to write SDP action plans.

Needing his middle leaders to facilitate the SDP process, yet knowing that they lacked prior training in this area, HoS2 liaised with the School Internal Review and Support Unit (SIRSU) and trained them about “*how to develop an SDP*”. This reassured the HoS that “*there was a person per group who knew the process, knew what to ask and knew what they needed to hear*” from the teachers. It also “*empowered*” (HoD2:FG2) middle leaders who felt “*prepared and trained for it*” (HoD2:FG2), enabling them to lead the SDP process expertly and confidently.

4.3.3 Heads of schools’ CPD.

Acceding to a headship role required having a qualification in educational leadership and management. Following “*very general*” (HoS3) induction training, central office provided few CPD opportunities that nurtured HoSs’ knowledge and expertise necessary to guide schools towards continuous, curricular improvement and achievement. Training offered focused on using software such as *E1 Finance*TM and *TimeTabler*TM, whilst external meetings attended involved giving feedback rather than gaining beneficial learning experiences.

The college offered SLs some CPD opportunities, in areas such as leadership and management. Yet SLs wished to participate in “*workshops where people meet and discuss difficulties*” pertaining to leading curriculum work. They hoped for “*seminars for all leaders, including the college principals and EOs, discussing the curriculum*” (HoS3), with the participation of local and foreign keynote speakers sharing their expertise with them. Lacking such opportunities, SLs sought their own training. As HoS1 stated, “*we never had a dyslexia-friendly school, so we had to learn and we trained ourselves*”, with the help of college support staff and external units.

4.4 Curriculum Renewal

That teaching and learning was “*the operational core of what we do*” (CL1), deemed ‘*critical and crucial*’ (P1) to schools’ agendas, was a view that resonated amongst all key practitioners working within Sunnyvale College. As HoS3 stated, in viewing schools as institutions that “*offer quality learning, then the curriculum must take absolute priority*”. Policymakers and key practitioners agreed that the main purpose of schooling was to provide an adequate and relevant curriculum, one that appeals to students’ interests and needs.

Whilst a syllabus was deemed as prescriptive, a curriculum was perceived as being “*shaped by what happens in school*” (CL2). As a policymaker stated, “*the curriculum is not static but changes with a changing society*” (P2), responding to the needs of society and those of present day learners. Such a response was necessary because as CL1 stated, “*to remain relevant in what we are doing...we can’t stop changing*”. Despite dreading constant curricular change, teachers also believed in the need for it, as today’s realities differed from past ones. Addressing such needs meant “*there must be development and change and this must be implemented*” (T5:FG2).

4.4.1 Valuing curriculum change.

The local, curriculum renewal process, led by the inception of My Journey and the LOF, pursued students' holistic development aimed at fostering 21st century citizens. By offering different educational paths to learning, such policies aimed to ensure that "*every student gets his entitlement to learning and succeeds at his own pace*" (CL2).

Offering equitable educational provision required shaping "*teaching on students' needs*" by viewing "*teaching not as an imparting of knowledge but as the development of skills*" (CL1). Shifting from rote-memory learning to nurturing abilities and skills required both content and pedagogical renewal and the introduction of vocational and applied subjects. Adopting "*a student-centred approach*" (CL1) involved enacting a curriculum renewal process, which placed the student at the centre, whilst thinking "*in terms of sustainability and employability*" (HoD3:FG3).

Policymakers, SLs and teachers all shared the belief that such a reform process was necessary and beneficial. Curriculum change was inevitable as students' educational outcomes were still lacking. Whilst the need for curriculum renewal was uncontested, yet the implementation process adopted was somewhat controversial.

4.4.2 Challenges to curriculum change.

Despite acknowledging certain challenges faced at the inception of the LOFs, yet policymakers and some leaders expressed satisfaction about the process enacted. Positive aspects mentioned included the slow phasing in of the LOF, teachers' increased involvement "*through consultation*" (P2, CL1, CL2) and the provision of teacher training. Yet, the vast majority of respondents expressed misgivings about the process adopted, especially that pertaining to the first year of LOF implementation.

4.4.2.1 Rate and pace of change.

Being the latest in a string of reforms, the introduction of new curricular policies was perceived as the last straw! As a teacher stated, *“I have been teaching for ten years and there was a change introduced every year”* (T1:FG4). Facing constant change drained teachers of their energy, decreasing their enthusiasm and motivation to engage with the curriculum reform process underway.

Whilst believing in the benefits of the curricular changes being proposed, yet key practitioners felt that *“many changes are being enacted at a fast rate”* (AHoS4:FG1). Whilst acknowledging that such changes were well-intended, yet their implementation was questionable. Adamant that *“change must be done at a slower pace, not by enacting many changes all at once”*, a teacher added that:

Teachers must be given time to get used to a new system, to prepare for it and to adapt...you do not bombard them and put pressure on them and then wonder why there are teacher shortages or that they are not performing to the best of their abilities. (Teacher 1; Focus Group 1; 21st November 2019)

Constant change exhausted and frustrated both teachers and leaders. Amongst previously experienced changes, primary school teachers mentioned the introduction of benchmark exams, oral exams, mental Maths, tablets and the interactive whiteboard. Secondary schools went through the shift to the college system and the introduction of mixed ability teaching as well as setting in cores subjects and co-ed schooling. Additionally, they experienced on-going changes in technological devices and software used and changes to syllabi and books followed throughout the years. To many, the latest curriculum reform simply added to the long and tiring process of ceaseless change.

4.4.2.2 Inadequate structures.

Lacking the necessary structures, yet proceeding with the introduction of the LOF dampened the whole reform process. As AHoSs stated, “*we are putting the cart before the horse*” (AHoS4:FG1), adding “*we should slow down if necessary*” (AHoS3:FG4), as this was “*not the way things should be done*” (AHoS4:FG4; CL2).

Various reasons motivated such comments. One such reason was the lack of due agreement with the Malta Union of Teachers (MUT), which led to union directives that stalled the process for some time. Another reason was the fact that “*LOs were being implemented and EOs were still uploading them*” (AHoS4:FG1), affording teachers little time to engage with them prior to their implementation.

Starting the second year of implementation without a functioning online reporting system led an AHoS to claim “*if you want them [teachers] on board, you should have everything ready at the beginning of the scholastic year, not reach the end of November and things have not yet been provided*” (AHoS1:FG4). Such realities frustrated SLs and teachers, leading many key practitioners to declare that “*it would have been wiser to wait for another year until everything was in place and then started implementing this change*” (CL2).

4.4.2.3 Insufficient training.

Besides lacking appropriate supportive structures, training offered to both SLs and teachers was deemed insufficient and inadequate. Whilst being in charge of leading and enacting curricular policies, SLs and teachers felt ill prepared to lead such a reform process. Rather than getting clear directions, guidance and support, many experienced the opposite.

The little training offered failed to nourish hands-on practical skills about the curricular changes proposed. To add insult to injury, teachers got conflictual messages and “*felt bewildered*” (HoS1) and “*in panic*” (HoS1, P2). As HoS3 stated, on asking for teachers’ feedback following the training sessions attended, “*over 65% said they [teachers] still did not feel confident implementing LOs*”.

Training offered to SLs in charge of such curriculum renewal process consisted of just “*one information session*” (HoS3; HoS4). SLs felt that “*something as crucial as this needs more than a two-hour session*” (HoS3). Due to this lack of training, SLs stated, “*we were not prepared well enough*” (AHoS2:FG4) and “*we were not trained*” (AHoS4:FG4). In acknowledging such a lacuna, a policymaker stated “*I admit that both heads of school and assistant heads were not prepared enough*” (P2) to lead this curriculum change process effectively.

Rather than being trained about “*the curricular advantages and curricular flexibility offered and the main objectives of the policy*” (HoS3), SLs also got conflictual messages, where “*an EO states one thing, another EO states a different thing, you hear a director say one thing and the Director General says a different thing*” (HoS1). Such a reality led SLs to state that “*feeling confused does not help*” (HoS1), with HoSs ending up having to disseminate information they felt uncertain of themselves.

Acknowledging such a reality, a policymaker declared that, by offering conflictual messages, “*we drove people crazy*” (P2), admitting that “*everyone enjoys stability*”. Such a reality riddled the process with a level of uncertainty that tainted the renewal process. Whilst being at the forefront of an essential curriculum change process, SLs and teachers felt ill equipped to handle such a process effectively.

4.4.2.4 A top-down approach.

Although policymakers valued the need from greater devolution of power, yet these felt that since this whole system reform “*involved major changes, so the input from the centre is important*” (P1). Such initial guidance was necessary to ensure cohesion, coherence and offer direction. In enacting such a reform, HoSs asked for “*clear, specific direction or autonomy*” (HoS1). Having conceded to being guided by central office, HoSs were deeply frustrated when such guidance failed to materialise, stating, “*When they [policymakers] decide on the way forward, they must inform us about every detail*” (AHoS2:FG4).

Since SLs were left in the blind, these resorted to getting second-hand information from teachers, a reality that both policymakers and SLs deemed unacceptable. As a policymaker stated, “*having heads or assistant heads getting information from teachers is not right*” (P2), as these were the ones leading the reform within their schools.

When key practitioners were summoned to so-called consultation meetings, key practitioners thought they could give their input. Yet, the term proved to be misleading as these were presented with finalised curricula, allowing little room for change. Such a reality led SLs to claim, “*that’s not consultation, that’s getting my feedback...that’s different*”, and adding that being told exactly what to do was “*a top-down approach*” (AH4:FG3). Teachers voiced similar views stating that policymakers needed to “*consult with teachers as we are the ones who implement these policies*” (T1:FG4). Such lack of real involvement in the reform process led to feelings of dejection, with teachers claiming, “*It feels like they care about the processes which are happening but not about the people.*” (T3:FG2)

4.4.3 Allowing time for change.

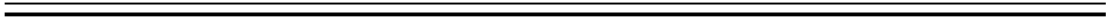
Despite holding high hopes for such a reform process, its initiation phase disappointed many. In acknowledging such a feeling, a policymaker insisted that “*this is not a reform that was launched and finalised in a year but is an on-going process*”, adding, “*we need to learn from this process*” (P2). Both policymakers reiterated the importance of drawing valuable lessons from the initial challenges experienced so as to improve implementation, resulting in a successful reform process.

SLs felt that transforming policies into practice required time, as “*you cannot snap a finger and simply shift from one system to another in a year*” (HoS4). As HoS2 stated, the inception of the reform process was only the first step towards the fulfillment of the curriculum reforms’ objectives, adding, “*Change is a slow process*”. Whilst strongly believing that one must allow time for change to happen, HoS2 observed that locally, reform processes tend to be adopted at a fast rate. Due to such a reality, “*we are losing too many soldiers on the battlefield to get to what we want*”.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter delved into curriculum leadership functions enacted by local key practitioners and challenges that hindered such practices. It explored the desire for increased collaboration and networking for enhanced curriculum development, implementation and innovation. It investigated leaders’ and teachers’ need for CPD opportunities to enhance their curriculum leadership skills. Finally, it explored the local, curriculum renewal process underway, highlighting the opportunities and challenges such a reform process has offered to date. In the following chapter, these findings are interpreted in view of the relevant literature reviewed.

Chapter 5:



Discussion

Discussion

A small body of determined spirits
fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission
can alter the course of history.

– *Mahatma Gandhi, lawyer; political ethicist*

5.0 Introduction

This study delves into curriculum leadership practices adopted within a changing, educational context. The ensuing discussion attempts to answer the study’s research question, namely, “How is curriculum leadership perceived and enacted in the local, changing educational context?” The influence that curriculum leadership functions can exert on local, curriculum renewal processes is likewise considered.

The major aspects that emerged from the research findings are grouped into four themes, which are (i) Leading Learning; (ii) Collaborative Learning Environments; (iii) Continuous Professional Development; and (iv) Curriculum Renewal. Each theme is sub-divided into a number of sub-themes. The discussion that ensues offers an interpretation of the findings combined to existing literature.

5.1 Leading Learning

Although key practitioners appear to be committed to the aims of curriculum leadership, namely the provision of a quality curriculum that enhances students’ learning and achievement (Glatthorn et al., 2017), yet lived realities within local schools often test their beliefs. Indeed, local school environments mirror the dynamic and complex educational contexts that numerous scholars have alluded to in the literature (see section 2.2.1).

Such realities often force leaders to choose between leadership and management. Facing such a dilemma, managerial duties tend to take the upper hand, confirming Bush's (2008) doubts about the extent to which the change in nomenclature, namely from SMT to SLT, has resulted in a change in practice. Locally, it appears that many school leaders are still grappling with this shift.

Curriculum leadership is about collaborative leadership practices that focus on learning and enhanced students' outcomes. Given that reforms in Malta at the moment aim to raise students' achievement, such leadership focus on learning is central to the local improvement agenda. By having leaders and teachers who collectively decipher what students know and how they learn, such practitioners could adapt and adopt practices that target such needs, equally improving their practice and sustaining students' learning.

However, the study indicates that being cooped up in their offices, inundated by managerial tasks, many HoSs struggle to prioritise learning. With HoSs failing to focus their leadership practices on learning, local visions for quality curriculum provision risk remaining evocative words inscribed in policy documents. Such bleak reform prospects are indeed inconceivable.

It appears that resource allocation strongly impinges on leaders' and teachers' propensity to dedicate their time and attention to learning. Having insufficient human resources has augmented contemporary leaders' workloads, resulting in curriculum leadership functions falling by the wayside. With literature strongly linking leadership to students' achievement (see section 2.2.2.4), ranking such practices higher on school leaders' daily agendas seems fundamental.

5.1.1 Shared curriculum leadership.

In line with the literature reviewed (see section 2.4), curriculum leadership practices enacted locally result from the joint efforts of leaders and teachers and the influence of their particular school context. Although HoSs are those primarily accountable for their school's overall performance, yet leadership is widely distributed, making it a strength within local schools.

Consistent with other studies on curriculum leadership (see section 2.3.1), HoSs prevalently exert their influence indirectly, by working through their middle leaders and teachers and by sharing curriculum leadership responsibilities. Delegation and empowerment seem central to this process, fostering trust, strengthening team leadership and supporting teacher leadership.

Although HoSs may not lead curriculum work directly, they seem to be the driving force behind it, guiding it through astute curriculum planning, the nourishment of collegial relationships and resource provision. Indeed, it appears that local HoSs adopt many of the "basics" of successful school leadership as identified by Leithwood et al. (2006) and Louis et al. (2010). Availing themselves of more time to focus on such practices, HoSs could accomplish outcomes that are even more powerful.

The study has shown that within local school contexts, a shared curriculum leadership model serves HoSs best. However, such a model fails to furnish local leaders and teachers with enough opportunities to actively lead curriculum work through cooperative curriculum implementation and critical reflection. Being that scholars highly acclaim such collective practices as vehicles for improvement and innovation (see section 2.4.2), one cannot underestimate such a deficiency.

5.1.2 Leadership for learning.

In view of such findings, the study proposes the adoption of a leadership for learning model (see section 2.3), this being the model that strongly reinforces curriculum leadership practices. Such a model allows HoSs to be visibly engaged in collaborative learning alongside teachers. Yet, adopting such a model locally requires having enough AHoSs, proficient clerical staff and adequate ancillary staff per school, thus alleviating administrative burdens off HoSs' shoulders, affording them additional precious time to actively engage in curriculum work.

Since both the literature reviewed and the study seem to suggest that headship roles are increasingly overloaded (see Section 2.2), enabling HoSs to lead learning may require a change in existing school management structures and the introduction of new roles within the local educational system. Introducing the role of a school manager, who handles administrative duties, would allow HoSs to become Directors for Teaching and Learning, with their primary responsibility being jointly collaborating with curriculum teams to advance teaching and learning.

Whilst even small companies benefit from chief executive officers, local schools, with populations averaging five hundred students, are still led by HoSs who have to deal with finances, maintenance, timetabling and staff management whilst also prioritising learning. Indeed, the current system seems to stretch HoSs beyond their limits, a reality which is untenable, making the introduction of supportive roles imperative. Presently, HoSs lack the necessary time and energy to focus on leading learning. Profiting of the role of school manager, local headship roles could increasingly gravitate towards leadership, allowing school leaders with a background in education to put their knowledge to better use.

This being perhaps too radical a proposition for the local context, a viable alternative would be that of having an Assistant Head Curriculum (AHC) per school. Such AHCs, acting as the HoS' delegate, could lead learning by working directly with curriculum teams, guiding SDP planning and jointly participating in curriculum implementation and evaluation practices. Specialising in teaching and learning, such a role could be a reference point for curriculum work.

At a time of unprecedented curriculum reform, such leadership focus on learning is key. It is through such an investment in human resources that curriculum leadership practices could get the undivided attention they merit, enabling leaders' and teachers' curricular effort to promulgate learning.

5.2 Collaborative Learning Environments

Literature supports the view that curriculum renewal and student achievement bank on leaders of learning who foster collaborative cultures and are jointly committed to inquiry processes focused on collective improvement. The study shows that although more than twenty years have passed since DuFour and Eaker (1998) popularised the concept of PLCs, a notion highly acclaimed by international and local scholars alike (see section 2.2.2.3), PLCs as understood in the literature, present us with a massive reculturing exercise and an ongoing commitment to learning that requires time, patience and continued effort.

As attested by Glatthorn et al. (2017) and Fink et al. (2011), it seems that limited time and lack of expertise as two critical factors that inhibit local school leaders' daily focus on leading learning. Although shared practices such co-teaching and lesson study are strongly acclaimed as powerful venues for learning, locally, such practices are still at the initial stages of being tried and tested locally.

Indeed, both teaching and evaluation are still prevalently conducted as solitary practices. As numerous local scholars have claimed (see section 2.2.2.3), evidence indicates that a culture of isolation persists. Such segregation is strongly attributable to the limited time available for collaboration. Availing themselves of an hourly, weekly curriculum meeting, key practitioners have little time for cooperative learning. Although leaders and teachers meet to discuss policy agendas, draw action plans and jointly devise schemes of work, yet lacking the time and necessary expertise, such interactions offer minimal opportunities for learning.

Local schools seem to languish without time for collaboration, hindering their transformation into PLCs. Since learning flourishes within PLCs, collaboration cannot remain on the periphery of local school agendas but must become central to it. Allowing time for collaboration can transform local schools into collaborative learning environment within which learning abounds. The success of present curriculum reforms requires such learning environments. Schools functioning as PLCs could reshape the local educational system, transforming it into a 21st century system that guarantees quality learning. Failing to re-invent itself, the Maltese educational system risks stagnation rather than renewal.

5.2.1 Scheduling time for collaboration.

As literature attests (see section 2.4.2), high-performing countries ensure that teachers are given adequate time to be together and engage in communal planning and implementation. In Singapore, teachers' networking and peer-to-peer learning are highly promoted (Schleicher, 2012, 2018). In Finland, teachers' schedules offer an equal balance between classroom work with students in the classroom and time allocated for collaboration with peers (Sahlberg, 2015). The fact that international

comparisons have long acclaimed Singapore and Finland as two high-performing education systems (OECD, 2013), attests to the key role that collaboration plays in building strong educational systems.

Locally, although key practitioners follow hectic schedules, yet collective learning and critical reflection seem not to have room within such busy timetables. The fact that such cooperation is central to learning, improvement and achievement, makes the call for the allocation of time for collaboration ever more resounding.

Heeding to such a call commences by protecting current, limited available time for collaboration. If primary schools availed themselves of relievers, who replaced absent peripatetic teachers, CT meetings could be held more regularly. In secondary schools, scheduling SDP and subject meetings into double sessions rather than two single slots could maximise time available for collaboration. Whilst acknowledging that timetabling has becoming increasingly complex, due to the introduction of new subjects, yet taking the time to schedule such double sessions could increase opportunities for cooperative learning.

Whilst such short-term measures could be initial steps towards enhanced teamwork, yet fostering collaborative learning environments calls for longer-term measures, ones that change the way local schools operate. As literature supports, embedding collaboration into local school's culture requires the adoption of learning-centred schedules (see section 2.4.2.1). Adopting such schedules requires the redistribution of existing teaching loads, with an increase in non-contact time allocated for collective inquiry. Although such a measure may require more teachers per school, a fact which is not taken lightly given current scarce resources, yet this measure needs

to be seen as part of a longer-term strategic plan that equally aspires to enhance local learning environments and could eventually ease current teacher shortages.

Since local practitioners' disenchantment with the profession is strongly linked to the demanding context within which they function, fostering school cultures that increasingly value and respect educators, environments that support both personal well-being and professional growth could, in time, draw more skilled and talented individuals to the profession.

5.2.2 Development of expertise.

As Fink et al. (2011) have argued, whilst having time for collaboration is instrumental to the development of PLCs, yet propensity for critical reflection requires expertise. PLCs lose their effectiveness unless they are guided by leaders who ably facilitate group learning. Evidence indicates that fostering such PLCs within local schools needs a greater investment in the development of leader and teacher expertise.

Presently, it seems that whilst leaders and teachers are being held accountable for curriculum renewal and improved outcomes, commensurate training that bolsters such efforts is wanting. Policymakers tend to rule for students' enhanced achievement but fail to realise that teacher learning is the route to such outcomes. Promoting students' achievement without investing in those who propagate such learning is self-defeating. Being furnished with curriculum leadership capacities, leaders and teachers could proficiently adopt curriculum leadership functions, improving themselves and their practice. Failing to invest in such expertise, current, curriculum efforts aimed to raise students' achievement may falter.

As Fink et al. (2011) have argued, “you cannot lead what you don’t know” (p. xxiii). Evidence indicates that, although middle leaders are those primarily responsible for facilitating curriculum leadership practices, such as classroom observations, few of these leaders have benefitted from prior training that equipped them with the capacities needed to transform such practices into venues for critical reflection and learning.

Given such findings, brought to light during a period of momentous curriculum change, the study makes the call for an increased provision of teachers’ and leaders’ CPD opportunities that offers key practitioners a better understanding about the innovations being proposed by curriculum policies, and which teach them strategies that allow them to effectively implement and evaluate such initiatives.

Adopting such a two-pronged approach to the nourishment of expertise could enable middle leaders to expertly coach teachers, helping them transform into reflective practitioners who research their practice and reinvigorate it. When such an investment in expertise is made, proficient curriculum leadership practices can thrive, enabling key practitioners to effectively translate curriculum policy visions into lived, classroom realities.

5.2.3 Access to expertise.

As Fink et al. (2011) have stated, having expertise yet failing to offer access to such expertise is indeed problematic. It seems that such a reality exists within local schools. Although some schools may avail themselves of middle leaders who could skilfully facilitate collaborative, curriculum work, a lack of time and unclear union agreements seem to limit such experts’ propensity to share their knowledge and skills with the teachers they lead.

The study indicates that AHoS and HoDs are the ones who are prevalently in charge of facilitating curriculum leadership functions. However, locally, the delegation of such responsibilities offers a conundrum. Although some AHoSs conduct classroom visits, many claim to lack the necessary time, training and subject expertise to draw mutual learning from such endeavours. In contrast, HoDs, who are deemed experts in their subject and benefit from reduced teaching loads, which would afford them more time for classroom visits and follow-up feedback, lack the necessary authority to conduct such visits and coach teachers. Therefore, schools are failing to capitalise on available resources, to the detriment of teachers who need such expert support, especially given the current introduction of numerous innovative practices.

Introducing cooperative learning practices, such as lesson study, into local school's contexts could offer a possible solution to such a dilemma. Such joint practices could curb existing power-relations issues and bring down the walls of isolation, enabling leaders and teachers to mutually benefit from such learning opportunities. Scheduling time for collective inquiry processes where HoSs and middle leaders participate as learners, whilst providing teachers with necessary support, could combine current, disparate, curriculum efforts into a more unified, concerted effort. Successfully embedding such practices within local school cultures could transform them into self-managing schools that secure continuous improvement.

The study indicates that, compared to other school leaders, HoDs enjoy stronger relationships with teachers and prevail in subject expertise. Thus, it appears that HoDs have the greatest propensity to propel collective learning practices forward. In view of such findings, the study proposes the gradual, yet consistent, establishment of subject departments in all secondary schools. Benefitting from an HoD, per subject, per secondary school, could give greater impetus to collaborative practices that foster

PLCs and nourish learning. Although such a proposition may incur a substantial investment in resources, and comes at a time when such resources are limited, yet, in time, the return on such an investment could be well worth it.

5.2.4 Transforming school cultures.

Never before has there been a stronger need for collaborative learning environments within local schools. Curriculum renewal processes bank on such cultures. Persisting with current segregation risks having curriculum proposals failing in their attempt to revitalise the local, educational system.

As Fullan (2007) has asserted, sustainable change requires a change in culture. Policy inception may initiate change, yet long-lasting transformation occurs with an equivalent shift in beliefs and behaviours, leading to “change in practice” (p. 30). Yet, it seems that local policymakers tend to persist with legislating change through policy inception, failing to give due attention to the transformation of school cultures.

As argued in the review of literature (see section 2.4.3.1), it is only when work-practices and mind-sets change, that local curricular visions can become a reality. Aspiring to bring about a paradigm shift in the way teaching, learning and assessment practices are approached locally requires a greater focus on the development of teachers’ and leaders’ professional capacities. Such an investment in key practitioners’ knowledge and skills would empower them to enact the changes that curriculum policies exhort.

Drawing lessons from Finland, as Sahlberg (2015) has stated, the policies that aimed to revamp the Finnish system were spearheaded by intensive pedagogical training together with the strengthening of networking practices that sustained collective inquiry. Hoping to emulate Finland’s success entails learning from their

example. Finland's whole system overhaul centred round the provision of CPD that nourished expertise. As results of international tests indicate (see section 2.4.2), such a strategy has paid off. By focusing on quality CPD provision, in time, enhanced achievement may also become a local, lived reality.

5.3 Continuous Professional Development

As Sorenson et al. (2011) have stated, lacking the continuous nourishment of expertise, key practitioners may experience "arrested development" (p.130), resulting in demotivation and decreased performance. This case study seems to point to such a grim, local reality. Lacking the necessary upskilling and re-skilling, key practitioners appear to struggle with adopting the renewal processes currently underway.

Although local in-service training provisions have morphed into CoPE sessions, following the collective agreement signed in 2017, it seems that such a change in title and structure was not accompanied by an equivalent change in content and quality. CPD provision still offers minimal pedagogical training and little room for reflective practice. It prevalently offers content-knowledge, which is delivered through lecture-like sessions.

In line with literature (see section 2.4.2.1), and as expressed by numerous participants in the study, the call is for more practice-based CPD sessions, specialised workshops and opportunities for sharing good practices. Such CPD provision could effectively nourish key practitioners' skills, knowledge and abilities, enabling them to better facilitate curriculum innovation.

Given the local context of curriculum reform, having such capacities is vital, because as Fullan (2002) has stated, only skilful change agents can translate reform policies into enhanced students' outcomes. Pressing for change without adequately

empowering the drivers of such change poses unrealistic expectations and undue pressures. Such actions offer bleak curriculum renewal prospects, ones that demand counteracting.

5.3.1 College-based CPD.

The revelations that CPD opportunities, as offered to date, seem not to fully cater for key practitioners' needs, calls for the re-shaping of such CPD provision. The study indicates that whilst central office seems detached from school's lived realities, colleges seem more cognizant about their schools' needs. Such findings imply that, if the responsibility for the provision of centrally-driven CoPE sessions is delegated to the colleges, this could lead to better quality training.

Being in the middle of the chain of command, the college seems better poised to offer more tailor-made training that equally supports school-based initiatives whilst aligning schools to national curricular agendas. By operating college-based CPD in tandem with school management-driven CPD, college-based CPD could focus on nourishing expertise whilst allowing management-driven CPD to foster opportunities for critical reflection on practice.

Provision of such high-quality specialised CPD, founded on collective sharing of practices, could transform local notions about leaders and teacher training and learning. This could result in a shift from training that addresses the masses, to more refined training that vests practitioners with curriculum leadership skills necessary to lead curriculum efforts proficiently. Moreover, as school-based CPD centres on the sharing of good practices within each school, colleges could extend such sharing of expertise across the college, cluster and beyond. Such practices would better enable colleges to live up to their mission, that of fostering stronger networking practices.

5.3.2 Enhanced networking practices.

Literature exhorts networking practices that offer opportunities for improvement through “lateral capacity building” (Fullan, 2008, p. 19). Likewise, key practitioners at all levels of the institution desire stronger networking opportunities that nourish learning. Yet, findings indicate that the local educational system still seems highly compartmentalised, both at MEDE level and even more so at school level. Although the inception of the college system aimed to enhance networking opportunities, yet, to date, local practitioners still prevalently work in silos, lacking the time for networking that nourishes meaningful learning.

At a time of unprecedented curricular reform, the need for collaboration at all levels of the educational system is even more acute. At grassroots level, teachers require the allocation of time and space to collaborate and reflect on ways how to improve their practice. Extending such reflective processes to a more macro-level could enhance opportunities for shared learning. Moreover, it could provide more “system cohesion” (Fullan, 2008, p. 43), by aligning school-based initiatives to national aims, linking the goals of the whole system.

College-based CPD could further strengthen schools’ external links, which presently seem rather weak. By forging stronger connections with MEDE entities, including subject EOs and other institutions such as the University of Malta (UoM), the Institute for Education (IfE) and foreign educational institutions, numerous experts could be drawn to the college to provide key practitioners with CPD experiences that better support their improvement efforts.

In coordinating such CPD opportunities and enhanced networking practices, the college-based EO curriculum could play a central role. The findings indicate that

such a role benefits from strong links with both central office and schools. Profiting from the capacities of such a role, colleges could increasingly offer streamlined training that enhances key practitioners' learning and performance, transforming them into efficacious drivers of curriculum development and renewal.

As Sahlberg (2015) has stated, when the Finnish system sought to introduce innovative notions, such as cooperative learning and peer-coaching into its educational system, expert trainers were flown in from abroad. Aspiring to mirror high-performing educational systems requires adopting similar strategies, including providing local key practitioners access to quality CPD opportunities. Such provision could be the enabler of a wider improvement agenda, and it will pay to invest in it.

5.3.3 Shared governance.

Devolving CPD responsibilities to the college and its schools does not relinquish MEDE's authority. Nor does it absolve it of all responsibilities. As proposed by the study, whilst central office would maintain control over curriculum design, for coherence and cohesion purposes, yet it could increasingly drive colleges towards self-management, starting by empowering them to become centres for CPD.

Such proposal needs to be considered as part of a strategy that shifts the local educational system towards shared governance. As Cutajar, Bezzina and James (2013) and Bezzina (2019a), have argued, findings indicate that, to date, whilst some degree of autonomy has percolated down to the college and school level, yet colleges still lack autonomous decision-making. Devolving CPD responsibilities to the colleges could be a decisive step in that direction.

A sustainable move towards shared governance is founded on "reciprocal accountability" (Fink et al., 2011, p. 221). As the study has shown, one of the critical

issues with the current renewal process is poor accountability. It seems that whilst central office holds leaders and teachers accountable for students' high-achievement, it fails to sufficiently empower them to carry such responsibilities proficiently.

Mutual accountability ensures that both MEDE and the college are equally committed to the achievement of high-educational standards. Whilst central office holds colleges and key practitioners responsible for students' learning and achievement, it is equally dedicated to ensuring that its institutions and practitioners are capable of meeting such expectations. Such two-way commitment ensures that accountability for high-standards is counteracted by the provision of support. By uniting "pressure and support" (Fullan, 2007, p. 84), local aspirations for the achievement of high-standards can become a reality.

5.4 Curriculum Renewal

As argued in the literature review (see section 2.4.3), since effective educational institutions respond to the changing needs of societies, renewal is central to them. Within such changing school contexts, curricula also constantly develop themselves, seeking to address the present needs of their learners.

The study indicates that local schools are experiencing renewal on a binary level. These are introducing school-based curricular innovations whilst also enacting centrally-driven curriculum reforms. The study has shown that, whilst school-based initiatives tend to garner teachers' cooperation and support, centrally-driven reforms are less successful in generating such commitment.

Although key practitioners valorise curriculum change, yet they question the way centrally-driven curriculum change is being enacted. Time pressures have led to fast decision making, lacking the appropriate input of key stakeholders. Precipitating

such a reform process has resulted in low morale, especially amongst middle leaders and teachers, who feel disenchanting by the renewal process. The bigger issue faced by this current reform process is that by going too fast and lacking key practitioners' support, such reforms risk not taking shape in the longer term. Off the back of that, less teachers will be drawn to the profession, and with more resignations being considered, teacher shortages may increase.

5.4.1 Valuing leaders and teachers.

As highlighted in the literature (see section 2.4.3), curriculum change happens within schools. Any successful renewal effort centres round teachers and leaders. Placing them at the periphery impairs the whole reform process, decreasing its propensity for success. The study indicates that, by legislating change from the top, key practitioners' plight was left unheard. Rather than considering themselves as valued partners, many key practitioners view themselves as mere pawns manipulated by an overbearing system. Such realities seem to be dulling the reform process, one that all agree upon in principle.

As the study indicates, the current reform process stands to benefit if teachers and leaders are better involved in strategic decision-making, are provided with enriching learning opportunities and empowered to lead curriculum decisions. As successful foreign educational systems indicate, it is by valorising key practitioners that education systems profit the most (Sahlberg, 2015; Schleicher, 2012, 2018).

By enabling their practitioners to lead curriculum innovations, both Finland and Singapore have transformed their key practitioners into professionals. And results show. Such success is not only indicative through academic outcomes obtained, but also in the level of respect the teaching profession enjoys within these societies. As

Sahlberg (2015) and Schleicher (2012, 2018) have stated, Finland turned its system around and in so doing, made the profession one of the most esteemed in its country, making it an attractive and highly competitive one, and drawing highly qualified individuals to it.

5.4.2 A bottom-up approach.

The implications for the local educational system are myriad. The study indicates that effective change sprouts from the grassroots. As Bezzina and Camilleri (2001) have claimed, willing change from the top excludes teachers and generates resistance. In contrast, bottom-up approaches could harbour teachers' commitment, enhancing the renewal process.

Nourishing opportunities for cooperative practices at micro-level and extending them to a macro-level, through the input of the college, could transform individual, random, school-based curriculum renewal efforts into more cohesive efforts at national level. Adopting such a strategy could narrow the existing gap between top-down and bottom-up efforts, resulting in more sustainable change.

The study indicates that the top-down approach adopted during the current renewal process was spurred on by the fervent attempt to turn the system around in a short span of time. Whilst this may have been well-intended, yet the outcomes were not as positive. Persisting with a top-down approach without garnering the active involvement of the only true catalysts for change, teachers and leaders, risks resulting in poor reform implementation and another failed attempt at reform.

As both the literature reviewed and the study indicate, the smoothest path towards effective "institutionalization" (Fullan, 2007) is one led by well-equipped teachers, guided by capable school leaders, under the purview of their college leaders,

with the support of central office. As this study has brought out, such a bottom-up approach can raise key practitioners' morale, reinvigorating their energy and revitalizing their commitment to the renewal process. Having proficient curriculum leaders and teachers capably guiding the renewal process could strongly augment the reforms' propensity for success.

5.4.3 Allowing time for consolidation.

In closing, one must add that sustainable change requires time: time to learn, adapt and adopt new practices. As Sahlberg (2015) has claimed, the transformation of the Finnish educational system into a highly functioning system was spread over three decades. Being that local key practitioners are still catching their breath, following persistent past and present reforms, adopting an "incremental change" (Glatthorn et al., 2017, p. 243) approach could lead to better long-term outcomes.

Whilst aiming high, renewal needs to be achieved in smaller strides. Dedicating time to teamwork, allocating necessary resources and nourishing expertise could, in time, transform local institutions into "learning organisations" where:

people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together (Senge, 1990, p. 3)

Within such cooperative learning environments, proficient curriculum leadership flourishes and quality learning abounds. Fostering such environments could transform local schools into centres for educational excellence. In so doing, the Maltese educational system could finally turn itself around, achieving its long-sought goals of providing quality learning for all!

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a discussion on the key research findings that emerged from the study. These findings were interpreted in view of the literature, allowing for comparisons to be made and valuable lessons to be drawn from the research. The final chapter formulates the research conclusions and provides recommendations for practical implementation. Additionally, it explores the study's strengths and limitations, suggests areas for further research and ends with the researcher's final reflections about this research process.

Chapter 6:

*Conclusion
and Recommendations*

Conclusion and Recommendations

Lead the change you want to see.

- **Michael Fullan, 2008, p. 51**

6.0 Introduction

The final chapter attempts to draw the main conclusions from this study and make recommendations for practical implementation. It highlights the study's strengths and limitations and suggests areas for further research. The chapter ends with the researcher's final reflections about the research process.

6.1 Conclusions

This research has attempted to understand how curriculum leadership functions are perceived and applied within the local, changing educational context. The study has equally focused on aspects that enhance curriculum leadership functions and considered prohibiting factors. It has attempted to explore strategies that heighten proficient, curriculum leadership functions and considered how the increased prevalence of such practices could contribute to quality learning and improved outcomes.

This study, conducted within the Maltese, changing, educational context, portrayed educational institutions which adopted shared curriculum leadership practices aiming at quality curriculum provision. The research has noted that whilst delegation and empowerment bolstered curriculum leadership functions, lack of time, resources and expertise were inhibiting factors that limited the prevalence of such practices across all schools.

The study proposes leadership for learning as the model that facilitates curriculum leadership functions, enhancing leaders' and teachers' focus on learning. Adopting learning-centred schedules would allocate more time for collaboration, allowing room for cooperative learning and enhanced curriculum provision. Better resource provision, enhanced training opportunities and greater devolution of curriculum responsibilities to the college are identified as major contributing factors that could enhance key practitioners' propensity for proficient, curriculum leadership functions and augment the exertion of such practices within local schools.

Interpretations of the findings indicate that the seeds have been sown and curriculum leadership has set roots within local schools. By allowing time for collaboration and cultivating professional learning environments, such practices could grow and flourish. Although one cannot state this will directly influence students' outcomes and achievement, yet nurturing a cooperative learning environment could enhance learning at all levels of the institution. With learning being led by teachers, guided by capable curriculum leaders and duly supported by college leaders and policymakers, colleges could transform into continuously improving institutions that strive to offer quality curriculum provision and enhanced educational outcomes.

Given that research about curriculum leadership practices in the local context is still in its infancy, this research has attempted to increase such knowledge base. The research and literature presented in this study hope to offer researchers and practitioners insights about the subtleties and complexities of curriculum leadership. Benefitting from a deeper understanding about curriculum leadership practices could reinvigorate curriculum leaders' efforts to support quality learning. Being that the available evidence infers broad conclusions, additional research is needed to identify specific curriculum leadership practices that could successfully achieve such goals.

6.2 Recommendations

In view of such findings, a series of recommendations addressed at the three levels of management, namely ministerial level, college level and school leadership level are offered. The recommendations are being presented in point form for ease of reference by readers that would like to focus on either of the areas.

6.2.1 Recommendations at ministerial level.

- Being that school leaders' time is mostly dedicated to managerial duties, benefitting from sufficient, proficient ancillary staff could allow school leaders to delegate such duties and increasingly focus on leading curriculum work.
- Literature supports the view that leadership for learning is the leadership model that best supports learning. By introducing the role of school manager who focuses on financial and administrative duties, HoSs could become Directors for Teaching and Learning who lead learning by joining teachers in inquiry processes aimed at improved practice.
- Alternatively, introducing the role of Assistant Head Curriculum (AHC), by employing individuals with prior qualifications in curriculum leadership, and deploying one AHC per school, could ensure that schools increasingly prioritise curriculum leadership practices.
- Devolving responsibility for centrally-driven CPD provision to state colleges could result in more tailor-made CoPE sessions that support school-based initiatives whilst promoting national curriculum agendas. Through a stronger investment in the college's resources and provision of additional funding, state colleges could become centres for CPD, offering key practitioners enhanced access to quality CPD opportunities that nourish learning.

- Literature vouches for PLCs as vehicles for learning. Presently, high average-loads allow teachers little time for cooperative learning. Fostering such environments calls for the re-distribution of teaching loads, increasing non-contact time allocated for critical reflection. Given the current situation with teaching not being considered as an attractive position this needs to be considered as part of a more strategic plan of action that involves making teaching a desired profession.
- The study indicates that having in-house HoDs adds impetus to curriculum leadership practices within the schools they are stationed at. The gradual yet consistent development of a departmental system, by deploying an HoD per subject per secondary school, could transform such curriculum leaders into coaches who facilitate shared curriculum implementation and evaluation practices aimed to improve the practice. Despite the present strain on resources, such a strong investment in curriculum work is crucial to enhanced quality curriculum provision.
- Given the need for enhanced system cohesion, forging stronger connections with interested parties, including the MUT, the UoM and the IfE, MEDE could provide a clearer sense of direction and offer schools better access to expertise.
- The study advocates for a move towards shared governance, through the devolution of more power to state colleges. Founded on mutual accountability, MEDE could hold colleges accountable for high standards of learning and achievement whilst providing sufficient structural, financial and human resources to enhance their efficacy and propensity for success.

6.2.2 Recommendations at college level.

- Having adequate funding, resources and support from central office, the college could better distribute resources amongst schools within the college, with such equitable distribution enhancing each school's propensity for effective curriculum leadership.
- Acting as the intermediary, the college could draw stronger bridges between MEDE entities and schools. Strengthening two-way, vertical communication and fostering cooperative partnerships could enhance both school-based and national curriculum renewal processes.
- Being in charge of college-based CPD, the college could better support curriculum leadership practices and quality learning by offering on-going, tailor-made training for its leaders and teachers.
- Offering specialised CPD opportunities requires the college to forge even stronger connections with its schools, an endeavour that could be undertaken by the college-based EO curriculum. By having this EO liaising with SLTs, HoDs and teachers, the college could make better informed decisions about each school's CPD needs. Presently such CPD provision needs to focus on providing a better understanding about outcome-based education (OBE), formative assessment methods, student-centred teaching approaches, 21st century skills and digital literacy. Additionally, curriculum leaders may benefit from PD sessions about cooperative learning practices such as lesson study, learning walkthroughs, peer-coaching and instructional rounds. Such PD sessions could empower curriculum leaders to lead a curriculum renewal process skilfully, resulting in progress.

- By drawing onto its links with MEDE entities, including subject EOs, and by making stronger connections with the UoM, IFE and even foreign educational institutions, the college could offer seminars led by keynote speakers, thus nourishing its practitioners' knowledge, insights and expertise.
- Shifting from lecture-like set-ups to more hands-on workshops, interactive presentations, discussions and modelling of techniques that practitioners could incorporate in their practice would better link theory to practice, further enhancing the quality of such CPD opportunities and key practitioners' learning.
- Increasing networking practices, by organising joint CPD sessions within the college, cluster and beyond, could extend the learning that practitioners gain through the sharing of practices within their schools. Organising teacher-led or leader-led seminars and offering more shadowing experiences could further develop reflective practice, nourish collegiality and promote learning.

6.2.3 Recommendations at school level.

- Adopting a leadership for learning model, by delegating administrative duties to capable, clerical staff and/or AHoSs, could allow HoSs to lead learning. Increased participation in joint implementation and evaluation practices, as well as through informal classroom visits, could enable school leaders to better identify teachers' needs and support them through targeted CPD opportunities and better allocation of resources.

- Delegating the role of AHC to one of the school's AHoS could ensure that curriculum leadership practices are prioritised and not overshadowed by managerial work.
- Establishing curriculum teams, per subject at secondary school level, or year group at primary school level, and assigning a middle leader per team could allow each group to better focus on fulfilling subject and SDP goals whilst collectively implementing, evaluating and innovating curriculum provision.
- Having a curriculum leadership team, comprising of the HoS, AHC and the middle leaders leading curriculum teams could lead to more cohesive curriculum leadership actions that help transform the school's shared vision into sustainable outcomes.
- Adopting learning-centred schedules by slotting more non-contact time dedicated to joint, curriculum implementation and evaluation could enhance collective learning, enriching leader' and teachers' expertise and improving their practice.
- Given that the college would provide tailor-made CPD that targets the development of expertise, management-driven CPD could transform into enriching CoPE sessions centring on the sharing of good practices and teamwork. During such sessions, professionals would focus on devising ways of implementing knowledge, skills and strategies learnt during college-based CPD sessions, observe each other practising such skills and critically reflect on such implementation, thus augmenting their learning and improving their practice.

6.3 Study limitations and recommendations for further research.

As acknowledged in the research methodology chapter, having an insider status could pose limitations on the study. Yet, data triangulation and accessing multiple sources aimed to restrict such limitations and offer valid and reliable data. Indeed, profiting from the advantages of having an insider role seems to have strengthened the study, offering richer data than otherwise available to an outsider researcher.

With regards to methodological restrictions, the present study was limited by its qualitative nature. Qualitative research is often criticised for being exploratory (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), with case study research lacking generalizability (Yin, 2013). However, Yin (2013) argues for “analytic or conceptual generalization” (p. 327) rather than offering statistical information. Findings explain how the issue investigated produces its results or fails to do so. By drawing onto its pressing “how” research question, this study allowed for analytical generalisations to be made.

Although this single case study was not representative of all state colleges, it may still shed light on significant issues pertaining to local curriculum leadership practices. In line with Yin (2013), the findings were used to address the dearth of literature in the area and in so doing “the generalizations from a single case study can be interpreted with greater meaning and lead to a desired cumulative knowledge” (ibid, 2013, p. 327).

Time posed another limiting factor. Having a broader time frame, conducting a multiple case study could have enhanced this study’s analytic value. Nonetheless, this research sought to provide an in-depth understanding of curriculum leadership practices given the set timeframe.

Based on such strengths and limitations, one must acknowledge that whilst the suggested recommendations may improve curriculum leadership practices within the local context, one cannot claim that enacting such practices will definitely result in such an outcome. A need for further research exists. Being that this study was a single-case exploratory study within one college in Malta, conducting a multiple case study across a number of colleges could enhance the generalisability of present findings.

6.4 Reflections on the Personal and Professional Impact of the Study

The study into the realms of curriculum leadership practices has led me on a journey of discovery, offering both personal and professional growth. Engaging with the literature and interacting with numerous professionals has deepened my insights about curriculum leadership functions, enabling me to identify ways how, as an assistant head of school, I could increasingly prioritise such a crucial facet of leadership, that of curriculum leadership.

The experience has highlighted how change needs to be approached from an incremental perspective. One cannot expect change to happen without due respect to the varied contexts people work from. As this study has shown, policymakers often tend to expect educators working at the school level to embark on change without acknowledging that there are factors that could hinder such implementation. Studies have repeatedly shown that reform requires a shift in mindset first and foremost, and we are still struggling at that level. It shows that a focus at all levels needs to be at the human level and the environments that we create to make professional learning a way of life for all of us.

Having personally profited from such an enriching learning experience, the research and literature presented hopes to stir other researchers' interest in this area

thus encouraging further exploration. Through the knowledge advanced by the study, it is hoped that this research could nourish curriculum leaders' and teachers' insights, motivating them to adopt curriculum leadership practices more proficiently and profusely.

Inspiring policymakers, educational leaders and teachers to valorise and prioritise curriculum leadership practices could transform local educational institutions into professional learning environments, ones that hold teachers' and students' learning at heart. Focusing leadership on learning could ultimately furnish learners with more meaningful learning experiences, successfully transforming them into mature, capable and knowledgeable individuals, who are not just functional citizens of the 21st century, but prove to be its pillars. As Schleicher (2018) has stated:

universal high-quality education is an attainable goal, that it is within our means to deliver a future for millions of learners who currently do not have one, and that our task is not to make the impossible possible, but to make the possible attainable. (p. 280)

As researchers, policymakers, school leaders and teachers, we can all be catalysts for change. As Fullan (2008) exhorts us, let us lead the change we want to see. Let us all join forces and make quality curriculum provision a local reality. And then, upon successfully transforming our schools into centres of educational excellence, we can bask in the knowledge that together we spurred the Maltese educational system to reach a coveted milestone.

Now is the time. Power is in our hands. Let us keep on aspiring to provide quality learning. Let us keep on inspiring today's learners, empowering them to build better, stronger tomorrows. Let us make a difference. Together, we can!

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a review of the findings and was followed by a series of recommendations that may offer venues for increased prevalence of curriculum leadership practices within local, educational institutions. Whilst it cannot be assumed that curriculum leadership functions will turn the Maltese educational system around, given that numerous contributing factors impinge on the success of any educational system, yet nourishing proficient, curriculum leaders who capably guide curriculum development and innovation could have a positive impact on quality teaching and learning, enhanced achievement and improved outcomes.

References

References

- Aasland, D. G. (2010). Research as Response. *Qualitative Social Work: Research and Practice*, 9(1), 43-51. Retrieved from: DOI:10.1177/1473325009355619
- Attard Tonna, M. (2013). Promoting Professional Development. In C. Bezzina & K. Vella (Eds.), *The Leadership Imperative – A journey where people matter*. Malta: Print It., pp. 149-163.
- Attard Tonna, M., & Bugeja, G. (2016). *A Reflection on the Learning Outcomes Framework Project*. Malta, Faculty of Education, 10(1), 169-176.
- Attard Tonna, M., & Calleja, C. (2010). *The Let Me Learn professional learning process experience: a new culture for professional learning*. Universitas Tarraconensis. *Revista de Ciències de l'Educació*, 1(1), 35-53.
- Attard Tonna, M., & Calleja, J. (2018). *Teachers' professional lives and careers*. Faculty of Education, University of Malta. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323416013_Teachers'_professional_lives_and_careers
- Bacharach, N. L., Heck, T. W., & Dahlberg, K. (2010). *Changing the Face of Student Teaching Through Co-Teaching*. Teacher Development Faculty Publications. Retrieved from https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/ed_facpubs/1
- Barth, R. (2001). Teacher Leader. *Phi Delta Kappan Magazine*, 82(6), 443-449.
- Bennis, W. G. (1989). Managing the dream: Leadership in the 21st century. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 2(7), p 6-10.

- Bezzina, C. (2001). The Professional Development of Headteachers in Malta: Trends and Development. *The International Journal of Educational Management*, 15(3), 138-144.
- Bezzina, C. (2006). Inclusive Learning Communities: the real challenges facing reform in Malta. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 20(6), 453-465.
- Bezzina, C. (2007). Networks as a means of nurturing collaborative learning communities: the power of personalisation and collaboration. *International Journal for Educational Law and Policy*, Special Issue: Public Governance of Education Systems, pp.71-85.
- Bezzina, C. (2008). Towards a Learning Community: The Journey of a Maltese Catholic Church School. *Management in Education*, 22(3), 22-27.
- Bezzina, C. (2013). Exploring the role of the Contemporary School Leader. In C. Bezzina & K. Vella (Eds.), *The Leadership Imperative – A journey where people matter*. Malta: Print It., pp. 27-37.
- Bezzina, C. (2019a). Engaging with centralised policy initiatives: the Malta experience. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 51, 369-380.
- Bezzina, C. (2019b). 'The Road less Travelled': Professional Communities in Secondary Schools. In C. Bezzina & S. Caruana (Eds.), *Teacher Education Matters: transforming lives ...transforming schools*. Faculty of Education, University of Malta: Gutenberg Press, pp. 180-189.

- Bezzina, C., & Bufalino, G. (2014). Exploring the leadership that matters. *Economia e Diritto*, 009, 1-5. Retrieved from: <http://www.economiaediritto.it/wordpress/exploring-the-leadership-that-matters/>
- Bezzina, C., & Bufalino, G. (2018). Nurturing authentic leadership for teacher leaders: the challenges ahead. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 55(1), 18-23.
- Bezzina, C., & Calleja, J. (2017). Making Time for Collaboration. *The Sunday Times of Malta* (pp. 52). Malta: Allied Newspapers Limited.
- Bezzina, C., & Camilleri, A. (2001). The Professional Development of Teachers in Malta. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 24(2), 158-170.
- Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, F. (2016). *Member Checking: A Tool to Enhance Trustworthiness or Merely a Nod to Validation?* *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1802-1811.
- Black, P., & William, D. (1998). *Assessment and Classroom Learning. Assessment in Education: Principle Policy & Practice*, 5(1), 7-74. Retrieved from: DOI:10.1080/0969595980050102
- Borg, M., & Giordmaina, J. (2012). *Towards a quality education for all: Every teachers counts*. Malta: The Malta Union of Teachers.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2017) Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12:3, 297-298. Retrieved from: DOI: 10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613

- Bush, T. (2008). From Management to Leadership: Semantic or Meaningful Change? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 36(2), 271-288.
- Bush, T. (2011). *Theories of Educational Leadership and Management*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bush, T., Bell, L., & Middlewood, D. (2010). *The principles of educational leadership & management*. London: Sage Publications.
- Calleja, J. (2017). *Lesson Study Report: Making mathematical connections*. Retrieved from: https://issuu.com/iblmaths/docs/lesson_study_report
- Calleja, J. (2018). *Teacher Participation in Continuing Professional Development: Motivating Factors and Programme Effectiveness*. Malta, Faculty of Education, 12(1), 5-29.
- Calleja, J. (2019). Learning to Enact Reform Practices: Understanding teachers' work within contrasting learning contexts. In C. Bezzina & S. Caruana (Eds.), *Teacher Education Matters: transforming lives ...transforming schools*. Faculty of Education, University of Malta: Gutenberg Press, pp.200-219.
- Calleja, J., Mizzi, D., & Riolo, I. (2018). *Teachers in communities of practice: perspectives and experiences from three doctoral research studies*. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326675938_Teachers_in_communities_of_practice_perspectives_and_experiences_from_three_doctoral_research_studies
- City, E. A. (2011). Learning from instructional rounds. *Educational Leadership*, 69(2), 36-41.

- City, E., Elmore, R., Fiarman, S., & Teitel, L. (2009). *Instructional rounds in education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Clark, S. N., & Clark, D. C. (2002). Middle School Leadership: Making Leadership for Learning the Top Priority. *Middle School Journal*, 34(2), 50-55.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Coleman, M., & Glover, D. (2010). *Educational Leadership and Management: Developing Insights and Skills*. Open University.
- Crippen, C. (2012). Enhancing authentic leadership-followership: Strengthening school relationships. *Management in Education*, 26(4), 192-198. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020612439084>
- Cutajar, M. (2007). Educational Reform in the Maltese Islands. *Journal of Maltese Educational Research*, 5(1), 3-21.
- Cutajar, M., Bezzina, C., & James, C. (2013). Educational reforms in Malta: A missed opportunity to establish distributed governance. *Management in Education*, 27(3), 118-124.
- Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., & Meyerson, D. (2005). *School leadership study: Developing successful principals (Review of Research)*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Educational Leadership Institute.
- Day, C., Harris, A., Hadfield, M., Tolley, H., & Beresford, J. (2000) *Leading Schools in Times of Change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

- Day, C., Sammons, P., Stobart, G., Kington, A., & Gu, Qing. (2007). *Teachers Matter Connecting work, lives and effectiveness*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Denzin N. K., & Lincoln Y. S. (2011). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Dimmock, C. (1999). Principals and School Restructuring: Conceptualising Challenges as Dilemmas. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 37(5): 441–62.
- Dimmock, C., & Wildy, H. (1995). Conceptualizing curriculum management in an effective secondary school: a Western Australian case study. *Curriculum Journal*, 6, pp. 297- 323.
- DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. E. (1998). *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*. National Education Service, Bloomington, IN.
- Duignan, P. A. (2006). *Educational leadership: Key challenges and ethical dilemmas*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Elmore, R. (2004). *School Reform from the inside out*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- European Commission (2013). *Reducing early school leaving: Key messages and policy support*. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/doc/esl-group-report_en.pdf.

- Farrugia, M. (2013). *Becoming a Visible Leader*. In C. Bezzina & K. Vella (Eds.), *The Leadership Imperative – A journey where people matter*. Malta: Print It., pp. 98-104.
- Fava Galea, M. (2015). *Instructional leadership in Maltese Schools: myth or reality?* Unpublished executive MBA thesis. University of Malta. Retrieved from: <https://hydi.um.edu.mt/>
- Fink, S. L., Markholt, A., Copland, M. A., Michelson, J., & Bransford, J. (2011). *Leading for instructional improvement: how successful leaders develop teaching and learning expertise*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a Culture of Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M. (2002). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16-20. Retrieved from: <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/may02/vol59/num08/The-Change-Leader.aspx>
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (4th Ed.). Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Fullan, M. (2008). *What's worth fighting for in the Principalship* (2nd Ed.). Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Fullan, M. (2014). *The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact*. San Francisco, Wiley.
- Glatthorn, A., Boschee, F., & Whitehead, B. (2006). *Curriculum leadership: Development and implementation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Glatthorn, A.A., Jailall, J. M., & Jailall, J. K. (2017). *The principal as curriculum leader: Shaping what is taught and tested*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Groundwater-Smith, S., Dockett, S., & Bottrell, S. (2015). *Participatory research with children and young people*. Los Angeles, Sage.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin, N.K., & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading Educational Change: reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33(3), 329-352. Retrieved from:
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0305764032000122005>
- Hallinger, P. (2009, Sept). *Leadership for 21st Century Schools: From Instructional Leadership to Leadership for Learning*. Paper presented in a lecture of the Chair Professors Public Lecture Series of The Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong, China.
- Hallinger, P. (2011). Leadership for learning: Lessons from 40 years of empirical. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 49(2): 125-142. DOI:
10.1108/09578231111116699
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (2003). Understanding the principal's contribution to school improvement. In M. Wallace and L. Poulson (Eds.), *Learning to read critically in educational leadership and management*. London: Sage.
- Hamilton, L. (2011). *Case studies in educational research*, British Educational Research Association online resource. Retrieved from: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/case-studies-in-educational-research>
- Handy, C. (2012). *The Age of Unreason*. London: Cornerstone Digital.

- Haradhan, K. M. (2018). Qualitative Research Methodology in Social Sciences and Related Subjects. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*, 7(1), pp. 23-48.
- Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional Capital: Transforming teaching in Every school*. Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Harris, A. (2008). *Distributed School Leadership: Developing tomorrow's leaders*. London: Routledge.
- Harris, A., & Muijs, D. (2005). *Improving schools through teacher leadership*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Harvey, J., & Holland, H. (2012). *The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching and learning*. New York, NY: Wallace Foundation.
- Hoerr, T. (2015). What's an Instructional Leader? *Educational Leadership*, 73(2), 84.
- Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G. (2001). *Awakening the Sleeping Giant: Helping Teachers Develop as Leaders* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Laws of Malta. (1988). *Education Act (Act XXIV of 1988)*. Valletta: DOI. Retrieved from: <https://education.gov.mt/en/Documents/Malta-education/act-2010.pdf>
- Lee, J. C. K., & Dimmock, C. (1999). Curriculum leadership and management in secondary schools: A Hong Kong case study. *School Leadership & Management*, 19(4), 455-481. DOI: 10.1080/1363243996

Lee, J. C. K., Dimmock, C., & Au Yeung, T. (2009). Who really leads and manages the curriculum in primary schools? A Hong Kong case study. *Curriculum Journal*, 20(1), 3-26.

Leithwood, K. (1994). Leadership for school restructuring. *Educational administration quarterly*, 30(4), 498-518.

Leithwood, K. A., & Riehl, C. (2003). *What we know about successful school leadership*. Philadelphia, PA: Laboratory for Student Success, Temple University.

Leithwood, K., Day, C., Sammons, P., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2006). *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership*. England: NCSL.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Louis, K. S., Leithwood, K., Wahlstrom, K. L., & Anderson, S. E. (2010). *Learning from leadership: investigating the links to improved student learning*. Minnesota: The Wallace Foundation.

Lumby, J. (2001). Framing teaching and learning in the twenty-first century. In D. Middlewood & N. Burton (Eds.), *Managing the Curriculum*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Lunenburg, F. C. (2011). Leadership versus Management: A Key Distinction—At Least in Theory. *International Journal of Management, Business, and Administration*, 14(1), 1-4.

Maguire, M. S., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. Retrieved from: <http://ojs.aishe.org/index.php/aishe-j/article/view/335>

- Marks, H. M., & Printy, S. M. (2003). Principal Leadership and School Performance: An Integration of Transformation and Instructional Leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(3), 370-397.
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership That Works: From Research to Results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Educational Learning.
- Middlewood, D. (2001). Leadership of the curriculum: setting the vision. In D. Middlewood & N. Burton (Eds.), *Managing the Curriculum*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (2000). *Creating the Future Together- National Minimum Curriculum*. Floriana, Malta: MEYE.
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (2005). *For All Children to Succeed: A New Network Organisation for Quality Education in Malta*. Floriana, Malta: MEYE.
- Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment (2007). *Job Description Handbook for Grades and Positions within the Directorate for Quality and Standards and the Directorate for Educational Services*. Floriana, Malta: MEYE.
- Ministry for Education and Employment (2012). *A National Curriculum Framework for All*. Floriana, Malta: MEDE.

Ministry for Education and Employment (2013a). *PISA 2009+ Programme for International Student Assessment Malta Report*. Floriana, Malta: MEDE.

Retrieved from: https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/international_studies/Documents/PISA_2009_MaltaReport.pdf

Ministry for Education and Employment (2013b). *PIRLS 2011 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study Malta Report*. Floriana, Malta: MEDE.

Retrieved from: <https://researchandinnovation.gov.mt/en/documents/pirls%202011-%20malta%20report.pdf>

Ministry for Education and Employment (2013c). *TIMSS 2011 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study Malta Report*. Floriana, Malta:

MEDE. Retrieved from: https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/international_studies/Documents/TIMSS_2011_Malta_Report.pdf

Ministry of Education and Employment (2014, January 25). *Ministry lists priorities in education sector* [Press Release]. Retrieved from:

<https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/News/Pages/News%20items/Ministry-lists-priorities-in-education-sector.aspx>

Ministry for Education and Employment (2014). *Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024: Sustaining Foundations, Creating Alternatives, Increasing Employability*. Floriana, Malta: MEDE

Ministry for Education and Employment (2014). *Respect for All Framework*. Floriana, Malta: MEDE.

Ministry of Education and Employment (2015). *Learning Outcomes Framework*.

Floriana, Malta: MEDE. Retrieved from:

<http://www.schoolslearningoutcomes.edu.mt/en/pages/about-the-framework>

- Ministry for Education and Employment (2016a). *My Journey: Achieving through different paths*. Floriana, Malta: MEDE. Retrieved from [http://www.myjourney.edu.mt/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ My-Journey - Booklet.pdf](http://www.myjourney.edu.mt/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/My-Journey-Booklet.pdf)
- Ministry of Education and Employment (2018, December 5). *Web portal launch – Part of ‘My Journey’: Achieving through different paths* [Press Release]. Retrieved from: [https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/DOI/ Press%20Releases/ Pages/2018/December/05/pr1182639.aspx](https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/DOI/Press%20Releases/Pages/2018/December/05/pr1182639.aspx)
- Moon B., & Murphy, P. (2006). Perspectives on the context of curriculum. In B. Moon & P. Murphy (Eds.), *Curriculum in Context*. London: Open University Press.
- Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (5th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- OECD (2013a). *PISA 2012 Results: What Student Know and Can Do. Student Performance in Mathematics, Reading and Science (Volume I)*. PISA, Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-volume-I.pdf>
- OECD (2013b). *PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful (Volume IV): Resources, Policies and Practices*. PISA, Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264201156-en>.
- OECD (2014). *TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*. TALIS, Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en>

- Pont, B., D. Nusche, D., & Moorman, H. (Eds.). (2008). *Improving School Leadership, Volume 1: Policy and Practice*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The Impact of Leadership on Student Outcomes: An Analysis of the Differential Effects of Leadership Types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635-674. Retrieved from: <https://doi-org.ejournals.um.edu.mt/10.1177/0013161X08321509>
- Sahlberg, P. (2015). *Finnish Lessons 2.0: what can the world learn from educational change in Finland?* Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Saidin K., & Yaakub A. (2016). *Insider Researcher: Challenges & Opportunities*. Retrieved from: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21070/picecrs.v1i1.563849>
- Schleicher, A. (Ed.). (2012). *Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21st-Century: Lessons from around the Worlds*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from: <https://www.oecd.org/site/eduistp2012/49850576.pdf>
- Schleicher, A. (2018). *World Class: How to build a 21st-century school system, Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/478926430002-en>
- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (1st Ed.). London: Doubleday.
- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2001). *Leadership: What's in it for schools?* London: Routledge Falmer.

- Sergiovanni, T. J. (2009). *The Principalship: A Reflective Practice Perspective* (6th Ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Sorenson, R. D., Goldsmith, L. M., Méndez Z. Y., & Maxwell, K. T. (2011). *The Principal's guide to Curriculum Leadership*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Spady, W. G. (1994). *Outcome-based education. Critical issues and answers*. Arlington. American Association of School Administrators.
- Spillane, J. P. (2006). *Distributed Leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Stigler, J., & Hiebert, J. (1999). *The Teaching Gap: Best Ideas from the World's Teachers for Improving Education in the Classroom*. New York: Free Press.
- United Nations (2015). *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York: UN Publishing. Retrieved from:
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
- Unluer, S. (2012). Being an Insider Researcher while conducting Case Study Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(29), 1-14. Retrieved from
<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol17/iss29/2>
- Wagner, T. (2008). *The Global Achievement Gap*. NY: Basic Books.
- Wiles, J. (2009). *Leading Curriculum Development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Yin, R. (2013). Validity and generalization in future case study evaluations. *Evaluation*, 19(3), 321–332. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389013497081>

Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research Design and Methods* (5th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Yin, R. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th Ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Yukl, G. (2010). *Leadership in organizations* (7th Ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Zaleznik, A. (1977). Managers and leader: Are they different? *Harvard Business Review on Leadership*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 55, 67-78.

Appendix A:

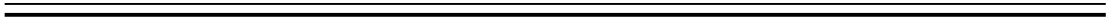
Research Time Frame

Appendix A

Research Time Frame

Thesis Proposal	
Reading of literature related to the area being explored.	September – October 2018
Thesis proposal written and discussed with tutor.	November 2018
Thesis proposal submitted to the Board of Studies.	December 2018
Thesis proposal approved by the Board of Studies.	February 2019
Formulation of the interview protocol, observation template, permission letters, information letters, consent forms.	February 2019
Submission for FREC Approval	
Submission of the thesis proposal to FREC.	March 2019
Further reading of literature including methodology.	April 2019
Ethical clearance granted by FREC.	May 2019
Application for Institutional permission and Approval.	May 2019
Application for Gatekeeper permission and Approval.	May 2019
Final FREC Approval to commence Data Collection.	June 2019
Data Collection and Analysis	
Interviews with policymakers, college leaders and HoSs.	June – November 2019
Interviews with middle leaders and teachers.	June – November 2019
Observations of meetings (SLT; CT; SDP).	June – November 2019
Verbatim transcription of all interviews.	June – December 2019
Analysis of the SDP documents 2019-2020.	December 2019
Transcripts sent for participant verification.	December 2019 – January 2020
Analysis of the data collected.	January 2019 – February 2020
Thesis Write-up	
Introduction.	September 2019 – October 2019
Literature Review.	October–November 2019
Research Methodology.	December 2019
Research Findings.	January – February 2020
Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations.	March 2020
Review, correction, editing and printing.	April 2020
Submission of Thesis.	May 2020

Appendix B:



Interview Protocol

Appendix B

Interview Protocol (English Version)

Interview: Head of School

Time of Interview:

Interviewer:

Date:

Interviewee:

Place:

Position of Interviewee

(Brief description of study)

- How important is curriculum development and implementation for schools?
- What role do college and school leaders play in the enactment of the curriculum?
- How do you seek to fulfil this curricular leadership role within your school?
- What role do other key practitioners play with regards to curricular leadership?
- What do you think about the curricular policies being introduced- My Journey/ LOFs/LAPs?
- What do you think about the way these policies are being implemented within your school?
- How are these new policies reflected in your school's SDP?
- How are school leaders being supported to translate these policies into practices?
- In what ways can current curricular leadership practices be enhanced?
- Is there anything else that you may wish to add?

Thank you for your co-operation.

Interview Protocol (Maltese Version)

Intervista' : Kap tal-Iskola

Hin tal-Intervista:

Persuna tintervista':

Data:

Persuna ntervistata'

Post:

Rwol tal-Persuna intervistata:

(Deskrizzjoni qasira tal-istudju)

- Kemm hu mportanti l- iżvilupp u l-implimentazzjoni tal-kurrikulu għall-iskejjel?
- Xi rwol għandhom il-mexxejja tal-Kulleġġ u tal-iskejjel fit-tmexxija tal-kurrikulu?
- B'liema mod bhala Kap ta' skola tfittex li tkun mexxej tal-kurrikulu fl-iskola tieghek?
- Xi rwol għandhom 'key practitioners' oħra fit-tmexxija tal-kurrikulu?
- X'taħseb dwar l-policies kurrikulari li qed jiġu ntrodotti bħal My Journey/LOFs u l-LAPs?
- X'taħseb dwar il-mod kif qed/ser jiġu implimentati fl-iskola tieghek?
- B'liema mod dawn il-policies godda qed jiġu riflessi fl-SDP tal-iskola tieghek?
- B'liema mod il-mexxejja tal-iskejjel qed ikunu ssupportjati biex jaraw li l-policies jiġu attwati u jsiru prassi fil-klassi?
- B'liema mod taħseb li l-prattici eżistenti fir-rigward tat-tmexxija tal-kurrikulu jistgħu jitjiebu?
- Hemm xi haġa oħra li tixtieq iżżid?

Grazzi.

Appendix C:

Translation of Quotations

Appendix C

Translation of Quotations

Quotation in Maltese, the original language	Translation into English
Theme 1 : Leading Learning	
4.1	
“idejalment hu [HoS] jkun the main curriculum leader”	“ <i>ideally he [HoS] is the main curriculum leader</i> ”
“jibbumbardjawhom”	“ <i>bombard them</i> ”
“il-head tagħna ngeġhluh jipprova jagħmel kollox”	“ <i>we ask our Head to try to do everything</i> ”
“sfortunatament mhux dejjem ikollhok ħin biżżejjed”	“ <i>unfortunately you do not always have enough time</i> ”
“jagħtu t-tmexxija tal-kurrikulu l-importanzi li jafu li għandu jkollu”	“ <i>give curriculum leadership the importance that they know it deserves</i> ”
“Il-perm ta’ kull skola għandu jkun il-kurrikulum...imma kemm ikun hemm ħin għal-kurrikulum...fil-laqgħat dejjem nsemmu l-curriculum imbagħad kulhadd jgħid li ħin għal kurrikulu m’għandux”	“ <i>The curriculum is the fulcrum of every school...yet time available for curriculum work is an issue...at meetings we always mention the curriculum and then everyone says that have no time for curriculum work</i> ”
“Minn SMT morna SLT ...imma vera morna minn management għal – leadership?”	“ <i>We have changed the term SMT to SLT...but have we really shifted from management to leadership?</i> ”
4.1.1	
“il-kurrikulum huwa l-core business ta’ dak li nagħmlu fl-iskejjel”	“ <i>curriculum work is the core business of we do within schools</i> ”
“ix-xogħol jispiċċaw jagħmluh l-assistant heads”	“ <i>assistant heads end up doing all the work</i> ”
“kull middle leader għandu jkollu xi role li jmiss xi ftit mal-klassi”	“ <i>all middle leaders should have a duty that connects them to the classroom</i> ”
“not strictly related bħal class visits u ssegwi s-sillabu mgħallem”	“ <i>not strictly related like class visit and following the syllabus being taught</i> ”
4.1.2	
“il-kap tal-iskola, l-assistenti kapijiet tal-iskola, il-heads of department fil-każ tas-sekondarji u l-middle schools huma l-curriculum leaders fl-iskola flimkien mat-teachers”	“ <i>the Head of School, the Assistant Heads, the Heads of Department in secondary and middle schools are the school's curriculum leaders together with teachers</i> ”
“responsabbilta’ kollettiva”	“ <i>collective responsibility</i> ”
“kollha għandhom responsabbilita’ ħarira differenti minn ta’ xulxin fit-twertieq tal-kurrikulu”	“ <i>who all played a different but important role in curriculum work</i> ”
4.1.2.1	
“ahna m’għandniex hafna say”	“ <i>we do not have much say</i> ”
“ahna [HoS] rridu naraw illi jiġi mplimentat b’mod korrett, naraw kif nissapportjaw lill-għalliema kemm b’sapport morali kif ukoll support ta’ riżorsi”	“ <i>we [HoSs] have to ensure that it is implemented well, finding ways of supporting teachers morally and by providing resources needed</i> ”
“u meta inti ttwettaq dawk l-affarijiet li għandek f’moħħok dejjem tkun iktar motivata biex toħloq iktar affarijiet..meta	“ <i>When you enact your ideas you get motivated to create more stuff...when you face obstacles..you give up and stop thinking</i> ”

inti ssib il-bibien magħluqin ma wiċċek..ħa taqta' qalbek u bħal moħħok jista'gna u ma tibqax taħseb fuq inizzjattivi godda li tista' toħloq biex tagħmel xi ħaġa differenti”	<i>of ways of creating new things and taking different initiatives”</i>
“kellu mpatt pożittiv u mhux biss akkademikament”	<i>“had a positive impact... not just academically”</i>
“isegwi dak li qed jiġi mgħallem u kif qed jiġi mgħallem”	<i>“following what is being taught and how it is being taught”</i>
4.1.2.2	
“purely curricular, u m’għandu x’jaqsam xejn mal-problemi tal-iskola”	<i>“purely curricular, not related to school problems”</i>
“hu [ACN] jagħmel ħafna xogħol li suppost nagħmel jien”	<i>“he [ACN] does a lot of work that I am supposed to do”</i>
“jibqgħu jaħdmu”	<i>“keep working regularly”</i>
“inta ffi l-kuxjenza”	<i>“stinging conscious”</i>
“jemmen fil-kurrikulu”	<i>“strongly believes in curriculum work”</i>
“il-lussu ta' numru sabieħ ta’ HoDs”	<i>“the luxury of a good number of HoDs”</i>
4.1.2.3	
“ghodda kritika biex il-kap tal-iskola flimkien mal-istaff iwettaq il-vizjoni tal-iskola”	<i>“a critical tool by which the Head of school together with all the staff implement the school’s vision”</i>
“ħriġna l-mod ta’ tagħlim, strategiji li nistgħu nagħmlu, modi ta’ kif nistgħu nagħmlu l-assessment”	<i>“identified teaching methods, strategies to adopt and types of assessment”</i>
“t-teachers bdew ħerġin b’certu idejat u bdew jgħidu ara din nista’ nassessja b’dan il-mod”	<i>“teachers came up with ways of assessing particular topics”</i>
“jaf ikollhok anke teachers li huma curricular leaders”	<i>“there might be teachers who are curricular leaders”</i>
“l-għalliem li x’hin jagħlaq il-bieb tal-klassi huwa hu li qed imexxi lil dawk l-istudenti li għandu quddiemu”	<i>“upon closing the classroom door it is the teachers who is leading the students there are in front of him”</i>
Theme 2: Collaborative Learning Environments	
4.2	
“ir-relazzjoni umana thalli l-impatt tagħha fuq kull aspett tax-xogħol tagħna”	<i>“relationships have an impact on all aspects of our role”</i>
“ma tistax taħdem man-nies, ma tistax taħdem mal-istaff, ma tistax taħdem mat-tfal...that’s number one...curriculum two..”	<i>“you cannot work with people, you cannot work with staff, you cannot work with children..that’s number one ..curriculum two”</i>
4.2.1	
“t-teachers trid tieħu hsiebhom, tirispettahom u tagħtihom li jixirqilhom”	<i>“you must take care of teachers, respect them and give them what they deserve”</i>
“...insa t-tagħlim, insa l-kurrikulu u insa r-rispett lejn ix-xogħol as you will not get it”	<i>“you can forget about teaching, forget about the curriculum and forget about loyalty to one job as you will not get it”</i>
“vantaġġi biss hemm minnha”	<i>“highly advantageous”</i>
“daqsxejn nieqsa”	<i>“somewhat limited”</i>
“tagħtina ċans biex niltaqaw kollha..anke dak li jkun johroġ id-diffikultajiet li wiehed jista’ jkollu mid-duties tiegħu billi jixxerja”	<i>“enable all of us to meet and share difficulties pertaining to ones duties”</i>

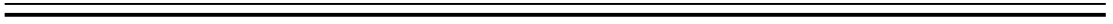
“dis-sena nħossni xorta ħafna aħjar ġħax qegħdin naħdmu flimkien”	<i>“I still feel much better this year because we are working together”</i>
“bil-ħarba, fil-kuritur”	<i>“in a hurry, in the corridor”</i>
“45 minutes ma ħumiex biżżejjed”	<i>“a forty-five minute slot is hardly enough”</i>
4.2.2	
“li jkun hemm relazzjoni tajba bejn il-kollegi hi mportanti ġħax l-ischemes of work u l-lesson plans jinħadmu flimkien”	<i>“having good collegial relationships is important as schemes of work and lesson planning is shared”</i>
“jirrifjutaw li jaqsmu l-file tagħhom ma’ ħaddieħor”	<i>“refusing to share their file with others”</i>
“dipartimenti li ħadmu flimkien marru tajjeb ..min ma ħadimx flimkien bata iktar”	<i>“departments that worked collaboratively did well..those who did not struggled more”</i>
“nnutajna li qed jieħdu iktar inizjattivi”	<i>“they are taking more initiatives”</i>
“u qed jirnexxielhom jagħmlu dan ġħax qed jaħdmu iktar flimkien”	<i>“and they are managing to do so because they are working together”</i>
“ħadmet u t-tfal ħadu pjaċir”	<i>“it worked and students enjoyed it”</i>
“konna nidhlu flimkien u min kien idur mat-tfal jara x’inhuma jagħmlu u xi ħadd qed jispjega u kienet tkun ta’ ġħajnuna għat-tfal”	<i>“we used to join classes and someone would go round the students to see wha they were doing and someone would explain and it helped students”</i>
“ġieli bħala kollegi bejnietna dħalna nosservaw lil xulxin”	<i>“sometimes as colleagues we observed one another”</i>
“tissagrifika free lesson”	<i>“sacrifice a free lesson”</i>
“ħija naqra lussu ġħax inti jagħtuk slots fejn tiltaqa’ ma’ kollegi u nfasslu lezzjoni dettaljata ..li kieku waħdek mhux ser tippjanaha zġur..ġħax tkun trid ħafna riżorsi u energija”	<i>“it is a luxury as you are allocated slots to meet your colleagues and develop a detailed lesson plan, one that you would not plan on your own as it you need a lot of resources and energy”</i>
“in the process qisek tiddiskuti, titgħallem”	<i>“in the process you discuss and learn”</i>
“ġħax t-teachers xebgħu u meta nipprovaw indaħħlu xi ħaġa ssa taf kif jieqfulna”	<i>“teachers are fed up and when we try to introduce new things they pull out all the stops”</i>
4.2.4	
“monitoring u evaluation huma l-qalba ta’ kollox u jridu jsiru b’mod regolari u kontinwu”	<i>“monitoring and evaluation are the central core of everthing and need to be conducted regularly and continuously”</i>
“biex tara li dak li qed naġħmlu qed jiġi mplimentat fil-klassi”	<i>“to see that what we are working on is being implemented in the classroom”</i>
“trid tkun taf it-tfal jekk jista’ jkun individwalment ħalli tkun taf it-tfal fejn qegħdin...taf il-ħiliet u diffikultajiet tagħhom u trid tkun preżenti fil-klassi”	<i>“knowing the students individually if possible and know their abilities and skills by being present in the classroom”</i>
“inti taf fejn hemm issues fit-teaching u inti taf fejn it-tfal qed isibu diffikultajiet”	<i>“you will know about teaching flaws and the difficulties students face”</i>
“through dik l-evidenza li ġbart”	<i>“based on the evidence collected”</i>
“problema kbira”	<i>“a big problem”</i>
“tpoġġi bilqiegħda u tifhem u tara u tosserva u tagħti l-input tiegħek”	<i>“sit down and understand and observe and give your input”</i>
“tarahom żejda”	<i>“seem burdensome”</i>
“kont naġħmel 3 class visits fis-sena lil kull teacher tal-year group tiegħi”	<i>“I used to do three class visits a year with every teacher of my year group”</i>

“jekk jiena leader tal-AfL, tad-dyslexia friendly school u mhux qed nidhol fil-klassi kif jiena nista’ nimmoniterja u nevalwa x’qed isir, il-prattika fejn tista’ titjeb , fejn sejra tajjeb hafna?”	“if I am in charge of AfL, or having a dyslexia-friendly school and I am not visiting classrooms to monitor and evaluate what is being done, how can I know what is going well and where I need to try to improve the practice? ”
“jistednuk huma fil-klassi”	“invite you to their classroom”
“li min ha jigi biex isibli l-izball ”	“visit to point out mistakes”
“tibda tisma’ certu biza’ dwar li bniedem jidhol fil-klassi”	“There is a certain fear of classroom visits”
“nara li t-tagħlim qed isehh l-ewwel haġa importanti. u nara x’feedback hemm mit-tfal u mill-ġhalliem”	“see that learning is happening which is important and get feedback from students and teachers”
“hi kwistjoni ta’ attitude”	“it’s a question of attitude”
“mill-feedback li nista’ niehu minn dak li qed jarani”	“from the feedback I get from the observer”
“fil-bidu kont niddejjaq imma issa mhux ha niddejjaq għax naf li l-feedback ikun kostruttiv”	“at first I did not like it but now I do not mind it as I know I will get constructive feedback”
“ma jhossux komdu”	“feel uncomfortable”
“jippromwovi s-sugġett tiegħu u jmexxi l-ġhalliema tiegħu f’pedagogija u f’kontenut illi jkun għadattati”	“promote their subject and expose their teachers to appropriate content and pedagogy”
“is-sugġett qed jigi mgħallem bil-latest techniques”	“the subject is taught using latest techniques”
“mhux qed ikunu preżenti biżżejjed fl-iskejjel biex jaraw li qed jiġu mplimentati, jissapportjaw lil ġhalliema f’ issues kurrikulari li jista’ jkollhom bhalissa”	“they are not enough presence in schools to monitor implementation and support teacher in curricular issues these might have”
“għenet kemm setgħet”	“helped as much as she could”
“serrhet mohh it-teachers”	“put teachers’ mind at rest”
“issugġeriet nies li jiġu jkellmuhom”	“suggested speakers”
“iktar dirett fuq il-kurrikulu tal-iskejjel”	“more direct on school’s curricular work”
“the middle person bejn x’qed jigri l-iskola u d-dipartiment”	“the middle person between schools and the department”
Theme 3: Continuous Professional Development	
4.3	
“inutli jkollhok il-hin jekk ma jkollhokx il-preparazzjoni għaliha	“it’s useless having the time unless you have the right preparation for it”
4.3.1	
“skills trid tippruvahom”	“skills need to be practiced”
“bdew jagħtuhom assessment forma ta’ testijiet xorta”	“still resorting to tests as an assessment method”
“t-training li għandhom it-teachers tagħna qed johduh ghax qed nipprovdhulom ahna at school level...mid-dipartiment unfortunately m’hemmx training”	“any training teachers are benefitting from is that provided at school level as unfortunately the department is not offering training”
“it-training li jista’ johrog mill-iskola kultant huwa aktar b’sahhtu bhala zvilupp professjonali”	“school-based training is more effective for professional development”
“Maths support, tal-literacy, tal-SpLD , tal-AfL, tad-digital literacy”	“Maths support, Literacy support, SpLD unit, HoD AfL and HoD Digital Literacy”

4.3.2	
“bla esperjenza u bla taħrig”	“no experience and no training”.
“huma biss l-assistenti kapijiet li għandhom ftit snin ta’ esperjenza li jistgħu jhallu mpatt fuq il-kurrikulu”	“only Assistant Heads with a few years of experience can have an impact on curricular work”
“xi haġa remota hafna”	“very remote”
“gergru”	“complained”
“tinvesti fit-training tagħhom”	“investment in their [AHOsS] training”,
“neqsin mit-training”	“training is lacking”
“fuq kif tibni SDP tajjeb”	“how to develop an SDP”
“għandi persuna f’kull grupp li taf xi trid, taf x’tistaqsi, taf xi trid tisma’ b’widnejha”	“there was a person per group who knew the process, knew what to ask and knew what they needed to hear”
“preparati u trained għal din il-ħaġa”	“prepared and trained for it”
4.3.3	
“workshops fejn in-nies jiltaqaw and they discuss difficulties”	“workshops where people meet and discuss difficulties”
“seminars għall-leaders kollha including il-principali, including l-EOs kulhadd fuq il-kurrikulu”	“seminars for all leaders, including the college principals and EOs, discussing the curriculum”
“qatt ma kellna a dyslexia-friendly school...allura kellna nitgħallmu aħna biex nieħdu t-training”	“we never had a dyslexia-friendly school so we had to learn and we trained ourselves”
Theme 4: Curriculum Renewal	
4.4	
“joffru tagħlim ta’ kwalita’, bil-fors il-kurrikulu ha jiehu mportanza assoluta”	“offer quality learning, then the curriculum must take absolute priority”
“xi haġa hajja li qegħda tigrri l-hin kollu fl-iskola”	“dynamic, shaped by what happens in school”
“l-curriculum mhux xi haġa statika imma ser tinbidel ma’ kif tinbidel is-socjeta”	“the curriculum is not static but changes with a changing society”
“ irid ikun hemm żvilupp u bidla’ u ovjament iridu jiġu mplimentati”	“there must be development and change and this must be implemented”
“kull student qed jieħu dak li huwa entitled għalih u tarah jirnexxi bil-pass tiegħu”	“every student gets his entitlement to learning and succeeds at his own pace”
4.4.2.1	
“ilni nġhallem għaxar snin u kull sena b’xi change ġdida”	“I have been teaching for ten years and there was a change introduced every year”
“qed isiru hafna tibdiliet u qed isiru b’rata mgħaġġla”	“many changes are being enacted at a fast rate”
“t-tibdil irid ikun iżjed bil-mod u mhux hafna f’daqqa”	“change must be done at a slower pace not enacting many changes all at once”,
“it-teacher trid tagħtih ftit nifs, li jilhaq jidhra b’sistema ġdida, jipprepara, jadatta...mhux nibbumbardjawn u l-pressure kollu fuq it-teachers imbagħad noħduha bi kbira li teachers m’hawnx jew li ma jistgħux jagħmlu xogħolhom bl-aħjar mod.”	“Teachers must be given time to get used to a new system, to prepare for it and to adapt...you do not bombard them and put pressure on them and then wonder why there are teacher shortages or that they are not performing to the best of their ability”
“l-LOs ha jiġu attwati u l-EOs għadhom qed itellawhom”	“LOs were being implemented and EOs were still uploading them”

“if you want them [teachers] on board..fil-bidu tas-sena skolastika suppost kellu jkun hemm kollox lest mhux wasalna end of November u u ghadna ma rajna xejn.. ”	<i>“if you want them [teachers] on board. you should have everything ready at the beginning of the scholastic year not reach the end of November and things are not ready”</i>
“ahjar stennejna sena oħra sakemm kellna kollox f’postu imbagħad bdejna”	<i>“it would have been wiser to wait for another year until everything was in place and then started implementing this change”</i>
4.4.2.3	
“mifxulin ”	<i>“feeling bewildered”</i>
“iktar minn 65% qalu li ma ħassewhomx kunfidenti jimplimentaw l-LOs”	<i>“over 65% said they [teachers] still did not feel confident implementing LOs”.</i>
“xi ħaġa kruċjali bħal din trid iktar minn laqgħa ta’ sagħtejn”	<i>“something as crucial as this needs more than a two-hour session”</i>
“ma konniex preparati biżżejjed	<i>“we were not prepared well enough”</i>
“nammetti li kemm l-kapijiet u l-assistenti kapijiet ma kinux preparati biżżejjed”	<i>“I admit that both Heads of School and Assistant Head were not offered enough preparation”</i>
“il-vantaġġi kurrikulari u l-flessibilita’ li joffri u l-ghanijiet prinċipali tal-policy	<i>“the curricular advantages and flexibility and the main objectives of the policy”</i>
“EO jgħid mod, EO ieħor jgħid xi ħaġa differenti, tisma’ direttur jgħid ħaġa u d-Direttur Ġenerali jgħid xi ħaġa differenti”	<i>“an EO states one thing, another EO states a different thing, you hear a director say one thing and the Director General says a different thing”</i>
“li tkun konfuż ma jgħinx”	<i>“feeling confused does not help”</i>
“lin-nies ġenninnihom”	<i>“we drove people crazy”</i>
“l-istabilita’ kullhadd jieħu pjaċir biha”	<i>“everyone enjoys stability”</i>
4.4.2.4	
“tinvolvi tibdil kbir allura l-input mic-centru huwa mportanit”	<i>“involved major changes so the input from the centre is important”</i>
“għwida cara u specifika jew awtonomija”	<i>“clear, specific direction or autonomy”</i>
“meta huma jiddeċiedi x’ser isir iridu jinfurmaw sa l-inqas dettall”	<i>“When they [policymakers] decide on the way forward, they must inform us about every detail”</i>
“li jkollhok kapijiet u assistenti kapijiet li jħibu l-informazzjoni mingħand l-ghalliema mhux sew”	<i>“having heads or assistant heads getting information from teachers is not right”</i>
“trid tikkonsulta ma’ l-ghalliema għax ahna nimplimentaaw dawn il-policies”	<i>“consult the teacher as we are the ones who implement these policies”</i>
4.5	
“din mhux riforma li bdiet illum u tlestiet f’sena mma hi process li jkompli”	<i>“this is not a reform that was launched and finalised in a year but is an on-going process”</i>
“irridu nitgħallmu minn dan il-process”	<i>“we need to learn from this process”</i>
“ma tistax tfaqqa subgħajk u tibdel minn sistema għal-oħra”	<i>“you cannot snap a finger and shift from one system to another in a year”</i>
“il-bidla bil-mod”	<i>“Change is a slow process”</i>
“inhallu wisq suldati mejtin fuq il-kamp tal-battalja biex naslu għal dak li rridu”	<i>“we are losing too many soldiers on the battlefield to get to what we want”</i>

Appendix D:



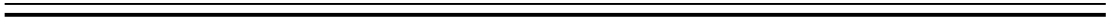
Observation Template

Appendix D

Observation Template

Observation Template			
Name of School		Date	Time
Meeting Observed	SLT Meeting /Subject Meeting/ Curriculum Time Meeting		
Participants	HoS/AHoS/HoDs/Teachers/Other Staff members		
Seating Plan			
Time	Procedures observed	Raw Comments	
Time interval	Speaker's Role : HOS/AH/HoD Topic 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Curricular Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Procedural Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Information Giving <input type="checkbox"/> Other matters: _____		
Time interval	Speaker's Role : HOS/AH/HoD Topic 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Curricular Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Procedural Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Information Giving <input type="checkbox"/> Other matters: _____		
Time interval	Speaker's Role : HOS/AH/HoD Topic 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Curricular Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Procedural Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Information Giving <input type="checkbox"/> Other matters: _____		

Appendix E:



Field Notes Sample

Appendix E

Field Notes Sample

Observation Template			
Name of School	S3	Date 14/06/19	Time 11.15-12.45
Meeting Observed	SLT Meeting		
Participants	HoS/ 6 AHoS/ 3 HoDs		
Seating Plan	All seated round a conference table		
Time	Procedures observed	Raw Comments	
Time interval 11.15–11.30	Speaker's Role : HoS Topic 1 : Scheme 9 <input type="checkbox"/> Curricular Matters <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Administrative Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Procedural Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Information Giving <input type="checkbox"/> Other matters: _____	HoS asks assistant heads for names of those students who still need to be inputted. The school has to forward names of students who need lunches, uniforms, stationery and photocopies. AHoSs are to forward names of students who would require this support. All teachers are being notified to forward the names of the students who will benefit if they are enlisted in Scheme 9.	
Time interval 11.30-11.45	Speaker's Role : HoS Topic 2 : Transport <input type="checkbox"/> Curricular Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Matters <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Procedural Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Information Giving <input type="checkbox"/> Other matters: _____	Transport booking for each student next year. Students need to book transport for next year. The official link has been sent through a circular .Assistant Heads are to remind students about this in the last assemblies they have before the annual exams. If students do not book there will not be any room for them on transport. Transport buses are allocated depending on the number of bookings there are. A reminder will be placed on the facebook page. Students must book transport online.	
Time interval 11.45-11.55	Speaker's Role : HoD Topic 3 : Green Flag <input type="checkbox"/> Curricular Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Procedural Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational Matters <input type="checkbox"/> Information Giving <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Extra Curricular	School achieved the green flag and this was greatly celebrated as this is the first one for the school. Very positive feedback about the operations at school level, especially the level of students' involvement. These students will be rewarded with a special outing and also with a certificate for the service offered to the school – students of the EKO skola council, sports' council, students' council – will enjoy a funday.	

<p>Time interval</p> <p>11.55-12.05</p>	<p>Speaker's Role : AHoS</p> <p>Topic 4: Exams</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Curricular Matters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Matters</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Procedural Matters</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Organisational Matters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Information Giving</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other Matters: _____</p>	<p>Update re exams. The papers are in cream colour. This was received positively as this is very helpful for dyslexic students.</p> <p>Sets – Sets have been checked and updated. Double checking of excel sheet being done; checking of students who do not attend; access arrangements are being marked on the class lists – joining of sets. Checking of room allocation, joining of sets following the removal of access arrangements students.</p> <p>Invigilation – Time-off has been collected. Work on how many sessions will be needed has been done. It has been worked out on number of hours not by session.</p> <p>Access arrangements – support from visually /hearing impaired – communicator. A student who is visually impaired will get her papers enlarged.</p>
<p>Time interval</p> <p>12.05-12.20</p>	<p>Speaker's Role : AHoSs/HoDs</p> <p>Topic 5 : Full Day SDP</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Curricular Matters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Matters</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Procedural Matters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Organisational Matters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Information Giving</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other matters: _____</p>	<p>The HoS asks for feedback re: full day SDP. The general feedback is very positive. The fact that the activity was organised away from school for the first time was well received and also that transport was offered for free.</p> <p>One assistant head said that everything was well organised and her groups ran smoothly. The fact that each one had a pack with all the related material necessary to work in the group was very helpful.</p> <p>Another Assistant head said that the initial presentation that the HoDs gave based on the training provided by SIRSU really guided the teachers about how to write smart goals. It was useful for both teachers and leaders.</p> <p>HoS asks all to pass on the Action plans their groups worked on. Some SLT members have passed them on but others have not.</p> <p>Some assistant heads said that they are still working on finalising some of the information written in the Action plans. One said that it is very hard to meet the teachers since half days have started. Another one agreed saying that she is doing the changes herself. Another one agreed saying she is only working with the rapporteur to finalise the document.</p>

<p>Time interval</p> <p>12.20-12.30</p>	<p>Speaker's Role : HoS/ AHoS</p> <p>Topic 6: CoPE</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Curricular Matters</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Administrative Matters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Procedural Matters</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Organisational Matters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Information Giving</p> <p>Other Matters: _____</p>	<p>Feedback about CoPE sessions</p> <p>Feedback about CoPE sessions provided this year was relatively positive. The feedback provided will also be used to come up with further details for next year. All teachers will be given a sheet indicating all the different types of training that have been done. It is a document that can be used for the teacher as proof of the training that has been obtained. An AHoS said teachers asked whether they will be given a certificate of attendance to acknowledge the training done.</p>
<p>Time interval</p> <p>12.30-12.45</p>	<p>Speaker's Role : HoS/ AHoS</p> <p>Topic 7: Curriculum Planning</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Curricular Matters</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Administrative Matters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Procedural Matters</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Organisational Matters</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Information Giving</p> <p>Other Matters: _____</p>	<p>Curriculum Planning</p> <p>Curriculum Diagram – we need to start assigning teachers to the sets.</p> <p>We have instructions that those teachers who taught only Year 7's should not be given Year 8's – ideally year 7s will be given the same tracks and the same sets.</p> <p>Blocks – teachers work as teams. The more this can be done the better as it facilitates timetable wise – timetables are similar.</p> <p>The head will forward loading so that AHoSs and HoDs will start assigning sets to the different teachers.</p> <p>Deadline will be the 3rd week of June.</p> <p>HoDs will be helping out with the population of sets and assigning teachers of the subjects they are in charge of to sets.</p> <p>Teachers' requests will be sent to help with the work of assigning teachers to the sets.</p> <p>HoS/AHoS will be working on building the curriculum diagram.</p>

Appendix F:

Coding System Sample

Appendix F

Coding System Sample

Transcript – HoS 1

I: Kemm hu mportanti l-iżvilupp u l-implimentazzjoni tal-kurrikulu għall-iskejjel?

P: Importanti hafna jekk ...fuq l-iskala nàseb jien Number 2...emm...ovvjament l-għalliema u l-istaff kollu jrid jkun jaf eżattament x'inhu mistenni minnu. Per eżempju din is-sena kellna l-introduzzjoni tal-LOs...emm...kellna l-kinder 1 illi sa Ġunju aħna l-Heads kellna t-training u qalulna mod...x'hin dhalna f' Settembru qalulna mod ieħor u gie kollox scrapped allura l-K1 reġġhu għamlu...għadhom għaddejnin bil-CoPE sessions s'issa ...ilhom sena shieha għaddejnin bil-CoPE sessions illi ...u jekk ha jgri hekk...ma nafx forsi ha tismaghha minghand haddieħor l-KGE's huma breed għalihom...they are very good people...ma tistax ma tkunx biex taħdem ma' 'fal ta' dik l-eta' but they panic...huma resourceful b' mod inkredibbli li minn roll tat-toilet paper johorgulek lesson tal-blieħ però emm x'hin inti tgħidilhom li jridu jagħmlu xi haġa huma jippanikjaw għax jibdew jarawh xoghloż żejjed meta fil-fatt mhumiex jifhem li 'they have to keep doing what they are actually doing at the moment' ...heqq imbagħad kellna l-Year 3's fejn wasal kollox f' daqqa, kollox fil-bidu tas-sena...fil-fatt għamilna l-ewwel term bi staff illi tant kien focused fuq kif ser jgħor l-assessorjar li minflok naqas l-assessorjar żdied b' mod konsiderevoli ...bdew jippanikjaw li mhux ser ilaħħqu s-sillabu u meta darba l-feel kien ta' ... thosshom... 'they were burning out very fast' ...emmm ...ghajjattilhom u tkellimna... għax minix jnlaħħaq, mhux inlaħħaq l-istudji soċjali mbagħad għidtilhom stenna, x'qed tagħmlu bħalissa, imbagħad għidtilhom jekk inti ha tagħmel per eżempju din il-lezzjoni tal-Malti ...toħroġhom passigġjata ddaħħal is-Science, ha ddaħħal l-istudji soċjali u ha ddaħħal ir-religjion u sibna t-topics kif iddaħħalhom...tant bdew jaraw kollox...tant bdew jaraw kollox bħal ziemeł bil-dawn hemm...

I: Bil-blinkers

P: Bdew jaraw kollox għalih...kif ser nassessjaw...bdew jibzighu li ser iħallu xi haġa barra illi litteralment...issa aħna bħala skola għandna l-ikbar numru ta' teachers li bħalissa qed jagħmlu l-Masters fl-AFL u għandi oħrajn deħlin ha jibdewh ...jigifieri bħalissa għandi xi 4 or 6...

I: How good...kollha minn skola waħda!

P: Jigifieri AFL hemm qiegħed...qed tifhem...jigifieri int trid tara ftit il-bizat tagħhom u li jkunu jafu fejn sejin...jigifieri inti trid tara li x'hin ha tiġi biex tiżviluppa l-lezzjonijiet tiżvilupahom b'ċertu mod illi it can be cross-curricular, li inti m'hemm xejn ta' barra minn hawn but 'as a leader int ...mhux ha jġu dejjem jgħidulek il-bizgħat tagħhom għax jibzighu ...din il-biza' ta'...

I: Forsi judgement?

P: Ehe ...jgħidulek forsi tgħid din mhix kapaċi ...din dejjem ġeija għal xi haġa...pero inti tidda tinnota kif ikun hemm dak il-buzzing feel li jkun hemm xi haġa ...but you cannot put your finger on it...

I: Jigifieri qed tgħid li ħassejtha xorta allavolja ma ġewx huma jtkellmu miegħek direttament ...emm...speci jtkellmu miegħek ...jgħidulek b' mod dirett...

P: b' mod definittiv...imbagħad sta għalik li inti tiġborhom, tkellimhom ...first and foremost tikkalmahom u tgħidilhom li inti kifhem 'what they are going through' ...għax inti once li tikkalma l-

Schools_home
Reform – training – information given was changed resulting in wasted time and energy; frustration, burnout.
No proper/clear directives – reform lacked certain leader and teacher preparation

Schools_home
CoPE sessions – more like information sessions rather than training
Teachers did not feel well prepared in handling continuous assessment – they panicked

Schools_home
Head is aware of the staff's talents ; capabilities

Schools_home
Head of School aware of staff's feelings; addresses issues through open communication – encourages them, helps them address their fears

Schools_home
Head strongly believes and supports/encourages teachers' CPD

Schools_home
Addresses their feelings;
Leading curriculum indirectly by understanding their fears and concerns

Schools_home
A leader who is caring, compassionate, empathic, a good listener and Communicator; very much in touch

Appendix G:

FREC Ethical Clearance

Appendix G

FREC Ethical Clearance

- alexia.abela-cascun.99@um.edu.mt - University of Malta Mail - Google Chrome

=2&view=bt&ver=1x4ym73thry1g&q=FREC&q&s=true&search=query&th=9&23thread-f963A1634046233203925102&q&t=frec.1&cvid=1

1767_13052019_Alexia Abela Cascun Inbox x

Research Ethics EDUC <research-ethics.educ@um.edu.mt> Mon, 20 May 2019, 12:25 ☆ ↶ ⋮

to me, Christopher ▾

Dear Ms. Abela Cascun


Please be informed that **FREC** (Education) finds no ethical or data protection issues with your research application 1767_13052019_Alexia Abela Cascun, as set out in the Senate approved documents Research Code of Ethics and Research Ethics Review Procedures. **You may proceed to obtain Institutional (eg. Education Directorate, Secretariat for Catholic Education etc) and gatekeeper permissions (eg. Heads of School, Heads of Organisations etc).**

When requesting permission from the Department for Curriculum, Research Innovation and Lifelong Learning, please also present a copy of this notification with your application.

Once you have obtained all necessary permissions, please save them as PDF documents and forward them to **FREC** by email on research-ethics.educ@um.edu.mt as soon as possible so that the ethics clearance process can be concluded without undue delay. PDF files should be named using the first part of the Unique Form ID (found at the top of the most recent online application), followed by the year and the name of the file e.g. **123_2019_Permission Secretariat for Catholic Education**.

Please DO NOT collect any data before you receive an email from **FREC confirming that all permissions have been checked and accepted. To collect data before **FREC** has concluded the ethics review process of your application would be in breach of Senate regulations.**

kind regards


FREC Secretary
i/Dr Marie Therese Farrugia

...

FREC Education
Room 311, Faculty of Media & Knowledge Sciences Building
Tel: 2340 2423

Appendix H:

Institutional Permission

Appendix H

Institutional Permission

DIPARTIMENT GHALL-KURRIKULU, TAGHLIM
TUL IL-HAJJA U IMPJEGABILITA'
FLORIANA FRN 1810



DEPARTMENT FOR THE CURRICULUM, LIFELONG
LEARNING AND EMPLOYABILITY (DCLE)
FLORIANA FRN 1810

Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability

Tel: 25982743

researchandinnovation@ilearn.edu.mt

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

Date: 28th May 2019

Ref: RI2019 / 108

To: Head of School

From: Director

Title of Research Study: *The Head of School as a Curricular Leader, at times of Educational change.*

The Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability would like to inform that approval is granted to **Alexia Abela Cascun** to conduct the research in State Schools according to the official rules and regulations, subject to approval from the Ethics Committee of the respective Higher Educational Institution.

The researcher is committed to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research. The researcher will be sending letters with clear information about the research, as well as consent forms to all data subjects and their parents/guardians when minors are involved. Consent forms should be signed in all cases particularly for the participation of minors in research.

For further details about our policy for research in schools, kindly visit www.research.gov.mt.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation.

Claire Mamo

MA Ed (Open)
Research Support Teacher
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability

f/ Alex Farrugia

Director
Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability
Great Siege Road | Floriana | VLT 2000

t: +356 25982443 e: alex.farrugia@gov.mt | www.education.gov.mt



MINISTRY FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Appendix I:

*Request for Gatekeeper
Permission – HCN*

Appendix I

Permission Letter – Gatekeeper HCN

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am Alexia Abela Cascun, a student reading for a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management at the University of Malta. As part of my course fulfilment, I am working on a dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Christopher Bezzina. In the course of my research, I will be investigating Curricular Leadership. I would kindly like to request your permission to carry out the research component of my study within your college. Below please find a brief description of the study.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore how curricular leadership is being enacted in our schools. The study will investigate ways by which college and school leaders can influence teaching and learning, enabling teachers to translate curricular policies into effective classroom practices.

Data to be collected

In order to adequately collect the data that is needed for my study, I would like to:

- Conduct a 1-hour interview with you.
- Conduct a 1-hour interview with the EO curriculum.
- Conduct a 1-hour interview with Heads of School in two Secondary schools and two Primary schools within your College.
- Conduct 1 Senior Leadership team meeting observation at each school with a focus on the matters discussed such as teaching and learning, administrative matters and so on.
- Conduct a 1-hour focus group interview with five middle leaders per school,
- Conduct a 1-hour focus group interview with five teachers per school.
- Access the SDP document of each school for the scholastic year 2019/2020.

The interviews are aimed at exploring aspects related to the purpose of the study, and will be conducted on a day and at a time arranged at the participants' convenience. I wish to audio record all the interviews with the research participants, including the focus group interviews. These recordings would enable me to transcribe the

interviews, assisting with the analysis of data. I would also need to take field notes during the observation of the Senior Leadership Team meeting.

Should you agree to allow me to conduct research within your college, I would be grateful if you would act as an intermediary between myself as the researcher and the prospective research participants. This would ensure that no participant feels coerced to take part in the study. Participation is strictly voluntary and participants may withdraw their consent at any point in the study without any consequence whatsoever. To safeguard confidentiality, the name of the college and schools will be changed and no reference will be made to personal names. However, the college can possibly still be identified by its individual characteristics. Information gathered in the study, together with the audio recorded data will be stored on a password protected hard drive and raw data will be destroyed once the study is completed. Raw data gathered will be used solely for the purposes of this study.

Granting me the possibility to conduct the research within your college would be greatly appreciated. Should you wish to, I welcome the opportunity to meet with you, to share my research intentions and the methodological approach that I wish to adopt.

Should you wish to grant me permission to conduct this research within your college, and to act as an intermediary, I would be grateful if you would confirm this in writing.

Thank you in advance for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Yours Faithfully,

Alexia Abela Cascun (Researcher)

Prof. C. Bezzina (Supervisor)

Email: XXXXXXXX

Email: XXXXXXXX

Mobile No: XXXXXXXX

Mobile No: XXXXXXXX


Signature: _____






Appendix J:

Gatekeeper Permission - HCN

Appendix J

Gatekeeper Permission – HCN




  28 May 2019, 21:20   

to me ▾



Permission granted.


Heads of school are to be made aware of the details.


Good luck with your studies and research.




Head College Network

 College 







Appendix K:

*Request for Gatekeeper
Permission - HoS*

Appendix K

Permission Letter – Gatekeeper - Head of School

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am Alexia Abela Cascun, a student reading for a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management at the University of Malta. As part of my course fulfilment, I am working on a dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Christopher Bezzina. In the course of my research, I will be investigating Curricular Leadership. I would kindly like to request your permission to carry out the research component of my study within your school. Below please find a brief description of the study.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore how curricular leadership is being enacted in our schools. The study will investigate ways by which college and school leaders can influence teaching and learning, enabling teachers to translate curricular policies into effective classroom practices.

Data to be collected

In order to adequately collect the data that is needed for my study, I would like to:

- Conduct a 1-hour interview with you.
- Conduct 1 Senior Leadership team meeting observation with a focus on the matters discussed such as teaching and learning, administrative matters and so on.
- Conduct a 1-hour focus group interview with five middle leaders.
- Conduct a 1-hour focus group interview with five teachers.
- Access the school's SDP documents for the scholastic year 2019/2020.

The interviews are aimed at exploring aspects related to the purpose of the study, and will be conducted on a day and at a time arranged at the participants' convenience. I wish to audio record all the interviews with the research participants, including the focus group interviews. These recordings would enable me to transcribe the interviews, assisting with the analysis of data. I would also need to take field notes during the observation of the Senior Leadership Team meeting.

Should you agree to allow me to conduct research within your school, I would be grateful if you would act as an intermediary between myself as the researcher and the prospective research participants forming part of your staff. This would ensure that no participant feels coerced to take part in the study. Participation is strictly voluntary and participants may withdraw their consent at any point in the study without any consequence whatsoever. To safeguard confidentiality, the name of the college and schools will be changed and no reference will be made to personal names. However, the college can possibly still be identified by its individual characteristics. Information gathered in the study, together with the audio recorded data will be stored on a password protected hard drive and raw data will be destroyed once the study is completed. Raw data gathered will be used solely for the purposes of this study.

Granting me the possibility to conduct the research within your school would be greatly appreciated. Should you wish to, I would gladly welcome the opportunity to meet with you to share with you my research intentions and the methodological approach that I wish to adopt.

Should you wish to grant me permission to conduct this research within your school, and to act as an intermediary, I would be grateful if you would confirm this in writing.

Thank you in advance for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Yours Faithfully,

Alexia Abela Cascun (Researcher)

Prof. C. Bezzina Supervisor)

Email: XXXXXXXX

Email: XXXXXXXX

Mobile No: XXXXXXXX

Mobile No: XXXXXXXX

Signature: _____

Appendix L:

*FREC Permission
to Collect Data*

Appendix L

FREC Permission to Collect Data



L-Università
ta' Malta

Faculty of Education

University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080, Malta

Tel: +356 2340 3058/2932
educ@um.edu.mt

www.um.edu.mt/educ

6th June 2019

RE: Application for Research Ethics Clearance 1767_13052019_Alexia Abela Cascun

Dear Ms Abela Cascun,

With reference to your application 1767_13052019_Alexia Abela Cascun for Research Ethics clearance, I am pleased to inform you that FREC finds no ethical or data protection issues in terms of content and procedure.

You may therefore proceed to approach potential informants to collect data using the tools/documents outlined in this application.

You are reminded that it is your responsibility - under the guidance of your supervisor - to distribute Information Letters and Consent/Assent Forms that are written in appropriate and correct English and Maltese.

If you are conducting your research in State Schools, I would like to remind you to send a copy of your dissertation, once it has been successfully examined, to the Directorate for Curriculum, Research, Innovation & Lifelong Learning as you agreed to do when applying for permission to conduct your research in State Schools.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "MT Farrugia".

Dr Marie Therese Farrugia
Chairperson Faculty Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education

Appendix M:

Information Letter

Appendix M

Information Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Alexia Abela Cascun, a student reading for a Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management at the University of Malta. As part of my course fulfilment, I am working on a dissertation under the supervision of Prof. Christopher Bezzina. In the course of my research, I will be investigating Curricular Leadership.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore how curricular leadership is being enacted in our schools. The study will investigate ways by which college and school leaders can influence teaching and learning, enabling teachers to translate curricular policies into effective classroom practices.

Data to be collected

In order to adequately collect the data that is needed for my study, I would like to:

- Conduct a one-hour interview with you.
- Conduct one observation of an SLT or curriculum meeting.
- Access the school's SDP plan for 2019/2020.

During the observation I would like to take field notes to assist with data analysis. I would also wish to audio record the interview. Audio recordings will help me transcribe the interviews for data analysis. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may freely withdraw your consent at any point in the study. To safeguard confidentiality, the names of the college and schools will be changed and no reference will be made to your personal names. However, the college can possibly still be identified by its individual characteristics. Information gathered in the study, together with the audio recorded data will be stored on a password protected hard drive and will be destroyed once the study is completed. Raw data gathered will be used solely for the purposes of this study.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. If you have any further queries do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Yours Faithfully,

Alexia Abela Cascun (Researcher)

Prof. C. Bezzina Supervisor)

Email: XXXXXXXX

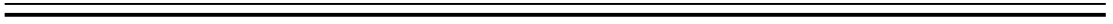
Email: XXXXXXXX

Mobile No: XXXXXXXX

Mobile No: XXXXXXXX

Signature: _____

Appendix N:



Consent Form

Appendix N

Consent Form

Curricular Leadership

I have thoroughly read and fully understood the attached *Participant Information Sheet* for this study and by signing this consent form, I confirm that:

1. I have had the opportunity to clarify any doubts, to obtain more information about the study and to understand the educational value of my participation.
2. I fully understand that participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw my participation at any point during the study. I am also aware that I can refuse to answer any question that might compromise my position or that of individuals or situations that I might need to refer to.
3. I have been informed that audio-recorded data will be securely stored on a password-protected drive and that data will be destroyed once the study is terminated.
4. I understand that the data collected will be used solely for the purpose of this study.
5. The researcher has explained that the names of the college, the schools and the subjects will not appear anywhere in the study. However, I am aware that due to its singular characteristics, the college might still be identified.
6. I agree to take part in the study by :
 - Participating in an audio-recorded interview.
 - Being observed during a Senior Leadership Team meeting.
 - Granting access to the Senior Leadership Team meeting.
 - Granting access to the School Development Plan for 2019/2020

Name of Participant

Signature

Yours Faithfully,

Alexia Abela Cascun (Researcher)

Prof. C. Bezzina (Supervisor)

Email: XXXXXXXX

Email: XXXXXXXX

Mobile No: XXXXXXXX

Mobile No: XXXXXXXX

Signature: _____