

**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
FOR MIDDLE LEADERS IN A LAO TERTIARY INSTITUTION**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
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Declaration

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This Thesis entitled: “**Leadership Development for Middle Leaders in a Lao Tertiary Institution**” is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec Institute of Technology degree of Master of Educational Leadership and Management.

Candidate’s declaration

I confirm that:

- This Thesis/Dissertation/Research Project represents my own work;
- The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
- Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

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ABSTRACT

Recently, the education reformation in Laos has reinforced the higher education institutions to meet the national social-economic development plans. Consequently, more demands and expectations are placed on educational administrators at all levels, in particular middle leaders. The increased roles and responsibilities of middle leaders were required to be clarified, while more challenges or issues occurred in their practices. Regarding this, middle leaders need to obtain new knowledge and abilities for embarking on their roles and responsibilities, and the challenges.

This qualitative research investigated the perspectives of senior leaders and middle leaders in relation to middle leaders' leadership practices, challenges or issues facing middle leaders, leadership development opportunities and the core elements of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution. Two methods of data collection were employed: a semi-structured interview with four senior leaders and a questionnaire with forty middle leaders from the presidential board, five faculties, six offices, and two centres.

The findings of this research revealed roles of the middle leaders associated with three dimensions, academia, administration and politics in which each dimension constitutes three main responsibilities: interpreting of the policies and strategies into action plans; implementing, monitoring and evaluating; and supervising. The study also indicated that a lack of experience in managing and teaching, ensuring a quality of learning and teaching with limited resources, poor coordination and collaboration and a lack of trust from colleagues were the major challenges for middle leaders' practices. In addition, the leadership development opportunities for middle leaders were based on two dimensions of performance appraisal (professional and political). Moreover, the institution expected to develop a leadership development programme for middle leaders. Regarding this, the five core areas of knowledge and skills were suggested to be included in a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders, including political knowledge, educational leadership and management, foreign language, communication and IT skills.

This research highlights the need for the Ministry of Education and Sports, the higher education institutions, and senior leaders to acknowledge the importance of leadership development and a sound designing framework of leadership development for middle leaders in Lao higher education settings.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	The Asian Development Bank
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ML	Middle leader
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
FA	Faculty A
FB	Faculty B
HED	The Higher Education Department
HoD	Head of department
IEMD	The Institute for Educational Management Development
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAPPA	National Politics and Public Administration Institute
NUOL	National University of Laos
PB	Presidential Board
SL	Senior Leader
SPPA	School of Political and Public Administration

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will firstly present the background of the research in which global and Lao contexts of higher education and leadership development is presented through related literature. The rationale for this research will then be explained. Following this, the research aim, objectives and research questions will then be explored. Finally, the outline of the thesis will be introduced.

1.1 BACKGROUND

1.1.1 Context of higher education and middle leadership development

Conventionally, the management and governance of higher education have considerably changed due to legacies of business management theories. The transformation of higher education management is based on the rhetoric and management practices of the corporate sector (Meek, 2002). According to Santiago, Carvalho, Amaral, and Meek (2006), ‘New managerialism or new public management’ (p. 215) requires the higher education institutions to offer courses and activities that reflect labour market and economy needs. Kotter (1996) explains that economics and social forces accelerate the need for critical changes in organizations. While Wallace (2003) notes that the external forces, especially politics and governments initially exert organizational change and that external forces drive changes to their structure, strategy, culture and the political dynamics of the organisations. Education policy is now locked into economic competitiveness and to indicators expressing national and international comparisons of educational outcomes in league tables (Mercer, 2009; Portin, 2005). This is supported by Miller (1998), and Harley and Lowe (1998) who note that the academic performance of institutions is replaced by economic rationality. This is because universities have responded to the changing landscape via adopting a more market-oriented approach (Pitcher, 2013). Currie and Newson (1998) elaborate that the practices of higher education institutions are derived from market ideology such as downsizing, privatisation, budget diversification and accountability. It can be clearly seen that changes in higher education administration and management stem from a changing economic environment.

In a similar manner to the global context, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) embarked on a programme of structural reform known as the New Economic Mechanism (NEM) in 1986. This vision was aimed to accelerate the alteration from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy (Xaysomphou, 2006). Since then, the Lao government has instituted various legal and administrative reforms to support overall development of the economy, as well as the education sector. The orientation of the new economic mechanism in the 1990s provides frameworks for the privatisation and liberation of Lao higher education in both public and private tertiary institutions in a larger scale aiming to catch up the social and economic demands of the country (Ogawa, 2009; Xaysomphou, 2006). In 1995, the higher education system was restructured by the Prime Minister's decree on private higher education and the decree of national standards of the higher education curriculum in 2001 (Ogawa, 2009). In addition, the decree also amalgamated ten higher education institutions under the administration of the National University of Laos (NUOL). This reformation was aimed to make higher education institutions meet the social and economic needs; and to make them capable of mobilising and exploiting the modernisation process (Ogawa, 2009; Xaysomphou, 2006).

Recently, higher education in Lao PDR consists of four public universities, 11 teacher training colleges and around 70 additional public and private bachelor degree granting education institutions (UNESCO, 2014). This has resulted in a gradual increase in the number of students in higher education (Xaysomphou, 2006). However, these institutions do not meet acceptable regional quality standards as a result of lacking skilled and experienced personnel relating to leadership and management (ADB, 2009). For example, staff at the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education had inadequate skills to determine policy, to improve higher education curriculum and create evaluation and monitoring standards for the higher education system (Ogawa, 2009). In relation to this, one of the adopted education strategies is to enhance the management of administrative boards towards educational objectives. According to Xaysomphou (2006), many development programmes relating to administration and management at all levels of Lao education, aim to strengthen planning and management capabilities, articulate tools for education management information systems and create school mapping.

Furthermore, as one of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), to be a part of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2020 for crossing over the least developed country status, the higher education sector in Laos have faced more challenges in terms of ensuring quality of education (Ogawa, 2009). As a result, a lot of innovations have taken place, embracing the introduction of new admission policies, curriculum reforms, staff development programmes, promoting research and international cooperation (Ogawa, 2009; Weidman, 1995). It means that the higher education institutions need to clearly articulate their strategic management, financial and strategic planning, and commercial marketing as fundamental management instruments for successful competition (Santiago et al., 2006). In consequence, senior managers are demanding of mid-level managers and their academic faculties, departments and units in order to achieve the organisational goals.

1.2 RATIONALE

Recent studies on leadership in academia focus on examining leadership and abilities in a higher education reform context (Jameson, 2012; Scott, Coates, & Grebennikov, 2010) and some of the impacts of educational leadership on the effectiveness of the institutions and schools (Dimmock, 2012; Riley & MacBeath, 2003). The shifting of higher education management from being fully administrated by government into a self-managed institution, results in the operations of the higher education institutions becoming more complex, with significant responsibilities and leadership tasks disseminated or delegated to middle leaders (Adey, 2000; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006; Youngs, 2009). Blandford (2006), Marshall, Adams and Cameron (2000) suggest that roles and responsibilities of academic leaders at all levels of education are required to be clarified.

Consequently, the middle leaders of higher education institutions face more challenges in their practices. Adey (2000) asserts that these changes have extended the scope and workload of middle leaders and created the issues for middle managers . There are lots of pressures at every level in the ways that the higher education institutions are operated including making sense of the processes in detail (Neave, 2002). This is because these organisational entities are at the practical base of the higher education institutions, closest to actions relating to research and teaching, and are the best place for implementing strategies and policies (Santiago et al., 2006). Furthermore, more expectations are placed on the leaders who lead

the departments and units in order to ensure that the institutions provide quality in learning and teaching for students (Inman, 2009; Santiago et al., 2006). In relation to this, Adey (2000) argues that the increased pressures on practices require middle leaders to obtain new knowledge and abilities in order to effectively embark on roles and responsibilities.

Leadership development programmes are credible programmes in several places. In Asia, Australia, Europe and North America, the leadership development programmes are widely organised (Huber, 2003). It means that leadership and management development becomes a key focus in educational administration and management at all levels of education (Bush, 2010; Rowley, 1997). In relation to this, Bassett (2012) and Santiago et al. (2006) argue that developing leadership has become a priority as expectations are placed on middle leaders. In higher education settings, Gardner (2002 as cited in Cardno, 2012) affirms that educational leaders require developing leadership and management skills in order to provide high-quality learning experience to students. This is supported by the work of Walker (1995) who notes that it is significant for building a fully-trained management team especially at first line and middle levels in higher education, in which the complication of middle leadership requires specialised knowledge and capacities (Fitzgerald, 2000a). Therefore, leadership development for middle leaders is seen as the priority in order to accelerate organisational success and student achievement.

Leadership development is necessary for middle leaders who are primary keys for organisational success (Blandford, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2000b). In the Lao educational context, the Asian Development Bank (2000) and Boupha (2008) also note that Lao higher education institutions have experienced a shortage of qualified and experienced lecturers, managers and administrators. Earley and Fletcher-Campbell (1989 as cited in Harris, Busher, & Wise, 2003) support that many new heads of department are more likely to have a lack of preparation for their appointed roles and there are only few training programmes available for new and aspiring heads of department. Harris et al. (2003) also argue that even though middle leaders obtain some improvement in their practice, there is still a lack of effective and adequate training for middle managers. This is supported by Adey (2000) who shows that there is no adequate training in order to equip or prepare middle leaders for their roles.

In addition, due to the reason that the ultimate goal of educational leaders is to provide quality learning and teaching in order to enhance student outcomes, this tenet requires persistently guiding the framework and content of leadership preparation and development (Dimmock, 2012). In turn, high achievements of student learning are derived from good teaching and professional development which both depend on effective leadership (Bush, 2010; Dimmock, 2012). It means that leadership development should place an emphasis on developing the knowledge and skills of leaders. However, Azis, Mullins, Grauer, Burnfield, Lodato, and Cohen-Powless (2005) argue that mostly leadership development programmes in higher education cover generic skills rather than individual development needs. This is because effective development programmes cannot be concerned with solely generic leadership theories (Azis et al., 2005) and rely on contextual learning (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001).

Some literature on leadership in higher education suggests that although middle leaders play a significant role in enhancing learning and teaching, most research tends to focus on leadership at senior management level rather than the middle management level (Santiago et al., 2006; Smith, 2005). Inman (2009) argues that even though some research focuses on middle leaders, most seeks to define their roles and responsibilities rather than how their leadership has been developed. This has been echoed in my own country, Laos, with recent research on Lao higher education. Syharath (2012) in his study places a focus on the professional development needs and the roles of middle leaders in Lao higher education. He found that where a job description does not clearly identify the particular role, there were constraints for providing professional development. Sackdanouvong (2013) in his study on middle managers in a Lao higher education institution, highlighted that senior leaders need to consider academic middle leaders as change agents and to provide the appropriate professional support for their development. Inman (2009) and Cardno (2012) propose that research should draw attention to leadership development for middle managers to scrutinise what really is the role of middle leaders and how to develop and assess their effectiveness in enhancing learning and teaching in the institution. Therefore, it is timely to investigate how administrators at the middle management level of a higher education institution in Laos develop their leadership practices in order to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

1.3.1 Research aims

This research aims to investigate the leadership development for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution and to extrapolate a model of leadership development for middle leaders. These objectives below shape the context of this study:

1. To identify leadership practices of academic middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution.
2. To explore the challenges/issues facing middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution.
3. To examine leadership development opportunities for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution.
4. To identify the elements of a proposed leadership development programme in a Lao higher education institution.

1.3.2 Research questions

1. What are the leadership practices of middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution?
2. What are the challenges/issues facing middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution?
3. What are the leadership development opportunities for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution?
4. What are the core elements required of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution?

1.4 THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis is organised into five chapters, all of which contribute to the identification, justification and understanding of the topic of this research.

Chapter One provides the background, rationale, research aims and questions that shape the frame of this thesis.

Chapter Two critically reviewed a wide range of literature associated with concepts of middle management, roles and responsibilities of middle leaders, the challenges facing the middle leaders, and leadership development for middle leaders.

Chapter Three outlined the research methodology and positions. Research sampling is discussed in relation to the research methods. The research methods, the semi-structured interview and the questionnaire are critically explained. Finally, the validity and reliability of data results, and ethical considerations are discussed.

Chapter Four provides the findings collected from the semi-structured interview with senior leaders and the questionnaire with middle leaders. The data findings are organised and presented with the research questions used as headings.

Chapter Five presents the discussion of key findings from the research and integrate with references from literature in chapter two. The emerged themes from data analysis are discussed regarding each of the four key research questions. Conclusions are made under each research theme. Recommendations for future practice, limitations of the study and recommendations for further research are provided.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter critically reviews a wide range of literature associated with concepts of middle management that embrace the role and responsibilities, and leadership effectiveness of middle leaders in higher education. Following this, the challenges facing the middle leaders are critically reviewed. Finally, literature on leadership development is reviewed for middle leaders, including leadership development opportunities, contexts of leadership preparation programmes and the elements of leadership development programmes are critically examined.

2.1 CONCEPT OF MIDDLE MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1.1 Overview of middle leaders

Middle management is viewed through various contexts. In the corporate context, according to Huy (2001), middle managers are “any managers between two levels, below the CEO and one level above line workers and professionals” (p. 73). In this sense, middle managers are “those below the small group of top strategic managers and above first-level supervision”(Dopson, Risk, & Stewart, 1996, p. 136) or positioned between the apex and the operating core in a hierarchical system (Mintzberg, 1989). In a hierarchical school system, middle leaders are responsible for leading teachers in their departments or offices and beneath senior leaders such as a dean, an associate dean and a rector (Blandford, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2009). It can be assumed that middle management implies “a downward flow of authority from the leader, given in order to promote what the leader seeks” (Bennett, 1995, p. 2). Middle leaders who work with senior leaders aim to create a sense of a shared organisational identity that provides the reconciliation of top-level perceptions with low-level operation problems (Marshall, 2012). However, working in both top and lower levels of management, middle leaders are sometimes seen with suspicion by departmental members who question whether they work for the interests of senior management or the departments (Busher, 2005). It can be implied that communities of practice such as departments help to frame the practices and boundaries of the middle leaders.

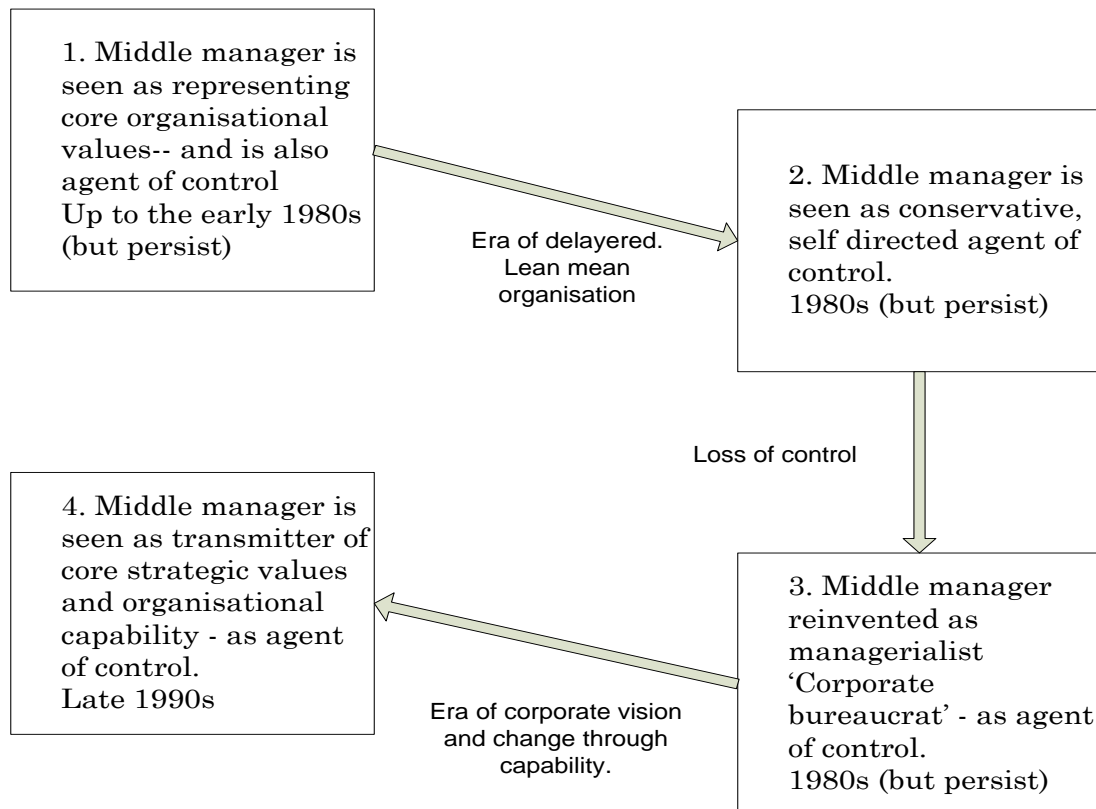
The term middle manager and middle leader are variously defined. The terms might be translated to have different meanings depending on the school's context. Glover, Miller, Gambling, Gough, and Johnson (1999) propose that the use of the term 'middle leaders' or 'middle manager' might underline the institution's perception of the roles in which schools that use 'middle leader' may emphasise the strategic, developmental aspect, whereas schools who use 'middle manager' might focus on the operational aspect of the role. Similarly, Kotter (2007) asserts that a manager is appointed by an institution and has a formal authority to direct the activities of senior managers in fulfilling the organisational goals while a leader is appointed formally by an institution or might informally emerge as the individuals' choice and is a person who influences others. Zaleznik (2004) argues that a manager cannot be a leader, but a leader can be a manager. Bennis and Nanus (2005) support that if the manager can influence individuals to achieve organisational goals without using his or her formal authority to do so, then the manager can demonstrate leadership.

Although many educational researchers variously define middle leaders, Starratt (2003) sees a strong link between leadership and management. He claims that the key work of school leaders is to focus on teaching and their management tasks will enhance the quality of learning for all students. While Pitcher (2013) and Winter (2009) note that school leaders should encourage commercial and innovative activities (managerial values) whilst retaining the significance of professionalism, collegial relations and academic autonomy (normative values). In relation to this, Spillane and Diamond (2007) suggest the terms leadership and management are two sides of the same coin and cannot be separated because they are almost not distinguishable and any difference is only theoretical because leadership and management provide different functions at different times. It can be assumed that middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution have both management and leadership functions. Thus, a middle leader can be described as an academic staff member with leadership or curriculum responsibility. This may involve a head of department (HoD), a programme coordinator or vice-programme coordinator, a program director or a deputy director, director or vice-director, head of subject or vice-head of subject, head of division or vice-division, and equivalent.

2.1.2 Roles and responsibilities of middle leaders

Historically, the role and responsibilities of leaders in middle management have been developed through changes in management. In recent years, new public management or managerialism has reframed all features of academic identity and work around corporate ideologies and strong managerial culture (Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2008), especially administrative structure in higher education institutions (Clegg & McAuley, 2005). In consequence, it results in changing roles and responsibilities of managers in the middle management. Clegg and McAuley (2005) review management and higher education literature since the 1970s until late 1990s. They found that the roles of middle managers depend on the four different contexts of higher education institutions, including corporate, strong culture, arena and communitarian or collegial. Although these four contexts of higher education are distinctive, and each has its supporters and detractors, they might coexist in any complex organisation to a lesser or greater extent. In addition, the middle leaders are seen as different actors based on the nature of higher education (See figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Four periods of middle management



Source: Clegg & McAuley (2005, p. 24)

In figure 2.1, the middle managers hold different roles based on the management in higher education around the twin discourses of collegiality and managerialism. Middle management is seen as representing the core values of an organisation because it is understood that these roles have been addressed as the middle leaders work collaboratively with senior management to build a sense of shared organisational goals in which the middle managers enhance the linkages that demands intensive knowledge transformation (Ghoshal & Barlett, 1998). Academic middle leaders are likely to be conservative on organisational issues so that they protect the ideas from lower levels to be taken to the senior management (Kanter, 1986 as cited in Clegg & McAuley, 2005). However the middle managers had been delaying due to restructuring of the university in terms of developing corporate vision and promotion (Clegg & McAuley, 2005). During the 1980s and 1990s, middle leaders are reinvented as corporate bureaucrats, professionals and experts, who undertake institutional planning, develop and maintain quality assurance, and implement human resource management. While middle managers who are transmitters in the organisation (Clegg & McAuley, 2005), are concerned with the management of organisational goals, linking knowledge and best practice across the organisation, and developing the individual (King, Fowler, & Zeithaml, 2001).

In educational settings, leaders in the middle management are involved in a wide range of roles and responsibilities. In general, academic middle leaders who lead a department, subject, division and units have dual roles—teaching and managing (Bennett, Woods, Wise, & Newton, 2007). It means that they have to lead to ensure quality learning and teaching through providing support to their teachers while maintaining the managerial tasks within their own departments or units. In addition, Fink (2013) argues political behaviour should be a pivotal role of the educational leaders in order to gather all staff members towards an integrated institutional system. Educational leaders need to act politically in order to raise the aspirations of others via teaching, mentoring and coaching in which acting politically means building collaborative cultures through shared vision and shared decision-making in the organisation. Hoyle (1990) affirms that the political dimension of an organisation forms an alternative way to understand organisational processes. This is linked to the argument from Burns (1978) who states that “Leadership is the reciprocal process of mobilizing by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers” (p. 425).

According to the research from Busher and Harris (1999), the role of heads of department or middle managers consists of four dimensions: the role of translation, supervisory leadership, transformation, and representative leadership. Academic middle managers interpret the policies and perspectives of senior managers into departmental practices; employ their expertise to improve staff members and student performance, and liaise inside and outside the institution. This means that middle leaders are responsible for implementing the institutions' strategies, goals and policies; passing on effective practices of learning and teaching; and being a role model for staff members (Blandford, 2006).

In addition, middle leaders are in charge of supervising the tasks of the teams within the institution (Busher, Hammersley-Fletcher & Turner, 2007) as they are in a pivotal position of academic influence (Marshall, 2012; Ramsden, 1998). Whereas Blandford (2006) and Fitzgerald (2000b) propose that middle leaders have dual roles—teaching and managing—which involve working with individual values and beliefs that appear in the ethos of institutions. In essence, they create, form and apply practices and policies in order to achieve an environment for learning; and they also develop skills and capabilities, the knowledge and understanding of colleagues within the organisation or departments (Blandford, 2006; O'Brien, Draper, & Murphy, 2008). In other words leaders in the middle management embrace basically working with and through other people (Bush & West-Burnham, 1994; Partington & Stainton, 2003).

Academic middle leaders embrace a number of managing and leading functions within the institution. Busher, Harris and Wise (2000) propose that subject leaders as middle managers practice their leadership functions associated with five dimensions or aspects of the organisation including; the curriculum, operational development and resources management, human relationships, symbols and culture, and context of decision-making (see details table 2.1). This is supported by Partington and Stainton (2003), who assert that middle leaders get involved in a number of activities within the organisation such as organising, planning, monitoring, resourcing, controlling and evaluating, as well as leading.

Table 2.1: Five aspects of organisations, five functions of leadership

Five dimensions	Some of the functions of the subject leaders and middle leaders
The curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaping study programme to meet national standards • Considering the quality and quantity of curriculum materials needed to sustain these programmes • Creating a preparatory programme for public examinations • Setting clear standard and processes for scoring student’s work • Provision of special education needs curriculum support • Establishing clear processes of giving feedback on the quality of students’ work
Operational development and resources management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning, organising, monitoring and evaluating the work of a subject area • Setting performing indicators and targets • Creating and sustaining deadlines for the projects • Linking the curriculum development plans to those of the whole school
Human relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing self: personal values, professional interests and beliefs, technical expertise • Knowing colleagues: personal values, professional interests and beliefs, technical expertise • Respecting other people and self, different needs and aspirations • Understanding the different needs (e.g. Ethnicity, poverty, gender, ...) • Critical friends and mentor: help colleagues to reflect carefully on their practices both as a team and individuals • Appraiser and professional reviewer of colleagues’ practice • Establishing and applying consistent standards of behaviour
Symbols and culture (vision, beliefs, symbols and ceremonies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living proclaimed values and persuading colleagues to do the same • Projecting a vision (e.g. The range of teaching methods possible) • Helping create successful stories • Sharing stories of what works in the classroom • Creating ceremonies, symbols and rituals that celebrate key values
Contexts of decision-making: power, authority and environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The moral use of power and permission • Gaining access to sources of power through senior staff • Comparing organisational values and individual (staff) value • Understanding the demand of the environment • Relationship with external sources of power such as school governors

Source: Busher, Harris and Wise (2000, p. 109)

In a similar manner to Busher, Harris and Wise (2000), Bryman (2007) reviews literature on aspects of leader behaviour associated with effectiveness of departments from three countries: UK, USA and Australia, and he has found 13 aspects of leader behaviour associated with the effectiveness of the departments. These aspects include a clear sense of strategic vision and direction, being considerate, fair and honestly treating staff, personal integrity and being trustworthy, facilitate the direction set, open opportunities in decision making and admire open communication, communicating department progression, being a role model, collegial work environment, being proactive in advancing departmental

foundation with internal and external constituencies, providing feedback on performance, creating academic reputations, and adjusting workload and providing resources for stimulating research and scholarship. These aspects are not represented as in any order (Bryman, 2007).

Although middle leaders are not part of the teams of senior management who have the responsibility for overall strategic development of the institutions, they are also involved in strategy and policy development. De Boer and Goedegebuure (2009) claim that middle leaders do not only implement organisation policies, but they play a crucial role in organisational strategy development, agenda setting, and policy design. Peeke (1997 as cited in Earley, 1998) elaborates that middle managers help to shape institutional strategic plans by developing their departmental plans and suggesting ideas for the entire institutional plans. Earley (1998) supports that an effective academic middle manager is an individual who can consider the long-term interests of the whole college or institution rather than more immediate interests of his or her subject or curriculum area. This means that middle leaders need to reconceptualise their role away from viewing themselves as a senior subject teacher (Earley, 1998) in which strategic management should be seen as part of their roles (De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009). However, it is also argued that the levels of involvement of the middle leaders in decision making would vary upon the nature of organisations and predisposition of members (De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; Earley, 1998).

It is also interesting to note that one of the significant roles of middle leaders is as a political advocate. Green (1997) argues that the role of educational leaders is to forge the cultural and political harmony for the burgeoning nation and to strengthen the ideology of their dominant political party. This is supported by Burns (1978) who states that “leadership is the reciprocal process of mobilizing by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources, in a context of competition and conflict, in order to realize goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers” (p. 425). Louis and Miles (1990) describe the political skill leader as one who takes every opportunity to discuss values, to articulate a vision and to place each problem into the context of the larger picture. It is argued that politics can offer public legitimacy to an innovation, assist raising the funds for implementation, and encourage staff members to carry it out (Warwick & Reimer, 1995 as cited in Riley & Khamis, 2005). However, Hargreaves (2003) claims that many governments are demolishing the academic professions and hindering the abilities of the

institution to offer the skills and knowledge to students beyond the economics, as a result from the torrent of legislation that has drastically changed the practices of education leaders and teachers (Bottery, 2004). Ryan (1999) notes that post modern scholars, administrators and teachers are engaged in some sort of political activities through their actions.

Thus, it is critical to note that the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders in higher education are complicated due to tasks and missions associated with various contexts, management, academics and politics.

2.1.3 Effective middle leaders

Middle leaders are central to the successes of an organisation. In the current turbulence in many higher education environments, Fullan (2007) argues that middle leaders fulfil a particular prominent role in institutional effectiveness. This is supported by Cohen and March who note that middle leaders are indispensable to the academic success of many universities in the USA (as cited in Marshall, 2012). In a New Zealand higher education setting, middle leaders are key players in implementing organisational change (Curzon-Hobson, 2004). While Earley (1998) affirms that middle managers are primary keys to improve quality of learning and teaching, and motivating forces of organisational success. Whereas Currie and Procter (as cited in De Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009) put forward that middle level management influences the organisational performance rather than the top management.

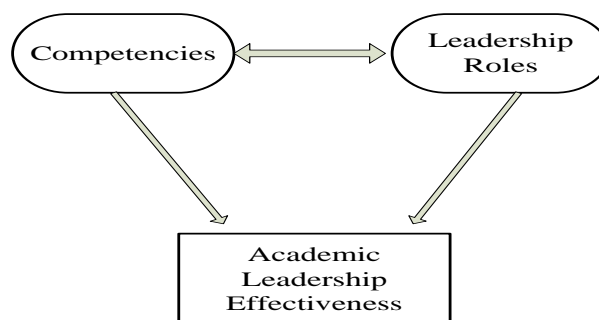
Middle leaders employ different strategies to enhance their institutional success. Blase and Anderson (1995), argue that educational leaders use their power in various ways to frame the works of students and colleagues. According to the research from Buser (2006), academic middle leaders employ different leadership styles as their strategies to construct the socially cohesive department. He further suggests some types of leadership styles that enhance the cohesion within the organisation, including servant leader, organisational architect, moral educator, leading professional and social architect. When practicing servant leadership, educational leaders are tempted by personal commitment and enthusiasm to delineate the needs of students, teachers and community to be served (Sergiovanni, 2007). Leaders who act as organisational architects help colleagues by creating great senses of ownership and commitment to their work through creating a flatter organisational structure (Buser, 2006). Leaders practice as moral educators through showing caring and valuing the unique demands of each team member in their departments. As a social architect, leaders design and bond

social networks to address social and economic conditions facing staff and students; sensitive to racial, gender and cultural issues, and develop partnerships with communities outside the institution. Academic middle leaders who act as professional leaders are more than capable as teachers, liaise with colleagues, specialise in organising departments, and pedagogy. It is argued that whatever leadership styles are employed by middle leaders, the intention of the practice is to build and maintain key values for a higher standard of performance of both teachers and students (Busher, 2002).

In a similar vein to Busher (2006), O'Brien et al. (2008) maintain that leadership styles can enhance a sense of mission within individual establishments. Sergiovanni (2001) supports that effective leaders have a better understanding of institutional environments and characteristics of educational leadership because they have discovered alternatives to direct leadership that can get individuals connected to their responsibilities, to their tasks and to each other. Regarding this, Busher (2006) elaborates that middle leaders help to retain and improve learning and teaching via helping colleagues to work together and prepare the best learning and teaching for students associating with community's needs. It can be assumed that the middle leaders need to create socially cohesive departments in order to ensure the entire success of the organisation.

The effectiveness of academic middle leadership practices depends on different types of management and skills or leadership competencies. According to Shahmandi, Silong, Ismail, Samah, and Othman (2011), the conceptual framework of relationships among effective academic leadership, roles and competencies has been represented (see figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Competencies, roles and academic leadership effectiveness



Source: Shahmandi, Silong, Ismail, Samah and Othman (2011, p. 53)

Competencies are described as personal traits, behaviours, knowledge and values. Where Gonzalez (2004) suggests four categories of leadership competencies that can enhance effectiveness of academic leadership including personal characteristics and skills, competencies of social responsibility, institutional competencies, and administrative competencies (see figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3: Four categories of competencies

<u>Four categories of Competencies</u>
1. Personal characteristics and skills include anxiety control, flexibility, adaptive management, time management, innovative, motivating, positive attitude towards people, diplomatic, honest, language skills, critical thinking, entrepreneurial spirit and visionary.
2. Administrative competencies involve strategic decision-making, teamwork, delegation, leading organising, negotiation, evaluating and supervising, communicating, networking, reconstructing new institutions, resource-raising, staffing and financial competencies.
3. Competencies of social responsibilities consist of sensitivity to cultural and diversity, implementing the national policy, service sense, analysis of demands, and knowledge of economic situations.
4. Institutional competencies embrace institutional identity and philosophy, organisational culture, sense of commitment

Source: adapted from Gonzalez (2004, p. 170-171)

Similarly, Heck, Johnsrud, and Rosser (2000) suggest the core leadership traits that enhance administrators' performance at dean level include vision and goal setting; interpersonal relationships; management of units/departments; communication skills; promoting institutional diversity; research/professional /campus endeavours; and quality of education in the unit. In a similar way, Marshall, Orrell, Cameron, Bosanquet, and Thomas (2012) also affirm that there are six key management responsibilities lying at the heart of academic leaders, establishing a vision and a direction for learning and teaching, communicating the vision and direction, motivating and inspiring members to engage with the vision, planning and budgeting, organising and staffing, monitoring and problem solving for learning and teaching. Similarly, The Wallace Foundation (2012) proposes five essential features of leaders that enhance teaching and learning outcomes; shaping a vision of academic success for all students, cultivating a climate hospitable to education, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction, and managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement. It is suggested that to achieve success with learning and teaching each of these five tasks or features need to interact with the other four (The Wallace Foundation, 2012).

According to Bolman and Gallos (2010), there are three sets of characteristics for successful academic leaders in the middle management embracing understanding, listening and respecting differences; searching for mutual benefits; and staying alert to system changes and employing appropriate leadership styles. Kotter (1996) explains that economics and social forces accelerate the need for critical changes in organizations. The external forces, especially politics and governments initially exert organizational change (Wallace, 2003). This means that these external forces drive changes to their structure, strategy, culture and political dynamics of the organisations. In this sense, Briggs (2005) claims that middle managers see themselves as a bridge between deciding institutional objectives and interpreting them. It means that middle leaders need to identify, and identify with, different tasks and different individuals such as teachers, senior leaders, and team members in order to effectively cope with their daily practices (Blandford, 2006). Lashway (2006) points out that effective educational leaders seek to enhance the capacity of staff members they work with, assist them to understand the issues, inspire growth, and reward achievements. This might be said that leaders ought to provide opportunities for their staff to increase their abilities, learning, and development while their success should be recognised. In a similar vein to Bolman and Gallos (2010), Hartley and Hinksman (2003) see the key attributes of the effective leadership practice; the ability to live with uncertainty, adaptability and agility, leading from mistakes, preparedness to distribute leadership, work across boundaries and build trusting relationships.

In terms of professional development, Cardno (2005) underpins that educational leaders who exploit the potentials of professional upgrading in a holistic way have a substantial influence on the development of individuals as well as organisational effectiveness. This is echoed in the work of Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) and Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd (2009) as it is reported that educational leaders who actively get involved in professional learning as learners as well as leaders, or as both generate a substantial impact on student outcomes. The practices in this dimension include engaging in, as well as fostering both informal and formal opportunities to develop teaching and learning (Robinson et al., 2009). This is supported by Ramsden (1998), who notes that ‘first and foremost, academic leadership must provide the means, assistance and resources which enable academic and support staff to perform well’ (p. 8). Thus, the primary function of the leaders is to bring out the best in individuals and to guide them towards the future.

2.2 CHALLENGES FOR MIDDLE LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Many educational scholars identify a variety of issues faced by middle leaders. It is widely accepted that middle leaders who lead departments, subjects, office and units are individuals who have been affected by managerialism or new public management (Meek, Goedegebuure, Santiago, & Carvalho, 2010; Santiago et al., 2006). Deem (2004) explains that overseeing teaching and research, and motivating and leading colleagues remain unchanged under old forms of public management, but distinctive, new forms of public management have recently emerged, involving greater accountability and increased marketisation. Kember (2010) and Wang (2003) claim that the move from elite to mass education in Asian countries such as Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea have increased the diversity of higher education providers as it has created both opportunities and threats for the sector (Pitcher, 2013). Briggs (2007) and Leader (2004) argue that the roles of middle leaders have become more challenging as tertiary institutions counteract the existence of institutional autonomy, performance management, and decreasing resources. According to research by Bryman (2007) and Mercer (2009), department chairs and heads of department in higher education institutions are challenged by tensions that attempt to deal with research, teaching and administration. These tensions include balancing of workload, internal and external credibility, and collegiality and accountability.

2.2.1 Balancing of workload

The drastic changes in higher education since the late twentieth century associated with increasing demands result in an extension of workload in the higher education especially for middle management leaders. Bennett et al. (2007) and Mercer (2009) explain that the increased complexity and demands on middle management cause more issues for middle leaders in terms of balancing time for teaching and managerial tasks, accountability for both senior management and staff, and specific professional development needs. In a similar manner, Bolman and Gallos (2010) argue that the daily tensions of a life sandwiched among clashing norms and values, global and local demands, and internal and external expectations can contribute to difficulty for academic leaders in terms of maintaining their balance and focus. It can be implied that middle leaders' roles can hinder clarity of priorities and boundaries of responsibilities (Briggs, 2001; Leader, 2004).

Middle leaders need to seek consensus between collegiality and hierarchical controls when they have to make decisions in order to satisfy both top management and subordinates and to survive (Bolman & Gallos, 2010; Hellowell & Hancock, 2001). As a matter of fact, middle leaders cannot adequately satisfy everyone and this leads them to be torn and stressed (Bolman & Gallos, 2010). As a result, academic middle managers are caught in the middle of pressures from the administration and their academic staff members in which their staff management role becomes more critical and demanding, and their own teaching, scholarship and research inevitably suffer (Kogan, Khawas, & Moses, 1994).

2.2.2 Tensions between internal and external accountability

As institutions become more complex and diverse, more values and expectations are placed on middle leaders in terms of providing accountability for their management within the organisations and communities (Blandford, 2006; Santiago et al., 2006) and academic integrity (Mahmud & Bretag, 2013). Since the transition of the traditional higher education system to a mass higher education system based on a market oriented force in the 1990s, the higher institutions are required to meet not only formal requirements of accountability, but they need to be engaged in wider communities (Bargh, Bocok, Scott, & Smith, 2000). Consequently, this creates more tensions relating to accountability and credibility at departmental levels (Bryman, 2007; Santiago et al., 2006). However, there is evidence from the literature that middle leaders see themselves as representing core academic values rather than representing core organisational values (Gleeson & Shain, 2003; Lapp & Carr, 2006). Mahmud and Bretag (2013) maintain that academic integrity is essential within and beyond the university setting. Educational institutions do not stand alone in terms of ensuring quality of learning and teaching outcomes, but they need to build more networks with communities. It is sometimes described as professional learning communities (Stoll, 2011; Timperley, 2011) or teacher learning communities (Wiliam, 2007). Moreover, Henkel (2000) proposes that academics' identities are articulated by "the cross-cutting imperatives of discipline and enterprise (the university or college)" (p.17).

Brown and Humphreys (2006) have noted that higher education institutions have been placed and shaped by conflicting managerial and professional work ideologies. Institutions attempt to retain traditional academic cultures while simultaneously developing and promoting cooperative ideologies and structures; they are identified by a hybrid identity (Foreman & Whetten, 2002). This can be called "Academic identity schisms" (Winter, 2009,

p. 124). Winter (2009) further argues that the schisms in academic identities contribute to two separate concepts of academic managers, “academic manager” or “managed academics” (p. 126). An academic manager is defined as an individual who primarily embodies the corporate managerialism discourse represented by various managerial roles including programme leader, budgeting, and influencing decision-making with senior leaders. In contrast, the managed academics often focus on their professional identities given their discipline expertise and specialised teaching roles; and they take on non-managerial positions and have limited opportunities to influence decisions of the institution.

By underpinning professional identities, the managed academics define, defend and promote distinctive credits to their institution (Brown & Humphreys, 2006). It means that the departmental leaders need to maintain their research performance reputations as well as completing managerial tasks (Bryman, 2007) within and beyond the organisation. As academic managers or heads of department are situated at a critical point of academic influence (Ramsden, 1998), by virtue of their positions, they can maintain the significance of professionalism, academic autonomy and collegial relationships (normative values) while encouraging commercial activities and innovation (managerial values) (Winter, 2009).

2.3 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR MIDDLE LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2.3.1 Concept of leadership development and leader development

Leadership development and leader development are defined in various ways. Day (2001) has drawn the basic distinction between leadership development and leader development, underlying the development of social structures and processes and the development of individuals (leaders). The former is more modernised as it moves towards teambuilding and organisational development, whereas the latter is a more traditional approach that emphasises building individual abilities. Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) elaborate the distinction between the definition of leader development and leadership development. Leader development is defined as the expansion of a person’s capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes while leadership development is described as the expansion of the organisation’s capacity to enact the basic leadership tasks needed for collective work— setting direction, creating alignment and maintaining commitment (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004). The latter definition assumes the leadership as a property of a whole organisation in which the success in encountering a complex challenge relies on the organisation’s ability to

develop all features of the organisation that contribute to leadership (G. O’Cormor & Quinn, 2004). Bush (2010) underpins that headship or leadership is a specialised occupation that requires separate and specialised preparation. This is because leadership development is an ongoing process that embeds in personal development which includes learning and expanding experiences, development of connections between individuals, the capacities of the groups, the development of connections between the groups in the organisation, and the development of organisational culture and systems (Cardno, 2012; Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004).

According to Rudman (2002), leadership development is a broad concept which includes a number of managerial elements—management training, management support and management of education. However, Day (2001) notes that there is an overlap between leadership development and management development, but suggests that management development tends to focus on enhancing task performance in management roles, while leadership development involves building the capacity of individuals to help staff learn new ways of doing things that could not have been predicted. Stoll (2011) notes that building and developing capacity is an imperative for every individual who is passionate about improving with transformational learning. Cardno (2005) puts forward that “all staff in management positions should be motivated and supported to access the body of information, theory and skills needed to work with and through others to accomplish organisational goals” (p. 301). This can be achieved through formal or informal approaches—multisource feedback, mentoring programmes, developmental assignments, role models, guided reflection and mastery experiences—and it might be time consuming (Hams, Spain, & Hannah, 2011).

2.3.2 Design of a leadership development programme

Many educational researchers attempt to identify what content should be included in leadership development programmes and how they should be designed to deliver effectively. In recent years, several educational leadership preparation programmes have redesigned their contents and delivery methods to be aligned with national standards and to create more efficacy of leadership development, career development, leadership practices and school improvements (Orr, 2011; Young, 2009). Birman, Desimone, Porter, and Garet (2000) propose that an effective leadership development programme should have two main features, structural features (form, duration, and participants) and the core features of the processes that occur during the professional experience (content focus, active learning and coherence).

In a similar vein, Forde, McMahon, and Gronn (2013) suggest that the design of leadership development programmes needs to engage a combination of many forms of learning that exposes participants' learning needs which in turn contribute to upgrading improvement in practice. These forms of learning comprise practice-based learning, social cohort learning, peer learning, conceptual learning and reflective learning.

Bush (2010) also proposes that the design of the leadership development programmes should embrace four dimensions that highlight the design of leadership development programmes: a bridge between the work situation and learning situation for reflection of practice, learning identification, active learning approaches, and effective learning support based on matching, ongoing assessment of the relationship and its quality. While Dimmock (2012) asserts that successful leadership preparation and development programmes should be driven by three forces, (1) experienced leadership practices and their relative efficacies, (2) clear job descriptions of current and future roles of leaders, and (3) how leaders learn best.

In terms of contextual aspects, many educational researchers identify a wide range of topics that should be contained in the leadership development programmes. Some scholars suggest that cultural contexts, defined leadership theory, active learning, reflection, linking training and practice, leadership network, and improving assessment are contextual features that can shape a baseline for effective leadership development programmes (Dimmock, 2012; Draper, O'Brien, & Murphy, 2008; Tucker & Grogan, 2001). According to Knight and Trowler (2001), there are seven types of leadership and management knowledge that are crucial factors that help academic leaders to lead effectively. These are control knowledge (self-knowledge gained through means of reflection), interpersonal intelligence, conceptual knowledge about leadership and management, process of leadership and management, educational practice, contingencies and what might affect, and tacit knowledge that integrates the other six forms of knowledge in to specialised practice. Inman (2009) also suggests that these types of knowledge should be employed as a framework for developing a leader in parallel with the experience of leadership practice. This is supported by Dimmock (2000), leaders learn from their insights which are emerged and accumulated through simultaneously applying intuitions, collecting and analysing knowledge and evidence in specific leadership situations.

Some researchers emphasise specific capabilities that are needed for leadership practices. Wang and Chen (2002) note that leadership competencies for effective middle managers include four managerial skills: strategic decision-making, empowerment and facilitation, relationship coordination, monitoring and innovation. In a similar vein, according to the research from Qiao and Wang (2009), there are five managerial competencies that are critical for middle managers comprising team building, coordination, execution, communication and continual learning. These competencies are seen as critical skills for successful middle managers. In terms of leadership development for professionals, it is crucial to understand what constitutes managers' competency profiles in order to design and develop efficient leadership development training programmes for the middle managers (Qiao & Wang, 2009).

More specifically, Stevenson and Howlett (2007) propose some specific fields of capabilities that need to be included in the leadership development programmes. These fields involve financial/budget awareness, planning and organising to achieve goals, handling conflict, delegating and 'letting go', managing and prioritising increasing workload, thinking more broadly about faculty/university issues, strategic 'visioning' skills, assertiveness with challenging colleagues, leading others through change, decision making to make progress, staying focused and positive in the face of challenging and pressure. The participants of the leadership development programme subsequently engage in a range of activities including 360 degree feedback, one-to-one coaching, IT training, a university funding workshop and the occasional external programme in which development activities they undertook depended entirely on their specific needs and learning styles. All however, continue to have a formal annual performance appraisal for reviewing, in which senior leaders or appraisers check progress against middle leaders' leadership plans. It means that after attending the leadership development programmes, there should be an appraisal process to follow up on how leadership practices have been applied by the participants (Day, 2011; Howard & Wellins, 2008).

In a similar manner to Stevenson and Howlett (2007), Bush (2008) reviews contents of leadership development programmes in nine of the ten countries (limited details of China's programme included in this table), and argues that only five out of these contents are themes across national boundaries. These contents include instructional leadership, law, finance, managing people and administration. These five themes can provide the initial point for creating leadership development curriculum.

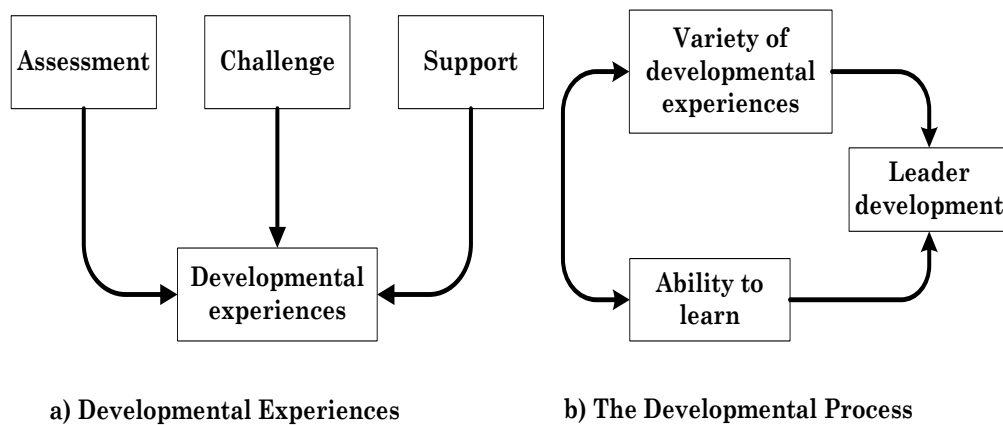
As leader development is a core aspect of leadership development, leadership development will be more effective when emotional intelligence, culture and context are included in its core contents. Goleman (1998) demonstrates that it is vital for leaders to develop their emotional intelligence prior to the development of others. Emotional intelligence involves personal competence and social competence. Personal competence is connected with self-awareness and self-management while social competence is related to social awareness and relationship management (Goleman, 1998; Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004). It is noted that emotionally intelligent leaders look for signs that reveal particular habits and the systems that support themselves for their leadership development (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). Social awareness is the foundation that enables a leader to articulate and maintain effective relationship with others (Goleman, 2000; Goleman et al., 2002). This, in turn, can lead to the development of both leaders and others. Cardno (2012) also asserts that capacity development of personal and interpersonal skills—self-awareness and self-management—relating to any forms of leadership development for individual leaders could enhance the ability to realise and manage others. Huber (2008) elaborates that the contents of leadership development programmes has shifted from embracing a specific role to a broader concept that pays attention to personal learning and one's needs in terms of dispositions, performance and knowledge that would benefit in a more sophisticated environment. The shifts in content now include communication and cooperation (one of the significant components in leadership development) is shifting from being experts in administration into experts in communication and cooperation.

Apart from the emotional intelligence, context and culture should be included in the designing of leadership development programmes. Bush (2010) asserts that context-specific preparation and school-specific learning for leadership development are critical elements that should be considered in the nature of leadership preparation and development. These two elements can reflect real situations where the leaders practise leadership roles (Heck, 2003).

Many educational researchers have identified different approaches to leadership development and the leader development process. McCauley, Van Velsor, and Ruderman (2010) present a two-part model of leader development. The first part of the model in figure 2.4.a—assessment, challenge, and support—are factors that unite to make developmental experiences more powerful. It means that whatever the experience, it has an effect on the developmental experience if it embraces these three factors. The second part of the model in

figure 2.4.b indicates that leader development is a process which needs both a various range of developmental experiences and the ability to learn from the experiences embedded in the particular leadership context. The ability to learn is a multifaceted amalgamation of personality factors, motivational factors and learning tactics (p. 5). Day (2011) affirms that “the more challenging an experience is, the more developmental values it holds” (p. 41).

Figure 2.4: Leader development model



Source: Van Velsor, McCauley & Ruderman (2010, p. 4)

A leader development approach is linked to leader identities and adult learning. Day, Harrison, and Halpin (2009) posit an integrative approach to leader development. This an integrative framework associated with expert leader (or leadership expertise) at the most tangible level, supported by self-regulation processes at a meso level and leader identities, with adult development at the foundation. Moreover, this approach underpins the notion of leader development as a lifelong journey that is a part of continuing adult development processes (Day et al., 2009). This is consistent with the leader development framework from Day and Harrison (2007), where a multilevel leader identity incorporates with organisational levels as well as levels of individual development. As individual leaders are promoted in an organisational hierarchy, they move from an individual to relational and then collective identity (Lord & Hall, 2005). It means that as individual leaders hold greater responsibilities, the fundamental needs of leader development also need to be changed or adapted as leader development is a highly individualised process (Day, 2011), that includes identifiable factors such as learning goal orientation, feedback accessibility, leader identification that can boost the process (DeRue & Wellman, 2009).

Another interesting model of the leadership development process is associated with team-based orientation. Day, Gronn, and Salas (2004) suggest a model of developing leadership capacity in the team conceptualised in terms of the amount of distributed, shared, and the work cohesion with regard to addressing leadership challenges.. Kozlowski, Watola, Jensen, Kim, and Botero (2009) note that leadership knowledge, leadership skills and leadership abilities are developed through a three-phase cycle of preparation, action and reflection. As the workload is low in the preparation phases, the focus is on establishing developmental goals which create missions and social capabilities and direct member resources. When the workload increases in the action phase, the leader follows up and develops team coherence, via facilitating harmonization and adaptation. It is recognised that the coherence in the action phase often degrades due to present workload. Thus, leader is required to be prepared to moderate the recovery of coherence by adjusting strategies, updating contingent assessment, and prompting coordination. Finally, at the end of the cycle, leaders should moderate regulatory activities and reflection to pave learning. Furthermore, in terms of moving team members from novice to expert status and beyond to build adaptive teamwork, the team seizes more responsibility for its leadership, learning, and performance (Kozlowski et al., 2009).

However, it is argued that there is limited research evidence to inform which preparation approaches to leadership development effectively influence what participants learn, their post preparation professional progress, and their leadership practices (Orr, 2009). This is also consistent with Bush and Glover (2004), and Bush, Glover and Harris (2007) who claim that there is continual debate about what forms of leadership development are most likely to contribute to effective leadership. Therefore, it can be implied that a systematic leadership development programme needs to be developed in order to guarantee academic leadership effectiveness in the higher education institutions.

2.3.3 Constraints of leadership development programmes

There are some concerns raised on leader or leadership development associated with a leadership development programme itself, progression after preparation, and the leadership practices of participants. There are some limitations of the leadership preparation programmes and one of the constraints for the leadership development programme is content. Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2010) argue that programme content is often thought to be too theoretical and irrelevant to the demands of daily practice, and not

tailored to the needs of participants' different career stages, backgrounds, prior experience and school contexts. In addition, college and university based programmes have been more focused on management and administrative topics instead of emphasizing the more essential curricular, pedagogic and learning issues (Hale & Moorman, 2003). In relation to this, Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) note that often missing from the curriculum are topics related to principles of effective teaching and learning, the design of instruction and professional development, organisational design of schools that promote teacher and student learning and the requirements of building communities across diverse school stakeholders.

Moreover, lack of opportunities to learn on the job is another concern for leadership development. According to the report from Howard and Wellins (2008), the participants have insufficient opportunities to learn on the job. Robertson (2008) suggests that it is crucial to acknowledge the nature and context of leader's work in order to establish the appropriate type of professional development which will fulfil their daily practice. In this sense, participants see learning closely tied to having access to challenging and interesting job assignments which require feedback as a tool to promote learning and development (Howard & Wellins, 2008). Day (2011) proposes that if developing an expert leader requires intense and dedicated practices, then practice-with-feedback should occur in a daily and ongoing manner on the job. Hence, it is critical for leaders to see direct relevance of their professional development to practice.

In terms of professional progression, as leadership development is an ongoing process, sustainability is an underlying issue. Day (2011) argues that the leadership development should not rely on an episodic or programme-focused approach to development and it needs to be sustainable. Even though most leaders realise that learning and development occurs on-the-job, not in the session, they are typically left on their own striving and integrating learning from leadership development programmes into their personal development plans. It is significant that leadership development that consists of learning and development take place every day rather than as only scheduled events, programmes or interventions (Day, 2011; Howard & Wellins, 2008).

Moreover, the efforts for providing or supporting leadership development for leaders are varied in terms of allocating fund and resources from different economic backgrounds. Nationally, Leithwood and Levin (2008) argue that in developed countries varying levels of

wealth, and many resources are being devoted at local and national levels to the development of educational leaders, but it is not the case for most developing countries when resources are scarce; so the merits of investment in leadership development needs to be weighed against other priorities such as the preparation of textbooks. Institutionally, Levaci (2010) explains that it is important to recognise that the purpose of resource management is to increase student learning outcomes within given funding constraints. Everard and Morris (1996) raise an interesting question “ Should be, how do we invest limited financial resources so as to maximise the benefit to the school?” (p.197). This means that all professional and leadership development training need to be planned through the process of budgeting.

2.4 SUMMARY

A middle leader can be described as a manager or leader who holds responsibility relating curriculum or management functions. This might include a head of department, a programme coordinator or vice- programme coordinator, a program director or a deputy director, director or vice-director, head of subject or vice-head of subject, head of division or vice-division, and equivalent. As middle managers are between the senior management and staff members (Carlstrom, 2012), they seize complex responsibilities which contributes to more issues or challenges in their daily leadership practices. As challenges or issues have increased in their daily practices such as workload and dilemmas, it requires more leadership training or programmes that enable middle leaders to fulfil their leadership practices in order to enhance their organisational success.

Studies of middle management confirmed that there was a need for leadership development programmes in developing countries. These could apply for the Lao context and confirm the relevance of the research topic and four research questions.

The following chapter provides an overview of the methodology with justification for the interpretive or qualitative methods of a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter starts with an overview of research in education, methodology, the research paradigm and a rationale for a qualitative approach. The two methods of data collection; the semi-structured interview and questionnaire are examined in association with pertinent literature. Key principles for sample selection of each data collection method are discussed. Following this, strategies for analysing the data are discussed and identified. Validity, reliability and triangulation are also examined in order to strengthen the results. Finally, ethical issues are considered regarding how these concerns are addressed in the context of this research.

3.2 METHODOLOGY

3.2.1 Overview of educational research

Educational research has been given various definitions. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009), educational research is the formal and systematic application of the scientific method to understand educational issues. Similarly, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) note that educational research is concerned with “the systematic and scholarly application of the principles of a science of behaviour to the problems of teaching and learning within education and to the clarification of issues having direct or indirect bearing on these concepts” (p. 1). It means that the objectives of the educational research are to describe, predict, explain, or manage educational phenomena (Gay et al., 2009, p. 6). However, research in education is complex and challenging. Coleman and Briggs (2002) support that research in education is more challenging and exciting as it draws on multi-disciplines. Freebody (2003) explains that educational research is challenging and a multi-faceted field as the dynamics changes in cultural values, political and economic features contribute to the needs of educational research to provide social and economic expectations.

Research serves many purposes in education. Husen (1997) suggests that the ultimate purpose of knowledge derived from educational research is “to provide a basis for action” (p. 20). While Creswell (2012) proposes that research is important in for three reasons: adding new knowledge, informing policy debates, and improving practice. According to Freebody

(2003), research contributes to existing information about educational problems and addresses the issues and gives alternative solutions to the existing issues. He continues that in terms of policy, the results of educational research can inform, obstruct or advance policy in education. This is supported by Creswell (2012) who notes that policy makers use the research to debate educational issues. The educational research results can inform change or development in professional practices such as assessment procedures and teaching strategies.

In terms of leadership and management, research draws on theories and practices from the social sciences and management field. Briggs, Coleman and Morrison (2012) present educational leadership research is twin-focused, with an emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of administrators and organisational structures. It aims to focus on the improvement of leadership activity for enhancing student learning outcomes. While Gunter (2005) also notes that research activity moderates more knowledge and a typology for educational leadership research approaches.

3.2. 2 Research methodology

According to Scott and Morrison (2006), methodology is viewed as the nature of reality and how individuals perceive it. The way individuals perceive social reality is associated with an ontology and epistemology (Davidson & Tolich, 2003). Methodology embeds a paradigm (both ontology and epistemology) and offers a rationale for strategies that the researchers use to conduct research activities (Morrison, 2012). This means that methodology is much more than techniques or tools for data collection because it provides in-depth reasons for each step in the research process. Kaplan (as cited in Cohen et al., 2007) explains that if methods refer to techniques and procedures used in the process of data gathering, the focus of methodology is then to describe approaches and the paradigms of research. He also pinpoints that the aim of methodology is to assist us to recognise the process and not the products of scientific inquiry.

Generally, there are three main research methodologies for educational and social research; quantitative, qualitative and mixed research (Bryman, 2008; Creswell, 2012; Gay et al., 2009; Hibberts & Johnson, 2012). Quantitative research aims to demonstrate the relationship between research and theory as deductive and predictive approaches which hold an objective conception of social reality (Bryman, 2008; Gay et al., 2009). Gay et al. (2009) point out that personal interaction between researchers and participants rarely occur because data collection

is mostly through paper-and pencil or non-interactive elements. This means quantitative approaches test scientific hypothesis statements rather than understanding the human environment and behaviours (Bell, 2007; Bryman, 2008; Gay et al., 2009). In contrast, qualitative research embraces naturalistic and an interpretive approach to the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

A qualitative research design includes grounded theory, document analysis, case studies, ethnographies, narrative and phenomenological research to indicate research findings as individual realities (Creswell, 2002). In this regard, Neuman (2003) further explains that qualitative research approaches emphasise the process and meaning that are beneath various patterns of behaviour that cannot be measured in intensity, frequency or quantity; and (Bryman, 2008) suggests that researchers might be surprised with their findings by taking an interpretative stance. This links to assertion from Burns (1994), who notes that qualitative research makes the researchers acknowledge that “ reality should never be taken for granted, given that attention must be paid to the multiple realities and social constructed meanings that exist within every social context” (p.12). It means that qualitative research sometimes provides alternative understandings towards the issues.

Alternatively, mixed methods research is a brand new research approach. It is a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in which researchers systematically employ instruments from both paradigms to collect, analyse, validate and interpret data (Hibberts & Johnson, 2012). According to Hibbert and Johnson (2012, p. 129), there are four main models of paradigm emphasis design: QUAL-quan, Quan-qual, QUAL-QUAN, and QUAN-QUAL. The capital letters in the models denote dominant paradigm of the research while to lower case letters denote the lower dominance (Hibberts & Johnson, 2012, p.127; Gay et al, 2012, p.463; Creswell, 2003). The concept of paradigms that substitute in each research approach will be discussed in the next section.

3.2.3 Research paradigm

To make sense in educational research, it is important to understand the paradigms which are embedded in the research. A paradigm is a set of philosophical assumptions which contains a collection of epistemological and ontological assumptions (Bryman, 2012; Davidson & Tolich, 2003). In general, it is recognised that a research paradigm entails three dimensions— an epistemological perspective, an ontological perspective, and methodological approaches

that are linked to the paradigm (Grogan & Simmons, 2012). This means that research methodologies are affected by both ontology and epistemology (Morrison, 2012). Ontological assumptions are concerned with the essence of social issues being investigated in which researchers aim to ask about social reality (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007); while epistemological assumptions emphasise breadth and depth of knowledge about human nature (Cohen et al., 2007). Somekh and Lewin (2005 as cited in Morrison, 2012) describe a paradigm as an approach to research which provides a merging framework of understandings of truth, values, knowledge and reality. It means that it is liability of a researcher to take a stance.

Many researchers have identified different types of research paradigms. According to Davidson and Tolich (2003), there two competing paradigms in social research, positivism and interpretive approach (interpretivism). Positivism is an epistemological position that promotes using natural science methods to study social reality and beyond (Bryman, 2008; Davidson & Tolich, 2003; Neuman, 2003), especially for educational enquiry (Morrison, 2012). In contrast, the interpretivism is a systematic analysis of social interaction through direct detailed observation of individuals in natural settings to reach a deep level of understandings and interpretations of ways that individuals retain and create their social worlds (Neuman, 1997 as cited in Davidson & Tolich, 2003). Similarly, in educational research, Scott and Morrison (2006) present four paradigms—positivism/empiricism, phenomenology/interpretative approach, critical theory and postmodernism. Critical theory focuses on values as central to all research activities and the researchers do not adopt an unbiased stance relating to the world. Postmodernism is a model of thoughts that reject universal and global beliefs in which localised knowledge is centred and the universal legitimacy of concepts is undermined (Scott & Morrison, 2006). These research paradigms are philosophical positions that researchers should take and be familiar with if they need to decipher the nature of educational enquiries (Morrison, 2012).

3.2.4 Rationale for a qualitative approach to research

This research drew upon a qualitative research methodology with an interpretative paradigm because the focus of this study was to gain insights into individuals' interpretations towards their social realities. Husen (1997) suggests that the qualitative research is focused on attempting to understand human beings in their specific context. In this case, as this study was aimed at investigating the leadership development for middle leaders in a Lao higher

education institution, it seeks to understand how senior leaders and middle leaders perceive the leadership development in their own institution. It is noted that the qualitative approach assists a researcher to understand the actions based on subjective, values and inherent realities (Bryman, 2008).

3.3 RESEARCH METHODS AND SAMPLE SELECTION

Two methods of data collection, namely the semi-structured interview and the questionnaire were the main tools for collecting data in this research. These two tools of data collection were separately used with the senior leaders and middle leaders respectively. The semi-structured interview was an appropriate tool to collect data from senior leaders who provided information about roles and responsibilities, the challenges facing middle leaders, leadership development opportunities, and the core elements of a proposed leadership development programme. This is because the semi-structured interview allows space for both interviewees and interviewers to think and reflect freely within the scope of a specific topic (Bryman, 2012; Marianne Coleman, 1999; Kvale, 2007). Finally, the questionnaire was used as a tool to gather information from middle leaders relating to role and responsibilities, the challenges, leadership development opportunities, and the core elements of a proposed leadership development programme. These two main methods will be explained in detail in the next sections.

Moreover, some document analysis was used to support the findings from the two methods adopted. Bryman (2012) and Coleman (1999) note that documentary analysis is utilised as predetermined categories in a systematic and replicable manner. The secondary data sources from the Lao Ministry of Education and Sports, provincial education sectors and related international agencies in Laos provided support to the findings of the interviews and questionnaire.

3.3.1 The semi-structured interview

A semi-structured interview is an interview that combines both structured and unstructured approaches (Coleman, 2012; Gay et al., 2009). Semi-structured interviews are viewed as a method for exploiting grounded data in interviewees' experience the same as the data that is theory laden (Galletta, 2013; Seidman, 2013) and it is mostly used under an interpretivism paradigm or as a mixed method (M Coleman, 2012). The semi-structured interview was selected as an apt method of data collection for this study (see Appendix 1) because it is a

fruitful source of data (Cardno, 2003) as it is a powerful approach to delve into educational issues through making sense of the experience of the individuals (Seidman, 2013). It was used to collect data from senior leaders' perspectives, perceptions and interpretations of leadership development for middle leaders in a Lao higher education. The semi-structured interview is an appropriate method to address particular topics relating to the phenomenon of the study as it also leave space for interviewees to offer new meanings to the focal point of the study (Freebody, 2003; Galletta, 2013). Freebody (2003) further explains that semi-structured interviews aim to reveal a core of issues in parallel while leaving space for the interviewees to address sequences and relevancies around and out of the core. Gay et al. (2009) also note that an interview is purposeful interaction in which interviewers can explore and probe interviewees' responses to collect in-depth data about their feelings and experiences.

There are three basic options for collecting data from interviews—taking notes in the process of interviewing, writing notes after interviewing, and audio or video taping the interview (Coleman, 2012; Galletta, 2013; Gay et al., 2009; Warren, 2002). Gay et al. (2009) compare these three choices and comment that taking notes during the conducting of the interview might distract and alter the flow of the interview session while writing notes after the interview is perhaps better than taking notes during the interview process but it can cause difficulties for interviewers to memorise or remember all the contents of the interview properly. Tape recording whether audio or video, is convenient and reliable source which can ensure the original data are available at any time required. Coleman (2012) states that recordings help to retain all nuances of answers from participants and the richness of individual statements are secured. In this study, a sound recorder was selected as a suitable device for recording data of interviews because it was easy to bring with the researcher and there are lots of available software support for transcribing.

There are many key principles to be considered when designing the semi-structured interview. A set of interview questions is a significant part for collecting valuable data. Gay et al. (2009) suggest that to ensure the quality of the interview, interview questions should involve both open-ended and closed questions; and pilot test the questions with a group of participants who share similar features with your research participants. Rubin and Rubin (as cited Warren, 2002) also note that there are three kinds of questions in the interview—main questions for guiding conversation, probes for clarifying answers or requesting an example,

and follow-up questions for pursuing the effects of answers to main questions. In the semi-structured interview, a set of general outlining questions are developed but not specific wording and elaboration are not included (Boudah, 2011). This means that the researcher had general ideas about topics to be covered in the interview and can focus on elaboration of those topics and filling in gaps in data. Since the study was conducted in the Lao higher education institution, the interviews were conducted in the Lao language and all questions and responses were translated from English into Lao and vice versa.

The semi-structured interview has different approaches to collect data including face-to-face interview, by video link or online, and by telephone (Boudah, 2011; Coleman, 2012; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Tierney & Dilley, 2002). In this research, the data was collected through face-to-face interviewing and took 30 to 45 minutes per individual. Coleman (2012) states that face-to-face interviews allow interviewers to observe interviewees' body language which perhaps indicate discomfort or comfort, so the interviewer can make judgements on ways to continue the interview. However, it is sometimes difficult to interpret body language properly in terms of differing cultures (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner as cited in Coleman, 2012). As a face-to-face interview is time-consuming, the interviewers need to ensure that there is a private space or room for the interview (Gay et al., 2009; Kvale, 2007; Seidman, 2013) and an appropriate number of questions (Bryman, 2012; Coleman, 2012). In this study, the interview was organised in a private room of each senior leader and the interview schedule was presented during the interview session (see Appendix 1).

3.3.2 Sample selection for the semi-structured interview

As the research aims to understand the participants' perceptions towards leadership development for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution, the purposive sampling approach was adopted to select the samples. The purposive sampling approach helped to narrow and identify a number of samples (Gay et al., 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2008). In this research, six senior leaders from the presidential board, deans and associate deans from the presidential board and five faculties were chosen as sufficient research participants for gathering data about leadership development for middle leaders in order to understand the perceptions of senior leaders and confirm the middle leaders' perceptions relating to leadership development. As noted by Bryman (2008), "purposive sampling is to sample participants in a strategic way, so those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed" (p. 415). This is supported by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) who state

that the quality of research is dependent on the appropriateness of methodology, methods, and suitable strategy of the sampling.

3.3.3 The questionnaire

Although the face-to-face interviews allow the research to gain insights into the feeling and experience of participants towards a particular issue, interviewing is time-consuming. The questionnaires are more applicable in terms of a fixed schedule for the research project (Creswell, 2012; Gay et al., 2009). According to Gay et al. (2009) and Thomas (1998), a questionnaire is a series of written questions to be answered by selected groups of individuals about their beliefs and attitudes towards the phenomenon. The questionnaire is broadly used to collect data with multiple methods such as qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

The questionnaire was used as the second method of data collection for this study. It was extensively used and a helpful instrument for collecting data, being able to be administered by participants, providing structured and being reasonably straightforward to analyse (Cohen et al., 2011; Denscombe, 2007; Hinds, 2000). The questionnaire is typically used for qualitative research through gaining insights into participants' feeling and experience (Bryman, 2012; Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Hinds (2000) states that a questionnaire is "concerned with gathering data from, usually, a large number of respondents, and the data gathered usually focuses on the views, ideas and attitudes" (p. 41). As the aims of this research were associated with the perspectives or views of a number of middle leaders on role and responsibilities, challenges, leadership development opportunities and the core elements of a proposed leadership development programme, the questionnaire was considered as an appropriate tool for collecting data for this study. Bryman (2008) and Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that the mix of closed and open-ended questions in the questionnaire has advantages as the respondents can answer in their own words; the questions do not suggest answers; unusual responses can be delivered; and, therefore new knowledge and understanding of issues can be tapped into and they are useful in uncovering new issues.

Constructing valid questionnaires require skills and time. In a broad sense, a questionnaire should be brief, attractive and easy to respond to. Cohen et al. (2000) and Gay et al. (2009) assert that a well-designed questionnaire can encourage respondents to fully engage in the data collection. The questionnaire should connect to the research objectives and the questions

should cover the issues in order to collect and analyse the data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) confirm that “questions developed to guide the research study need to depend on the context with process and meaning rather than cause and effects” (p. 150). In this study, the researcher spent a lot of time to identify and develop the sub questions from the interview to design a questionnaire in order to make it suit the middle leaders who were key respondents in this research.

The instructions in questionnaires can encourage respondents to answer all items within the questionnaires. The questionnaire should have plenty of space for questions and answers; and the purpose of each section should be clearly explained (Bell, 2007; Cohen et al., 2007). In addition, the questions should be orderly and clearly categorised into sections as it is easy when collected data is analysed. Bell and Woolner (2012) state that the researcher needs to ensure that the wordings of questions are clear and should not be complicated and sensitive with an easy layout for both respondents and the researcher. Cohen et al. (2000) also note that “the order of the questionnaire is important, for early questions may set the mind-set of respondents to the latter questions” (p.257). Furthermore, it is necessary to have a pilot test of the questionnaire in order to make sure that all questions, formats and wordings expose the real research focus (Bell & Woolner, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007). In this research the questionnaire was designed with clear instructions and categorised into sections based on the research aims and research questions (see Appendix 2).

After the questionnaire designed, pilot testing is significant to ensure that all questions within the questionnaire are easy to understand and cover all the points of the research. Bryman (2008) suggests that it is necessary to conduct a pilot test prior administering a self-completion questionnaire to the research sample. This links to the assertion from Clarke and Dawson (1999), who note that a questionnaire should be pre-tested to guarantee that the participants understood all questions and statements easily. The questionnaire was trialled with a pilot test with some non-participants who gave honest feedback. Some of the questions were simplified and adapted to clarify meaning.

After the questionnaire was designed and reviewed, the questionnaire was distributed to targeted participants to complete (see Appendix 2). Generally, the questionnaire was expected to be completed in 30 to 45 minutes approximately without being closely guided by the researcher (Bryman, 2012; Gay et al., 2009). Bryman (2008) affirms that “the

questionnaires are more convenient for respondents because they can complete a questionnaire when they want and at the speed that they want to go” (p. 218). This means that the questionnaires are more convenient to manage in the large organisations such as tertiary institutions and create less distraction to participants (Bell, 2007; Bryman, 2012). However, Bell (2007) argues that if the respondents do not have enough time to answer the questions in the questionnaires, it will affect the result quality of data analysis as well as the research outcomes. As the researcher had an initial contact with the chancellors, deans, directors and their secretaries within the target tertiary institution, it was anticipated that their assistance in accessing and distributing questionnaires would enhance the level of response.

3.3.4 Sample selection for the questionnaire

Thirteen affiliate organisations are administered by the higher education institution including five faculties, six offices and two centres; and the researcher selected 47 out of 55 heads of department, heads of subject and middle managers to respond to the questionnaire. According to Cohen et al. (2000) and Bryman (2012), the selection of samples for the open-ended questionnaire in this research is based on non-probability sample strategies as the researcher targets a particular group of participants in a small scale research. Many researchers state that the non-probability sampling strategy is mostly employed by the qualitative researchers; in particular, the respondents for the questionnaire are selected through purposive sampling (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2011; Forgelman & Comber, 2007). Cohen et al. (2011) and Forgelman and Comber (2007) underline that the purposive sampling is commonly employed to select participants for a specific purpose or a specific case. Middle leaders across the institution were purposively selected to provide information on leadership development.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis and interpretation of qualitative research are crucial steps in the research process involving a variety of strategies and requires systematic approaches. Lofland, Snow, Anderson, and Lofland (2006) define data analysis as “a kind of transformative process that raw data is turned into findings or results” (p. 195). The analysis of data in qualitative research starts throughout the research project during and after data collection as it is a persistent part and an iterative process (Boudah, 2011; Galletta, 2013; Gay et al., 2009; Watling & James, 2007). Gay et al (2009) suggest three iterative steps to proceed with data analysis including reading/memoing, describing what happens in the setting, and classifying the research data. The logical consequence of activities is from reading to description, to

classifying, and finally interpretation. However, once a researcher starts to internalise and reflect on the data, the initial ordered sequence may lose its structure and become more flexible. Whereas Watling and James (2007) represent six elements of qualitative data analysis that move around underpinning methodological assumptions. These elements include defining and identifying data, collecting and storing data, data reduction and sampling, structuring and coding data, theory building and testing, and reporting and writing up the research. Data analysing and interpreting can be differentiated upon a number of methods used for collecting data (Boudah, 2011; Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2011); and data analysis requires plenty of time and reflection (Galletta, 2013).

3.4.1 The semi-structured interview data analysis

The interview was conducted with four senior leaders who were from the presidential board and two deans of faculties. The interview data was transcribed and analysed in Lao language and then translated into English. Transcribing audio records was to make data available in textual form for data analysing (Poland, 2002), but transcribing interviews demand times and hard-work as it perhaps takes 5-10 hours to transcribe for a 60-minute interview (Coleman, 2012; Seidman, 2013). In addition, transcriptions of audio or video tapes need to ensure accuracy. According to Galletta (2013) and Kvale (2007), the researcher needs to check the matching between the transcriptions and audiotapes because there could be some discrepancies due to mishearing or misinterpretation of audible passage, or poor quality recordings in order to ensure its validity and reliability (Kvale, 2007; Poland, 2002; Watling & James, 2007). In this study, the researcher had a cross-check the transcriptions with the audio files of the interviews in order to ensure the accuracy and sent the transcriptions to the interviewees to verify the correction of the information prior to analysis.

In this research, the interview transcriptions were analysed through coding, categorising and content analysis. According to Kvale (2007), Lofland et al. (2006), coding is significant to qualitative research analysis because it allows the researchers to divide data into segments as well as analytical themes are being developed. Watling and James (2007) affirm that “the structuring and coding underpin the key research outcomes, and can be used to shape the data to test, refine or confirm established theory, apply theory to new circumstances, or used to generate a new theory or model” (p.359). It is noted that the quality of analysis in qualitative research relies on the researcher’s abilities towards the research topics and tools for analysis such as language and software for analysis (Kvale, 2007).

3.4.2 The questionnaire analysis

The questionnaires collected from 47 middle leaders were analysed using a thematic coding. The data was formatted and coded to be used in analysing the main themes which emerged from the research questions. The common themes were highlighted and coloured in terms of words and/or motifs, similarities and differences; and then put into categories. This is the first step for a more entire analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). The researcher read all comments and answers from the open-ended questions several times and then colour coded the responses. Using a matrix as “a framework for the thematic analysis of qualitative data provides one way of thinking about how to manage themes and data” (Bryman, 2008, p. 555).

3.5 VALIDITY OF THE RESULTS

3.5.1 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are crucial for the integrity of the research. In qualitative research, sometimes credibility and authenticity are used instead of validity and reliability (Flick, 2002). According to Cohen et al. (2011) and Hartas (2010), validity refers to the consistency of a measurement associated with concerns whether the results reflect what the researcher is searching for. Kvale (2007) asserts that survey validation rests on the purpose of interview or questionnaires and on epistemological conceptions. The researcher can enhance their research worthiness via different types of validity in qualitative research. In this study, the researchers ensured and followed the five key concerned of validity across the research process as mentioned by Maxwell (1992). According to Maxwell (1992), there are five types of validity that are concerned through the process of the qualitative research including descriptive validity, interpretive validity, theoretical validity, generalizability and evaluative validity. Descriptive validity refers to the factual correctness in which the researchers need to ensure that they do not distort or make events based on inferences. Interpretive validity concerns the meanings and its accuracy of participants’ words or actions. Theoretical validity refers to the ability of the researchers in explaining the findings of the study to a broader theory. Evaluative validity refers to degree of the researcher in presenting data in unbiased way. Generalizability validation can be both external and internal validity (Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

To ensure validity of the interview, Kvale (2007) explains that “interview interpretations need not only be tested communicatively by direct questions, but also pragmatically by observation of the actions and consequences of interviewer interpretations” (p. 126). The transcriptions of the interview were checked and valid by the senior leaders with signed consent form (see Appendix 3) before analysing. Similarly, for questionnaire validity, Scott and Morrison (2006) note that the researcher needs to cross-check the returned questionnaires by interview respondents in case some questions are uncompleted; and to follow-up and suggest how to fill in the questionnaires with the non-respondents through giving an example.

3.5.2 Triangulation

Bush (2012) defines triangulation as a tool to compare different sources of evidence in order to determine the accuracy of phenomena. In a similar vein, Cohen et al. (2011) and Flick (2009) define triangulation as the use of two or more data collecting methods in some aspects of human behaviours.

Triangulation helps to enhance validity and reliability in qualitative research. Triangulation is not a strategy for validation, but an alternative to validation (Flick, 2009). This means that triangulation is utilised as a check on data through careful use of multiple sources which can lead to more valid data (Bush, 2012; Cohen et al., 2011). This research was best suited to adopt methodological triangulation as it employs the semi-structured interview and the questionnaire to collect data from five faculties, six offices, and two centres in a Lao higher education institution. The data findings from the interview informed the data findings from the questionnaire, while the data gained from the interview and the questionnaire was triangulated with the documentations from the Lao Ministry of Education and Sports. This is supported by Flick (2002) who notes that “the combination of multiple methodological practices, empirical materials, perspectives, and observers in a single study is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth to any inquiry” (p. 229).

3.6 ETHICAL ISSUES

A primary ethical concern in my research was to gain permission for access into the 13 affiliate organisations of a Lao higher education that I planned to work with. To administer the questionnaires and interview, deans and directors were contacted at the beginning. Six senior leaders were asked for their approval to engage in six individual interviews through

providing them briefly with an information sheet (See Appendix 4) and consent form (See Appendix 3). There were no conflicts of interest with the 13 affiliate organisations involved in this research since I had no links to the chosen faculties beyond a professional association. Finally and most importantly, this research project was conducted with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC) guidelines and the data collection phase did not proceed until the UREC approval was given.

Ethical considerations are viewed as a vital part of all research studies in which the researchers need to recognise and concentrate on the ethical issues because their studies embrace human personal interaction in a community or institution (Flick, 2009; Lapan, Quartaroli, & Riemer, 2011). Bryman (2008) explains that “ethical issues cannot be ignored as they relate to the integrity of a piece of research and to the disciplines that are involved” (p. 133).

The primacy of ethical conduct has driven the design and processes of this research and ethical approval from the Unitec Research Ethics’ Committee (Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC), 2009). In addition, due to this research was conducted onsite in a Lao higher education setting, it was vital that it did not distract from daily practices of senior and middle leaders. This is supported by Galletta (2013) whose states that before data collection commence, those researchers working with a university setting will need to gain approval from their institutions. Thus, it required a formal written request by letter using UREC guidelines to a Lao tertiary institution in order to gain permission and access for the research to be conducted (See Information sheet—Appendix 4).

Many key principles of ethical challenges were identified through the entire process of the research from the starting of the investigation to the final report. The key principle was being informed consent. Wellington (2000) notes that it is significant for the researcher to ensure that the research is ethical in terms of its design, methods, data analysis, presentation and its conclusions. Davidson and Tolich (1999), and Kvale (2007) suggest five key principles of ethical consideration, namely, informed consent, voluntary participation, do no harm, avoid deception, and ensure confidentiality and anonymity. These key principles assist the researcher to carefully think how no participants will be adversely affected by involving them in this research (Busher & James, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 1999).

Many authors also reveal that participants must be informed about the aims and rationale of the research and their role involved in the research (Bryman, 2008; Davidson & Tolich, 1999). The researchers need to sufficiently explain the objective, process and intended results of the research to potential participants in order to gain informed consent from them (Busher & James, 2012; Fowler, 2009). In other words, this raises an emphasis on informed consent from fundamental democratic rights to freedom and self-determination (Cohen et al., 2000). Participants should be voluntary participants in the research without incentive and reserved confidentiality (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007). Seidman (2013) further explains that voluntary participation in the research means the participants are informed not persuaded as the researchers inform and encourage but not coax the participants to join the study (See Information sheet—Appendix 4). In this research, all participants were able to withdraw at any time and a consent form was signed by the participants to protect themselves, the researcher and the Unitec Institute of Technology (See Consent form—Appendix 3).

In terms of confidentiality, the data and the identity of their institution and faculties are kept confidential. In this research, names of participants, research places and even dates were codified to secure privacy (Busher & James, 2007). Privacy has been maintained by ensuring that all data is kept in a secure place and that access is limited to those who have been disclosed as having access during and after the end of the research project (Busher & James, 2012; Cohen et al., 2007; Kvale, 2007). However, Walfrod (2006) argues that once the research is publicly reported it is hard to guarantee the anonymity and privacy of both participants and institutions if the research is well-known.

It was the responsibility of the researcher to avoid both mental and physical harm to participants and to the socio-political environments in which they live. This was an onsite research where participants and the researcher met face-to face, so the researcher needed to be sensitive to the socio-political context of the institution (Busher & James, 2007). All questions in this research were checked to guarantee the least harm to participants such as uncomfortable and sensitive questions that might cause offensive feeling. In addition, the participant can skip any questions if they do not intend to give information (Fowler, 2009). If the participants do not understand the questions, the researchers can further explain, but without convincing the participants to answer in the ways that the researcher expects (Busher & James, 2007; Seidman, 2013).

The benefits of the research outcomes are one of the key ethical concerns. The researcher is required to ensure that research findings are of mutual benefits to participants, researchers and society (Busher & James, 2012; Creswell, 2012; Gay et al., 2009). With regards to the purpose of this research, the outcomes of this research are seen as mutual gains among the informants, the institute and the research. The middle leaders and senior leaders of the target institution will perhaps scrutinise the leadership development opportunities and be inspired to improve their leadership development and to extend their leadership practice. Besides that, the research findings and outcomes had to be ethically presented. Elgesem (as cited in Busher & James, 2012) recommends that the collected data can be used only in ways that relates to the original aim of the research project. The results of this research will be shared to the institution where the research was conducted, and the Unitec Institute of Technology.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter provided a discussion on methodology in the educational and social science fields. It provided an overview of educational research, research methodology, and research paradigms. The rationale of this research was drawn upon to justify the qualitative research approach and an interpretivism paradigm. Data collection methods and sample selection were examined and discussed regarding the two methods of data collection; the semi-structured interview and a questionnaire. Six senior leaders were asked for interviewing and forty-seven questionnaires were distributed to and collected from middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution. Data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability and ethical issues were discussed with support from relevant authors.

CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS

This chapter provides a summary of the findings gathered from the five faculties, six administration offices, and two centres of a Lao tertiary institution, through semi-structured interviews with four senior leaders, and through a questionnaire with forty middle leaders. The research design focused on investigating leadership practices of middle leaders; the challenges or issues facing middle leaders; the leadership development opportunities for middle leaders; and elements or features of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders.

The data from both the interview and the questionnaire have identified and contributed new knowledge for the Lao tertiary institution involved in the research to consider how leadership development for middle leaders could be developed in order to increase organisational effectiveness and success. In a broader sense, the findings of this research may be valuable to the Lao Ministry of Education and Sports, Laos in terms of designing leadership development programmes for middle leaders in higher education settings.

4.1 INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Senior leaders perspectives

This section summarised the research findings from interviews with four senior leaders (SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4), from two faculties (FA, FB) and two representatives from a presidential board (PB) in a Lao tertiary institution. The table below indicates the role of each research participant.

Table 4.2: Coding for interview participants

Code	Representation	Roles and Responsibility
SL1	Senior leader from Presidential Board	A representative of the Presidential Board for Academic Affairs
SL2	Senior leader from Presidential Board	A representative of the Presidential Board of Administration
SL3	Senior leader of Faculty A	The Dean of Faculty A
SL4	Senior leader of Faculty B	The Dean of Faculty B

The interviews were linked to the leadership practices and challenges or issues facing middle leaders, the leadership development opportunities for, and the elements of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders. The interview questions (see Appendix 1) were designed for senior leaders who are associated deans or deans, associated presidents or presidents to express their perspectives on leadership development for middle leaders in the Lao higher education context. The interviews with the senior leaders allow the researcher to respond to the sub-questions and contribute to discovering how they perceive the context of leadership development in their own tertiary institution and faculties respectively.

4.1.1 Leadership practices of middle leaders

Question One: What are the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders in your faculty/organisation?

The role and responsibilities of middle leaders in this higher education institution are based on the official statutes of the faculties, departments, offices and centres. However, according to the discussion with the four senior leaders and looking at the statutes, the roles of middle leaders are associated with academia and administration that constitute four main responsibilities: interpreting the policies and strategies into action plans, implementing, monitoring and evaluating, and mentoring:

Each faculty, office and centre has its own statutes which indicate roles and responsibilities of staff members, roles and responsibilities are legally indicated within statutes. I would categorise the middle leaders into two main types based on their nature of work, academic and/or administration. The office directors or deputy directors work closely with us in order to moderate academic work within our institution; while the heads of department, subject leaders deal with curriculum and teaching (SL1)

Whereas another senior leader noted the dual role of a middle leader who is required to juggle the two different roles of academic leadership and administration:

Sometimes, some HoDs and programme leaders hold two roles, managing the daily routine tasks within the offices and teaching activities (SL4)

In addition, all of the four senior leaders agreed that the main responsibilities of middle leaders were to interpret the policies and strategies into action plans, implementing, monitoring and evaluating, and supervising their colleagues:

The office directors and deputy directors play significant roles in terms of interpreting the directions gained from the presidential boards as well as the government policies into action planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation, and report with feedback for future practices (SL2)

The HoDs, programme leaders or subject leaders are obliged to ensure that all the courses and contents in the programmes attach to the institutional goals and policies (SL4)

The four senior leaders also indicated that middle leaders have a responsibility to guide and supervise their colleagues in the departments or teams:

The middle leaders need to be available for their staff members on demand to assist their colleagues as much as possible because some urgent problems might need to be clarified or given advice immediately., some staff members individually come and talk with their deputy directors on key managerial tasks that they do not clearly understand whether those tasks are their responsibilities or whether they fulfilled their tasks (SL4)

These findings indicated that middle leaders in this higher education institution hold a simultaneous dual role of managing and teaching. In addition, three main responsibilities had emerged, interpreting strategies and policies into action plans, implementing, monitoring and evaluation, and supervising.

Question Two: What are the required capabilities of middle leaders to enhance their practices in your faculty /organisation?

All the senior leaders agreed that the requirements for middle leaders to enhance their leadership practices encompass subject knowledge, leadership and management skills, strong political acumen and communication skills:

The directors, deputy directors and HoDs need to understand and have knowledge about a variety of management theories in order to apply to their real practice. Moreover, the directors should have the ability to influence other staff members to pursue their responsibilities (SL2)

The HoDs and subject leaders' attitudes towards the political regime are seen as one of significant qualities that are necessary for their performance. The middle leaders might be promoted to the higher positions once they have proved that they literally commit to the political and governmental regime in terms of promoting the policies as well as disseminating into their own departmental practices (SL3)

These findings showed that subject knowledge, leadership and management skills, political acumen and communication skills are required capabilities for middle leaders in order to be effective as a middle leader in a higher education institution.

Question Three: What do you need to do to strengthen the mentioned capabilities?

All of the senior leaders agreed that the way to strengthen the capabilities of the middle leaders is to continue with professional development and leadership development both on-site and off-site. The faculties as well as the institution, seek ways to support and strengthen leadership skills and capabilities for the middle leaders, key aspiring and teaching staff members. All of them are encouraged and allowed to apply for scholarships; to be selected as appropriate candidates to apply for the leadership development programmes in the National Politics and Public Administration Institute (NAPPA) or School of Politics and Public Administration (SPPA) regarding the quota:

Domestically, the institution normally gets one or two scholarships for the higher diploma in Politics and Public Administration from NAPPA and SPPA (SL2)

Internationally, we have academic and technical collaborations based on Memorandum of Understandings (MOU) with higher education institutions in neighbouring countries such as Vietnam and Thailand. It is expected that these MOUs will widen the leadership development opportunities for our middle leaders (SL1)

These findings revealed that the institution gives support or provides opportunities for middle leaders to strengthen their capabilities through creating networks with other higher institutions both domestically and internationally. However, the middle leaders also need to be more active in terms of developing their professions.

4.1.2 Challenges or issues facing middle leaders

Question 4: What challenges or issues did middle leaders encounter?

All of the senior leaders agreed that lack of experience created problems for many middle leaders (HoDs, subject leaders or directors) because they did not know where to start or end when they have to deal with an inadequate human resources system while dealing with the implementation of action plans to meet the institutional goals:

When I (the dean) assigned the HoDs or subject leaders to develop the curriculum in their departments or subject areas, most of them did not know where to start or how to get this mission done. They held this task on their own. This indicated that they did not know how to use their roles in order to disseminate the task to staff members (SL4)

Due to lack of experience in management, putting resources (persons, materials, funds) in some action plans cannot fit to the real situation of the faculties, and it needed to be adapted at some points. Besides that, some HoDs or subject leaders who lacked experience in teaching; cannot give appropriate advice to their team members towards the teaching techniques for enhancing the student learning outcomes (SL3)

All of the senior leaders also agreed that middle leaders encountered an unbalanced workload when they spent time to deal with managerial tasks; they struggled with a limitation of time for teaching preparation:

The directors,... of many offices encountered challenges when they attempted to fulfil their teaching while they had to run administrative works for the senior management (SL2)

These findings indicated three main challenges facing middle leaders, included a lack of experience in managing and teaching, ensuring a quality of learning and teaching with limited resources and an imbalance of managing and teaching tasks.

Question Five: How did these challenges/issues affect their leadership practices?

All the senior leaders agreed that the challenges had an impact on delaying the successful implementation of the organisational goals or action plans. The action plans suffered a setback when middle leaders experienced work overload, limited support from human resources, lacked experience in management and did not gain a proper acceptance from their colleagues:

Some activities had been postponed due to HoDs not knowing how to operate. Whiles some activities had been implemented, but the outcomes did not reach the organisational expectations due to lack of experience in management and leadership, limited number of staff members and teasing from peers (SL2)

The failure to successfully implement action plans combined with a lack of trust/acceptance by colleagues; resulted in the middle leaders showing a lack of self-confidence:

Lack of trust from the colleagues both senior teachers and peers can depress the middle leaders in which the depression brought about losing self-belief in the middle leaders themselves. In consequence, some implemented activities could not achieve effectively as expected plans (SL2)

The relationship gap was one of the issues which resulted from the lack of trust/acceptance amongst the middle leaders and their colleagues:

Once some members cannot accept comments or feedback from their directors or HoDs, the gap between them occurred and expanded as the recurring problems were not solved together. Consequently, it affected the outputs of the operational plans as well as the organisational goals (SL1)

The data findings revealed that the challenges or issues facing middle leaders had impacts on delaying the successful implementation of the organisational goals or action plans, a lack of self-confidence in leading and managing and expanding relationship gaps among staff members and leaders.

Question Six: How did middle leaders cope with these challenges or issues?

All of the senior leaders agreed that an open discussion is one of the most effective ways to handle these challenges. Any problems should be raised and seek solutions democratically without a hidden agenda. The middle leaders and staff members need to be open-minded and honest to give and respond to the feedback from each other.

Once the problems occurred in any departments or offices, the directors or HoDs have responsibilities to bring all members to talk. It was necessary for the leaders in the middle management to gather all members and then discuss the faced issues in order to seek the collective solutions. Giving space for discussion will help the HoDs or subject leaders to reflect, review and gain more viewpoints from the staff towards any recurring problems especially in the monthly or quarterly meetings (SL1)

The senior leaders also suggested that any problems that go beyond the abilities and skills of the middle leaders; need the advice and guidance of the senior management:

The senior leaders are available to the middle leader at any time if they encounter the problems that are difficult to make decisions. In case of re-locating the human resources, a young director normally comes to discuss with the President Board in order to get some suggestions (SL2)

All of the senior leaders agreed that sharing experience and knowledge on leadership and management is another way to deal with the challenges:

The Presidential Board encourages all staff members within the organisation to learn and learn and learn..., in order to fulfil their professional and leadership practices. In particular, the leaders in the middle management need to learn more about the leadership and management theories which are recently developed that should be applied into their real practices (SL1)

These data findings showed many effective ways for middle leaders to cope with the challenges or issues facing their leadership practices, including an open discussion, getting advice from the senior management, and sharing experience and knowledge on leadership and management with colleagues.

4.1.3 Leadership development opportunities for middle leaders

Question Seven: What types of leadership development training or programmes does your organisation offer to aspiring leaders prior to their appointments as middle leaders?

All of the senior leaders agreed that this higher education institution did not provide any types of leadership development training to aspiring leaders before their appointment as middle leaders (SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4). Only some of the aspiring or middle leaders had participated in leadership development programmes (provided by NAPPA or SPPA) prior to their appointments:

For this institution, we do not offer any course relate to leadership development to our own aspiring leaders before appointing them as middle leaders,...., but only some of them had opportunities to study in the institutions that are our network that provide the courses, such as the School of Politics and Public Administration (SPPA) or the National Politics and Public Administration Institute (NAPPA) before their appointments (SL1)

These findings indicated that aspiring leaders had not been prepared enough prior to their appointments as middle leaders.

Question Eight: How does your organisation provide or offer leadership development training or programmes to middle leaders?(After appointment)

All of the senior leaders agreed that faculties as well as the university did not provide leadership development training or programmes themselves for middle leaders itself (SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4) in both short-term and long-term training. In addition, there is no any specific training course for middle leaders provided by the institution:

This institution does not provide specific leadership development programmes or training for middle leaders (SL1)

These data findings indicated that the institution does not directly provide any leadership development programmes for middle leaders.

Question Nine: What are the main constraints of providing leadership development opportunities for middle leaders in your organisation?

All of the senior leaders agreed that a lack of funding is one of the main constraints of the institution to provide leadership development opportunities for middle leaders. This is due to the reason that it is a newly established higher education institution, and there is a limited budget allocated to human resource development:

A limited amount of money is seen as one of the main obstacles facing leadership development opportunities. As the university is a newly established public university, the distribution of the budget to human resource development plans from both the government and the institution itself cannot supply the whole demands of all affiliated faculties. So, the opportunities for the middle leaders have been reduced as a result of the limited budget (SL2)

The senior leaders also noted that the lack of human resources was another constraint that narrows down the leadership development opportunities:

It was quite hard for the senior leaders to support all middle leaders so that they have equal opportunities to get involved in the leadership development training or programmes, because each department, subject unit, office or centre has only one middle manager. Currently, each department, office, or centre has only one administration position instead of having more available positions such as two deputy positions for each. As a result of that, once the institution had offered the opportunities for the middle leaders to participate in the long-term programmes, it inevitably creates managerial issues to those departments afterward (SL1)

Three out of the four senior leaders agreed that unpreparedness of the middle leaders is one of the main constraints facing the institution. It was difficult for senior leaders in making decisions to allow the middle leaders who had not been prepared enough to access any leadership development and professional development:

It was not easy to provide any development opportunities for the middle leaders who were not active in terms of self-development. One good example is the case in the FB. One of the HoDs got a scholarship to study abroad, she declined the scholarship as the study course is conducted in English and she was not ready to go due to family matters (SL2)

The findings revealed that a lack of funding, lack of human resources, and an unpreparedness of middle leaders had impacts on the senior leaders in making decisions to support or provide the leadership development opportunities for the middle leaders. These constraints narrow down the leadership development opportunities of middle leaders.

Question Ten: What are the core selection criteria in your organisation to select staff members to participate in the leadership development trainings or programmes?

The four senior leaders gave very similar explanations towards key selection criteria for eligible candidates or participants who can get involved in any leadership development training or programmes. The eligible participants are key staff members or aspiring leaders who will be middle leaders in the future; or middle leaders who have not yet attended any training regarding their leadership development:

Initially, the aspiring leaders or middle leaders who have not any experience in administration or managerial background will take a 45-day course of leadership development (it is called basic political and public administration). ..., then they can continue their study in the long-term based on approval from the institution (SL2)

All senior leaders agreed that middle leaders are required to meet the expectations based on two main dimensions of the staff performance appraisals that are adopted and adapted from the Government Decree about Standard Criteria for Administration Positions of Civil Servants in Lao People's Democratic Republic (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2014). The two main dimensions are the political tenet dimension and the professional dimension (knowledge and capabilities, working scheme, and experience):

The core criteria for selecting key staff members or middle leaders to attend any leadership training, we consider are based on two dimensions, political dogma and professional performance. Each dimension has its key components for evaluating how the staff members' performance reaches the expectations (SL1)

The senior leaders agreed that political commitment is one of the significant criteria for selecting the eligible participants to be involved in the leadership development training. The middle leaders need to meet the political expectations against five criteria:

The political dimension includes five key criteria, raising awareness of the political policies within the organisation, implementing and distributing policies, being a role model for implementing the policies, collaboratively working both domestic and international, and the appropriate ways of implementing international policies. These five main criteria are used as fundamental elements for evaluation of staff members' political stance and for measuring leadership positions (SL1)

In terms of the professional dimension, all senior leaders suggested similar lists of criteria that the aspiring leaders, key staff members or middle leaders should have in order to be adequate candidates. The middle leaders need to prove that they are qualified in their subject degrees, have experience in teaching or managing a working scheme, research experience and communication skills:

Being a part of leadership development training or programmes, the key teachers, aspiring leaders or middle leaders should have at least a prominent qualification related to their nature of work, be active and motivated, responsible for their duties and organisation, able to work with many individuals and able to influence other colleagues to work towards organisational goals, and have at least three to five years of experience relating to their work responsibilities (SL2)

However, two senior leaders also noted that in the case of this institution, only some criteria in each dimension could apply because it was a newly established institution:

In the case of our faculty, I opted to apply only some of these criteria in order to evaluate those potential leaders or middle leaders. For example, a middle leader passed the criteria of professional dimension (experienced in teaching and learning) but was not able to reach the political dimension criteria. It is, hence sometimes, in case of our university, eligible participants to the leadership development training do not need to meet both dimensions; they might meet one of the two dimensions (SL3)

These findings revealed that eligible participants are key staff members or aspiring leaders who will be middle leaders in the future; or middle leaders who have not yet attended any training regarding the leadership development. In addition, the core selection criteria for attending the leadership development programmes associated with political and professional dimensions. The core selection criteria constitute the political acumen, subject knowledge, research capabilities, communication skills, and experience in leadership and managing a working scheme. However, only some of the criteria could apply to this institution due to the age of the organisation.

4.1.4 The core elements of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders

Question Eleven: What is required for a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders?

Three out of four senior leaders agreed that support from the senior management on human resources development plans is one of the significant requirements for developing a leadership development programme for middle leaders:

Any development programmes cannot be occurred if there is no support from the senior management or the institution, in particular the leadership development programme for the HoDs or directors, or subject leaders. The programme designers, I mean any individuals who are responsible for the leadership development programme need to be supported by the senior management (SL3)

Three out of the four senior leaders also agreed that an in-depth analysis of the existing leadership development programmes in other higher education institutions (domestic and international) is necessary for developing a new leadership development programme for higher education:

We consider to design the leadership development programme based on locating and evaluating the existing leadership development programmes in the higher education institutions within the country and abroad in order to seek what and how it fits into our context. In addition, the results from the performance appraisals can help us to understand and recognise the major drawbacks facing the middle leaders that will contribute to developing the programmes that fit the middle leaders' demands (SL1)

Two of the senior leaders noted that linkage between theories and real practices is also essential for reflection and improvement of middle leadership practices:

It is significant to organise the leadership development programme that can directly respond to the middle leaders' development needs (SL4)

The senior leaders recommended some factors that are required for designing a proposed leadership development programme including reflection time, selection criteria for participants, development of curriculum, and facilities and resources. These elements provide the fundamental concepts for leadership and management; and enable the middle leaders to reflect and apply to the real context in their own departments or offices. The middle leaders themselves need to understand what is going on in their departments and institution and what areas of knowledge or skills need to be improved in regards to their appraisals and interests. Moreover, facilities and resources such as libraries, and IT facilities can assist before and after training sessions:

The contents of the leadership development programme should be categorised in order to fit with the nature of the middle management work such as academic affairs, administration or technical field administration. In addition, the contents and activities should be consistent with working experience of the middle leaders, this will allow them to reflect their previous leadership practices and then develop new approaches for future practices (SL1)

The leaders in the middle management have to be an active learner and like studying new things; meet the core selection criteria (SL2)

Resource books and IT facilities are required for the proposed leadership development programme (SL3)

These findings indicated the process of developing the leadership development programme for middle leaders, including, analysing the existing leadership development programmes provided by other institutions, support from the senior management, and linkage between the theories and real practices. Furthermore, the data also indicated the core elements that should constitute the proposed leadership development programme, including reflection time, selection criteria for participants, development of curriculum, and facilities and resources.

Question Twelve: What areas would you encourage middle leaders to develop in order to enhance their capabilities?

The areas of knowledge and skills that middle leaders need to learn in order to enhance their capabilities are viewed as the core contents that should be included in the proposed leadership development programme. The proposed leadership development programme should be designed in order to develop the learners through three dimensions—attitude, knowledge and skills—in which the design of the programme should be aimed at building leadership skills and capabilities for leadership practices (SL1 & SL2).

All senior leaders agreed that political knowledge is necessary for the middle leaders in this institution. This is because it can help leaders to understand the general views of the politics as well as the higher education policies for their roles and responsibilities. The political content might include historical videos or songs, national documentaries, the resolutions from the political party and government in power:

Due to the political acumen is one of the core criteria for promoting, it is vital for the middle leaders to learn and understand the underlying beliefs that govern their own organisational culture and other organisational cultures in order to be adaptive and know what things going on (SL4)

The educational leadership and management is seen as one of the crucial factors to include in the proposed leadership development programme. As educational leaders, it is critical to understand what goes on in the educational settings (SL1, SL2, SL3, &SL4):

The middle leaders need to be aware of legal documents that relates to education, such as educational law, educational policies and the national educational reformation strategic plans in order to adjust them into their real practices. In addition, knowledge about project management, curriculum development, human resource management, quality of education, and performance appraisals should be included in the leadership development programmes (SL3)

The four senior leaders agreed that foreign language competency is one of the important skills that middle leaders need to have because it helps them to communicate with foreign allies more conveniently, so at least one foreign language should be included in the programme:

A middle leader needs to be proficient in any foreign languages, at least one language. This is because foreign language proficiency is one of the significant criteria for appointing the employees to administration positions, being fluent in any language is required for the middle leaders too. So I would recommend that foreign language should be constituted in the proposed leadership development programme (SL1)

All of the senior leaders agreed that the ability to communicate with and to get along with other people is essential for the middle leaders in terms of mitigating the relationship gaps between the leaders and staff members and influencing them towards the organisational goals:

The HoDs or subject leaders need to be good at communication skills in order to be able to influence the colleagues to get on board and go together towards the departments, faculty or institutional goals (SL3)

Three out of the senior leaders agreed that information technology (IT) is another significant skill that middle leaders are required to have in order to help them prepare for their teaching and managing:

The IT skill is required for the middle leaders; they need to be competent in at least basic functions of the Microsoft Office. If the middle leaders are competent in using IT, they will be, for example, able to save time in preparing lesson plans or presentations (SL1)

These data findings revealed the proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders should be designed in order to develop the learners' attitudes, knowledge and skills. Many areas of knowledge and skills that need to be included in the proposed programme were current political context, educational leadership and management, foreign language, communication and IT skills.

4.2 QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS

Middle leaders perspectives

This section summarised the research results and findings from the questionnaire completed by forty middle leaders (HoDs, deputy HoDs, directors or deputy directors, subject leaders or associated subject leaders) from five faculties, two centres, and six offices in a Lao tertiary institution. The list of middle leaders within the institution was provided by the Personal and Inspection Office. Forty-seven copies of the questionnaire in total were distributed to middle leaders in those faculties, centres and offices; and there was a high return rate of forty responses (85.10%).

The designed questionnaire, encompassed 18 questions, and was divided into five main sections; namely general information, roles and responsibilities of middle leaders, challenges or issues facing middle leaders, the leadership development opportunities for middle leaders, and the core elements of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders in a Lao tertiary institution. The questionnaire included closed, checklist and open-ended questions. This questionnaire was intended to collect the middle leaders' perceptions (See Appendix 2).

4.2.1 General information

The middle leaders were asked to identify their positions and the number of years that they have been appointed in those positions in order to get an overall image.

Question 1: What is your position in this faculty/office/centre?

The respondents of the questionnaire in this research defined themselves as middle leaders who have both teaching and managing responsibilities. Most of the middle leaders (48%) were holding a position at division level (25% as heads of division and 23% as the deputy heads of division). There were 28% who held positions at departmental level (23% as the deputy HoDs and 5% of the HoDs). Only 25% of the middle leaders (15% as the deputy directors and 10% as the directors) perform mainly in managerial and administrative tasks (see table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Job titles of middle leaders

Job Titles	Job titles - Numbers of positions	Job titles - Percentage
Director	4	10%
Deputy director	6	15%
Head of Department	2	5%
Deputy Head of Department	9	23%
Head of Division	9	23%
Deputy Head of Division	10	25%
Grand Total	40	100%

Question Two: How many years of experience have you had in your current position?

The large number of the respondents who were employed as middle leaders had less than four years experience. It is significant that more than 80% of the middle leaders indicated that they had only one to three years of working experience. There were only 12.50% of middle leaders who were in a range of four to six years experience; and the percentage of the middle leaders who were in a range of more than six years was only 5%.

Table 4.4: Working Experience in the middle management

Year of experience	1-3 years	4-6 years	> 6 years
Number of persons	33	5	2
Percentage	82.50%	12.50%	5.00%

4.2.2 Leadership practices of middle leaders

Question Three: What is your role and responsibilities in this faculty/office/centre?

Thirty-five out of the forty middle leaders (87.5%) stated that their responsibilities related to administration tasks including general administration, planning and implementation, personnel management (recruitment, rewards, performance appraisal, and human resources development planning), facilitating, coordinating, financial planning, and reporting:

I do work as secretary to the senior management in terms of preparing for recruiting, staff performance appraisal and proposing the training and professional development plans (ML31)

My work is to establish budgetary plans for the whole activities in the institution; following up and report the financial status to the senior management (ML40)

Thirty-two out of the forty middle leaders (80%) had mentioned about their responsibilities which relates to the academic leadership such as outlining the programmes, teaching plans, allocating teachers to each subject, doing research, monitoring and evaluating teachers, and mentoring:

My work is to look at the course outlines of the programme, set implementation plans for my department, monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning activities within the department, seek some funds to support staff professional training, and supply some teaching materials to the teachers (ML36)

My responsibilities embrace teaching and doing research about the subject that I have taught and encourage team members to do action research regarding their teaching (ML5)

Twenty-five out of the forty middle leaders (62.5%) noted that supporting and promoting a positive attitude towards the direction and policies from the Government in the institution policies is seen as one of the significant responsibilities in this higher education institution:

I am also responsible for instilling and sustaining the political acumen into staff members in order to be confident and trust in the organisational system as well as the politics and the government system (ML16)

Twenty four out of the middle leaders (60%) suggested that they simultaneously juggled with three different types of jobs, managing, teaching and political propaganda:

My main duty is related to propaganda of the political directions and policies, especially in education. Besides that, as a director of the office, I have to manage staff members to get things done on time, while I also have to teach year two students of the bachelor graduate degree (ML24)

These findings indicated three main types of the role and responsibilities of middle leaders associated with academic leadership, administration and maintaining political acumen. Some of the middle leaders hold all of the three main responsibilities; while some may hold two and some might hold only one main responsibility.

Question Four: What are the required capabilities of middle leaders to enhance leadership practices in your faculty /organisation?

Thirty-three out of the forty middle leaders (82.5%) stated that one of the most important factors that can enhance their leadership practices associated with the level of specialisation in their subject areas and basic IT skills:

I want to specialise in my subject areas and to develop the curriculum in order to be able in teaching various levels of the subject and be able to use at least the basic functions of the Microsoft Office, or internet (ML21)

Thirty out of the forty middle leaders (75%) identified that leadership and management skills are crucial and needed for improving their practices. The contemporary leadership and management will increase effectiveness of their leadership practices:

I think that the middle leaders need to have the abilities to influence and persuade colleagues to get things done together (ML28)

I need to enhance the abilities in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation in order to be able to get things organised and lead my team more effectively (ML11)

Thirty out of the forty middle leaders (75%) considered teaching and instructional skills as one of the key capabilities that the middle leaders need to embrace:

In terms of leading, it is necessary to specialise in various teaching methods and know how to suggest appropriate solutions to colleagues when they need help (ML2)

Twenty-eight out of the forty middle leaders (70%) noted that foreign language competency and communication skills are the required capabilities that can accelerate their leadership practices:

Foreign language competency and good interpersonal skills will broaden the opportunities of a middle leader to engage in the academic world at international level and jump to a higher rank. Moreover, the middle leaders who are good at interpersonal skills would accept and listen to other feedback and then seek the appropriate solutions collectively (ML25)

These findings revealed many key skills and abilities that the middle leaders need to develop in order to enhance their practices. According to the data from the questionnaire, there are some key capabilities that are necessary for improving the effectiveness of the middle leaders' practices. These key capabilities include subject knowledge and basic IT skills, leadership and management skills, teaching and instructional abilities, and foreign language skills.

Question Five: What do you need to do to strengthen the mentioned capabilities?

Thirty-three out of the forty middle leaders (82.5%) had proposed that continuing with regular support for professional training and leadership development will help enhance their capabilities:

The institution must organise or support the professional training programmes such as leadership training, and art of communication in order to enhance our leadership capabilities (ML15)

Twenty-five out of the total middle leaders (62.5%) claimed that setting the periodic staff performance appraisals is another approach to maintain and enhance the capabilities of the middle leaders:

It requires having regular meetings in order to revise and report the progress of the assignments; the meeting should be organised monthly, quarterly, mid-year, and annually (ML14)

Twenty-four out of the forty middle leaders (60%) had revealed that continuing support from the communities or partnership institutions was one of several ways to enhance their capacities. Through supporting, exchanging and sharing lessons and experiences with them, it allows the middle leaders to reflect and realise their strengths and weaknesses that needed to be improved:

I think, we need to have space for sharing working experiences with other people who have similar role and responsibilities, in order to learn more about how they did against what we done (ML10)

I think that one of the best ways to enhance my capabilities is to share and learn with other higher institutions both inside and outside the country (ML20)

Twenty-four out of the forty middle leaders (60%) proposed that self-motivation for personal development should be another significant factor that affects how the middle leaders can enhance their capacities or potential:

The middle leaders need to be more active in terms of learning and development themselves (ML23)

The middle leaders should surf the webs and learn in order to find new inventions and techniques regarding their subject areas and work (ML37)

These findings revealed the four main approaches that help strengthen middle leaders' capabilities, including continuing professional and leadership development, establishing periodic staff performance appraisals, regular support from inside and beyond the institution, and self-motivation for personal development.

4.2.3 Challenges or issues facing middle leaders

Question Six: What challenges or issues did you encounter as a middle leader?

Thirty-seven out of the forty middle leaders (92.5%) pointed out that one of the main issues facing the middle leaders in their practices was a lack of experience. Most of the middle leaders were newly appointed; they have not enough experience in both managing and teaching:

Almost all of the middle leaders had never experienced managing and administering (ML11)

The middle leaders struggled with weighing between the emergency and the importance of the action plans and did not know which had to be done first (ML14)

Twenty-four out of the forty middle leaders (60%) viewed poor coordination and collaboration with colleagues as a constraint on the effectiveness of performance:

Transferring information between the top to bottom, and from individual to individual was unclear which led to misinterpreting missions (ML37)

Leaders from the top management did not discuss or set the meetings before delegating tasks to the middle leaders that contributed to misunderstanding when they practice (ML33)

Lack of resources was one of the challenges facing the middle leaders' practices. Twenty-four out of the forty middle leaders (60%) mentioned that lack of human resources, unclear job descriptions, inadequate budget and poor facilities had impacted on the effectiveness of their leadership practices:

Some activities had not been implemented due to lack of money and experienced staff members (ML26)

Some assignments were beyond my abilities and some assignments were not mine, but I had to do it because of a limited number of staff members (ML36)

Twenty-three out of the forty middle leaders (57.5%) had agreed that lack of trust/ acceptance was one of the main issues that created the setbacks to daily work:

When the middle leaders criticised the actions of the employees, some employees did not accept and ignored the feedback from the middle leaders, this affected the working relationship between them that led to delay the work progress and low achievement in their practices (ML17)

These findings indicated four main challenges facing the middle leaders while they practiced their leadership role. These challenges were comprised of a lack of managing and teaching experiences, poor coordination and collaboration, a lack of resources, and a lack of trust/acceptance from colleagues.

Question Seven: How did these challenges/issues affect your leadership practices?

Thirty out of the forty middle leaders (75%) affirmed that the major constraints that affected their practices contributed to slowing down the completion of the implemented action plans:

The assignments cannot be completed on time and did not achieve with high quality (ML25)

The effectiveness of teaching and learning did not reach the expectations due to overload of responsibilities (lack of human resources) (ML30)

Twenty-two out of the forty middle leaders (55%) had agreed that the working relationship had been eroded by the lack of trust/acceptance from the colleagues as well as the top management. It undermined the working relationship at the departmental level as well as the institutional level:

The operation of the activities did not achieve as expected plans due to lack of accountability in the middle leaders' capabilities (ML24)

Once working with the seniors, there was no confidence as while colleagues did not really trust in my administration as being in the same age (ML28)

The data findings revealed that the challenges or issues affected the success and effectiveness of the organisation. The majority of the middle leaders identified three main impacts, including delaying of work progression, low achievement or standards, and increasing relationship gaps. These challenges are interconnected with each other.

Question Eight: How would you deal with these challenges or issues in the future?

Thirty-five out of the forty middle leaders (87.5%) proposed that getting advice from experienced individuals was one of the best ways to overcome the challenges. The constructive feedback could be established through regular meetings. The sharing and discussion about the current issues with senior leaders or colleagues who have a lot of experience will help the middle leaders gain new ways of thinking and strategies. In addition, there should be regular meetings in order to share and exchange ideas towards the current issues and seek collaborative decision making:

Regular meetings will help the middle leaders seek the collaborative solutions to the problems faced because many individuals have possibilities to share and discuss about them (ML6)

Once the middle leaders faced the problems that they couldn't make decisions, they should get advices from the senior leaders or colleagues instead of carrying them on their shoulders (ML28)

Thirty-four out of the forty middle leaders (85%) stated that providing training programmes such as leadership and management, communication and teamwork is another way to resolve the challenges they facing:

The institution or faculties should organise the training programmes for the middle leaders such as leadership and management, project management, distributed leadership, coordination techniques, teamwork and delegation (ML24)

Twenty-four out of the forty middle leaders (60%) suggested that it is significant for the institution to reshape the working system. Incentives, roles and responsibilities of the middle leaders need to be redefined against unfair work delegation:

The working system needs to be changed from the hierarchical system into the participative system in which students' participation should not be overlooked (ML26)

It required the middle leaders as well as the senior leaders to re-allocate staff members and responsibilities according to the existing resources (ML22)

Twenty-three of the total middle leaders (57.5%) affirmed that political acumen needs to be sustained and promoted in parallel with organisational reformation:

It is necessary to sustain and cultivate individuals' attitudes towards the organisation's political stance or organisational culture (ML35)

The newly appointed leaders and employees need to deeply understand the new concepts of the political party and the government towards the national social-economic development strategies; and being a role model in terms of political advocacy (ML3)

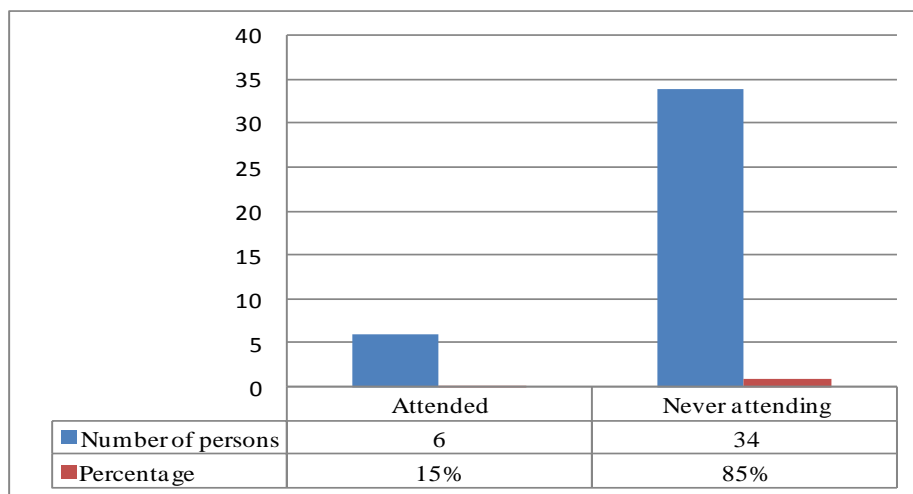
The data findings revealed the four main ways to address the challenges. These four ways include gaining advice from experienced individuals, providing regular leadership and management training, restructuring working schemes, and sustaining and promoting political acumen.

4.2.4 Leadership development opportunities for middle leaders

Question Nine: Did your faculty/office/centre provide any leadership development training or programmes prior to your appointment as a middle leader?

The data findings indicated that a large number of middle leaders (85%) had never attended the leadership development training programme and only 15% out of the total middle leaders had been participating in the leadership development training programme (see figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: The opportunities for leadership development training prior to appointment



Question Ten, Eleven and Twelve

The data findings from Question Ten, Eleven and Twelve had a low response from only six respondents who had attended some forms of professional and leadership development programmes. Four of them had attended leadership and professional development training programmes provided by domestic institutions while the rest of them had opportunities to attend an in-country long-term course and overseas short-term course respectively. In addition, three out of the six middle leaders had attended the training twice a year, while the other three had attended only once a year. The contents of those programmes included strategic thinking and planning, leadership traits and styles, teamwork, quality assurance and evaluation, and staff performance appraisals.

Question Thirteen: How does your organisation provide or offer leadership development training or programmes to middle leaders? (After appointment)

Thirty-four out of the forty middle leaders (85%) stated that there was no leadership development training or workshops provided by the institution:

Since I've been appointed as a deputy director, I never attended any leadership development training or programmes provided by the university (ML35)

These findings revealed that these middle leaders had not participated in any leadership development programmes provided by their higher education institution after their appointments.

Question Fourteen: What are the main constraints in your organisation/faculty to provide leadership development opportunities for middle leaders?

Twenty-six of the forty middle leaders (65%) considered a lack of human resources as one of the most significant factors that constrict the leadership development opportunities:

The organisation could not provide the leadership development programme because there was the limited number of staff members; if key staff members occupied this job, then it had an impact on other tasks (ML30)

Twenty-five out of the forty middle leaders (62.5%) stated that the institution did not have the apparent plans for leadership development in the middle management sector:

I didn't know about any leadership development plans from the senior management, I just wait until it will be my turn to get involved in the training (ML32)

Twenty-four out of the forty middle leaders (60%) claimed that the reason that the institution could not directly provide or offer the leadership development to them was because there were no qualified and experienced staff members in this area of knowledge:

Leadership development is a new term for us, and I knew that we did not have experienced staff members to prepare and organise the leadership development programmes for the middle leaders (ML15)

Twenty-four of the total middle leaders (60%) commented that funding was another main constraint which narrowed down the leadership development opportunities of the middle leaders in this institution:

Although each year we had two scholarships offered by SPPA or NAPPA each year, we also needed more support for the professional and leadership development programmes, especially funding for attending seminars both on-site and off-site (ML28)

Twenty-two out of the forty middle leaders (55%) had considered that the low proficiency of communicating in foreign languages, especially English, becomes one of the main barriers that limit the leadership development opportunities for the middle leaders:

I did not have many opportunities to participate in the leadership development programmes as my colleagues in the same office because I was not good in English (ML11)

The findings indicated the main constraints of the institution or faculties to provide the leadership development opportunities for the middle leaders were associated with lack of human resources, lack of clear leadership development plans, lack of experience in managing and teaching, lack of funding, and foreign language incompetency.

Question Fifteen: What are the main selection criteria in your faculty /office/centre to select aspirant leaders to participate in the leadership development trainings or programmes?

Thirty-three out of the forty middle leaders (82.5%) suggested that one of the most important criteria was a work accomplishment profile such as work experience, effectiveness of work achievement and high responsibility:

What popped-up in, my first thought about selection criteria... was about their tasks, achievements towards the organisational goals. They should have a lot of work achievements if they were offered to participate in the leadership development training (ML3)

I thought that one of the significant criteria was related to work performance. The individuals who can achieve the organisational goals should be rewarded to attend the leadership development programme in order to pave ways for their future leadership role (ML28)

Thirty-one out of the total middle leaders (77.5%) agreed that subject knowledge is one of the key selection criteria for being a part of the leadership development training or programmes:

Prior to being a HoD or a subject leader, the individual has to be specialised in an area of knowledge, and it also opens more opportunities for the leaders to apply for the leadership and professional development programmes (ML34)

Thirty out of the forty middle leaders (75%) agreed that leadership potential was one of the key criteria in which the leadership potential could include many criteria such as vision, teamwork, planning and management and how the middle leaders treat their colleagues:

The directors, HoDs and the heads of divisions who have long-term visions, managerial skills and understand the working system tend to be given a lot of chances to access various training programmes, including the leadership development rather than those who have not (ML25)

Twenty-eight out of the middle leaders (70%) stated that an individual's perception towards the political beliefs has an impact on the leadership development opportunities:

An individual, who will be a leader in the future, should have positive attitudes towards the political system (ML30)

Twenty-seven out of the forty middle leaders (67.5%) agreed that communication skills were one of the key criteria. Middle leaders who can get along with others tended to have more opportunities to participate in a leadership development programme than those who cannot:

Any individuals who would be selected to be involved in the leadership development programmes should be good at communication skills such as presenting things in a structured and logical order, giving and accepting criticism (ML18)

Twenty-seven out of the forty middle leaders (67.5%) agreed that foreign language competency is one of key selection criteria. The middle leaders who have abilities to communicate in a foreign language tend to be nominated not only for the leadership development training, but for any professional development training programmes than those who cannot:

The individuals who can communicate in any foreign languages with proficiency at some point, they have more chances to attend the training programmes abroad (ML33)

These data findings revealed the six core selection criteria that the aspiring leaders or middle leaders should have in order to gain access to the leadership development training programmes offered outside of their institution. The core selection criteria included a high profile of task achievements, leadership potential (project management skills, self-discipline), subject knowledge, political acumen and a positive attitude towards the government policies, foreign language proficiency, and communication skills.

4.2.5 The core elements of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders

Question Sixteen: What is required for a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders?

Thirty-two out of the forty middle leaders (80%) stated that resources and funding was the most significant requirement for establishing the leadership development programme. The resources here mean human resources (who will be in charge of organising the programmes, resource persons), equipment and facilities, and an appropriate budget:

The proposed leadership development programme needs to have sufficient budget, resource persons, and facilities (ML19)

Thirty out of the total middle leaders (75%) agreed that the proposed leadership development programme needs to have curricular and training manuals for leadership development in the middle management. The training manual should indicate the processes of leadership development via sessions and reflections on their practices. The contexts need to be aligned with the nature of work in the middle management:

It is necessary to have the specific courses to develop leadership potentials in the middle management (ML38)

The participants need the materials such as training manuals, or theories that can be their references for practices (ML35)

Twenty-seven out of the forty middle leaders (67.5%) suggested that support from the top management was another requirement for the proposed leadership development programme. The leadership development should be one of several action plans in terms of human resource

development strategies, and mentoring and coaching with the senior leaders will provide the virtual experience for the middle leaders:

The senior management or the institution should have the professional development plans, including leadership development training plans for the leaders who are newly appointed, especially the middle leaders (ML32)

As a part of the leadership development, the senior leaders should have time to mentor, coach or instruct the participants who get involved in the leadership development programme (ML13)

The data findings indicated three main factors that are required for the programme, including resources and funding, training manuals, and support from the senior management (mentoring and coaching) respectively.

Question Seventeen: What kind of leadership development programmes would you prefer in order to enhance your capability?

Almost all of the middle leaders prefer attending a leadership development programme within their own country rather than abroad. The period and venue of the programmes are associated with the middle leaders' considerations whether they will engage or not. Domestically, most of the middle leaders prefer to participate in the leadership development programmes that are organised in a short-term period instead of the long-term period (83% of individuals prefer in-country short-term course while only 16% of them prefer in-country long-term course). Similarly, more than half of the middle leaders prefer to take the short-term courses (55%) rather than the long-term courses abroad (25%). In terms of conferences and seminars, the data also showed that the middle leaders favour attending the domestic conference (63%) instead of the conference at the international level (45%). However, more than half of the total middle leaders (58%) seek to learn and develop their capabilities themselves.

Question Eighteen: What areas would you like to develop or learn in order to enhance your leadership capabilities?

Strategic thinking and planning is selected as the most significant contents to be included in the proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders in which thirty-two out of the forty middle leaders (80%) had marked it. The second priority content is associated

with the legal aspects of the educational management as it equated to 62.5%. Similarly, 60% of the total middle leaders also need foreign languages, especially English, to be included as a part of the programme. In terms of academic, methods of research and development theories need to be constituted in the programme too. While theories or principles associated with personnel management, leadership, and emotional intelligence are seen as the other top priorities to be included in the programme (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Contents of the proposed leadership development programme

Contents of the leadership development programme	Number of persons	Percentage
Strategic thinking and planning	32	80.00%
Legal aspects of educational management	25	62.50%
Foreign Language skills	24	60.00%
Research for the development	22	55.00%
Personnel management	21	52.50%
Leadership traits and styles	21	52.50%
Emotional Intelligence (EQ)	21	52.50%
Developing visions and goals	18	45.00%
Interpersonal intelligence /communication skills	17	42.50%
ICT and learning	17	42.50%
Curriculum management and teaching methods	16	40.00%
Conflict management	16	40.00%
Quality assurance and evaluation	16	40.00%
Policy and Law	15	37.50%
Mentoring and coaching	15	37.50%
Monitoring and evaluation of staff performance	14	35.00%
Teamwork	14	35.00%
Budgeting or financial management	12	30.00%

These findings revealed the seven core types of knowledge and skills that need to be included in the leadership development programme. The seven recommended components include: strategic thinking and planning, legal aspects of educational management, foreign language skills, research for development, personnel management, leadership styles and traits, and emotional intelligence respectively.

4.3 SUMMARY

The data findings identified the roles of middle leaders as complex and diverse which are associated with academic leadership, management, and politics. The main responsibilities in their roles are: interpreting the institutional strategies and policies into action plans, implementing, monitoring and evaluating, and supervising. In order to be effective middle leaders, there are some required capabilities that middle leaders should embrace; political

acumen, communication and foreign language skills, subject knowledge, teaching and instructional skills, IT skills, and leadership and management skills. In terms of maintaining and strengthening the required capabilities, middle leaders need to be supported by the institution and beyond for providing more leadership development opportunities or continuing professional and leadership development programmes both in-site and off-site; establishing the periodic staff performance appraisals and self-motivation for personal development.

In relation to the practices, many middle leaders faced many challenges or issues, including a lack of experience in managing, ensuring the quality of teaching and learning with limited resources, an imbalance in the managing and teaching workload, poor coordination, and a lack of trust and acceptance from colleagues. These challenges had impacted by delaying the successful implementation of organisational goals or action plans, decreasing self-confidence in leading and managing, and widening the relationship gaps between team members and the middle leaders. In regards to the challenges, some solutions were proposed such as gaining advice from experienced individuals, providing professional and leadership development training, and an open discussion.

The data revealed that this higher education institution did not provide any leadership development programmes for middle leaders prior and after their appointment due to a lack of funding, lack of experience, inadequate resources and unpreparedness of the middle leaders. In addition, most of the middle leaders had not attended any leadership development programmes provided by other institutions. However, six middle leaders or aspiring leaders were supported by another institution to study or train in the network institution such as SPPA or NAPPA. The data also indicated that the leadership development opportunities are associated with performance appraisals (professional performance appraisal and political tenet appraisal). When aspiring leaders or middle leaders' performance meets the criteria of the institution, they will be selected to participate in the leadership development programmes provided by the network institutions. The core selection criteria included a high profile of task achievements, leadership potential (project management skills, self-discipline), subject knowledge, political acumen and a positive attitude towards the government policies, foreign language proficiency, and communication skills.

The leadership opportunities and the core elements of a proposed leadership development for middle leaders in this higher education institution have been proposed in order to enhance the practices of middle leaders.

The following chapter will discuss some of the key findings with reference to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and make recommendations for future practice and research on the leadership development for middle leaders in Lao higher education settings.

The table below summarises the key findings of this study:

Table 4.6: Summary of the key findings

Main themes	Key findings
Leadership practices of middle leaders	<p><u>Roles:</u> <i>academic leadership, administrator, and political advocate</i></p> <p><u>Responsibilities:</u> <i>interpreting the institution policies and strategies into action plans, implementing, monitoring and evaluating, and supervising</i></p> <p><u>Required capabilities for effective middle leaders:</u> <i>political acumen, communication and foreign language skills, subject knowledge, teaching and instructional skills, IT skills, and leadership and management skills.</i></p> <p><u>Ways to enhance the required capabilities:</u> <i>support from the higher education institution and communities and self-motivation for personal development.</i></p>
Challenges or issues facing middle leaders	<p><u>Key challenges facing middle leaders:</u> <i>a lack of experience in managing and teaching, ensuring a quality of learning and teaching with limited resources, poor coordination and collaboration, and a lack of trust and acceptance from colleagues.</i></p> <p><u>Negative impacts:</u> <i>the low achievements of the action plans or organisational goals, decreasing self-confidence in leading and</i></p>

	<p><i>managing, and expanding relationship gaps between middle leaders and colleagues.</i></p> <p><i><u>Ways to deal with the challenges:</u> getting advice from senior leaders and experienced individuals or colleagues, organising leadership and management training, and political acumen.</i></p>
<p>Leadership opportunities for middle leaders</p>	<p><i><u>Provided by the institution:</u> no leadership development training for middle leaders prior to and/or after their appointment.</i></p> <p><i><u>Constraints for providing leadership development opportunities for middle leader:</u> the institution’s internal constraints including a lack of funding, a lack of resources (human resources and facilities), and an unpreparedness of middle leaders.</i></p> <p><i><u>Eligible participants for the taking leadership development opportunities:</u> key staff members or aspiring leaders; or untrained middle leaders.</i></p> <p><i><u>Key criteria of eligible participants:</u> strong political acumen and foreign language competency.</i></p>
<p>The core elements of a proposed leadership development programme</p>	<p><i><u>The requirement for developing a programme:</u> analysing the existing documentations and programmes provided by other institutions, support from the senior management, and a theoretical programme that relates to practice.</i></p> <p><i><u>The core features of a proposed leadership development programme:</u> development of curriculum, reflection time, selection criteria for participants, and facilities and resources.</i></p> <p><i><u>The core areas of knowledge and skills in a programme:</u> political knowledge, educational leadership and management, foreign language, communication and IT skills.</i></p>

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter links the key findings from the interview and questionnaire to the literature reviewed. The conclusions and recommendations for future practice, limitations of the research and recommendations for further research stem from the empirical data. It is hoped that the discussion of findings will contribute to broaden the body of knowledge on educational leadership and management that currently exists in the middle leadership and extrapolate to a leadership development programme for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution.

The researcher employed a qualitative approach that generated descriptive data from two different perspectives of senior leaders and middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution. The conclusions and recommendations were gathered and analysed from two data collection methods; a semi-structured interview and questionnaire with the two groups of senior and middle leaders. It should be noted that many of the findings provide strongly identifiable linkage between the middle leaders' perspectives and senior leaders' viewpoints about the leadership practices of middle leaders, the challenges facing middle leaders, the leadership development opportunities for, and the core elements of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders.

The discussions of findings and its conclusions are presented according to the four main sections:

1. Leadership practices of middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution
2. Challenges or issues facing middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution
3. Leadership development opportunities for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution
4. The core elements of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution

5.1 DISCUSSION

5.1.1 Leadership practices of middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution

This study revealed that the roles of middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution are related to three dimensions: academia, administration and politics. According to the data from the interview with senior leaders and the questionnaire with middle leaders, the senior leaders noted that the main role of middle leaders was associated with teaching and managing, but middle leaders believed that their roles did not focus only teaching and managing, but also on political advocacy embedded in their administration positions. It means that middle leaders are required to juggle their three roles of academic leader, administrator and political advocate. These findings are slightly different from the arguments of several researchers who note that middle leaders have a dual role of teaching and managing (Bennett et al., 2007; Blandford, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2000b). Indeed, many authors point out that educational leaders act politically in order to create mutual understandings between themselves and subordinates towards organisational goals (Burns, 1978; Fink, 2013; Hoyle, 1990). While Bolman and Deal (2008) argue that politics can be a medium for accomplishing noble purposes.

In relation to the three dimensions of the middle leadership role, there were three main responsibilities identified in the study: interpreting the institution policies and strategies into action plans, implementing, monitoring and evaluating, and supervising. These findings are supported by Blanford (2006), Marshall et al (2012), and Partington and Stainton (2003) who comment that middle leaders get involved in a number of activities such as organising, planning, monitoring, resourcing, controlling and evaluating, as well as leading. These responsibilities of the middle leader are keys to improve the quality of learning and teaching and organisational success (Busher & Harris, 1999; Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Blanford, 2006; Earley, 1998; O'Brien et al., 2008).

The data collected from the interviews and questionnaire identified the list of required capabilities for middle leaders in order for them to be effective. These required capabilities for middle leaders included political acumen, communication and foreign language skills, subject knowledge, teaching and instructional skills, IT skills, and leadership and management skills. This is supported by Heck et al (2000) who identify core leadership traits that enhance leadership performance include interpersonal relationships, communication skills and management of departments. In addition, Shahmandi et al (2011) suggest that the

effectiveness of middle leaders relates to roles and competencies (personal characteristics and skills, administrative competencies, social responsibilities and institutional competencies).

The data suggested ways to enhance the required capabilities including more support from the higher education institution and communities in terms of leadership development opportunities (both on-site and off-site) and self-motivation for personal development. These findings are supported by Mahmud and Bretag (2013) who argue that educational institutions do not stand on their own feet in terms of ensuring the quality of learning and teaching, communities are also part of it. While Blandford (2006) notes that knowing what is required of the middle manager's role is the key component for institutional achievement.

5.1.2 Challenges/issues facing middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution

The research indicated the key challenges or issues facing middle leaders including; a lack of experience in managing and teaching, ensuring a quality of learning and teaching with limited resources, poor coordination and collaboration, and a lack of trust and acceptance from colleagues.

A lack of experience in managing and teaching was one of the major challenges facing middle leaders in this higher education institution. This became evident in both the responses to the interview and questionnaire with the senior leaders and middle leaders respectively. According to the senior leaders' perspectives, HoDs or deputy directors struggled to manage and allocate their staff members to the right tasks when they implemented action plans. Responses to the questionnaire showed that 37 out of 40 middle leaders (92.5%) perceived that a lack of experience in managing created a setback in their practices because 80% of them had only one to three years of working experience in the current positions. This finding echoed a concern raised by the Asian Development Bank (2000) and Boupha (2008) who note that the Lao higher education institutions have experienced a lack of qualified and experienced managers and administrators. In addition, the lack of experience did not mean only the middle leaders' abilities, but also the fact that it was a newly established higher education institution. One senior leader from the interview noted that; *"the institution was newly established and many middle leaders are newly appointed and had never held any leadership positions, it was difficult to get things done and achieved as expected plans"* (SL2). This is supported by Murphy and Meyers (2008) who explain that the demise of the organisation might be resulted from organisational characteristics such as size, age, instability, managerial expertise, and success.

The findings showed that ensuring a quality of learning and teaching with limited resources created constraints on leadership practices of middle leaders. Responses from the questionnaire showed 62.5% of the middle leaders faced difficulties to implement action plans with a limited budget, scarce facilities and a lack of experienced staff members. The senior leaders from interviews also confirmed that an inadequate human resource system of the institution created a setback for implementing action plans and achieving quality of learning and teaching goals. This reflects the work of Briggs (2007) who argues that the role and responsibilities of middle leaders become more challenging when institutions work against the scarce resources. The findings are also supported by Bolman and Deal (2008) who note that “when the fit between people and organisation is poor, one or both suffer” (p. 137).

The findings also revealed that the challenges of inadequate resourcing outlined above impacted the achievements of the action plans or organisational goals, decreasing self-confidence in leading and managing, and expanding relationship gaps between middle leaders and colleagues. This is reflective of Cardno (2012) who argues that whenever a problem occurs, it creates problems to manage personal and interpersonal relationships, managing personal issues and managing resources for individuals. It means that a sandwich life of middle leaders among clashing external and internal expectations, local and global demands contribute to losing focus of their roles and responsibilities (Bolman & Gallos, 2010). In other words, the needs to satisfy both senior management and team members bring more tensions and pressures to the middle leaders (Hellowell & Hancock, 2001).

This study also suggested some possible ways to cope with the challenges effectively, including getting advice from senior leaders and experienced individuals or colleagues, organising leadership and management training, and sustaining political acumen. The senior leaders in the interviews noted that any issues that were beyond the capabilities of the middle leaders, needed to be instructed or guided by them. Similarly, 87.5% of middle leaders prefer getting advice and feedback from the senior leaders or experienced individuals in case they could not make decisions. In order to get advice from senior leaders, Blanford (2006) suggests that middle leaders need to act as reflective practitioners. While middle leaders from the questionnaire saw the importance of organising or attending leadership and professional development training as an alternative way to build their capacity to deal with the challenges (34 out of 40 middle leaders, 85%). This is reflective of Cardno (2012) who suggests that to

deal with the challenges, educational leaders require deciphering the nature of issues and specific training might be required.

It is interesting to note that these respondents believed that sustaining and promoting political acumen is one way to overcome the challenges. According to the responses from the questionnaire, more than half of the middle leaders (57.5%) suggested that the organisational reformation needs to be in parallel with sustaining and cultivating individuals' attitudes towards the organisation's political stance and culture. This is supported by Green (1997) who argues that educational leaders have responsibilities to harmonise the culture and political ideologies of the dominant government and political party; and it attempts to create citizen participation in the government (Hanson as cited in Anderson, 2005).

5.1.3 Leadership development opportunities for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution

This research showed that a large number of middle leaders in this higher education institution had not been prepared enough prior to and after their appointments. This became evident in both responses to the interview and the questionnaire respectively. According to the data from the interview, most of aspiring leaders or middle leaders did not attend any leadership development programmes provided by the institution. This is echoed in the questionnaire data, only six middle leaders (15%) attended the leadership development programmes prior to their appointments and 85% of middle leaders did not attend any leadership and professional development after their appointments. These findings are aligned with the report from the Asian Development Bank (2009) as it reports that higher education institutions in Laos consist of untrained personnel in leadership and management. These findings are also echoed in the work of Adey (2000) and Harris et al (2003) who claim that middle managers have not been trained appropriately for their appointed roles.

The findings from the interviews and questionnaire also showed that the institution's internal constraints narrowed down the leadership development opportunities for middle leaders. These constraints included a lack of funding, a lack of resources (human resources and facilities), and an unpreparedness of middle leaders that prohibited their selection for the leadership development opportunities offered by the institution. One senior leader gave an explanation that *“as the institution was newly established it was difficult to provide enough funding and resource persons in terms of providing leadership development programmes for middle leader”* (SL2). While one middle leader also supported that *‘most middle leaders*

were not prepared themselves enough to attend a long-term development programme as they lacked confidence in their own skills and abilities, especially foreign language proficiency' (ML15). This newly established higher education institution lacked the funding and resources to support professional development activities and leadership development opportunities for middle leaders. These findings echo Cardno (2005) who notes that time and money is one of the requirements for professional development. Regarding this, Levaci (2010) suggests that the aim of educational resource management is to maximise student learning outcomes within given resource constraints.

This research also indicated that the eligible participants for taking up leadership development opportunities are key staff members or aspiring leaders who will be middle leaders in the future; or middle leaders who have not yet attended any training regarding the leadership development. This was evident in the data from the interview with the senior leaders, *"Initially, the aspiring leaders or middle leaders who have not any experience in administration or managerial background will take a 45-day course of leadership development (it is called basic political and public administration). ..., then they can continue their study in the long-term based on approval from the institution (SL2)"*. This finding is echoed in the work of Bush and Jackson (as cited in Bush 2012) who note that aspiring leaders are often targeted for a leadership development programme.

Moreover, the findings suggested that key staff members, aspiring leaders or middle leaders who had strong political acumen and foreign language skills would gain more opportunities to engage in the leadership development programmes than those who had not.. This became evident in both responses from the interview and questionnaire. The senior leaders from the interview agreed that political commitment is one of the significant criteria for selecting the eligible participants, while most of the middle leaders from the questionnaire perceived that political acumen (70%) and foreign language competency (67.5%) could widen their leadership development opportunities. The political acumen and foreign language skills are the key requirements of this higher education institution to select the eligible participants for applying or taking the leadership development programmes as well as the required capabilities for effective leaders (mentioned in 5.1.1). These findings are supported by Huber and Pashiardis (2008) who note that "there is a higher efficiency and effectiveness when individuals take over leadership who have been carefully selected and are suitable for the

demands” (p.198). Furthermore, political acumen and foreign language skills are two significant attributes for promotion in Laos (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2012).

5.1.4 The core elements of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders

This research indicated that the institution aims to develop a leadership development programme for middle leaders. According to Bush (2010), designing a leadership development programme involves four dimensions: learning support basics, active learning approach, linkage between practice and learning, and learning identification. This complies with the requirements for developing a leadership development programme that were gained from the empirical data. These requirements included support from the senior management, analysing the existing documentations and programmes provided by other institutions, and a theoretical programme that relates to practice. This is also supported by Forde et al (2013) who state that a leadership development programme needs to have a wide range of learning approaches that meet learners’ demands in order to improve their practice. It means that leadership development needs to combine both formal and informal training (Scott & Webber, 2008).

The findings identified the core features in a proposed leadership development programme; development of curriculum, reflection time, selection criteria for participants, and facilities and resources. According to Birman et al (2000), an effective leadership development programme has two main features, structural features (form, duration, and participants) and the core features of the processes that occur during the professional experience (content focus, active learning and coherence). In addition, these findings suggested that a leadership development programme for middle leaders should be designed in order to develop the learners’ attitudes, knowledge and skills. This is supported by Day (2011) and Day et al (2009) who claim that leader development is an individualised process and adult lifelong learning.

The findings of this research revealed the five core areas of knowledge and skills that are required to be included in the proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution. These core areas of knowledge and skills included political knowledge, educational management and leadership, foreign language, communication and IT skills. Moreover, the research indicated some specific content that

needs to be included in the proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders; strategic thinking and planning, legal aspects of educational management, foreign language, research for development, personnel management, leadership styles and traits, and emotional intelligence respectively. Almost all of the contents identified in this research are similar to the work of several authors (Bush, 2008; Howlett, 2007; Qiao & Wang, 2009; Wang & Chen, 2002), with the exception of the political context and foreign language. The political knowledge is mandatory and foreign language competency will widen the possibilities of the individuals to be selected as eligible candidates for applying for leadership development programmes outside of the institution or to be promoted (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2014).

5.2 CONCLUSIONS

This qualitative research was conducted in a Lao higher education institution in order to gain different perspectives of senior leaders through the interviews and middle leaders through the questionnaire about their leadership practices, the challenges or issues, the leadership development opportunities and to identify the core elements for a proposed leadership development programme.

This study showed that the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders in a Lao higher education are complex and unique, especially the role as political advocate, supporting the political party in power. In relation to this, some required capabilities such as political acumen, foreign language facility and leadership and management skills need to be strengthened through support from the higher education institution and communities.

This research revealed that there are many challenges facing a middle leader in a Lao higher education institution that impact on task achievements, working relationships and trust and acceptance of both middle leaders and colleagues. In relation to this, some proposed ways to resolve the challenges were; introducing a professional and leadership development programme, getting advice from the experienced senior leaders, and sustaining and promoting political acumen.

This study revealed that although most of middle leaders did not engage in the leadership development programmes prior to or after their appointments due to the institution's internal

constraints. The middle leaders need to be more active and less passive. They need to take personal responsibility for the preparation of themselves, especially political acumen and foreign language skills in order to qualify for the leadership development programmes in the future.

The findings indicated that the higher education institution needs to develop a leadership development programme for middle leaders that can develop learners' attitude, knowledge and skills. To do so, a proposed leadership development programme is required to be developed based on support from the senior management, analysing the existing documentations and programmes provided by other institutions, and a theoretical programme that relates to practice. In relation to this, the proposed leadership development programme should include these core features: development of curriculum, reflection time, selection criteria for participants, and facilities and resources. In terms of development of curriculum, it should have five core areas of knowledge and skills in which some of them are unique to and necessary for the Lao higher education such as political knowledge and foreign language respectively.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation One

The senior leaders need to increase collaboration with other institutions and the community to widen the leadership development opportunities for middle leaders.

The findings from the research echoed a wide range of literature reviewed and confirmed that although middle leaders play a significant role in organisational success, they faced constraints due to the complex roles and responsibilities (teaching, managing and politics) in higher education. This reflects the fact that middle leaders had less opportunities to participate in the professional and leadership development (15% of middle leaders had attended, see figure 5, p. 72) or there was a limited number of leadership development programmes available for them (SPPA or NAPPA). In relation to this, there is a need to broaden the leadership development opportunities for middle leaders in order to enhance their skills and abilities through support from senior management and communities. In other words, the senior leaders need to expand the collaboration with other institutions in order to seek more scholarships or funds to support their middle leaders. It means that the senior leaders should view creating networks as one mechanism for optimising leadership in order

to raise awareness of the influence of others on the operation and performance of the organisation (Townsend, 2010).

Recommendation Two

The higher education institutions and the Institute for Educational Management Development, the Higher Education Department, and the Ministry of Education and Sports in Laos need to work together in order to design a leadership development programme for middle management.

This study revealed the key components for an ideal leadership development programme for middle leaders in a Lao higher education that could be developed. It is recommended that the senior leaders in conjunction with the Institute for Educational Management Development (IEMD) and Higher Education Department (HED), the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) work together in order to develop the leadership development programme that is suitable for middle leadership in the higher education context. Initially, the IEMD and HED need to see the importance of middle leadership in higher education in terms of delivering the quality of learning and teaching and they need to work collaboratively with the higher education institutions in order to develop the leadership development curriculum that can meet the middle leaders' needs. Regarding this, the required elements of a proposed leadership development programme represented in this study could be a foundation for the IEMD, HED and higher education institutions in Laos to develop a leadership development programme for middle leaders in the future.

Recommendation Three

Aspiring leaders and middle leaders need to be motivated in terms of personal development in order to extend their own opportunities for leadership development

According to the findings, unpreparedness of aspiring or middle leaders was one of the constraints that narrow down their leadership development opportunities. This was a case as one middle leader refused the scholarship to study abroad due to a lack of foreign language proficiency (SL2). This reflects the importance of personal development. Hence, it is interesting to note that middle leaders need to have self-motivation for personal development and be prepared via building foreign language proficiency in order to increase their own professional and leadership development opportunities.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

There was a limited availability of the literature relating to the leadership development for middle leaders in Lao higher education, especially in the country where this research was conducted. However, the literature on middle managers in higher education, schools and other sectors (from the developed countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and some European countries) was reviewed and used in this study as the issues raised were transferable to the Lao higher education context.

The time constraints prevented me from introducing a wider sample and having the perception of teachers or lecturers in participating faculties, and although they were not central in the study, they are influenced by the practices of their HoDs, subject leaders and directors (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Their voices or perspectives were missing from the data and these perspectives would be interesting to look into in order to gain a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities, and required capabilities of middle leaders as a foundation for a proposed leadership development programme.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher of this study would like to recommend that further research should be conducted to gather a wider range of data from more faculties across the Lao tertiary institutions. This would support or challenge the findings of this study and contribute to broadening knowledge about ways to develop and design a framework for leadership development in the middle management in higher education in relation to their roles and responsibilities. In addition, the Lao tertiary institutions could employ the findings to inform their practices and these will then inform senior leaders and managers about roles and responsibilities of, challenges faced and leadership development needs of the leaders in the middle management.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview

Title: Leadership Development for Middle leaders in a Lao Tertiary Institution

Section I: Leadership practices of middle leaders

- Q1. What are the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders in your faculty/organisation?
- Q2. What are the required capabilities of middle leaders to enhance teaching and learning in your faculty /organisation?
- Q3. What do you need do to strengthen the mentioned capabilities?

Section II: Challenges/issues facing middle leaders

- Q4. What challenges or issues did middle leaders encounter?
- Q5. How did these challenges/issues affect their leadership practice?
- Q6. How did middle leaders cope with these challenges or issues?

Section III: Leadership development opportunities for middle leaders

- Q7. What types of leadership development training or programmes did your organisation offer to aspiring leaders prior to their appointments as middle leaders?
- Q8. How did your organisation provide or offer leadership development training or programmes to middle leaders?
- Q9. What were the main constraints of providing leadership development opportunities for middle leaders in your organisation?
- Q10. What are the core selection criteria in your organisation to select staff members to participate in the leadership development trainings or programmes?

Section IV: The core elements of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders

- Q11. What is required for a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders?
- Q12. What areas would you like to be included in a proposed leadership development programme in order to enhance middle leaders' capabilities?

Thank you very much for your valuable time to contribute informative information, answers, and comments to this interview.

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2014-1030)

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 28/05/2014 to 28/05/2015. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire



The Questionnaire

Title: Leadership Development for Middle Leaders in a Lao Tertiary Institution

This questionnaire is intended to:

1. To identify leadership practices of middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution.
2. To explore the challenges/issues facing middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution.
3. To examine leadership development opportunities for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution.
4. To identify the elements of a proposed leadership development programme in a Lao higher education institution.

Your response to this questionnaire confirms your participation in this research. Your personal responses will be confidential.

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire and contributing to a better understanding of leadership development for middle leaders in higher education in Laos.

Definition of terms:

Middle leaders can be described as academic staff with leadership or curriculum responsibility. This may involve a head of department, a programme coordinator or vice- programme coordinator, a program director or a deputy director, director or vice-director, head of subject or vice-head of subject, head of division or vice-division, and equivalent in a Lao higher education context.

Leadership Development can refer to any activities or processes that enhance the quality of leadership within an individual or organisation.

This questionnaire is divided into five sections: general information, leadership development opportunities for middle leaders, leadership practices of academic leaders, challenges or issues facing middle leaders, and the core elements of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders. Please answer with a (✓) and provide some in-depth information relating to that question.

Section I: General information

Q1. What is your position in this faculty/office/centre?

.....

Q2. How many years of experience have you had in your current position?

- 1- 3 years 4-6 years > 6 years

Section II: Roles and responsibilities of middle leaders

Q3. What is your role and responsibilities in this faculty/office/centre?

.....

Q4. What are the required capabilities of middle leaders to enhance leadership practices in your faculty /organisation?

.....
.....
.....

Q5. What do you need to do to strengthen the mentioned capabilities?

.....
.....
.....

Section III: Challenges or issues facing middle leaders

Q6. What challenges or issues do you encounter as an academic middle leader?

.....
.....
.....

Q7. How do these challenges/issues affect your leadership practice?

.....
.....
.....

Q8. How do you deal with these challenges or issues?

.....
.....
.....

Section IV: Leadership development opportunities for middle leaders

Q9. Did your faculty/office/centre provide any leadership development training or programmes prior to your appointment as an academic middle leader?

- Yes No

If Yes, please continue to Q.10, if No, please continue Q.13

Q10. What kind of leadership development did your faculty/office/centre offer you in order to enhance your capability? Please tick the appropriate boxes.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-country short-term course | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic conferences and seminars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-country long-term course | <input type="checkbox"/> International conferences and seminars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overseas short-term course | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overseas long-term course | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, _____ | |

Q11. How often do you have opportunities to participate in the leadership development programmes?

- Once a year Twice a year Three times a year

Q12. What areas of leadership development have you ever participated in prior to your appointment? Please tick the appropriate boxes.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic thinking and planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring and evaluation of staff performance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal aspects of educational management | <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum management and teaching methods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Policy and Law | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring and coaching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Budgeting or financial management | <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interpersonal intelligence /communication skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership traits and styles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Developing visions and goals | <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel management | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality assurance and evaluation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research for the development | <input type="checkbox"/> ICT and learning |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Intelligence (EQ) |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Language skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify..... | |

Q13. How does your organisation provide or offer leadership development training or programmes to middle leaders?(after appointment)

.....

Q14. What are the main constraints in your organisation/faculty to provide leadership development opportunities for middle leaders?

.....

Q15. What are the main selection criteria in your faculty/office/centre to select aspirant leaders to participate in the leadership development trainings or programmes?

.....

Section V: The core elements of a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders

Q16. What is required for a proposed leadership development programme for middle leaders?

.....

Q17. What kind of leadership development would you prefer in order to enhance your capability? Please tick the appropriate boxes.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-country short-term course | <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic conferences and seminars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-country long-term course | <input type="checkbox"/> International conferences and seminars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overseas short-term course | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overseas long-term course | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, _____ | |

Q.18. What areas would you like to develop or learn in order to enhance your leadership capabilities?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic thinking and planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring and evaluation of staff performance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Legal aspects of educational management | <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum management and teaching methods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Policy and Law | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring and coaching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Budgeting or financial management | <input type="checkbox"/> Conflict management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interpersonal intelligence /communication skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership traits and styles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Developing visions and goals | <input type="checkbox"/> Teamwork |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel management | <input type="checkbox"/> Quality assurance and evaluation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Research for the development | <input type="checkbox"/> ICT and learning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Language skill |

Thank you very much for your valuable time to contribute informative information, answers, and comments to this questionnaire.

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2014-1030)

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 28/05/2014 to 28/05/2015. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (Ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 3: Consent Form - Interview



Participant Consent Form Interview

Programme: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

Project Researcher: Anongsack Mahavong

THESIS TITLE: Leadership Development for Middle Leaders in a Lao Tertiary Institution

I have had the research project explained to me and I have read and understand the information sheet given to me.

I understand that I don't have to be part of this research project should I choose not to participate and may the consents within two weeks after receipt of the transcript prior to the completion of the research project.

I understand that everything I say is confidential and none of the information I give will identify me and that the only persons who have access will be the researcher and the supervisor. I also understand that all the information that I give will be stored securely on the researcher's personal computer for a period of 5 years.

I understand that my interview with the researcher will be taped and transcribed with the opportunities to verify the transcription.

I have had time to consider everything and I give my consent to be a part of this project.

Participant Name:

Participant Signature: *Date:*

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2014-1030)

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 28/05/2014 to 28/05/2015. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 4: Information Sheet



Information Sheet

Title of Thesis: Leadership Development for Middle Leaders in a Lao Tertiary Institution

My name is Anongsack Mahavong. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a MEdLM thesis which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of this research is to investigate the leadership development for middle leaders in a Lao higher education institution and to extrapolate a model of leadership development for middle leaders. I am principally interested in leadership practices of middle leaders; and challenges or issues facing middle leaders; leadership development opportunities for middle leaders in a higher education setting; elements or features for a leadership development programme.

I request your participation in the following ways:

I will collect data via conducting interviews and using a questionnaire of approximately thirty to forty minutes duration. I would appreciate your participation. This information sheet, the questions for the interviews or the questionnaire for the survey will be handed to you by the researcher. The interview will be recorded, transcribed and translated by the researcher. The participants will have opportunity to check the transcription. The questionnaire will be collected by the researcher in an envelope to ensure confidentiality when you have completed it.

If you agree to participate, I will be asking you to sign the attached consent form regarding the interview or the questionnaire. It is understood that you may withdraw the consents within two weeks after receipt of the transcript from the researcher.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis and information from you will be kept separate and entirely confidential.

I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand.

My supervisor is Dr Josephine Howse and may be contacted by email or phone.
Phone: +64 9 8154321 ext 8348 Email: jhowse@unitec.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anongsack Mahavong'.

Anongsack MAHAVONG

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2014-1030)

This study has been approved by the UNITEC Research Ethics Committee from 28/05/2014 to 28/05/2015. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 8551. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 5: Organisational Consent/Permission Letter to conduct research

[Organisational letter head]

Reg. No.....

Date.....

ORGANISATION'S PERMISSION LETTER TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Regarding the letter dated [date of request letter from the researcher] about conducting a research in [name of the selected organisation] and information about the research project "*[Name of the research title]*" from the researcher and his/her principal supervisor.

On behalf of the President of *[Selected organisation]* I am very pleased to welcome you to conduct a research in my organisation. It is understood that the name of my organisation will not be used in any public reports. The researcher is allowed to conduct data through interviews and questionnaires in selected faculties and offices for *[Number of participants within the organisation]* in total as mentioned in the information sheet.

The consent is subject to approval of the research ethics application number: **(2014-1030)** by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee and a copy of the approval letter being forwarded to the organisation as soon as possible.

Should you have any information to inform, please do not hesitate to contact us.

We are looking forward to give you convenience for your research.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature and sealed stamp]

[Position]