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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON  
FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

LEADERS IN NEED:  
PERCEPTIONS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY SENIOR LEADERS ON  
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

By

Clifford William Allen

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Education  
February 2011

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT  
FACULTY OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Doctor of Education

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Perceptions of local authority senior leaders on leadership  
development

By Clifford William Allen

'Leaders In Need' is a qualitative study contributing to an understanding of the mechanisms for exploring and identifying leadership development requirements and needs. It explores the views of senior leaders in local government as they reflect upon their individual leadership development needs and the organisational requirements expected of them. The research identifies four themes: becoming a leader, organisational requirements, individual needs and potential for improvements.

Theme one explores the entry, experience and education of leaders as they prepare to make a transition from professional to leader. Theme two explores organisational requirements, organisational change, challenge and capability. Theme three explores how individual development needs are defined, identified and satisfied. Theme four explores whether improvements can be made to the mechanisms for investigating organisational development requirements and individual development needs.

The research finds that leaders and their organisation do have development needs and requirements responsive to transformative modernisation. There are processes and mechanisms available to assist organisations and individuals explore and identify leadership development. When they are applied they are perceived to lack the rigour and effectiveness to adequately explore and identify leadership development requirements and needs. Perceived performance levels influence the mechanisms for exploring development requirements and needs. Leaders direct personal development activity when performance levels are perceived as acceptable. The organisation directs leadership development when performance levels are perceived as unacceptable. There is potential to improve a leadership development response by ensuring individual and organisational development activities overlap.

## Contents

List of figures .....	5
List of tables .....	5
Declaration of authorship .....	6
Acknowledgements .....	7
Chapter One	
Introduction .....	8
Context .....	9
Research aim and key questions .....	16
Chapter Two	
Introduction .....	19
Investigating and reviewing relevant literature .....	20
Development.....	21
Leaders and leadership .....	27
Senior leaders in local government.....	32
Theme one. Responsibilities and work of senior leaders .....	34
Theme two. Exploring organisational leadership development requirements.....	41
Theme three. Exploring individual leader development needs .....	50
Theme four. Leadership in local government .....	59
Chapter Three	
Introduction .....	74
Ontology, purpose and methodology .....	75
Research methodology .....	80
Method of enquiry .....	85
Research sample.....	91
Creating the research instrument.....	94
Interview instrument.....	97
Research ethics .....	98
Processes of analysis.....	100
Analysing and interpreting the data.....	103
Chapter Four	
Introduction .....	107
Accessing leaders, piloting and data gathering.....	108
Pilot purpose and studies .....	109
Pilot study one.....	110

Pilot study two .....	111
Data gathering .....	115
Chapter Five	
Introduction.....	117
Introductory observations.....	118
Theme one: becoming a leader .....	118
Theme two: organisational requirements.....	132
Chapter Six	
Introduction.....	150
Theme three: individual needs .....	151
Theme four: potential for improvement.....	166
Chapter Seven	
Introduction.....	176
Findings .....	177
Potential implications .....	179
Potential for improvement .....	196
Appendices	
Appendix 1: Issues, contributions and significant arguments.....	202
Appendix 2: The semi-structured instrument. ....	204
Appendix 3: The ethical protocol. ....	206
Appendix 4: Summary of respondents and interview.....	208
Appendix 5: Suggestions for local authority consideration.....	209
References .....	214

## **List of figures**

Figure 5.1	Research process and analysis	page 115
Figure 5.2	Research aim and questions	page 117
Figure 6.1	A process model	page 185
Figure 6.2	Development responding to performance	page 196

## **List of tables**

Table 3.1	Conceptual framework	page 95
Table 5.1	References to different roles	page 119
Table 5.2	Respondent combinations of professional, managerial and leader roles	page 121
Table 5.3	Perceptions of leader	page 131
Table 5.4	Impact of change on the role of the leader	page 135
Table 5.5	Issues and challenges creating potential requirements	page 139
Table 5.6	Support and concerns related to courses	page 147
Table 6.1	Respondent perceptions related to development need	page 151
Table 6.2	Respondent perceptions of different types of appraisal	page 158
Table 6.3	Respondent perceptions of some development methods	page 163

## **DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

I, Clifford William Allen, declare that the thesis entitled LEADERS IN NEED: Perceptions of local authority senior leaders on leadership development and the work presented in the thesis are both my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research. I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself or jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission.

**Signed** .....

**Date** .....

## **Acknowledgements**

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# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a context for local government and professional experience as background to the study. The demand for leadership development is introduced and research questions are raised as a guide to the direction of the study. The study has a focus on the practice of exploring and identifying organisational requirements and individual needs for leadership development.

## **Context**

Local government has been defined as:

...specific institutions or entities created by national constitutions, by state constitutions, by ordinary legislation of a higher level of central government, by provincial or state legislation or by executive order, to deliver a range of specified services to a relatively small geographically delineated area. (Shah and Shah, 2006, p. 1)

Local government is the collective term for the 468 local authorities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In England and Wales there are some 400 local authorities. They vary in size but on average serve a population of about 120,000 citizens. Local government is divided into county councils, metropolitan councils, unitary councils, London boroughs and district councils. Employees in local government tend to have a career spanning many years and some will not have worked in any other type of organisation. The public sector has a total workforce of about six million employees and 40 per cent of these remain in public sector employment for more than 10 years. In the private sector only 27 per cent of employees remain with the same employer for a comparative length of time (Office of National Statistics, 2009). This context has a stabilising effect upon local government and its leadership and means that its leaders are likely to be in mid-career or later. Leaders may have similar responsibilities across councils but they come from very different backgrounds, experience and qualifications and they are required to work with many different community and commercial

partnerships, and political groups. Also councils differ in urban, rural and inner-city settings. Impoverished settings such as councils in northern England and wealthier settings such as some of those found in southern England also have an influence.

Local government has been in existence for many hundreds of years. During this time it has developed a distinctive culture, very strong traditions and many of its roles, functions and practices are embedded in history. Schein (2004) defines culture as the accumulated shared learning from shared history and this implies structural stability, patterning and integration. Every local council has a unique cultural framework and beliefs, values and practices that are influenced by its leadership and the differing political make-up of each council. Cultural effects are recognised in many organisations including local government, education and the private sector. The culture of an organisation develops in part from leadership and organisational culture may have an effect upon leadership (Bass, 1985). Hofstede (2001) has shown that the context of culture has a significant influence on leadership. Research by Hofstede studied organisational leadership across national and within national cultures. Although Hofstede's studies (Hofstede, 1980, 2001) focus on business management they highlight a complex interplay between culture and practice that involve both the leader and the led. Hofstede (2001) argues that characteristics of leadership are developed within a context and cultural framework of beliefs, values and practices that need to be acceptable to those who are led. Bass (1985) asserts that transformational leaders change their culture by first understanding it and then with a new vision realigning shared assumptions, values and norms. It follows that, to understand local

government perceptions about organisational leadership development requirements and individual leader needs, some background and context is required. This is because, if leadership is taken out of context and theorised in isolation, the complexity and ambiguity of the concept and subsequent difficulties in interpretations increase (Shah, 2006).

### **A personal dimension**

It is important to this investigation to state my personal experience and background. This is because it has a fundamental influence upon the choice of methodology, focus and assumptions inherent within the investigation (Erben, 2000; Usher et al., 1989). A personal interest in leadership development emerged from thirty years of work as a practitioner of learning and development. Practitioner experience of leadership development produced an awareness of some difficulties when attempting to attract the top levels of leadership onto development programmes, no matter how prestigious or innovative the development programme. The following work experience provides the background, highlighting and illustrating with examples, how awareness of these difficulties has emerged.

Experience of organisational development, corporate development and learning involved many projects, programmes and processes for developing senior leaders. Responsibilities included designing and ensuring the delivery of both future leader and senior leader programmes of development. The programmes designed for leadership were considered innovative and forward looking and won recognition for good practice from national bodies such as the

Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). Achieving awards for innovation from the Local Government Chronicle, a National Training Award and a commendation from central government led to a financial grant to further develop leadership programmes and disseminate good practice. A contract was also awarded to commission a national programme of leadership development targeted at chief executives in local government. Out of this work the Executive Leadership Academy was formed and has been running successfully for several years.

Personal experience revealed that good information and data on the development needs of senior leaders was sparse or missing. For example there was a lack of information from formal appraisal systems about development needs at senior levels, whereas such information was readily available at more junior levels. It was also observed that senior leaders were reluctant to express personal leader development needs which may be construed as weaknesses in leadership ability. It was also difficult to convince senior leaders to attend leadership development programmes. Leaders had operationally plausible or valid reasons for not attending. This experience accords with an observation that experienced leaders are more difficult to get to attend leadership development than newly appointed leaders (Adair, 2007).

Another observation derived from experience was that providers of high level leadership courses attracted middle level staff with potential, rather than senior level staff with a need for further leadership development. Senior leaders expressed a preference to

learn with peers as a senior leadership team gaining confidence to express group leadership development requirements agreed and recognised as group development requirements, rather than individual and personal development needs. Leadership development providers appeared to face an information gap when designing senior leadership development programmes. To reduce information gaps leadership development providers gather information by interviewing leaders or employ some other form of confidential data gathering process. These activities (described as diagnostic) would invariably precede a programme design activity by leadership programme providers.

Diagnostic work prior to prescribing a course of action is reasonable, valid and considered good practice in many professions (Covey, 1999). Personal experience indicates that diagnostic work often led to course designs focused on 'away days' to develop, for example, an organisational vision, leadership team building, organisational change solutions for perceived problems such as culture, communication or staff attitudes. While this development process has a place and is valid and appropriate for an organisation, it fails to identify and give voice to the individual leader's development needs. Such experience of leadership development raises questions about how individual leader development needs are explored and identified prior to designing leadership development opportunities.

### **A leadership requirement dimension**

Important aspects of this research are concerned with perceptions related to exploring and identifying leader and leadership development and the perceived leadership effect upon a capacity for

transformative change. A demand for leaders developed to take on the complex problems of transformative change in local government is a pressing requirement that has not been ignored. In a report on local government Lyons (2006) called for improved leadership by stating:

The responsibilities of central government must be clarified, local accountability must be improved and local government must build up its confidence and capability, including developing its skills, leadership and self-confidence.... Local government also needs to continue to develop its strategic leadership capacity in relation to local partners. (Lyons, 2006, p. 6)

A Chartered Institute of Management Project (2001) indicated that the quality of leadership in the UK is low and that public sector leaders receive the lowest ratings. Adair (2007) observes that as leaders progress to more senior positions they often stop learning about leadership. This observation may well be noting the absence of senior leaders on leadership development courses, rather than a cessation of learning. Leadership involves the difficulty of both leading and learning, having a confident knowing position and at the same time being open to learning new ideas and the challenge of change (Binney and Williams, 1995). Things that are difficult to learn are also things that competitors find difficult to learn. Local government shares in competition through tendering for work, processes of best value and benchmarking service delivery. Competitive advantage is gained by learning specific and difficult things before the competition does (Kay, 1993; Pfeffer, 1994). If everyone has an advantage through learning, no-one has a

competitive advantage. However, a demand for learning through capacity building applied to leadership is noted in strategic documents such as the Pay and Workforce Strategy (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and Employers Organisation for Local Government (EO), 2003), IDeA Leadership Development Strategy (2008) and other published research documents (IDeA, 2008; Laffin, 2008).

A local government capacity building programme recognised a demand for leadership development within the local government 'Academy for Leadership' directed towards senior officers and within the 'Executive Leadership Academy' directed towards councillors (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008). The researchers noted specific skill gaps at middle levels of leadership and middle management levels. The capacity building programme included a strong focus on the development of generic corporate capacity for leadership targeting elected members and senior officers. Mechanisms for delivering support to senior leadership development also reflected a central emphasis being substantially provided in the form of national programmes supplied by national agencies such as the IDeA and the Employers Organisation (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008).

### **An investigative dimension**

Developing a strategic capacity for leadership along with appropriate competencies of leadership may rely upon valid and suitable methods of exploring and identifying organisational requirements for leadership and the needs of individual leaders. Practitioner experience leads to a suspicion that in relationship to senior

leadership there may be a gap in our knowledge and expertise for exploring and identifying senior leadership development requirements and leader needs. Individual leader development need and organisational leadership requirement appears as a fruitful area for further exploration, investigation and research. An aim and purpose for this investigative study into leadership development requirements and leader needs within local government is stated below.

## **Research aim and key questions**

The overarching aim of the research is:

To investigate the degree to which the perception of local government senior leaders about individual development needs and leadership requirements of an organisation are explored and identified.

Implicit assumptions within delivered leadership courses and programmes are that leadership development provision is meeting the identified organisational leadership development requirements and the individual needs of leaders. A question can be raised about how organisational requirements and individual needs are distinguished. This will be explored further in later chapters. There may also be a range of views held by key informants about leadership and leader development which may be important to practice.

One theme concerns how leaders are prepared for their role and the perceptions and understanding they have of leadership as used by

them in preparing for a leadership role. A related theme concerns the leaders' role and ascertaining their development needs in relation to the organisation's leadership requirements. A focus of the research is organisational leadership requirements and individual leader needs for development. Performance management may refer to a job description when using methods to identify individual training needs or development requirements (Osborne, 1996). This implies that an understanding or attributed meaning of leader and leadership can be applied to the assessment of leadership performance. A leader's role may be defined within a job description. There is a legal requirement to produce job descriptions based on an understanding of the job, the purpose and tasks. How processes for exploring and identifying leader and leadership development relate to the role, performance of the job and perception of leadership may be important factors for this study. Themes of leader preparation for the role and an understanding of leadership are important because leadership is being developed to achieve certain business goals through the activities of leaders. Leaders have a job to do that requires certain skills, abilities, knowledge and experience. Clarifying perceptions of leadership and what it is to be a leader may be important to development processes.

The research aim and focus is operationalised through an investigation of research questions organised into themes of major significance. The research is premised on the identification of leader development needs and leadership requirements used to formulate appropriate leadership development programmes. Exploratory questions of perceptions in the area of four significant themes are listed below:

### 1. Leader preparation

- How are leaders being prepared for their role?
- How are the role demands on leaders changing?

### 2. Exploring organisational leadership development requirements

- What mechanisms are used to explore organisational leadership development requirements?
- How does an organisation build capacity and provide for identified leadership development during transformative change?

### 3. Exploring individual leader development needs

- Where is the responsibility for identifying the development needs of individual leaders located?
- How do individual leaders discover what abilities they need to develop?
- How are individual leader needs for development being met?

### 4. Potential for improvement

- How are mechanisms for exploring and identifying individual leader needs and organisational requirements for development able to be improved?

# Chapter Two

## **Introduction**

Chapter one introduced context as a background to identifying significant research questions for the study to explore. The research questions offer guidance to appropriate literature which may be relevant and pertinent to the study. This chapter explores a sample of the literature with a view to positioning the study within current research. It also explores if any gaps in our knowledge are indicated. The thematic questions raised to operationalise the research are used to give direction to the literature review. The chapter progresses from establishing concepts and definitions to exploring in some depth the following significant themes.

- Responsibilities and work of senior leaders
- Exploring leadership requirements
- Exploring development needs of leaders
- Leadership in local government

Implications for the research are identified from within each theme.

## **Investigating and reviewing relevant literature**

An expectation in a research project is for a literature review of relevant existing research (Hart, 2003). Such an expectation is based upon the premise that if research is to contribute to knowledge in a meaningful way, it cannot start from within a vacuum. Existing research will be located within the geography and field of knowledge of related research. Many other researchers have previous and current work which will have some bearing and relevance to this study. There are, however, many different and varied sources to review in relationship to leadership. Therefore the advice of Hart (2003) to focus on some key issues and to deal with some key sources has been heeded. The process of finding what is key information was very much like tracking through only partially familiar territory (Massey, 1996). The activity of tracking necessitates following trails and gaining direction by picking up indicators and following them. A literature review requires a direction and this was provided by the research questions implicit to the aim of the study. A directional question for exploring the literature is what information exists to inform the conceptual definitions and main areas indicated by the research questions.

The literature was searched for pertinent information by a thematic approach. The research questions suggest and signpost a literature review focusing on:

- development as it applies to leaders;
- responsibilities and work of senior leaders;
- individual development needs of leaders;
- organisational leadership requirements;

- senior leaders and leadership within local government.

Key concepts and important terms are explored prior to reviewing the themes.

## **Development**

A key concept used in this study is development. A distinction can be made between passive development that occurs as a result of natural processes of maturation or growth and active development that is dynamic and motivational. This study is not concerned with passive development. Active development implies movement and a journey.

...development is a journey of choice, a living activity, a process of interaction with emerging properties that introduce uncertainty and has many interconnections. (Pritchard and Nencini, 1990, p. 55)

Pedler (1990) expresses the idea of development being the study of transitions, a biography of coming from somewhere, doing things in this time and moving on to other things. For Pedler (1990) development is rooted in biography, a process of personal meaning making, promoting learning that is both individual and collective. Pedler calls this 'our lives in our time' (Pedler, 1990, p. 3). A distinction is raised here between leadership development and leader development. Some writers argue that leadership development emphasises the collaborative and social capital building of the organisation through commitment, respect and the acceptance of a set of values (Barker, 2001; Day, 2001; Hofstede, 2001). Leader

development focuses on the individual and emphasises the personal acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. The idea of personal development was revised by progressing the concept of self-development based on ideas of a 'do it yourself activity' (Pedler, 1990, p. 9) done in isolation, to include taking charge and responsibility for one's own learning even in the presence of others. Fox (1990) has argued that self-development combines both self-mastery and also the mastery of events when stating:

Self-development emphasises self-mastery of the self itself (the in-here emotional, cognitive, intuitive sensory and other learning processes) and mastery of events in the 'out there' world of events, business, politics, educational design, other people and more i.e. the whole environment outside the singular self. (Fox, 1990, p. 22)

Fox (1990) makes a distinction between the inner world of the self and the outer world of knowledge and experience. For Fox the singular inner self is developed first and then follows a developed mastery of the outer world. However, it is argued by Usher et al. (2001) that the self, knowledge and experience are related. They explain:

Knowledge of the world is possible because there is a one-to-one correspondence between the world and the way it is represented through experience. Rational procedures such as reflection can be used by all and enable experience to be sorted, validated and transformed into knowledge. This monological conception of experience, certainly in its rationalistic and humanistic variants, is

essentially individualistic and psychologistic. (Usher et al., 2001, p. 101)

An understanding of self-development may depend upon an understanding of the idea of self and also of development. In a technical sense the self is a cognitive structure that permits self-reflection and organises information about oneself (Leary, 2004). Some psychoanalysts describe the self as being made up of different parts that may be in conflict (Freud, 1920; Jung, 1964; Klein, 1932; Winnicott, 1965). These ideas may aid the development of a healthy view of the self and through therapeutic psychoanalytic techniques correct unhealthy views. However, such a starting point implies illness requiring analysing and healing of parts of the self. For this study self-development posits a holistic view and assumes health and a capacity for improvement.

Self-development may be an important aspect of leadership development, an essential pre-requisite to leading others (Covey, 1999) and a personal and individual process meaning many different things to different people (O'Donovan, 1990). Adlam and Plumridge (1990) argue that development is not something which an organisation can do to its members and that organisational leaders cannot do it to their organisation. If this is true, then Adlam and Plumridge (1990) are arguing that development is actually self-development. A supporting idea is that personal or self-development is initiated and led by the individual, based on individual needs or wants (Maslow, 1943). Implicit is a view that leader needs are the personal, individual and self-development activities that a particular

leader wants to progress. This may motivate an increase in personal mastery or further personal career development, or both.

According to Gross (2007) the self has motivational features such as:

- Self consistency (to maintain, if not verify, one's existing view of oneself);
- Self-evaluation (self-assessment, to see oneself accurately);
- Self-enhancement (to maintain a positive image of oneself);
- Private (self-enhancement also relates to personal self-esteem);
- Public (self-enhancement relates to self presentation or impression management). (Gross, 2007, p. 567)

One of the early theories associated with self-development is that of Maslow (1943) who proposed a five-level hierarchy of needs. The theory proposes that people have needs and are motivated to satisfy them from a basic level for food and shelter through security and acceptance, to the highest level self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). The theory posits the notion that people are motivated to satisfy basic needs before they feel a drive to satisfy higher level needs. Other research suggests there are three groups of need: existence needs, relatedness needs and growth needs (Aldefer, 1969). Aldefer suggests that people move between these groups of need and are driven to satisfy multiple groups of need. What seems common to these motivational theories is that development can be perceived to progress by a drive to satisfy personal needs that project an individual to higher levels of personal development. Self-development processes may be assisted by increasing levels of self-

awareness. This indicates a requirement for the reflected views and feedback from others (Luft and Ingram, 1969). This would suggest that although self-development may be based on individual responsibility, it cannot be achieved by a single individual working entirely alone on their development.

Selected literature appears to indicate a conceptual overlap between the notion of individual self-development and the notion of organisational development in which there is a much broader application of the processes of development. Locating needs at the personal level of development creates a distinction between leader development concerned with personal development needs, which may lead to improvement in personal mastery, and leadership development concerned with organisational requirements that may lead to organisational development. One perspective is that employee development is initiated and led by employers based on organisational requirements leading to organisational development. Employers may have two separate processes. There may be a process for facilitating individual development as well as a process for organisational development. The CIPD asserts that the organisational process for developing people involves the integration of development processes, operations and relationships that leads to enhanced organisational effectiveness. The CIPD also argue that developing individuals enhances personal competence, adaptability and employability (CIPD, 2001). This confuses the relationship between individual development needs and organisational development requirements.

Self or personal development seems to be initiated and led by the individual taking charge and choosing a path leading to the acquisition of skills, experience and knowledge. Such development may satisfy individual and personal needs. This may lead to enhanced self-perception, self-awareness and sense of identity. The process of self-development may be viewed as improving individual performance by accessing potential or latent capabilities of the individual. Maslow (1943) expresses self-development as:

...the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming. (Maslow, 1943, p. 898)

Organisational development may be perceived as the responsibility of the employing organisation. Organisational development specialists analyse development requirements that, when fulfilled, add to the social and business capital of the organisation. For an organisation to succeed, the employers require certain skills, expertise, knowledge and experience. Business strategies include an aim to develop employees with the capabilities the organisation requires. Exploring and identifying organisational development requirements enables staff with potential to be chosen and developed. This can be considered as a business investment with an outcome designed to improve productivity, performance or quality. Economies of scale are achieved by employee development opportunities being offered as group and collective activities. Successful employee development programmes may be adding benefits to the business and to the social capital of the organisation. Self-development may also be present in this process, without being the driver of employee

development. The extent to which an individual engages with employee development or self-development is complex. There may be an overlap between the desire of an individual for personal development and an organisational requirement to develop certain capabilities. Also an employee may accept a place on an organisation's development programme because the individual has need of paid employment. Continuous professional development (CPD) may confuse the issue further by integrating both self and employee development through a process of continuous updating. It may be that CPD is a process of keeping up to date with an institution's professional changes rather than self or employee development as defined above. Employee development forms part of organisational development and includes a requirement to develop leadership.

## **Leaders and leadership**

Reviewed literature offers a confusing picture of leader and leadership development and organisational development. This may reflect a lack of differentiation between leader and leadership. Learning and skills sector research (Lumby et al., 2005) indicates no causal relationship between leadership development and organisational development. The research indicates that leadership development has only an indirect effect upon organisational improvement and change. Other research into educational leadership development also fails to link it directly with organisational performance (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1999). This contests the assertion of the CIPD (2001) that employee development improves organisational performance, although there may be differences

between commercial and public sector perceptions. Barker's research (1997, 2001) suggests differentiating between a good leader and an effective manager is problematic with little evidence to show how leadership development programmes contribute to leadership practice. The research of Lumby et al. (2005) observed that if leadership development was not having an impact upon organisational development and performance it may be because the development activity is unsatisfactory.

There may be numerous perceptions about why leadership development may not be effective, including perceptions about quality and quantity. However, the focus of this study is upon the exploration of leadership development requirements of the organisation and development needs of individual leaders prior to the design and delivery of development programmes. Reviewed literature seems to use development terms such as leadership, leader, organisational and employee development interchangeably, as though they are similar in meaning. However, there is a distinction to be made between an organisational development requirement for leadership and the needs of individual leaders. It may be that much research has overlooked a potential distinction between leader development needs and leadership development requirements. Barker (2001) expresses the view that:

Conventional understanding of leadership has been systematically constructed from other conventional knowledge about social hierarchies and about their command and control structures. (Barker, 2001, p. 473)

Another view expressed by Barker (1997) is that leadership is all about change. The rationale for this is restated by Barker (2001): 'If there is no need for change, there is no need for leadership' (Barker, 2001, p. 491). There is a view that leadership has a responsibility to create a transformative vision that influences and transforms social organisations. In local government the democratic nature of the organisation creates an organisational or business vision as a collective rather than an individual process. A vision describes a future state requiring the present state to go through a transformative change process through leadership. Leadership as a transformative process is defined by Barker (2001):

Leadership is a process of transformative change where the ethics of individuals are integrated into the mores of a community as a means of evolutionary social development. (Barker, 2001, p. 491)

Rodgers et al. (2003) also define leadership as a process by stating that leadership is:

...a dynamic and living activity, a process of interaction with emerging properties that makes no sense without followers and a context of enactment. (Rodgers et al., 2003, p. 11)

In formulating a definition of leadership Barker (2001) implies a potential dichotomy between 'individual needs and institutional needs' (Barker, 2001, p. 474). This adds a degree of confusion since an institution cannot have a need in the same way as a person has a need or want. In this study, 'organisation' will be taken to mean the

employer as a democratic collective of officers and politicians agreeing a framework of values and beliefs embedded in activities, structures, procedures and policies. When the term organisation is used it will relate to the collaborative and holistic meaning as defined above. When organisations require leadership they may initiate collective processes to identify and offer leadership development. An organisation may have collective requirements for leadership abilities and these may be specified as a set of leadership competencies, characteristics or traits. Such specifications are often general and vague and emerge from the context of the organisation and the demands of the business. For the purpose of this study leadership has been assumed to be a complex social process engaged with transformative organisational change.

Leaders within organisations such as local government can be identified as figureheads found at or near the top of hierarchical structures. There may be an assumption that the hierarchical position of leader forms the headwater and source of leadership within an organisation. Another assumption is that organisations require leadership as a collective, collaborative, cultural, value driven requirement for the business to perform effectively and efficiently. This would apply particularly to democratic and political organisations such as local government. A leader may have a limited range of business skills and expertise compared to those of larger social groups of subordinate followers. However, the leader seems to adopt a hierarchical position with the role and responsibility to get the best from subordinate followers and to make the organisation successful. A presumption here is that the performance of a single leader can be responsible for the performance of many employees and the

successes and failures of an organisation. What follows from the presumption is that the actions and will of a leader are responsible for all the outcomes and organisational achievements and for the action and will of the many (Barker, 2001).

A potential distinction can be made between leaders as individuals and corporate leadership. Corporate leadership may be linked to the requirements of the organisation for leadership capacity and individual leaders may have personal development needs linked to the role of the leader. This potential distinction between leaders as individuals and leadership as corporate enactment is underscored in local government by a requirement to modernise through developing required organisational leadership, as distinct from developing individual leaders. This idea may lead to treating senior leaders as a homogenous group and identifying group and organisational development requirements. There seems to be an assumption that an homogenous group of people called leaders exists and common characteristics, traits, behaviours or competencies can be identified, defined, sorted, classified and measured (Bass, 1999; Boal and Hooijberg, 2000; Carless et al., 2000; Horner, 2003; House et al., 2002; Kirby et al., 1992; Roush and Atwater, 1992). Another view is that leaders comprise a heterogeneous group of unique people. Like artists, leaders are perceived to be unique and individualistic. The role and work of a leader may be interpretative, depending upon a number of different artistic-like abilities that depend upon values, beliefs and attribution of leader characteristics (Barker, 1997; Barker, 2001; Grint, 1997, 2003; Lord and Maher, 1991).

## **Senior leaders in local government**

Senior leaders in local government function within a context of transformative change, an increasing agenda for delivering council services and a requirement to tackle increasing levels of community and social problems (Bains Report, 1972; Bovaird and Martin, 2003; IDeA, 2008; Laffin, 2008; Leach et al., 1994; Maud Report, 1967). Here transformation is taken to mean a significant change process. A significant change may replace skills, systems, technology, culture and learning used in the past and is part of modernisation. Local government leadership as a corporate and collective activity is concerned with processes of transformative change linked to modernisation.

This study focuses upon senior leaders in local government. A position is taken that considers senior leaders to be a heterogeneous group with personal and specific needs. Grint (2003) makes the point that leaders are unique with a particular set of leadership arts. The locus for responsibility, accountability and transformative change separates leaders from other staff. The position of leader in organisations is often more highly resourced by salary, benefits and material resources that may be considered appropriate to the needs of a leader. These factors separate leaders from other employees and this may be the price for positions of responsibility, taking charge and control. Individualism may be underscored by factors that separate even when sharing a common title of leader.

Senior leaders in local government have emerged from many different professional and occupational backgrounds. They have

different professional training and allegiances to different professional institutions and may retain, as a senior leader, specific occupational and managerial responsibilities. A workforce development plan for local government indicates that local government employs staff in more than 300 different occupations. These factors point to a heterogeneous group of unique individuals rather than a homogenous group with similar abilities and qualities. There are a number of levels of work within local government. These include:

- Administrative level;
- Junior manager/middle manager;
- Graduate;
- Specialist;
- Senior level.

(Workforce Map for Local Government, 2006, p. 12)

Senior leaders are included in the senior level which, according to the *Workforce Map for Local Government (2006)*, constitutes 6.6 per cent of the total workforce. Senior leaders are identified in varied occupations and are indicated by senior level posts carrying salary grades for senior manager and above. They include those with titles of head of service, chief officer, director and chief executive. They are also identified by having a strategic role, engagement with the political framework, high levels of staff responsibility and financial control. The criteria for identifying senior leaders are:

- Functioning at a senior level within local government;
- Found within salary grades of senior manager and above;
- Possessing job titles of head of service, chief officer, director or chief executive;

- Having a strategic role;
- Engaging with the political framework;
- Possessing high levels of staff responsibility;
- Possessing high levels of financial responsibility and control.

Senior leaders are important to this investigation because they are assumed to have the power, ability, resources and responsibility to modernise local government and bring about changes that enable high levels of performance and efficiency within a framework of partnership and democracy.

The criteria used to identify senior leaders adopt a utilitarian and practical approach. The criteria take a conventional view of 'leader' as people associated with top positions in a hierarchy. Also the criteria acknowledge that certain individuals in social systems may be entitled to a greater share of the wealth and power by virtue of their qualities and abilities. It is expected that senior leaders have better remuneration packages, employee benefits and access to a greater range of organisational resources. These criteria assist in identifying a relevant sample of senior leaders appropriate to this study.

### **Theme one. Responsibilities and work of senior leaders**

The work responsibilities of leaders in local government are not static: they change with time. In the literature there are examples that show that the role and work of senior leaders in local government is dynamic and continually changing (Bains Report, 1972; Department For Education And Skills (DfES), 2005; Maud Report, 1967). Senior leaders in local government are multi-tasking

because the role includes professional and technical ability, managerial ability, and leadership ability. For example it has been noted that prior to 1967 local government was led by a Town Clerk with responsibilities that included giving legal and financial advice, ensuring administrative efficiency and leading a team of senior officers (Leach et al., 1994). The Maud Report (1967) stimulated significant change to the role and tasks of leadership vested in a 'Town Clerk' and created corporate leadership. This gave an emphasis to corporate planning and decision making 'subject to the rights of councillors under standing orders' (Maud Report, 1967, para. 162). The role and tasks of senior leaders in local government were also changed by the Bains Report (1972). For the first time leaders in local government took on the titles of chief executive and directors, similar nomenclature to that in the private and commercial sector.

Changes to the titles and work of senior leaders opened up a debate about the similarities and difference of leaders in the public and private sectors. For example it has been observed that the abstract and conceptual nature of management or leadership in the private sector may make it comparable to government (Lilienthal, 1967). A stronger perspective posits the view that there are no significant differences between governments and commerce (Jay, 1967). However, it should be noted that in local government senior leader posts are politically restricted. This means that senior leaders are prohibited from joining a political party, having a position in a political party or canvassing on behalf of a political party. This is to ensure that local government senior leaders serve all political parties within the council without bias or favour. In effect, the role of senior

leadership is played out under the restriction of a democratic right, and this does not happen in any other type of organisation. Some of the criteria used to differentiate local government from the private sector are listed by Leach et al. (1994, p. 7). A research report for the Local Government Management Board asserts 'there is a significant difference between local government and the private sector' (Hartley et al., 1996, p. 10).

The issue of how different or similar local government is to the private sector is an important one. This is because it may affect perceptions of performance and give direction to a transformative modernisation process towards private sector ways of working. The political dimension of the work roles of local government leaders and the required political skills has been researched by Baddeley (Baddeley and James, 1987; Baddeley, 1998, 2008). According to him, the dynamic between a local councillor and a senior leader in local government is both crucial to success and requires a political skill not required by private sector leaders.

The influence and inclusion of private sector styles and roles for management and leadership in local government have been shaped to some extent by the influence of central government. Central government has used financial resourcing to shape local government work. Local government finance is controlled by central government through setting Standard Spending Assessments (SSA) and by funding activities that central government want promoted. To promote specific activities central government uses processes such as competitive grant aid allocation. For example, urban development programmes once under the exclusive control of local councils, have

given way to cross-sector partnerships. City Challenge, introduced in 1991, invited competitive bids for £37.5 million of regeneration funding for each of 15 areas, the money to be spread over five years (Owen, 2007, p. 11). Partnership arrangements across public, private and voluntary organisations are now a normal way for local councils to do business. Such changes affect the way leadership is enacted and skilled to work with cross-sector partners and with the many political and professional officers within local government.

Transformative change promoted by central government legislation and financial control has required local government to develop both management and leadership with attributes thought to produce an effective local council. Attributes believed to promote local council effectiveness have been identified and listed (Clarke and Stewart, 1993, p. 89). Central government does seem to recognise that local councils with their status as 'democratically elected organisations, their professional expertise, large staff and capital assets are important players in the delivery of service to local communities' (Owen, 2007, p. 13).

There are many different sorts of professionals in local councils, each with a requirement for leadership in a particular professional grouping. Senior professionals give leadership to the delivery of services through departmental or directorate structures and to the organisation as a whole through corporate responsibilities. There are more than 300 different professional occupations in local government. Potentially any profession can give rise to a senior leader. It is appropriate to explore briefly the role of a typical senior professional leader such as the Director for Children's Services.

A critical incident, the death of Victoria Climbié occurred in February 2000 and was not ignored by central government. A related and more recent incident was the death of Child P. These incidents stimulated reviews by central government (Laming, 2003, 2009). Following a public enquiry (Laming, 2003) it was recognised that interagency working, at the local council level, lacked collaboration and data sharing. Some of the agencies involved with children included education, social services, health authorities and the wider voluntary community. The culture of departmentalism noted by Maud (1967) and Bains (1972) was a cause for concern. Central government responded with legislative changes (DfES, 2004). This resulted in the creation of Children's Service Authorities with new tasks and roles for a senior leader to be called Director of Children's Services (DCS). The new role and leadership task of the DCS is given in statutory guidance from central government (DfES, 2005, pp. 8-9).

The government guidance on the role of the lead officer for Children's Services identifies and describes the competence and functions of the DCS (DfES, 2005, pp. 11-12). The list of implicit competence and stated functions for the lead officer for the role is very broad, multi-professional, highly variable, exceptionally wide ranging and complex, requiring high level leadership and strategic skills. This may also be true for many of the senior leaders in local government. National guidance focused on functions, roles and tasks and said little about the skills, character and experience of the people taking up these leadership positions. The guidance leaves a very open statement by stating: 'the DCS should have appropriate

skills and experience' (DfES, 2005, p. 11), without specifying what this should be. There seems to be an assumption embedded in the modernisation process that major transformative changes can be effectively implemented and that a pool of professionals with leadership qualities and abilities already exist. This raises questions about leader preparation and development for new posts such as the DCS.

### **Implications for research**

The literature demonstrates a paucity of information about how leaders in local government are prepared for responsibilities of transformative modernisation or how the role and task is interpreted. It may be that job descriptions for leaders are not keeping pace with the rapid changes brought about by modernisation and the changing demands and requirements of leaders. Central government seems to have much to say about what senior leaders in local government should be doing. Much of this is given in the form of central government guidance documents on the work and responsibilities of senior leaders and on what they should be prioritising. Performance evaluation offers very little specific identification of leadership development requirement for ensuring that transformative processes are carried out effectively. Little is known about what councils are actually doing to explore and identify leader development need during periods of transformative change.

Processes of financial control and legislation appear to be two mechanisms used by central government to promote transformative change within local government (Clarke and Stewart, 1993; DfES, 1998; Leach et al., 1994; Owen, 2007; Walsh, 1991). A

transformative modernisation agenda driven by central government appears to have a private sector or business orientation. This sustains a debate about similarities and differences between leadership in local government and the private sector and may be giving direction to a change process. The move towards private sector style and involvement may also be having an effect upon the perceived priority, work and responsibilities of leadership in local government.

Processes for describing tasks, job descriptions and specifying personal experience and skills are problematic because such descriptions are interpretive and subject to a wide range of contextualisation and personal opinion (Flower et al., 1990). Within the process of task representation there may be a distinct difference in the meaning intended by central government as they write guidance for local authorities and that which is understood by local authority leaders as work is enacted. The task and work framework driving the implementation of the law may also have an unpredictable influence on those councils categorised as weak, average or excellent by central government. Transformative modernisation influences what leaders actually do and this suggests there is a gap in our knowledge about how leaders' needs are explored and development provided.

## **Summary**

Leadership in local government does not appear to be satisfying the performance requirements of central government. Questions of leadership capability, capacity and performance are being raised (Bovaird and Martin, 2003; Laffin, 2008; Lyons, 2006). Reviewed

literature also suggests that central government is driving local government towards transformative modernisation. This implies changing some historical political customs and practices and through leadership activity creating local government with a different culture and set of customs and work practices. However, the implementation of transformative modernisation in local government appears to feature some distinct failures (Bovaird and Martin, 2003; IDeA, 2008; Laming, 2003; Laffin, 2008; Lyons, 2006; ODPM and EO, 2003).

## **Theme two. Exploring organisational leadership development requirements**

A distinction may be made between needs and requirements. For this study it is considered that requirements are identified and expressed by employers and stakeholders as the skills, knowledge and understanding the organisation collectively requires to satisfy its customer demands and the organisation's business goals. An approach to understanding organisational development requirement is when it is expressed as an organisational process used to aid collective progress through the collaborative and expert stimulation and facilitation of abilities and knowledge supporting business goals, developing potential, and respecting and building on diversity (Harrison, 2006). The idea of locating requirements within the collaborative and social capital building of the organisation through acceptance of a set of values would seem to accord with the general ideas expressed by Day (2001), Hofstede (2001) and Barker (2001). Organisational requirements reside within the cultural values of an organisation and are considered to be the levels of expertise

accepted by an organisation in order to succeed as a business. Development needs are described as the personal and individual expressions of development wanted and chosen by an individual in order to satisfy an inner need, do a particular job well or to further the career prospects of the individual.

There may be an overlap with the desire of an individual for personal development and the organisation's requirement to develop certain capabilities. The complexities of overlapping personal needs and organisational requirements can lead to an assumption that they are the same. For example, this assumption may be implicit in evaluating performance and the potential gap between performance and the abilities to perform. A development requirement or need may exist when there is a gap between the expected performance standard of the job and the actual performance of the individual or team (Harrison, 2006). Exploring the gap helps to identify specific organisational development requirements or individual needs, or both but may not separate them.

The requirement for leadership development (defined as the skills, knowledge and understanding the organisation collectively requires to satisfy its customer demands and the organisation's business goals) assumes there are customers and business goals. Central government may be viewed as one of the customers of local government. Central government makes demands through reformative legislation, financial controls, government reports and guidance. These are intended to improve effective delivery of services and leadership practice. An emphasis for transformative change is directed towards organisational development, for example,

The Local Government Act of 1988 (Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR), 1988), Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT), the 1988 Education Reform Act (DfES, 1988) and the Citizen's Charter (Citizen's Charter, 1991). Conservative and Labour governments introduced legislation intended to reform the work and organisational structure of local government. It has been noted that English reforms have sought a 'radical re-focusing of councils' traditional roles and the elimination of the old culture of paternalism and inwardness' (Bovaird and Martin, 2003, p. 23). Reformative legislation and other processes are intended to modernise and this relates to what Barker (2001) refers to as transformative change. The requirement for transformative leadership may take the form of increasing collective social capital so that local government can be organisationally developed or changed to a modern form.

Local government appears to suffer from ineffective leadership in the areas of passivity to modernisation, cultural change, corporate and joined up working, partnership and collaborative working, diversity and the dynamic relationship between senior officers and lead councillors. Adair (2007) has noted that public sector leaders receive low ratings. The Lyons Report (2006) indicates that local government leaders need to perform better. The research of the Department for Communities and Local Government (2008) indicates a number of important areas for leadership development. The impact of modernisation processes does not seem to have achieved the objectives set by central government. This could indicate a performance gap and in consequence a development requirement, but it does not identify any specific leader development. Commenting

upon the research and evaluations of the local government modernisation agenda, Laffin (2008) states:

Local authorities emerge from the evaluation studies as largely passive recipients of central policy initiatives. Central policies eclipse local accountability. Members and officers reported that they were following central government's lead, rather than setting their own agendas and the evidence suggests that to date the LGMA has encouraged an environment in which many authorities rely upon strong external pressure exerted by Government policies to motivate change. (Laffin, 2008, p. 112)

Here Laffin may be indicating organisational and leadership issues rather than any specific performance issue for a particular leader. The research indicates a performance gap which signposts a requirement or need for leadership development. It may be that poor information about any specific development for leader and leadership has left local government as an organisation ill-equipped for the tasks of leadership set by central government. Policies designed to improve practice through transformative modernisation processes have been assessed as ineffective and organisational restructuring has also failed to provide the improvements desired by central government. Laffin (2008) asserts:

But the new political decision-making structures, implemented in the Local Government Act 2000, have not reshaped decision-making to the extent envisaged. The new council constitutions have not significantly modified the dynamics of member-officer relations. (Laffin, 2008, p. 115)

Although there may be a need for significant improvement, research has shown that corporate capacity building in local government has shown progress (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008). The researchers note that development improvement at the individual level was more pronounced than at the organisational development level. However, it should be noted that this research did not focus on leaders or leadership development specifically. There are indications that the performance of leaders and their organisations are not meeting expectations. The acquisition and development of abilities to perform at the level expected to achieve the tasks set by central government indicate that a developmental requirement exists for leadership (collective organisational development) and possibly at individual leader level.

According to Shah and Shah (2006), the role of a modern local government is to deal with market forces as well as central government legislation and policies. This role requires local government to operate as a purchaser of local services, a facilitator of networks of commercial and voluntary providers and a gatekeeper and overseer of national governments in areas of shared governance. Local government is also required to play a mediator role with many partners and networks to foster greater synergy and harness the untapped energies of the broader community for improving the quality of life for residents (Shah and Shah, 2006, p. 30). Local government leaders are therefore responding to three significant pressures: community, market and central government. Major imperatives on local government leaders are central government legislation and financial controls. What seems clear is that central

government drives a modernisation process based upon working practices found in the private and commercial sector. However, central government may not be doing what is appropriate for local communities and local market forces in the particular circumstances of a local council.

For transformative modernisation to be successful, leaders in local government may require a different skill set to those appropriate to the past (Bains Report, 1972; Bichard, 2000; Bovaird and Martin, 2003; Lyons, 2006; Maud Report, 1967). This implies that if the skills are transformed there would be a transforming effect on local government organisations. Transforming an organisation implies leadership with transformative skills and the ability to transform the skill sets of working colleagues. Abilities are required that relate to the purpose of an organisation. However, local councils may have multiple and conflicting purposes associated with responses to local communities, local markets and central government. Questions may be raised about what leaders are required to do and how specific leader development needs are identified to meet the demands of the role.

There does not seem to be very much known about the process that local government uses to explore and identify organisational leadership development requirements. This gap in knowledge suggests an opportunity to discover current practice and to investigate the processes for exploring and identifying collective leadership requirements and also individual leader development needs. An exploration of development requirements implies a necessity for establishing the organisation's purpose, role and tasks

through key task analysis, competency based analysis and problem centred analysis (Reid et al., 2004). Combinations of these methods of exploration have been used to describe the skills, knowledge and understanding required to ensure good organisational performance. Other processes use environmental searching, scanning, context analysis and future prediction. This broadly describes capacity building. Within local government capacity building has become an established technique for identifying development requirements for both leadership and professional working (Nunn, 2007). Capacity building documents, strategic documents such as the Pay and Workforce Strategy (ODPM and EO, 2003), IDeA Leadership Development Strategy (IDeA, 2008) and in-house research on previous and existing provision and published research documents contribute to and help to identify leadership development requirements for local government as a service industry. Capacity building has a focus upon the requirements of the organisation as a whole for professional and leadership abilities. Organisational capacity building seems to be concerned with group and collective requirements rather than individual personal development needs.

Local government leadership development commissioners such as the IDeA respond to survey research, study reports and capacity building information and other documentary research by ensuring there is provision of national programmes for leadership development (IDeA, 2008). Two such national programmes are the 'Leadership Academy' for leading councillors and the 'Executive Leadership Academy' for chief executives and other senior leaders. Both these programmes are commissioned and contracted by the IDeA but are not delivered by them. Senior leaders decide

individually whether or not to take up places on marketed national programmes. The expressed and perceived requirements for leadership development are assumed to be identified and recognised within the marketed programmes of leadership development.

The process for enrolment on leadership programmes seems to be one of self-recognition by senior leaders that they need a certain form of organisationally driven leadership development. There follows a voluntary take up process for accessing leadership development offered on a national basis. It may be that leaders are following a path of self-development as noted above. The phenomenon of a 'hands up' approach to accessing leadership development has been noted among further education leaders (Lumby, 1997a; Lumby, 1997b, p. 362). A similar phenomenon may be at work in local government, although this remains to be tested. However, it would seem that leadership development providers treat leaders as a homogenous group with similar development requirements. Providers require economy of scale to run development programmes profitably therefore large numbers of delegates are put through group programmes. The paradigm for providers of leadership development programmes seems to be industrial: industrial processes produce manufactured products. Leadership programmes are offered that appear to communicate that leaders will be produced as a result of development on a leadership course. In the absence of any identification of individual leader development need, people may be making a personal 'hands up' response and choice of leadership development programme.

Delivered programmes of local government leadership development are subject to scrutiny from the IDeA and research from other public organisations and this information is made public on websites such as [www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk). For example the capacity building programme (CBP) was subject to research undertaken for the Department for Communities and Local Government (2008). This included researching the Academy for Leadership and the Executive Leadership Academy. The research noted gaps in corporate capacity for leadership:

The research also noted... specific skills gaps at leadership and middle management levels. The CBP thus initially included a strong focus on the development of generic corporate capacity around leadership (elected members and senior officers), middle managers... The mechanism for delivering support also reflected the central emphasis being substantially provided in the form of National Programmes supplied by central agencies such as the IDeA, the Employers Organisation and the 4Ps. (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008, p. 10)

While focused on corporate capacity and therefore leadership requirement, the research is vague and non-specific about any particular development needs of senior leaders. Publicly available research reveals little about how senior leader development programmes are meeting and targeting the identified development needs of senior leaders in local government. The process for exploring leadership development requirement seems to be one of consultation with partners and stakeholders that appears more akin to a marketing survey than a diagnostic technique.

The IDeA Leadership Development Strategy (2008) gave its priorities for leadership development. The strategy considered the likely impact of future local government contexts in discussion with key stakeholders and partners. As a result priorities for leadership development were identified. The priorities are expressed in vague terms such as 'develop effective leadership' and 'develop talent management' (IDeA, 2008, p. 9). They are general and non-specific, offering little for leadership development programme designers to use in constructing an appropriate programme. The priorities seem to be identified through contextual information and selective partner consultation along with a mixture of research done by the providers and the IDeA as a commissioning body. Some of this research is clearly selective and has been aimed at promotion and marketing (see case studies at [www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk), and the list of stakeholders in Leadership Development Strategy, IDeA, 2008, p. 24).

### **Theme three. Exploring individual leader development needs**

An assumed link contested by Lumby et al. (2005) between leadership ability and organisational performance implies a need for leaders to pursue both personal and organisational leadership development. Performance management systems are designed to enable people and organisation to develop. According to Harrison (2006):

...performance management aims to support, develop, reward and retain able people and to enable an organisation to achieve its longer term goals. (Harrison, 2006, p. 95)

Performance management may have more of a person-centred approach especially if it uses data from appraisal and other Human Resource Management (HRM) processes. Appraisal data may indicate the reasons for good and poor performance. A key element of performance management is staff development as an outcome of appraisal. A survey (CIPD, 2004) of human resource practitioners found that 87 per cent had a performance management process in place and agreed that the process should be developmental. A development gap may be identified by comparing the actual performance with the required performance of the job (Osborne, 1996). Defining the job of leadership has complexities that make it problematic and this leads to indicators for a developmental gap without specifying the nature of the development required.

## **Appraisal**

There are many tools and techniques available to identify staff development needs. It is questionable whether many of them are appropriate to the identification of the developmental needs of senior leaders in local government. Identifying development needs for senior leaders may necessitate overcoming issues associated with hierarchy, the volume of work, task priorities and the political context found in local government. Identifying the requirements for organisational leadership may be broadly based and more open and therefore less problematic than identifying personal leader development needs. Within performance management systems a

diagnostic technique of choice for identifying a developmental gap and identifying personal developmental needs is appraisal.

In local government the overall performance of a council is the responsibility of the chief executive and the leader of the council. A chief executive will chair the corporate board of directors or departmental chief officers, or both, and also be responsible for appraising their performance. The chief executive will be appraised by the leader of the council. At least in theory, the leader of the council will be appraised by the community through the ballot box. However, this is likely to be for a four-year term rather than on an annual basis and may reflect little more than the popular vote.

Although appraisal is reported as a key and essential element in a performance management system, research indicates that it fails to be successfully applied (Harrison, 2006; Lockett, 1992). Appraisal is used to explore the connection between an individual's development needs and the organisation's performance (Boyd, 2005; Daley, 2003; DeNisi, 1996; Grider and Toombs, 1993; Webb, 1994). However, according to Smith (2004), postponing action to deal with poor performance issues when managing and leading professionals is common and the solution is for 'leaders to have courage and determination' (Smith, 2004, p. 134). While characteristics of courage and determination may be useful, performance management systems tend to advocate tools and techniques such as regular appraisals.

It is important to note that appraisal stops with the person at the top in hierarchical structures. Appraisal of senior leaders and the political

leadership of a council may not be appropriate for identifying the development needs of senior leader positions. A formal process for identification of personal development needs through appraisal is open to potential political ambush and tacit or explicit perceptions of deficiencies or inadequacies in leadership ability. In the world of adversarial politics, care is taken by those in power to avoid political ambush (Baddeley, 1998). Recognition of development needs has an ever present possibility of being interpreted as not having the competence and abilities to lead. Similarly, in a competitive environment for positions such as senior leader jobs there is a possibility for the organisation and the political framework to interpret development needs as inadequacies in skill and ability to lead (Baddeley and James, 1987). Not only is this context for appraisal problematic for local government senior leaders; the process of appraisal can also be problematic. Harrison states 'any appraisal discussion can produce invalid and unreliable results because it is an intensely human process' (Harrison, 2006, p. 109).

Appraisal as a tool for evaluating performance and identifying development needs is not a perfect instrument. Appraisal tends to assume that organisations are unitary systems (Harrison, 2006). However, in local government there is a diversity of professional groups, partnerships, stakeholders and powerful political groups with varied interests. According to Seldin 'obstacles to effective appraisal are legion' (Seldin, 1988 p. 45).

Numerous research articles signpost eight major drawbacks to performance appraisal.

1. The majority of appraisal programmes give the appraiser sole responsibility for appraising performance;
2. Standards and ratings of performance are variable and dependent upon the values of the appraiser;
3. Appraisers' evaluations migrate to an average and may fail to face up to difficult performance issues;
4. Appraisal can interfere with constructive coaching relationships;
5. Appraisal suffers from evaluation concerns such as 'halo' and 'horns', misinterpreting recent good or bad work as having more relevance than the overall performance;
6. Appraisals are problematic when applied to positions that are complex, difficult to define and establish work priorities;
7. Appraisal may attempt to numerically measure and objectify that which is, in reality, a subjective judgement;
8. One-sided appraisal evaluations create defensive and attacking positions.

The above list is a summary and adaptation of research from the literature (Cherrington, 1987; Cousins and Rogus, 1977; Devries, 1986; Oberg, 1972; Rice, 1985; Seldin, 1988). While some of this research is dated and some appraisal schemes may be updated with self-appraisal and 360 degree variants (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998; Boyd, 2005; Daley, 2003), appraisal remains problematic.

Appraisal is considered here because it purports to identify individual and personal development needs. It is, however, a technique and procedure initiated by the employer with the outcome, achieved through a collective process, of organisational training courses for

large groups. Local government senior leaders may be aware of the problematic and subjective nature of appraisal and the challenges associated with identifying their own leader development needs.

## **Coaching**

A method of developing leaders that may be helpful to individual leaders in local government is coaching. Coaching may be perceived as a means of achieving development rather than as a diagnostic technique. However, Parsloe (1995) explains that for highly qualified and experienced leaders a coach relies almost entirely on questioning. This enables leaders to develop their own personal development plan and to take responsibility for its achievement. This is a similar outcome to appraisal and self-appraisal. Coaching may also draw upon many other individualised diagnostic techniques such as the 'Johari window' (Luft and Ingram, 1969), Belbin's Team Roles (Belbin, 2004) and psychometrics (Myers and Briggs, 1995). These techniques may be used to identify personal development needs and also to improve performance at the same time by developing the intellectual, behavioural and attitudinal abilities needed for greater success. Executive coaching involves practical, goal-focused forms of learning and exploring behaviour through discussion (Hall et al., 1999). It has also been suggested that executive coaching, as a follow-up to a training programme, can significantly increase productivity in public sector managers (Oliver et al., 1997). Coaching has been described as an activity that 'adjusts learning styles to provide the maximum help in the most effective way' (Parsloe, 1995, p. 21). An advantage of a coaching approach in local government is that the coach need know little about the nature of the work and may focus on the development needs of the client. This may be

perceived as a significant benefit to senior leaders in local government. Coaching also offers the advantage of confidentiality in relation to identifying development need without revealing the nature of the work.

### **Implications for research**

It seems that exploring leadership requirements uses organisational development processes and may treat leaders as a homogenous group producing leadership developmental programmes akin to production line processes. Groups of delegates are brought together, taught something about leadership with the expectation of returning to organisations as leaders. A significant assumption concerns organisational achievement being dependent upon good leadership. Other assumptions then follow, for example that good leadership depends upon leadership skill, knowledge and understanding. Identifying skills, knowledge and understanding depends upon accessing valid and reliable information on organisational requirements for leadership development. Leadership development provision depends upon good information about the development requirements of an organisation in order to produce appropriate programmes of leadership development. Good leadership development assumed to impact positively upon the success and achievement of the organisation forms part of a performance management system. The relationship and nature of the processes in the chain form a complex and inter-related whole. Although it is a complex chain with implicit assumptions, this study attempts to distinguish, as elements within it, the exploration of organisational leadership development requirements and individual leader development needs.

Performance management systems are designed to address variations in levels of performance by identifying the developmental needs of individuals and offering ways to improve skill, knowledge and understanding that may be affecting performance (Harrison, 2006). Research into exploring individual local government leader development needs does not appear to be significantly represented in the literature and this suggests a gap in our knowledge. Exploring and then identifying senior leader development needs through individual processes such as appraisal and coaching are problematic. Universally applied to the workforce, appraisal may not work for leaders, and as a development needs identification technique may be misleading. Coaching seems to include techniques for exploring development needs through a private and covert process. It may be helpful to an individual, but it contributes little to the identification of organisational leadership development to a collective community. Therefore it does not yield sufficient information for leadership development providers to use when designing development programmes. Coaching may also be time consuming and costly as a one-to-one dependent technique that relies on self-awareness and reflection to produce a development plan. However, if established with appropriate ground rules, it offers a level of confidentiality and protection to the client and this may represent an advantage over an appraisal process for local government senior leaders. Coaching, appraisal and other methods for exploring individual development needs of senior leaders may be failing to furnish useful and appropriate information to leadership development providers. Selected literature presents an unclear picture about leadership and leader. The terms seem to be used interchangeably indicating a

general confusion, compounded when applied to the identification of leadership requirements and leader development needs.

Collective leadership development identification methods in local government seem to be contained within research and strategic documents that tend to be broad brush, vague and generalised. Published documents subsume organisational leadership requirements into larger strategic statements, obscuring specific leadership development requirements (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008; Nunn, 2007; ODPM and EO, 2003). The IDeA may have the opportunity to perform some specific leadership development identification activities for local government but this work seems to be left to individual regional associates. Whilst there seems to be no formal technique, method or coordinated approach used nationally to identify leadership requirements. There is a requested feedback and consultation process with stakeholders initiated by the IDeA, this appears much more akin to market research than a leadership development identification technique (IDeA, 2008).

## **Summary**

This section of the literature review has revealed that little may be known about how specific senior leader development needs are explored and identified in local government. There are clear indications that a performance gap exists and in consequence leaders may be in need of development, but the specific nature of any development does not seem to be identified. If leaders and leadership in local government are to achieve business and central government objectives, then leaders and the organisation will need

to be equipped with appropriate abilities, skills and knowledge. Identifying leadership development requirements and leader development needs in local government are complex and difficult tasks. Much more needs to be discovered about how individual leader development needs and organisational leadership requirements are being explored and identified.

#### **Theme four. Leadership in local government**

There are many perceptions of leader and leadership. These are variable and contested, and the literature on leadership is extensive. Therefore a selective sampling process was used for reviewing what is considered relevant literature. Some recognised literature related to the perceptions and conceptualisation of leadership was used to explore aspects of local government leaders. It revealed that, despite years of research, leadership remains partially understood and perceived in many different ways (Lumby with Coleman, 2007). It is worth noting that leadership is a concept, an idea, an abstraction with metaphysical rather than physical properties; as such it has no definitive objective reality (Lilienthal, 1967). Grint expresses the view that reading the literature on leadership leads to contradictory conclusions with no significant pattern except the sardonic truism that successful leaders are successful (Grint, 2003, 1997). According to Adair (2007) there is a great deal of confusion surrounding the concept of leadership. The implications of confusion and multiple ways of understanding leadership, for this study, are that if there is no clear guidance from research to organisations on how leadership can be conceptualised, this may well lead to confusion about how organisations should be describing the job of leadership,

understanding leadership and identifying leadership development requirements. Barker raises the question, 'How can we train leaders if we do not know what leadership is?' (Barker, 1997, p. 343).

Adair (2007) indicates that the terms leader and leadership are both abstract terms. The abstract nature of leadership opens the way for a variety of perceptions not only within a particular sector, such as local government, but also more broadly within a wider range of organisational type. Leadership presented as a concept has within it a number of possibilities for interpretation, understanding and attributed meaning. Leadership has been viewed as complex, fragmented and contradictory (Chemers, 1997). Another view of leadership indicates an inability to know and agree upon what leadership is, preventing the generation of an agreed understanding of leadership that is intellectually robust or emotionally satisfying (Rost, 1991). The absence of an agreed understanding of leadership leaves employers opting for a particular published perception or developing their own interpretation of leadership for themselves. Philosophically this is positioning leadership hermeneutically as a concept to be interpreted within the context, circumstances and culture of an organisation. Schutt defines a concept as:

A mental image that summarizes a set of similar observations, feelings, or ideas. And, the process of specifying what we mean by a term. (Schutt, 2006, p. 92)

Here Schutt is developing an understanding of concepts that are structured and positivist. This philosophical stance may be unhelpful when it comes to conceptualising leadership. Grint describes this situation as follows:

I am suggesting here that one of the main reasons that we have so much difficulty in explaining leadership and trying to enhance leadership qualities and skills of those who are leaders is that we have adopted a philosophical perspective that obscures rather than illuminates the phenomenon. The more scientific our methods of analysis become the less likely we are to understand leadership because it is not accessible to scientific approaches. (Grint, 2003, p. 91)

Grint (2003) is shifting the philosophical ground from quantifying and measuring as applied to leaders, to a qualitative and illuminative approach. This creative and phenomenological frame perceives leadership in a way that contrasts with many other researchers taking a more positivistic view. Other researchers have taken the position that leaders possess recognisable features that can be identified, defined, sorted, classified and measured (Bass, 1999; Boal and Hooijberg, 2000; Carless et al., 2000; Horner, 2003; House et al., 2004; House et al., 2002; Kirby et al., 1992; Roush and Atwater, 1992; Salaman, 2003; Tejada et al., 2001). As noted above, an inherent assumption is that leaders are the source of leadership and a causal relationship exists between defined characteristics of leadership and the production of a leader. The paradigm infers a production model; leadership development providers train people with the defined characteristics, and a leader is produced.

Organisations finding little clear and definitive guidance on leadership from the current research literature retain a significant need for leaders and a requirement for leadership. In the absence of a clear source of definitional guidance on leadership, it is unclear how

organisations such as local government perceive leadership and identify the development needs of leaders. Local government, however, has a capacity building requirement for leaders (Lyons, 2006; ODPM and EO, 2003). Councils cannot avoid thinking through what they mean by leadership in processes such as creating person specification and job descriptions for posts of senior leader and creating programmes of leadership development. Such processes require councils to focus attention on an understanding of leadership.

A definitional approach to the conceptualisation of leadership has been considered by Bass (1999). Bass argues that definitional approaches benefit from providing a basis for theory and provide scope within which leadership can be interpreted. Definitions draw attention to the procedural elements of a concept and provide a framework to understand form and structure. There are however, many thousands of leadership definitions produced over a long time span, in various social hierarchies and a range of military and commercial settings. The volume and variety of leadership definitions lead to a speculation that definitions of leadership are opinions about leadership rather than qualified comment upon the nature of leadership. Leadership definitions tend to be culturally and historically shaped and bounded and are therefore subject to cultural variations. Perceptions of leadership may also give rise to ambiguity, raising questions about whether leadership is most appropriately viewed as a specialised role based on authority or a socially distributed influence process, and whether it is equivalent to or different from management (Yukl, 2002).

Barker claims 'the essential nature of leadership can be determined through patterns of value, both stable and dynamic,' (Barker, 2001, p. 473) and defines leadership as a process. Leadership in terms of social-cognitive or information processing allows for many perceptions, meaning and understanding of leadership. Differing perceptions are considered by Lord and Maher (1991) through an information processing approach to leadership. They suggest that the essence of leadership is being seen as a leader by others. It is suggested that perceptions of leader are produced as a result of two processes: prototype matching and causal inference or attribution (Lord and Maher, 1991). A practical application of this theory may result in those making significant decisions in local government having assumptions about what leaders are like. Assumptions create conceptual and personal prototypes made up of selected attributes, traits and behaviours associated with leaders. When someone matches the conceptual prototype construction, they are described as or accepted as a leader. 'Transformational leader' describes the traits and behaviours of a particular conceptual prototype for a leader. A transformative modernisation agenda require leaders to transform local government through replacing skills, systems, technology, culture and learning from those used in the past.

### **Transformational leadership**

The transformative modernisation role for local government leaders may require a transformational style of leadership. Transformational leadership and its applicability to local government have been researched by Alimo-Metcalfe (2001). The research sought to investigate the characteristics of local government leaders by eliciting the constructs of male and female, top, senior, and middle

level managers and professionals working in organisations in both local government and the National Health Service. An instrument, the Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (TLQ-LGV), was developed and piloted on a national sample of 1,464 managers working for local government organisations (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe, 2001). The research identified nine scales that describe significant characteristics of transformational leaders and can be used to compare transformational aspects of local government leaders. However, the research lacked specific definitions of senior leader and leadership.

Perceptions of transformational leadership have undergone several revisions and development. Early perceptions of transformational leadership described it as being at one end of a continuum with transactional leadership at the other end (Burns, 1978). The early work of Burns also indicated that transformational leaders had and articulated a visionary purpose that bound the leader and followers together but no distinction is made between leader and leadership (Burns, 1978, p. 20). Local government has a public sector ethos with values of public service, democracy and enhancing the quality of life for all sections of the community. The leadership production of a visionary purpose may accord with some aspects of transformational leadership. However, Bass perceived transformational leadership and transactional leadership as two separate dimensions of leadership (Bass, 1985, 1999; Bass et al., 1996). Differences between transformational and transactional leadership have been described in the following way (Bryman, 2007, p. 8):

### Transformational Leadership

- Idealised influence: entails leaders sharing risks with followers and being consistent in their dealings with them.
- Inspirational motivation: providing meaning and challenge to followers; being enthusiastic; arousing commitment to future states.
- Intellectual stimulation: stimulating innovation and creativity; encouraging new ways of dealing with work.
- Individualised consideration: close attention paid to followers' needs; potential encouraged; personal differences recognised.

### Transactional Leadership

- Contingent reward: rewarding followers for successfully completing assignments.
- Management by exception (active and passive): either actively monitoring departures from procedure and errors among followers and taking appropriate action or passively waiting for departures from procedure and errors and then taking action.

This perception of transformational leadership accords with that of Bass (1985). However, Bass includes charisma as an element of transformational leadership. Kotter (1990) offers a more functional distinction between transactional and transformational leadership. For example, a distinction is made between the function of planning and the transformative establishing of direction; between the function of organising people and the transformative aligning of people (Kotter, 1990).

The functional distinctions between transactional and transformational leadership identified by Kotter (1990) may be perceived as having some of the important elements required of the role and tasks of senior leaders in local government. As noted above, there seems to be little distinction made between leaders and leadership. Leaders in local government have both professional and leadership functions. This may require both transactional and transformational competence and characteristics for leaders to be effective in local government.

The functions of transformational leadership as described by Kotter (1990) may need to be distinguished from charisma as described by Bass (1985) as an aspect of transformational leadership. Charisma of both nearby and distant leaders has been differentiated by Sharmir (1995). Nearby leaders are close to the workforce, located in a similar geographical workspace, easily accessible and approachable, sharing similar physical working conditions. Distant leaders are located in a different geographical space within the organisation. They may have different working conditions such as a separate office and a secretary, are less accessible and do not share the same physical working conditions as the workforce. There will be both distant and nearby leaders in large organisations such as in local government. The two types of leader have been found to display different characteristics. For example, nearby leaders are thought to be dynamic, active, sociable and set high standards, whilst distant leaders are thought to have a sense of mission, are persistent and pursue their vision without fear of criticism (Sharmir, 1995).

Differing notions of charisma for nearby and distant leaders may relate to transformational styles of leadership. Rosner (1990) conducted a study on the way women lead, concluding that women had a preference for transformational styles of leadership. Other gender-specific preferences for leadership styles were identified, with women seeming to be more people-oriented, with an interactive style and sharing of power and information (Rosner, 1990).

While transformational leadership is an acknowledged leadership style, other items in Rosner's work do not seem to be recognised as such. However, the work adds value in that it signposts some distinct gender issues in relation to transformational leadership. Gender and leadership style has an extensive literature. However, there is insufficient space in this study to do more than highlight some relevant issues. Although there may be differences in the cultural background of the American research conducted by Rosner (1990), the influence of gender has also been investigated in the UK by Alimo-Metcalfe (1995). This investigation concluded that male leaders working in the public sector are confident, organised, cerebral, purposeful, and clear with their instructions. Female leaders working in the public sector are thought to be self-aware, strong and supportive, concerned to take others with them, honest about personal values and keen to relate to others on an equal level (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995). Despite differences in language there seems to be broad agreement between Rosner (1990) and Alimo-Metcalfe's (1995) investigations.

Using empirical data from three studies, Bass et al. (1996) investigated the gender differences in a number of recognised leadership styles including transformational, transactional and

laissez-faire leadership styles. Women managers were rated higher on both transformational and transactional dimensions (Bass et al., 1996). Research by Broussine and Fox (2002) indicate that male dominance and leadership styles persist in local government despite the current requirement for transformative modernisation.

Statistical evidence would seem to support the notion that some gender issues, raised by Broussine and Fox, exist in local government. For example in 2003 there were 10 per cent female and 90 per cent male chief executives (ODPM and EO, 2003), which would seem to suggest an enduring phenomenon of males predominating at senior levels in local government. Employment statistics from the Office of National Statistics indicate that in the public sector the workforce in 2004 was made up of 34.8 per cent men and 65.2 per cent women (Office of National Statistics, 2009). If transformational leadership is an appropriate style for a changing context, but not the preferred style for men, the perception of leadership style may well be a significant factor in how leadership development requirements are identified and developed within local government. Research by Lumby with Coleman (2007) indicates that leaders need to be competent and committed to the process of diversity. This may also be a development need for senior leaders in local government.

Research undertaken in further education has shown a relationship between preferred methods of leadership development and styles of leadership (Muijs et al., 2006, p. 103):

...the type of leadership development experienced being related to respondents' views of leadership. Experiential leadership development appears to be related to transformational leadership, course-based leadership development to distributive leadership and individual-based leadership development to transactional leadership.

The research by Muijs et al. (2006) does not address the relationship between perceptions of leadership and the method for identifying the requirement for leadership development, only the method of development delivery. There remains an open question as to whether research in further education is directly applicable to the context of local government.

### **Implications for research**

Identifying senior leadership development requirements may be assumed to be founded upon a clear understanding of what is the nature of leadership and also on a description of the job of leaders (Barker, 1997; Harrison, 2006). For many other professions, for example nursing, accountancy or teaching, there seems a good degree of agreement about how these jobs can be described. The basis for such job descriptions is a clearer understanding of the role of a nurse, accountant or teacher. Selected literature on leadership suggests that no widely agreed or clear understanding of leadership exists. This has implications for leader development in relation to how leadership within local government is perceived, understood and defined. There is little to suggest that councils in local government will operationalise exploration of development needs for senior leaders when there is no agreed understanding of leader or

leadership. Selected literature presents a confused picture of leader and leadership, with many contested ideas containing multiple perceptions and understandings. The interpretative processes described by Lord and Maher (1991) signpost that leadership in local government may be perceived and interpreted differently across councils and within councils between training and development specialists, senior leaders, appointing specialist in human resources and among leadership development providers.

Transformational styles of leadership may be appropriate to local government given the context of transformative modernisation and change existing in local government. The literature indicates there are a number of issues associated with transformational leadership that may have a bearing upon the type of leadership development requirements and needs that are potentially explored and identified. These may be summarised as issues associated with:

- styles of leadership;
- the balance of transformational and transactional leadership;
- gender preference;
- behavioural indicators;
- the charisma of leaders;
- the links to organisational and personal change;
- a lack of clarity between leader and leadership.

Another issue is the use of subjective and vague terms to describe transformational functions; for example, aligning people and motivating and inspiring are poorly defined (Kotter, 1990).

Transactional leadership terms seem much clearer, for example

setting a budget and contracting wages for work. Greater clarity exists about how transactional leadership creates order and control than exists for how transformational leadership creates significant transformative step changes. Styles of leadership may lead to an assumption that a homogenous group of leaders exists with a common organisational leadership development requirement for a particular style. There are indications that not enough is known about how styles of leadership are taken into account when exploring and identifying leadership development requirements and designing programmes of leadership development (Lumby et al., 2005).

Selected and reviewed literature highlights the intention to transform local government to become more effective and efficient. Central government seems to be encouraging working practices akin to those of private sector organisations. To achieve better levels of organisational performance there may be a need to raise the levels of skill, ability and competence of leadership. However, the perceptions of leader and leadership are confusing and contested. Performance management systems and key techniques such as appraisal are used to identify development for professionals but may not be so useful when applied to leaders and leadership. Such techniques may have poor application to senior leadership development and consequently little is known about many aspects of identifying leadership development requirements and leader development needs. The issues, contributors and arguments identified in the literature are summarised and tabulated in Appendix 1.

## Summary

This review has sought to distinguish between significant dualistic terms:

- Self-development as initiated by and for an individual, and organisational development as initiated by collective social processes for the organisation as a whole;
- A leader as an individual figurehead with a hierarchical position, power and resources, and leadership as a social process of transformative change relating to corporate groups with similar values and beliefs forming an organisation's social capital;
- Development need as expressed by and satisfying individuals, and development requirement as identified by organisations to improve business performance;
- Development exploration and identification methods appropriate to organisational leadership requirement and those appropriate to leader need.

The review has also set out the criteria for identifying local government senior leaders and explored their task and responsibilities within the context of transformative modernisation.

The review indicates a potential gap in knowledge, suggesting a thesis that can be expressed as:

In local government the relationship between individual leader development need and organisational development requirement is poorly understood and may be subject to a variety of development exploration and identification mechanisms that provide vague and general information, creating confusion by failing to adequately recognise the degree of overlap and

distinction between individual leader need and organisational requirement for development.

Taking this study forward and exploring how the thesis may be researched will be influenced by ontology, concerned with what the researcher brings to the study, by epistemology, concerned with how reality may be known and methodology, concerned with how the research questions are investigated. These issues are discussed in the next chapter.

# Chapter Three

## **Introduction**

The previous chapter reviewed a sample of the literature and identified gaps in theory and practice that may be explored by research. Exploring through research requires an appropriate methodology influenced by ontology and epistemology. This chapter sets out the research ontology, epistemology and research method for unfolding meaning associated with the dualities of leader and leadership; development and self-development; personal needs and organisational requirements. It identifies the sample and sets out the criteria used to select the key informant respondents. The research method details the criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity as important factors in qualitative research methods. The chapter concludes with an explanation of how the data were analysed and considers the ethical issues associated with the chosen research method.

## **Ontology, purpose and methodology**

Research has been defined by Bassegy (1999) as:

...a systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry which aims to contribute towards the advancement of knowledge and wisdom.  
(Bassegy, 1999, p. 38)

Research is required to be a rigorous and systematic investigation of an aspect of an activity. Both clear thinking and practical application of research methods serve to make this possible. Another perspective is that research is a combination of both experience and reasoning and must be regarded as the most successful approach to the discovery of truth (Cohen and Manion, 1984, p. 15). A view expressed by Brown and Dowling (1998) is that:

...research should always justify the claims it makes to knowledge in terms of reference to experience of the field to which these knowledge claims relate. (Brown and Dowling, 1998, p. 7)

Brown and Dowling (1998) signpost the need for prior knowledge and experience of the research field of study for knowledge to be enhanced. Cohen goes further in asserting that research is discovering truth. However, the research position for this study is that truths are relative, circumstantial and propositional. This is a different ontological position to the realist view of absolute truth and an objective world. The posture taken in this study is that reality is virtual and socially constructed. Reality is taken to be shaped and

constructed through the influence of social, political, cultural and economic, belief and value factors. This creates an epistemological relationship between the researcher, the focus of the research and the method of finding out what can be known (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Epistemology is concerned with how reality is known through a choice of methodology that provides acceptable evidential data. An appropriate epistemological method for data gathering relates to the reasoning position of the researcher. The position of this researcher is that there are multiple realities that are circumstantial, relative and propositional. It follows that an appropriate epistemological methodology is qualitative rather than quantitative, subjective rather than objective and concerned with unfolding an individual's perception of reality.

The research study has been conceived on the basis of personal experience of senior leadership development, relevant literature and the gap that may exist between actual practice and reporting within the literature. A significant ontological influence is having personal experience of designing senior leadership development programmes with access to scanty validated evidence about the development requirements for leadership and leader needs in local government. This experience is not unique, but seems to be supported by the experience of writers such as Adair (2007) and Pedler (1990). The topic of the research concerns unfolding meaning upon a continuum within the dualities of leader and leadership; development and self-development and personal needs and organisational requirements. Much of the literature reviewed has unfolded meaning and interpreted these dualities listed above differently.

A method compatible with my epistemological and ontological position should allow for exploration and unfolding meaning. Unfolding meaning relies upon information data that are descriptive, subjective, perceptual and interpretative. I perceive no objective reality here from which I can detach myself as researcher. My ontological position also presupposes multiple realities and is concerned with the trustworthiness of respondent accounts. Hence my relationship is one of inclusion within a process of unfolding meaning and entails a qualitative dialogue between researcher and key informants. This implies an interview methodology. An interview method fits well with the aim of the research, stated as:

To investigate the degree to which the perception of local government senior leaders about development needs and leadership requirements of an organisation are explored and identified.

Methods for exploring the research purpose should engage with unfolding meaning because the context is people based, interpretative and subjective. Interviewing may be appropriate to a topic that has embedded within it multiple meanings, interpretations and perceptions that are dependent to some extent upon particular knowledge, experience and awareness.

Research methodologies define how a question can be investigated. Research methods may be identified very broadly as qualitative or quantitative or more focused and specific such as grounded theory or conversation analysis (Dey, 2005; Silverman, 2000; Silverman,

2001). Qualitative data collection methods such as interviewing can add:

- significant context that may be stripped by quantitative methods;
- rich insights into human behaviour, purpose and meaning;
- the individual insider view;
- the applicability of the individual case that may be lost in statistical norms;
- illuminative insight that may be lost in quantification;
- the acknowledged influence of the inquirer.

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985, pp. 106-7)

Qualitative research methods are an attractive choice for this study because they offer the prospect of exploring in depth the range of meaning and understanding enfolded within the themes of the study topic. Researching issues involving leadership, personal experience, understanding and perception may be studied by a research methodology that is qualitative and includes dialogue.

The literature review has indicated a lack of clarity and distinction between dualistic terms such as leader and leadership; between personal development needs and organisational development requirements; and between self-development and organisational development. Selected literature indicates multiple perceptions, multiple interpretations and the absence of widely acceptable definitions of these terms. Without a clear understanding of these terms it is left to organisations and individuals to create their own understanding of them. Uncovering multiple perceptions,

interpretations and understanding is an interpretative process found within qualitative research methods.

Within the category of interpretative processes, a method applicable to the research purpose is interviewing. The research purpose presupposes an understanding of leaders, leadership and the tasks and development needs of leaders. Information relating to the research purpose is considered to be held by a number of key informants with different experiences, perceptions and interpretations of leader development.

Interviewing is a suitable method for this study because it offers a way for researcher and respondent to explore experiences, perceptions and interpretations through in-depth dialogue. The research strategy utilises a process of dialogue to elicit the views of key informants about their experience and perceptions for identifying senior leader development needs and requirements for leadership. The study has not questioned the quality or quantity of leadership development programmes. However, it does consider if the design and focus of leadership development programmes and courses are based upon exploring and identifying individual leader development need and organisational leadership requirement.

There are indications that some form of interpretative exploration targets the development requirements of leadership for the organisation or development needs of individual leaders, or both. The research study investigates the practical application of this by seeking to uncover the degree to which local government leadership development requirements and leader needs are being explored,

interpreted and identified. The study presupposes that leadership development requirements and leader needs are subject to some form of exploration and identification process. Development needs and requirements, if clearly identified, may be used to inform the design and guide the focus of leadership development programmes. Relevant documentary evidence relating to policies on training and development, performance and task responsibilities may also inform the development requirements and needs of leaders. The study also includes a selective documentary review. An assumption here is that policy documents may be related to the behavioural experience of leaders and used to corroborate leader experience.

## **Research methodology**

An assertion to posit is that the production of an idea for researching a particular topic has its roots within a biographical narrative. It is argued by Usher et al. that the self, knowledge and experience are related (Usher et al., 2001, p. 101). In terms of educational research, Usher et al. put the self as both practitioner and researcher in a central arena around which factors such as research sponsors, subjects, practicalities, facilities, ethics, purpose and audience are issues of significant influence when engaging upon a research activity (Usher et al., 2001).

In choosing a particular research method account has been taken of personal biographical experience of leadership development and the factors identified by Usher et al. (2001). There are many methods by which to investigate the research question. However, the research is required to fit the contextual circumstances as well as the focus of the research (Usher et al., 1989). This would include my personal

circumstances as well as those pertaining to local government. Suffering from a sight problem excludes the researcher from a number of methods employing observational techniques. However, the researcher listens well and has a great deal of experience in various forms of interviewing. Also the current context for local government senior leaders requires a great deal of sensitivity on the part of researchers which can be taken into account when interviewing. Hard pressed and busy senior leaders are judged more likely to give this researcher interview time. Asking directly for an interview was judged more likely to furnish adequate data than requesting written material. Interviewing may depend upon gaining an acceptable level of trust and this is more likely to be achieved by forms of dialogue rather than forms of writing. In addition to these practical factors and ontological position, interviewing fits well with the research topic and question.

Interviewing as a research method has major advantages of adaptability, the potential to follow up ideas, to further investigate incomplete or poorly understood responses and to explore concepts, understandings and meaning. Perceptions and views are accepted to be varied and individual and yet there may be some commonality, typical themes and recurring views around key concepts and ideas. It has been argued in the previous section that leaders may be a heterogeneous group composed of unique individuals with personal needs, experience and understanding of the role and position of leader and leadership. An interview offers a window on such personal understanding and experience (Weiss, 1994).

The relationship between interviewing, researcher and respondent can be conceived as a dynamic in which each responds to the other so that it continually changes and meaning is constructed; it is an active process (Gubrium and Holstein, 1995; Jorgenson, 1991, 1995). This active interviewing is both interpretive and constructs meaning. Gubrium and Holstein (2003) explain:

Active interviewing is a form of interpretative practice... while reality is continually under construction it is assembled using the interpretative resources at hand... so that meaning is neither predetermined nor absolutely unique. (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003, p. 74)

Identifying key informants to interview implies and acknowledges that respondents are worth listening to as people who can provide valid information and perspectives on the research area of interest. It may be argued that interviewing is simply a performance that is 'persistently slippery, unstable and riddled with ambiguity' (Scheurich, 1995, p. 240). While acknowledging that there are difficulties, this study takes the view that active interviewing entails the creation of meaning within a dialogue: 'the respondent can hardly spoil what he or she is, in effect, subjectively creating' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003, p. 70). A skilled interviewer genuinely interested in the views of respondents can achieve rapport and obtain worthwhile information from the respondent (Keats, 2000).

An interview dialogue may be viewed like a stream structured by its two banks. The stream is common to both banks and yet separates and contacts both at the same time (Bohm, 1985, p. 34). The

meaning in dialogue is in constant flow between the semi-structures brought by interviewer and interviewee. It has been argued that respondent leaders may be considered as a heterogeneous group of individuals. This implies that respondents present unique and different sources of information from within a group of individuals commonly categorised as leaders. The constraints of research require some form of structure in the method of information gathering. This may best be achieved through a semi-structured interview process. Gathering information in this way has the advantage of treating each respondent as unique, which outweighs any deficiency in the reliability of the method. Also, it affords the flexibility to explore various areas in depth.

The research question, dualities of meaning and themes are considered to be subjectively based on social construction and interpretation. The study will make use of the various perceptions and interpretations of the dualities of leader and leadership; development needs and requirements; organisational and individual development, which are provided by and found in the literature. Awareness of my experience and practitioner position has been acknowledged in Chapter One. Openness about personal views and the semi-structured interview method enables a researcher to be aware of the difficulty of attaining absolute neutrality. However, as a researcher it is important to establish a non-judgemental stance as neutral as possible in relation to the emergent data derived from semi-structured interviews. The scope, direction and exploration of emerging information through semi-structured interviewing require skills and practice. Preparation and practice for the research came

from my professional experience and also through piloting the research questions and interview protocols.

The extensive literature on leaders, leadership, development requirements, development needs and performance of leaders provides a confusing and contested range of perspectives. This has been closely examined in Chapter Two and has led to the observation that potential gaps exist in knowledge about the application of development exploration as it is applied to senior leaders and leadership in local government. This research is designed to discover perceptions and practice through semi-structured interviewing and to report on the degree to which exploration and identification of senior leader development needs and leadership requirements are being applied and to see if improvements can be made.

In constructing the research enquiry it is realised that the findings will provide a limited and partial picture of a complex process that involves a chain of activities. The chain has inherent assumptions such as organisational achievement depends upon good leadership. Good leadership depends upon leadership skill, knowledge and understanding. Identifying the requirements for organisational leadership and individual leader development depends upon accessing valid and reliable information. Providers require good information on the development needs of leaders and leadership requirements in order to produce appropriate programmes of leader and leadership development. Good leadership development may be assumed to positively impact upon the success and achievement of the organisation. Some different aspects within this chain are reflected in the extensive literature that has focused not only upon leader and leadership characteristics and style, but also upon

development methods and development identification activities. The relationship and nature of the processes in the chain form a complex and inter-related whole, but this enquiry has a focus upon the exploration and identification of individual development need and organisational requirements. A focus creates a limitation but the research is designed to thoroughly explore the topic through a range of key informant interviews, selective organisation documentation and research literature.

### **Method of enquiry**

The chosen method of research fits broadly into the category of qualitative research and takes into account the two primary factors of trustworthiness and authenticity identified as important to the assessment of a qualitative study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). While trustworthiness is less certain it is more appropriate to the chosen research method. Kincheloe and McLaren (1998) explain:

Where traditional verifiability rests on a rational proof built upon literal intended meaning, a critical qualitative perspective always involves a less certain approach characterised by participant reaction and emotional involvement. Some analysts argue that validity may be an inappropriate term in a critical research context, as it simply reflects a concern for acceptance within a positivist concept of research rigour...Trustworthiness... is a more appropriate word to use in the context of critical research. (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1998, p. 287)

Trustworthiness is a concept appropriate to investigating aspects of multiple understandings of social reality. While qualitative research methods are less certain because they presuppose multiple accounts of social reality, the criteria associated with trustworthiness when rigorously applied add credibility and validity. Trustworthiness may depend on four factors, credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Saunders, 2008).

1. Credibility in the study consists of the respondents checking and confirming their recorded perceptions and experiences transcribed to form the interview data. This is achieved by each interview being digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim. A draft transcript of the interview was offered to the respondent for correction and validation. This process was designed to corroborate the account given by each interviewee and the researcher accounts produced that are considered congruent with the perceptions and experiences of the respondent. Selected organisational documentation was also scrutinised to establish if the respondent experiences were corroborated by relevant documents. These two processes establish a credible connection between data, the respondents intended description and the expected experiences enshrined in written organisational documentation.

2. The constraints of the study allow only for a relatively small number of respondent interviews and therefore depth rather than breadth is implicit to the research method (Geertz, 1973). The method chosen for this study implies unfolding meaning rather than an experiment in search of natural law or cause and effect. Therefore the study involves interviewing respondents from different parts of

an organisation and accessing perspectives about their experience of leadership development requirements and leader development needs. The study was limited to one local council and a restricted range of senior leaders. Each semi-structured interview, lasting approximately 70 to 85 minutes, was recorded and transcribed. This produced a large quantity of rich, in-depth data to analyse containing both shared and unique experiences and perceptions. It provided a database from which judgements could be made about what is common to all respondents and what is not. This introduces potential for the possible transferability of the findings across all the respondents and possibly to the wider picture of local government.

3. Dependability as a criterion for trustworthiness is akin to, but not the same as, reliability. The concept of reliability has to do with how well a research method is applied to the problem. To be reliable research should be carried out in such a way that, if another researcher were to look into the same questions in the same setting, they would come up with essentially the same results (though not necessarily an identical interpretation). Sapsford and Evans (1984) define reliability in the following way:

Reliability is the consistency of the results obtained when using a measure in research. It is a word used of measuring instruments, including the human observer..., and refers to the basic scientific requirement that it should be possible for another worker to duplicate one's results or produce comparable evidence, at least in principle. (Sapsford and Evans, 1984, p. 259)

This view of reliability may appropriately be applied to quantitative or positivistic research, but in qualitative research there is a view that validity is of greater value than reliability. In quantitative research the latter has relevance because it facilitates repeatability rather than being a precondition for attaining validity (Brock-Utne, 1996, p. 614). Dependability in qualitative studies is achieved through the research processes and evidence being subject to external audit (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The methodology for this study is concerned to ensure that audit is possible and that all records are complete and accessible for external audit. All data related to this research is open and available for confirmation and scrutiny using audit processes applied to the interview process and transcripts, creating a research instrument, research questions, analysis methods and interpretation.

4. Conformability within the context of qualitative research is a criterion of trustworthiness that recognises that objectivity in social research is not attainable. The research method is required to demonstrate that the personal values, beliefs and propensities towards particular theoretical positions have not biased the researcher to conform to them. While accepting that complete independence of view may not be achieved, by stating my ontological position and background (Chapter One), my views and ontological position has to some degree been open to scrutiny. The auditing process affords a further opportunity to scrutinise conformability.

Authenticity is an important objective for qualitative research methods and it may also be elusive (Bush, 2002). Although it is accepted that there is no perfect research method, rigour in the research method enables the criterion of authenticity to be achievable. However, the researcher's prior knowledge and previous experience may introduce a source of bias (Morrison, 2005). Bias may be defined as the systematic or persistent tendency to make errors in the same direction. This may be a particular problem for a single researcher conducting several semi-structured interviews because the method is prone to subjective bias. Implicit is an attempt to be clear about the purpose of the research, the method to be used and the researchers' personal assumptions and it is important to the choice of method to be used. This is particularly true of interviewing methods. Researchers are urged to make clear, if they can their own preconceptions of the field. For example, Morrison (2005) states:

Though researchers may not always be fully conscious of the preconceptions they bring to their research they need to make as overt as possible the conceptual structure they bring to their projects. (Morrison, 2005, p. 6)

Sources of researcher bias may be introduced by the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent and the construction of the questions (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 282). These sources of bias are acknowledged and minimised by clarifying my personal position and by engaging with an initial pilot study designed to hone skills and develop information gathering through refining the semi-structured interview questions. On the basis of two pilot

interviews, the data collection process and wording of the question framework was finalised as found in Appendix 2.

Designing the method of research with openness about preconceptions minimises researcher bias while also accepting that respondents cannot 'spoil' what is subjectively created (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003, p. 70). Although this improves validity (a concept more strongly associated with positivistic methods of research), no claim is being made that the outcome of this research has external validity or that the findings may be generalised to a wider context than that being reported by the study. Care has been taken to maximise internal validity so that the findings do authentically represent the phenomena investigated by the study.

Another aspect of authenticity is reliability, which shows that the operations of the research such as the data collection procedures can be repeated (Yin, 1994, p. 144). Systematic reporting of the actual documentation and procedures is given and is important to the reliability of the research method; without this, another researcher cannot follow the same procedure. Nonetheless, there are difficulties with semi-structured interviewing that make reliability more difficult to achieve. The strategy of a research method using semi-structured interviewing has been planned so that perspectives and descriptions can be gathered from the unique way each individual responds to this type of interview. This offers a significant advantage in obtaining an authentic view of how senior leaders' needs and leadership requirements are being explored and identified. Semi-structured interviewing offers the important advantage of treating each individual as a unique respondent. This advantage is considered to

outweigh the potential reduction in reliability not found in structured interviewing or questionnaire methods of information gathering. While a semi-structured interview method is potentially less reliable than positivistic methods, through taking account of the criteria for reliability and validity, trustworthiness and authenticity can be achieved and a rigorous research study produced.

## **Research sample**

There is a view that leaders are a heterogeneous group made up of unique individuals with individualistic needs. If this is accepted, no sample can be representative. However, a sample can demonstrate typical themes and common threads emerging from several interviews through virtual images of reality. Such images signify what is real to the respondent (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003). Virtual images are not perceived as being photographic or jigsaw-like in nature. With this perception there is no one-to-one correspondence, such that all the pieces need to be present in order to obtain a clear picture. The images may be perceived as holograms in which separate pieces of a hologram contain the complete picture in less detail than a complete hologram. A hologram is a constructed virtual image; it has depth and is three-dimensional and it can be viewed from different standpoints, but is the same picture (Bohm, 1985, p. 10).

The key sampling question is how much detail is sufficient for the study. The picture and detail will be provided by key informants and they may have different standpoints and hold different detail. For example a leader's view from one directorate in an organisation may

show some different details from that of a leader in another directorate. An informant may give a view that has some unique and idiosyncratic details. If two respondents from the same directorate give views, they may have some similarities and some individualistic details. Further interviews would add more detail that may be both unique in nature and confirming through similarity the views of other respondents. At a pre-study stage the data cannot be prejudged to be all unique or with some corroborating similarity of view.

The design of the research method is based upon in-depth interview (Geertz, 1973) and a search for meaning is implicit. The sample size is based on gaining sufficient data to offer depth and detail that will give a credible representation of a range of realities of leader and leadership development in local government. Given the constraints, of a self-funded small-scale Doctoral research study, seven leader respondents from different directorates offering a variety of leader professional areas is considered to be a sufficient sample to give the depth and detail required. Interviews will be supplemented with documentary evidence in the form of policy information, appraisal forms, and training and development information.

Because of the nature of the research question, the scope of the study and the depth and quantity of data produced by a semi-structured interview process, the sample size for the study needed to be relatively small and purposeful in character. Local government also has constraints on the time and costs for involving numbers of senior leaders in this study. Key informants are volunteers from within a pool of senior leaders in a district council. The sample was designed to access views about organisational development

requirement and individual development need from a range of professional service units and included both male and female respondents. The sample offered a rounded and holistic picture enabling the evidence to be viewed from different positions and perspectives.

A single local authority was considered as a complete entity, a hologram with each respondent a piece of that particular hologram. Individual leaders in a local authority are considered to provide a picture of the authority's processes for leader development. An individual view may be in less detail than the complete entity. By interviewing leaders from a variety of professional areas, increasing levels of detail are added. Participants are volunteers fulfilling the criteria which are:

- Functioning at a senior level within local government;
- Found within salary grades of senior manager and above;
- Possessing job titles of senior manager, chief officer, director or chief executive;
- Having a strategic role;
- Engaging with the political framework;
- Possessing high levels of staff responsibility;
- Possessing high levels of financial responsibility and control;
- They make a significant contribution to leadership development in local government;
- They have a significant involvement with the processes of identifying leadership requirements and leader needs;
- They work directly with local government leaders nationally and/or locally;

- They volunteer and are available and willing to take part in and engage with the research process.

The criteria are concerned to ensure participants are engaged, experienced and knowledgeable about the topic and themes of the research. The criteria also reflect the importance of organisational cooperation, engagement with the research processes and the longer term aspiration that the exploration of leadership development requirements and leader needs may be improved by this form of research.

A sample of seven senior leaders was drawn from a district council large enough to have a significant leadership board and service units. A district council was chosen because the majority of councils in England and Wales are in this category and so it contains the largest pool of senior leaders seeking development for further career progression. A typical senior leader career path is to gain broad experience in a district council before moving to greater levels of responsibility in unitary and county councils.

## **Creating the research instrument**

A strategy of using open questions within semi-structured interviewing was designed to obtain descriptive information and develop understanding about each of the issues and questions relevant to the topic of the research study (Gillman, 2000). Semi-structured interviewing is sufficiently flexible to allow researcher and respondent to exploit dimensions of the topic as they arise in the conversational style of the interview. A series of open questions also

act as prompts within a framework which permits lines of inquiry responsive to the interview data and contains the inquiry within the boundary of the topic of the research. Semi-structured questions in each of four areas, pertinent to the enquiry, were produced for interviews with respondent leaders.

The creation of a research instrument needed to be coherent with the purpose of the research and the literature that informs the conceptual framework. Interview questions are designed to access the direct personal experience of respondents. The complexities of the topic also required a presentation to respondents in a form that made it understandable and enabled a significant conversation about the research topic and respondent experience. Four broad areas of exploration are identified and linked to conceptual frameworks and related literature, as shown in Table 3.1 below. The conceptual framework along with the related literature formed the basis for the creation of a semi-structured interview instrument:

**Table 3.1 Conceptual framework**

<b>Area of exploration</b>	<b>Conceptual framework</b>	<b>Related literature</b>
1. Preparation for becoming a leader	Leadership is confusing, complex, contradictory, uncertain, abstract, plural and partially understood. Implies multiple understanding of leadership may exist in local government. Leadership may have recognisable features that can be identified, defined, sorted, classified and measured. Leadership may	Adair, 2007; Barker, 1997, 2001; Bass, 1999; Boal and Hooijberg, 2000; Carless et al., 2000; Chemers, 1997; Grint, 1997, 2003; House et al., 2002; Horner, 2003; House et al., 2004; Kirby et al., 1992, Lumby with Coleman, 2007; Lilienthal, 1967; Rost, 1991; Roush and Atwater, 1992; Tejada et al., 2001; Yukl, 2002.

	be an art, subjective and interpretative and has few objective features	
2. Organisational requirements for leadership	Requirement for leadership development during periods of modernisation and change. Making a distinction between leader and leadership development, employer requirements and personal needs, raising issues about how this impacts upon the nature of development and organisational performance. Identifying development requirements for the job, role and key tasks of leadership.	Adlam and Plumridge, 1990; Barker, 1997; CIPD, 2001; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008; Day, 2001; Fox, 1990; Harrison, 2006; Hofstede, 2001; IDeA Leadership Strategy, 2008; Lumby et al., 2005; Nunn, 2007; O'Donovan, 1990; Pedler, 1990; Reid et al., 2004; Rodgers et al., 2003.
3. Individual development needs	<p>The necessity for a performance management system to identify development needs.</p> <p>The requirement for a job description and key tasks when identifying development needs</p> <p>Appraisal and coaching as key elements for development and identification of development needs as applied to professional and leadership development.</p>	<p>CIPD, 2001; CIPD, 2004; Harrison, 2006; Lockett, 1992; Osborne, 1996; Smith, 2004; Reid et al., 2004.</p> <p>Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008; IDeA Leadership Strategy, 2008; Nunn, 2007.</p> <p>Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998; Bornholdt, 1978; Boyd, 2005; Cherrington, 1987; Cousins and Rogus, 1977; Daly, 2003; Devries, 1986; Grider and Toombs, 1993; Hallet, 1999; Harrison, 2006; Oberg, 1972, Oliver et al., 1997; Parsloe, 1995; Rice, 1985; Seldin, 1988; Webb, 1994.</p>
4. Potential for	Local government has performance issues that	Bains, 1972; Bovaird and Martin, 2003; Citizen's

improvement	rest at the door of leadership and indicate that leaders are in need of development. Leadership is to be more efficient, economic and effective through being more competitive, customer focused and entrepreneurial similar to the private sector. Transformative modernisation implies job specific tasks and leadership for those in senior leader positions.	Charter, 1991; Clarke and Stewart, 1993; DfES, 2005; Education Reform Act, 1991; Employment Organisation, 2003; IDeA, 2008; Jay, 1967; Laming, 2003; Lilienthal, 1967; Local Government Act, 1988; Lyons, 2006, Maud, 1967; Walsh, 1991.
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## **Interview instrument**

Four areas of questioning are identified from the conceptual framework (Table 3.1). The questions are designed to explore topics that enable the respondent to give a reflective description that is as comprehensive as possible. The aims of the interview instrument are to:

- provide the same semi-structure for each interview and across all of the respondents;
- provide a semi-structure based upon the research study themes and research questions;
- provide flexibility within the semi-structure to allow for the possibility of following up each respondent's personal reflections and perceptions.

Each area of exploration in the semi-structured instrument can be developed within each respondent interview. This enables prompting and further exploring which are designed to achieve both clarification

and depth. The semi-structured instrument is designed to gain access to the direct experience of each respondent through an interview process. The interview instrument was piloted, submitted and accepted by the University of Southampton Research Governance Office. The semi-structured instrument used in the research is found in Appendix 2.

## **Research ethics**

Ethical issues are of central importance to the quality findings for a strategy of practitioner qualitative research method. This has been powerfully explained by Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007):

The conduct of quality practitioner research is in its very nature ethical business. The dynamic which exists between practitioner research and professional practice for educators is such that ethicality cannot be divorced from quality in practitioner research any more than it can be divorced from quality in professional practice. (Groundwater-Smith and Mockler, 2007, p. 209)

A practical application of ethics requires information gathering processes to be guided by principles of respect for those who are contributing and ensuring that their informed consent is freely given. This research enquiry conforms to the code of ethical practice laid down by Southampton University and that of the British Educational Research Association (BERA). A code of ethics and research protocol was developed for this particular research inquiry (Appendix 3). It was shared with each participant as part of seeking their informed consent to participate in the research. Participation in the research was entirely voluntary and appropriate permission was sought from the relevant organisation. An explanation of the research aims and

the right of the participants to withdraw at any stage of the research was given to each participant. Anonymity was offered through the use of alphanumeric codes during the research inquiry process and beyond in the final written thesis. The use of minimal biographical information also helps maintain a level of anonymity.

Anonymity cannot be absolute and is a question of degree (Wengraf, 2001). A weak degree of anonymity is when non-work associates would recognise the respondent being interviewed. A stronger level of anonymity is when work associates cannot recognise the person giving the interview, and it is this level that is aimed for in this study. The highest level is when the person themselves would not recognise their contribution to the study. The nature of this study precludes the highest level of anonymity. A factor in relation to anonymity for this study is masking the identity of the local government organisation. However, since the local government organisation involved may be well known, absolute guarantees against determined and speculative identification cannot be offered. An ethos of public service means that the organisation may welcome being known as a participant seeking to improve through research.

Each interview was conducted face-to-face within the respondents' organisation. The sensitivity of a political and employment environment required a degree of sensitivity and the building of trust. Alphanumeric coding of the interviews, limited biographical data and the offer of confidentiality assisted the process of constructing trust. Each interview was digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were offered back to the respondent for checking, editing, agreeing and approval by each

respondent. Respondent checking ensures reliable representation contributing to credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Interview and respondent details were kept securely and protected from access by either locked or password-protected files, or both. All interviews were held within the participants' own working environment and organisation. To some extent this addressed perceptions of power between interviewer and respondent. It was also explained that information was being gathered by a research student from the University of Southampton. All participants received a draft copy of their interview contribution prior to the final inclusion within the research study. The ethical protocol followed throughout the research is recorded in Appendix 3.

## **Processes of analysis**

Two related processes of analysis are used; one to organise the data and the other to analyse the data. The data are organised and handled through creating codes and topic themes (Gibbs, 2002). There are computer software programmes available to assist with the organisation of large quantities of qualitative data. Software programmes such as Nvivo are helpful when there are many respondents and data are extensive in range and depth. The advantage of close contact with information from a small scale study outweighed the benefit of using data handling software. For this small scale study a process of highlighting, text cutting and pasting was found to be an appropriate way of organising data. However, Nvivo was used in a limited way to organise an initial large number of codes before reduction to those with significance. Data are analysed through a combination of inductive and deductive

approaches (Layder, 1998). A combination of inductive and deductive analysis takes account of both existing theoretical ideas and ideas which are developed directly from the data (Lewins and Silver, 2007).

Familiarity with the basic data and policy documents was achieved through reading and interacting with the data. This enabled initial coding categories to emerge from the data itself (Abrahamson, 1983). During this initial phase there was concern about the variety and numbers of codes and a subsequent refining process reduced the variety and number. This was a result of combining repetitive ideas and identifying larger themes that connect codes together and by eliminating idiosyncratic ideas and random codes. Repeating ideas are similar ideas expressed by different respondents, while a theme is a larger topic that organises or connects a group of repetitive ideas. The coded ideas and themes were analysed with the following questions in mind:

- Are there common themes emerging across respondents about specific topics, if so how do they illuminate the theme?
- Are there deviations from these common themes?
- What factors might explain any patterns and deviations?
- How are respondents' experiences and context related to their perspective and behaviour?
- What is significant in the experiences of the respondents and how does this help illuminate the themes and topics?
- Do any patterns suggest that additional data may be needed?

(adapted from Berkowitz, 1997)

By grouping unit codes and themes, categories of meaning emerged to provide a consistent format for presenting the experiences and perspectives explored within each topic area. Emerging categories of meaning were inter-related in all the responses to the enquiry. This process led to a 'categorisation' of the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 203). Evidence quotations exemplifying typical perspectives of the combined data analysis illuminate the process of exploring and identifying senior leadership development requirements and leader needs. Quotations are coded to the transcripts so that an audit trail of the data may be traced to each.

The data gathering method for this study also drew upon relevant documents as sources of supplementary evidence. Selected organisational documentation can be investigated efficiently because relevant documents are selected and explored as corroborative evidence faster than semi-structured interviewing (Bowen, 2009). However, the lack of availability of some documents (completed appraisals) limited the range of this corroborative method. Documents have the advantage of being non-reactive and unaffected by the research process. Documents are also stable, not subject to alteration and are available for repeated review.

Documents considered likely to be important supplementary evidence included the learning and development charter, policy documents, performance review or appraisal documents and documents relating to development and training. Documents were identified by a process of finding, selecting, making sense of and synthesising data contained in documents relevant to the enquiry (Bowen, 2009). The capacity to identify pertinent information is part of the researcher's experience and training in research

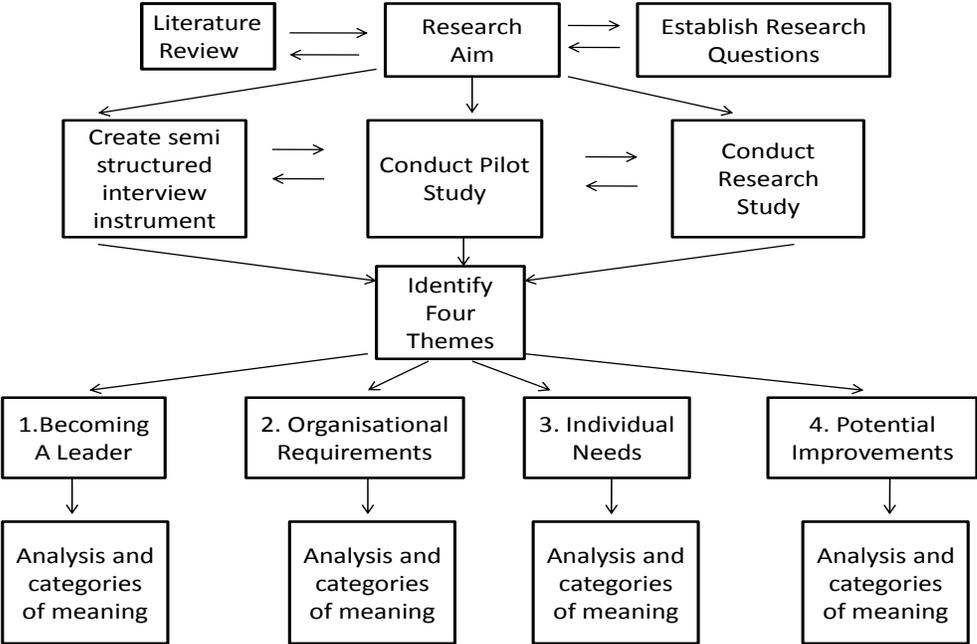
methodologies. The intention was not to produce an in-depth analysis of the documentation as an independent analytical process. Rather, it was to use documentation as a form of checking and corroboration of expressed respondent experience (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Meaningful and relevant passages of text were identified by the researcher. Identified texts were used to corroborate interview data and themes, codes and patterns pertinent to the focus of the study (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). This form of document scrutiny assists the process of illuminating meaning, developing understanding and discovering insights into relevant parts of the study (Merriam, 1988). Policy documents are viewed as statements of behavioural intent that describe what is expected to happen in certain circumstances. As such they are considered as documents of interpretation that offer guidance rather than a prescription for reality. Documents have been scrutinised for possible interpretations related to the experience of the respondents and the categories of meaning emerging from the analysis of the in-depth interviews. Those selected are viewed as complementary to the interview data, providing background and context. They acted as supplementary data with the potential to provide a means of tracking development processes and to offer a way of corroborating and verifying some of the findings in the semi-structured interview data (Bowen, 2009).

### **Analysing and interpreting the data**

The semi-structured interview instrument was a common template for all of the seven interviews comprising the data. The template has four themes with four sub-questions in each. Every sub-question was subject to enquiring and delving further or clarifying understanding

and checking by adding supplementary questions. The sub-questioning individualised each interview through an exploratory dialogue, and an active interview process facilitated responsive questioning as the interview progressed and produced in-depth reflective data (Gubrium and Holstein, 2003). An analysis and interpretation of the data is required to do justice to its inherent richness and also to present the analysis in a succinct format, given the contextual limitations of the study.

**Figure 3.1 Research process and analysis**



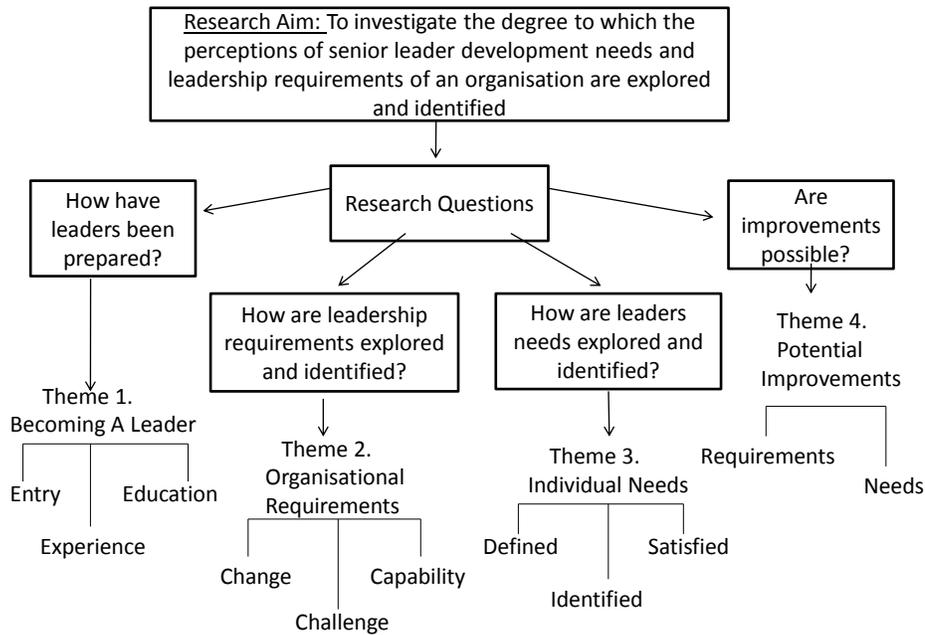
The process of analysis made use of several steps designed to capture the scope and range of the seven interviews and to plumb the depths of each interview through more detailed examination. A first step was to read all of the data and interact with it, noting emergent items of meaning with potential for coding. A second step

was to identify units of meaning useful for subsequent in-depth analysis. The reading was done in two ways; first by reading each interview separately, then by reading each theme across all seven interviews. This enabled coding and analysis to integrate the four themes across all seven interviews.

A third step was to condense the codes and categorise them by looking for patterns, common ideas and topics across all interview data and also to look for any distinguishing and distinctive features contained within each interview. A fourth step was to use the emergent patterns and distinguishing features to gain deeper understanding and insights and to illuminate and form links with existing and potential theoretical ideas and models. The analysis process is partly formed by analysing all data deductively and partly by using the emerging insights and understanding to analyse all data inductively (Lewins and Silver, 2007).

Figure 3.2 provides an overview of the research aim, questions and thematic categories of analysis.

**Figure 3.2 Research aim and questions**



This chapter has discussed issues related to the research design and provided a description of how a research instrument was constructed. To establish fitness for purpose the research design and instrument are required to be tested through piloting. The next chapter describes the process for piloting the research protocols.

# Chapter Four

## **Introduction**

Chapter three described the choice of research methodology taking account of ontology and epistemology. The creation of the research instrument was also described. However, before the research instrument could be used to gather research data it needed to be shown to be fit for purpose through piloting. This chapter describes how leaders in local government were accessed and became involved in the research study. Two pilot studies informed the process for the data gathering method used in the research study. The purpose of the first pilot study was to ascertain whether the research question framework was worded in such a way that it accessed the data required for the research study. A second pilot used an amended framework to test an active interviewing technique and strategy for giving respondents information prior to the interview. The chapter concludes by describing the interview process.

## **Accessing leaders, piloting and data gathering**

Gaining access to local government leaders was dependent upon gaining the cooperation of a local authority. However, during 2010 local authorities were facing considerable difficulties and pressures. An economic crisis plus an imminent general election added to local authorities' already busy workload and created significant pressures for their leaders. In these circumstances local authorities face stringencies when considering participation in a small-scale research project, involving some financial costs and also time away from operational responsibilities for their leaders taking part in the study. There is also a requirement for council officers to justify their participation. As a researcher there was a need to present to prospective local authorities the benefit to them. Therefore, a short synopsis outlining the research and its benefits accompanied the invitation to participate sent to local authorities along the south coast of England.

The responses may be classified as declined due to pressure of work, declined due to being inappropriate at this time, accepted in principle and accepted with conditions. One local authority responded with an invitation to meet its chief executive and the head of its human relations department (HR) for an exploratory discussion. At this meeting the head of HR indicated that the organisation was in the process of conducting a learning and development review, and in the light of this it was considered that the research project would be of mutual benefit. The research would benefit respondents through an opportunity to reflect in depth upon their preparation for and experience of leadership, and would also benefit the organisation as

it reviewed learning and development for senior leaders and leadership development. It was agreed that the receipt of an early interim report from the research findings might be used to supplement the organisation's own review of learning and development. The organisation was also pleased to participate in research intended to improve the process of leadership development in a broader context. A meeting of all the senior leaders, chaired by the chief executive, was used to present the proposed research study. Following a question and answer exploration of the study the organisation agreed to participate in the research and a number of senior leaders volunteered to participate as interviewees. All the volunteers conformed to the criteria for local authority senior leaders as previously specified (pp. 32-3).

### **Pilot purpose and studies**

An interview instrument was produced, submitted and accepted by the Research Governance Office. Before the interview schedule could be used to collect research data it was necessary to demonstrate its fitness for purpose and it was therefore piloted and tested. The purpose of piloting was to establish whether the semi-structured interview method would yield appropriate data. Two aspects of the method were piloted; the first checked if the interview instrument was worded appropriately and accessed relevant information, and the second established if the interview technique produced the in-depth information required for analysis. A pilot study was also an opportunity to refine interviewing skills and to learn how the interview process worked in practice. The questions needed to be at the right level and take up the amount of time indicated in the participant information. Other aspects of the research study were

piloted to ascertain how well they worked, including the ethics form, participant information and consent form. The information gathered was also used to assess whether the data were amenable to the method of analysis.

## **Pilot study one**

The first pilot study was to test the wording of the interview instrument. A volunteer from a number of senior leader contacts known to the researcher was interviewed, an educational consultant who had previously been an assistant education officer in a large county Council for over twenty years. The interviewee had extensive experience of being a head teacher within several schools and considerable experience of leadership development.

The interviewee and the researcher met prior to the interview to discuss the study and to answer questions and concerns prior to arranging the actual pilot interview. The interviewee was given the participant information sheet and consent form to read and peruse in detail. Sometime later, an interview was arranged by mutual agreement and took place within the home of the interviewee. The transcribed interview was offered back to the interviewee for editing and agreement. No alterations were made and the data were agreed.

Each of the four areas outlined in the semi-structured instrument had been explored during the interview. A focus of concern in the first pilot interview was ensuring an effective wording of the interview instrument. In consequence, the first pilot interview was characterised by a mechanical and formalised use of the instrument

with very little probing and exploration of the responses given by the interviewee. As a result, the first interview data lacked a sustained level of reflection. It produced adequate data, but without the richness and depth demanded by the method of analysis. Also, the interviewee recounted at length a personal history that lacked an up-to-date focus and clarity about each topic area. The pilot interview fulfilled the purpose of indicating where minor modifications and amendments to the wording would improve the questions within the instrument. The changes improved the transition from one area of questioning to the next and created a focus upon relevant, up-to-date information. A modified interview instrument was re-submitted and accepted by the Research Governance Office before being used in the second pilot interview.

## **Pilot study two**

A second pilot interviewee was chosen from a number of senior leaders at X Borough Council volunteering to take part in the research study. They had been invited to take part in the research study during a presentation at a senior management board meeting and one of the volunteers had time available to participate in this pilot; the selection was a convenience sample, accessed on the basis of availability. By using an X Borough Council volunteer, the pilot was matched and aligned to the research method. The respondent was actively working in the district council used for the main research data gathering, was unknown to the researcher and the interview was conducted in accordance with the method of the study.

Semi-structured interviewing is designed to capture a respondent's personal experience and understanding and enable them to be open to deeper reflections about the themes of the research study. Therefore, a strategy of giving prior information was piloted in the second interview. Quality data is considered to be produced from deep reflection upon personal experiences of work based leadership development. A lesson from the first pilot interview was that some prior thinking and preparation was vital if deeper reflective information gathering was to be enabled. A number of documents were forwarded by e-mail to the second pilot interviewee two weeks before the interview. Along with the standard ethical participant information and consent form there was a synopsis of the research, an abstract and a copy of the interview schedule.

By giving access to the information and interview schedule ahead of the actual interview, the effect of surprise and the need to 'think on one's feet' was minimised. The strategy reduced the sense of the interviewer leading the interviewee blindly from one area of questioning to another. The interviewee knew what was coming up, had brought the interview schedule with them and had made some notes in advance. This set the tone for the interview to be conducted in a much more conversational style and reduced reliance on the schedule and its exact wording. The strategy also gave the interviewee confidence, speaking with assurance, minimal hesitation and gave relevant examples from their experience. An interview technique of probing answers included the ethics of stretching comfort zones and dealing with experiences in depth without making the respondent feel uncomfortable. Implicit to the strategy is using the semi-structured interview as a framework without relying entirely

on the interview instrument's questions. This contrasted with the first pilot interview that had relied upon the interview instrument and its wording to access data related to the experience, understanding and meaning held by the interviewee. There had been little deviation from the words in the instrument and virtually no follow-up exploration or probing, and the interview had been more passive than active. For the second pilot, the interviewer was better prepared, with more familiarity with the instrument, less dependence upon it and a willingness to engage in a dialogue with the interviewee. The strategy facilitated an active interview that enabled probing and deeper exploration of the interviewee's responses and their perspective and understanding. In this pilot the instrument was used to give structure to the conversation, but the instrument was not allowed to restrict the dialogue. As a result the dialogue was more open and explorative.

Trust is formed and meaning is constructed through the creation of a responsive relationship between respondent and interviewer (Gubrium and Holstein, 1995; Jorgenson, 1991, 1995). Active interviewing using a semi-structured instrument with prepared questions and responsively following up and exploring what the respondent had said enabled access to the deeper meaning held by the respondent. The interview developed from a series of questions and answers to an exploration of the topic areas. This was a considerable improvement on the first pilot and enabled gathering data that were richer in content, grounded in the respondent's experience and deeper in reflection and insight.

A number of metaphors were used by the respondent to illuminate their experience of preparation for a leader's role. For example, they expressed the idea of being thrown in at the deep end, of training and developments being like a lifebelt, and of being like a sponge soaking up techniques, tools and theories. They expressed ideas of training as giving them labels to put on the experience of their day-to-day leadership, and talked of early experiences being steep learning curves with some experiences being more like cliff faces. This level of detail and depth of information was not accessed in the first pilot interview. The respondent was also willing to talk about emotional responses such as feelings of anxiety, fear, excitement and expectation. The instrument schedule had come alive by engaging with the respondent in a dialogue. By asking questions in response to the information given, the topic boundary was maintained and extended into data gathering that was more comprehensive, colourful and expressively intense than in the first pilot.

Responsive exploratory questions cannot be written down in advance since they are formed actively as the conversation progresses. An implication is that this form of interviewing cannot be replicated with the level of reliability of more structured approaches. However, reliability of semi-structured methods has been addressed earlier in this chapter on methodology. For this research study the interview instrument, the process and the technique are required to show that the data gathered is trustworthy, authentic, credible and dependable. The two pilot interviews demonstrated that a combination of an appropriately worded instrument, providing a framework, gives good coverage of the topic areas and a probing and exploratory interview

technique produces data of appropriate richness and depth for the purposes of the research study.

## **Data gathering**

The organisation participating in the research was a large south coast district council volunteering to take part in a small-scale research study. Although its participation was voluntary, it was constrained by staff availability and the coincidence of the organisation's own learning and development review with the nature of the research topic. Locating an organisation willing to participate in this study then agreeing participation and negotiating access to a public sector organisation proved to be a time intensive process. The consent of the chief executive and senior leadership was given on the basis that the research interviewing would be purposeful, time sensitive, limited in number, and providing some benefit to the organisation. The organisational context confirmed the appropriateness of the research topic, methodology and sample size.

An interview with each volunteer was scheduled and used the workplace office of each participant. Each interview was conducted according to the method outlined in the second pilot and used the strategy of sending, by e-mail, to each participant some background information and the interview schedule. Details relating to the spread of gender, professional background and interview data gathered are presented in Appendix 4. After each interview the transcribed data were returned to each respondent for editing and agreement. There were some amendments that consisted of deleting parts of the text referring to political leadership and the views and behaviour of politicians. For reasons of sensitivity to the nature of politics in local

government, the deletions were respected. The data consists of seven interviews lasting from 70 to 85 minutes and running to approximately 59,000 words in total. The agreed interview transcripts formed the research data used for analysis and interpretation. A summary description of the interviewees is provided in Appendix 4.

This chapter has described the information gathering process. The next chapter provides an analysis of the data relating to becoming a leader and organisational requirements identified in themes one and two.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter set out how the research instrument and interview technique were developed and used to gather the research data. This chapter provides an analysis of the data from the first two themes. The analysis begins with theme one, becoming a leader and deals with the entry, experience and education of leaders as they prepare to make a transition from professional to leader. The second theme explores organisational requirements, organisational change, challenge and capability to perform.

## **Introductory observations**

The seven respondents shared some common features such as being professional unit heads, professionally qualified, experienced in local government and having responsibilities across a number of related professional functions. They are also unique individuals in that they have distinctive professional bases and backgrounds, different work experiences and different journeys into leader positions. Appendix 4 summarises these features and shows that only two of the respondents have management qualifications, although all seven are professionally qualified. Three of the seven respondents have some private sector experience and every respondent has substantial public sector experience, one working for X Borough Council for thirty-one years.

## **Theme one: becoming a leader**

### **Entry**

The semi-structured interview began by exploring the process of entering a leader role. All respondents had a professional base in which early work experience and qualifications were gained. This suggests a foundation on which respondents built before entering management and leadership. Respondents perceive that successful professional work and experience affords them credibility and respect from other professionals, and that credibility was required for entry to a position of manager and leader as their careers progressed:

*Yes I did (have credibility), I was professionally qualified. I then took responsibility for pursuing my own management development through the Open University course. (4LN)*

Respondents made reference to three aspects of their work, professional, managerial and leadership. These aspects were explained in various ways depending upon the professional area and particular work experiences of the respondent. Typically, however, respondents explained the professional as technical skill and subject knowledge, the managerial as scheduling, organising and resourcing, and the leadership as vision, strategy, change and corporate working. No respondent perceived their role as pure leadership. For the first theme, Table 5.1 shows a relatively small total number of references (55), but they make a significant comment upon professional, managerial, and leadership work.

**Table 5.1 References to different roles**

Professional	20 references	All seven sources
Managerial	15 references	Six of seven sources
Leadership	20 references	All seven sources

The following are examples of respondent references to different roles:

*I'm like down on the shop floor. I do know what's happening because I get out there and see what's happening. I also get involved in what I think is more management issues. (5LN)*

*As managers and leaders, because I think it's probably got blurred around the edges there... .Our leaders and managers, because they are interchangeable. (LN7)*

*My personal view is that I'm a business leader rather than an IT specialist. (2LN)*

This study does not provide evidence that there are distinctly separate roles for professional, manager and leader in any pure form. There is evidence (see quotations below) that the different roles are combined. The combinations reflect roles that overlap, are integrated or allow for two or more roles to be significant in the working life of senior leaders. The roles and combinations of them can be arranged in the following ways:

#### Distinctly singular roles

1. Professional
2. Manager
3. Leader

#### Dualistic roles

4. Professional/Manager
5. Professional/Leader
6. Manager/Leader

#### Trilogistic roles

7. Professional /Manager/Leader

The data indicate combinations of roles that have significance for respondents, permitting their allocation to a category. Table 5.2 shows how each respondent combination of professional, manager and leader may be categorised:

**Table 5.2 Respondent combination of professional, manager and leader roles**

Rpndnt	3LN	5LN	6LN	4LN	1LN	2LN	7LN
Professional /Manager	Combined Professional /Manager elements	Combined Professional /Manager elements					
Professional /Leader			Combined Professional /Leader elements				
Professional /Manager/ Leader				Combined Professional /Manager/ Leader elements			
Manager/ Leader					Combined Manager/ Leader elements	Combined Manager/ Leader elements	Combined Manager/ Leader elements

Professional/Managers describe work roles with a strong professional element:

*I earn respect. I earn that respect first of all by my professional knowledge. So I have professional knowledge.... I know more than most what is actually happening in reality. I suppose I do this by the old-fashioned idea of managing by walking about. (5LN)*

Professional/Leaders describe both professional and leader roles:

*As a hands-on leader I like to know what my staff are doing and how they are doing it.... But also apart from that my role as a leader is to look at the wider picture of the Council. (6LN)*

Manager/Leaders leave professional activities to their staff and concentrate on management and leadership issues:

*There is no way that I can begin to do the professional job, but it is to enable the people who do the professional jobs and to*

*provide what they need and also to give them the confidence as well I think. (1LN)*

A combination of all three roles was also described:

*The job is probably about 20% corporate leadership, in terms of professional it is probably 20 to 30% and the remainder is about management, some of which will be leadership. (4LN)*

Senior leaders in this study have entered management and leadership by taking different journeys, but arrived at the same destination. They are all unit heads and a unit has a specific set of professional activities. Four of the respondents retain significant professional responsibilities (3LN, 4LN, 5LN, 6LN) and three have significant managerial/leadership responsibilities (1LN, 2LN, 7LN).

The journey from professional to leader was perceived as preparation for entry into the current senior leader role. The way the role can be interpreted and how it combines and mixes professionalism, managerialism and leadership may be influenced by the nature of the preparation. The notion of preparation as applied to leadership can be viewed as dissimilar to the preparation for more stable activities such as professional work. Professionals use established techniques, tools, skills, procedures and processes that change little over prolonged periods of time. Professional tasks are subject to established procedures and practices. Established customs and practice have longevity and continue unchanged for long periods of time. The data cited above suggest that leadership activity influences professionals to change these established methods, procedures and processes, to extend beyond the professional function, to take a

broader corporate view, becoming more community focused, working in partnerships and accepting a vision and culture different to that of the professional.

## **Experience**

Comments from respondents about leadership preparation suggest a combination of professional experience, experience of difficult and challenging projects and experience of formal courses, role modelling and experience of socialisation by peers. This may require a constant level of adaptability, flexibility and creativity (LN2). Leaders say (LN1, LN4, LN6, LN7) that they are excited, stimulated and motivated by change. They also say that professionals are fearful of change. All the respondents in this study began as practicing professionals making a transition to management and leadership. Such a transition may be facilitated by the opportunity to experience difficult and challenging tasks that include an element of change.

The data suggest that leaders in this study prepare themselves for leadership from a foundation of credibility within a specific professional domain. Professional credibility has been achieved by experiencing difficult tasks and responsibilities that stretch, challenge and increase the range of skills and depth of respondent experience. Professional experience preceded both management and leadership experience. A feature of this period is curriculum vitae (CV) building with work projects that provide experiences that are outside the ordinary day-to-day sphere of the professional. For example, respondent LN1 describes becoming a professional team leader before taking on increasing levels of management and leadership. Respondent LN6 describes a gradual process of increasing

professional skills and responsibilities before being offered a management, then a leadership position.

Preparational experience for a manager/leader can be incremental, a step-by-step journey through a professional hierarchy. For example, respondents 5LN and 3LN describe a career that moves steadily through the ranks of the profession and then includes management. A professional/leader describes an experience of progressive rises in career responsibility over a career spanning three decades in one organisation (6LN). Manager/leaders describe significant jumps in responsibility, with leaps and bounds on a career path that has episodes of rapid career progress (1LN, 2LN):

*I have actually taken a couple of decent sized jobs. So my preparation has not been a slow incremental climb. (1LN)*

Rapid career progress in management and leadership has an association with emotional stress and steep learning curves:

*I moved from a team leader to a unit head and I thought, oh god what have I done... It is absolutely terrifying... I did have sleepless nights. (1LN)*

A professional/manager/leader (4LN) was prepared by taking advantage of opportunities as they arose. A responsive approach affords the flexibility to combine all three roles of professional, manager and leader in any job opening that emerges:

*Then through the transformational changes that took place with the services, a partnership arose with X Borough Council. So in many respects I was well-placed in terms of competencies to take on (got the job) the partnership agenda. (4LN)*

Experiencing challenging tasks precedes formal learning and may be used opportunistically to gain experience of management and leadership. Emerging leaders then actively use formal courses to search for practical work based solutions to problems, to provide structure, language, principles and theories that underpin good work based practice. A respondent describes the experience as follows:

*For me it has been because having the experience has been about finding out for myself what questions I need to have answered. Then the course answers the questions rather than doing it the other way around. If you have not got any experience then you don't know quite what to do with the information, tools and techniques and you have to find that out later. (1LN)*

Experiencing work projects that are described as challenging, involve elements of change requiring flexibility, adaptability and a broader strategic view of the work of the professional. These work experiences are described by interviewees as providing steep learning curves and 'deep end' experiences. Early in their careers professionals take the opportunity to engage with a variety of experiences requiring them to be creative, to be strategic and to introduce some level of change or innovation. By doing this a transition to management and leadership may occur.

## **Education**

For the purpose of this aspect of the research, 'education' is taken to mean learning in all its forms. A typical educational route begins with formal learning leading to a professional qualification or demonstration of a high level of professional competence within a particular professional domain, or both. The route continues with learning about management and leadership. This learning is perceived by respondents to be predominately work based learning. Only two of the seven respondents gained any formal qualification in management or leadership. Formal education was used by 4LN to gain a diploma in management before gaining a leadership position and 5LN to gain a Master in Business Administration qualification after gaining a leadership position. However, all respondents report learning management and leadership from work experience. This suggests a desire for theory based preparatory courses in leadership prior to gaining a role of manager or leader may be low. What appears to be valued by an organisation and potential leaders are abilities to enact leadership, rather than possession of an educational qualification about leadership. Abilities to enact leadership are perceived to be learned from life and work:

*I have got it (leadership learning) from the experiences throughout my life and through my work. (6LN)*

Some respondents expressed a strongly held view that some leaders with the title of leader are without leadership, and no educational programme would be able to teach it to them:

*But there are some people, in my view, who will never be leaders no matter how many courses they go on... some people will never learn in a month of Sundays. (LN7)*

*There are also people in positions of leadership who should never be in those positions... I'm very much in the mindset that you can't necessarily train someone in leadership skills. (LN6)*

This may be a self-justification based simply on personal experience and belief. However, Handy (1992) also expresses the doubt that leadership can be taught, but is in no doubt that leadership can be learned or discovered. It may be that the central classroom for leadership is the workplace. In this study respondents expressed a view that formal educational processes do follow after steep learning curves in workplace learning:

*It was very much on the job, I had some really good opportunities with some very steep learning curves and in the middle of that I had some training...I think it is the better way... You actually do it on a practical basis first and then apply the theory to it. Programmes and training are very good because they focus upon areas and they put a structure around it and also put some language around it. (2LN)*

Learning about leadership may also involve an ability to reflect on personal performance and to take positive learning from the experiences. For example interviewee 1LN described a work project and a difficulty they had with an older and experienced professional. On reflection, they realised that the concern of the older professional centred on being judged on the whole project's quality, rather than their part within it. The respondent then explained how they learned to communicate better and to ensure that project members knew the boundaries of their responsibilities. Preparation for leadership was reported as involving learning from difficult work projects, direct hands-on activity and an emotional engagement with change,

extending beyond professional knowledge and seeking feedback on performance as a mirror to greater levels of self-awareness. All respondents believe leader preparation features self-awareness and self-development that make use of personal reflection and modelling as an aid to learning (this links with appraisal, pp. 158-9). Modelling as used by respondents appears to mean learning from those leaders possessing some desired attribute or skill. Respondents desire to acquire what they perceive good leaders to possess. The data indicate seven different mechanisms used by respondents to learn from others through modelling:

1. Modelling skills: identifying relevant skills by watching and imitating:

*I put great store into latching on to other people's abilities... it is like an informal apprenticeship sort of thing. (LN1)*

2. Modelling style: influenced by perceived ineffective and effective styles:

*So the good ones and the bad ones have both been an influence because you look at them and their style of management and you learn a lot. (LN2)*

3. Modelling good practice: reflecting on groups of tasks that make up processes leading to good practice:

*Time for thinking around good practice in leadership and modelling... there is a need to share good practice. (LN3)*

4. Modelling communication: learning how to discuss and present ideas as a leader:

*I learned a great deal from peer discussions and reviews. (LN4)*

5. Modelling successful theories: reading how theories have been applied by other leaders and copying them:

*I read management theories and different things like how others have succeeded. (LN5)*

6. Modelling tasks: observing how other leaders have gone about a task and imitating behaviour and actions:

*Find out what somebody's good at then you feed off their knowledge and ability. This is what I mean by role modelling. (LN6)*

7. Modelling values: perceiving other leaders intentions, beliefs and values:

*I appreciate people who have credibility, they've got to be honest, they have got to be open, they have got to be prepared to take risks, and they have got to be supportive of others. (LN7)*

Although respondents perceive modelling to be a good way to learn, as a process it has limitations. A model is only useful if it can be applied and works, and what works for one person may not work for another in similar circumstances, perhaps through drawing upon examples of contingent leadership and assuming they are examples of model leadership. Lord and Maher (1991) have pointed out that perceptions of leaders are produced as a result of two processes; prototype matching, and causal inference or attribution. The two processes create a conceptual personal prototype made up of certain attributes, traits and behaviours associated with leaders. This research suggests that when someone matches the conceptual prototype construction (a model), they are described or accepted as a leader. Individual respondents may have internally constructed

their own model and unconsciously projected this onto others resembling their internal image. Model leaders may also depend upon how 'leader' is being conceptualised and understood.

No documentary evidence indicated that senior staff had attempted to agree a consistent understanding of leader and leadership. Respondents expressed a general understanding about leadership and used different terminology to explain it, but no consistent view emerged that defined leader and leadership:

*I just don't think there's a kind of a statement anywhere about what leadership is, there's no definition sort of thing. (3LN)*

*I do not think we spend a huge amount of time talking about leadership within the organisation. (7LN)*

In the absence of a clear organisational concept of leader and leadership, respondents form their own views and also accept a common set of ideas about leaders. Respondent perceptions of leader had both a shared common core and an individualised variation across the seven respondents. Table 5.3 indicates both individual and shared ideas about leaders:

**Table 5.3 Perceptions of leader**

<b>Rpndnt</b>	<b>Individualised perception of leader</b>	<b>Shared perceptions of leader</b>
1LN	The leader brings many different people together and reconciles differences	Setting a direction, putting something in place for everyone to follow, vision and creativity
2LN	The leader is someone able to communicate through story making and story telling	Taking people through change, courageous decision maker, adaptable, flexible with integrity
3LN	The leader is a member of the hierarchy	Has an overview and moves things forward with a strategic business plan
4LN	A leader is there to ensure business survival	Influences the direction towards becoming a successful business
5LN	A leader wears many masks, and changes faces depending upon context and what is needed	Getting people to go in a common direction with a common goal and vision
6LN	Leaders are all round people with experience of life	Someone you can trust who encourages and has a wider picture
7LN	Leaders are risk takers and risk supporters	Someone who has credibility, a vision, open, honest and supportive

Barker (1997) has pointed out that if we do not know what leadership is; we cannot adequately develop and train leaders. An implication of a poorly conceived organisational concept of leaders and leadership may be that the organisation will find it difficult to identify consistently agreed requirements for leadership.

Respondents have some commonly held core ideas about leaders but with enough individual variation to suggest a difficulty in forming an acceptable organisational definition of leader and leadership development. Difficulties in understanding leaders and leadership are widely reported in the literature (Adair, 2007; Barker, 1997; Chemers, 1997; Grint, 2003; Lumby with Coleman, 2007; Yukl, 2002).

Exploring the journey of becoming a leader has illuminated a process of transition from professional to emergent leader. The data in this

theme suggests the transition process to be primarily facilitated by work based learning rather than formal educational programmes. The data also indicate that a leader does not exist in a pure form, although job titles may confuse this. A leader emerges with a role combined with professional or managerial aspects, or both. Employees with 'leader' in their job titles identify for the organisation a figurehead, a position and place in a hierarchy. However, respondents do not believe all employees with the title of leader are enacting leadership. Emergent leaders gain professional credibility and then extend to management or leadership, or both, through the experience of challenging tasks that involve changing some aspect of professional work. The speed of transition to leader may depend upon how the roles of professionalism, managerialism and leadership are combined. The data signpost a possibility that dropping the professional base and combining management and leadership makes for a rapid transition associated with steep learning curves and emotional stress. Leadership work based experience stimulates leaders to seek out and satisfy learning and development needs. Change also has an impact and in consequence individual leaders may recognise some personal development needs and the organisation may recognise some specific development requirements.

## **Theme two: organisational requirements**

### **Change**

In local government transformational change is referred to as modernisation. Leadership enacted when there are significant changes may be driven by a vision of a future state requiring a

process of implementation. The enactment of leadership may be dependent upon a context of change. Change has risks of failure and emotional consequences for leaders and followers. Despite risks and consequences, respondents from the seven interviews report instances of change 116 times, adding weight to the significance of change for leaders. Some examples are:

*I think organisational change is frightening for most people and it brings about fear. (7LN)*

*I have always worked with change around me. I have initiated quite a lot of change because that has been about bringing in new things that need to happen. (2LN)*

*This required the ability to lead a successful change because there were a number of different agendas. (4LN)*

*Organisational changes do have an effect upon staff and we do consider the staff when we make the decision. (6LN)*

When respondents talked about change they made no distinction between manager and leader. The leader/manager as a position, title or figurehead enacts leadership activities within processes of transformative change. Rodgers defined leadership as a process, indicating that leadership is 'a dynamic and living activity, a process of interaction with emerging properties... and a context of enactment' (Rodgers et al., 2003, p. 11). The position of leader in times of stability overlaps and has many parallels with management (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Handy, 1992; Schein, 2004; Zaleznik, 1992). When Rodgers et al. (2003) refer to a context of enactment; this may be transformative change because change affords leadership the opportunity to be enacted, to flourish and to have a prominent role. It then follows that leaders need change in order for their leadership

to be demonstrated, to be made visible through the impact of their work and role. For local government a context of change brings leadership to life and may be a catalyst providing the opportunity for leadership to emerge and for leaders to be recognised. The perception of Barker (1997, 2001) was that in the absence of significant change there is no need for leaders or leadership. This appears to be making a link with leadership and a context for change. It may accord with the notion of Kotter (1990) that leadership is about coping with change.

A relationship involving co-creation may exist between local government leadership and change through modernisation required by central government. Leadership in this study seems to be brought into being by change, and significant change does not appear to happen without the emergence of some form of leadership. Change provides a common backcloth against which leaders in the many different professional areas accessed by this study have an opportunity to exercise leadership and emerge as leaders. Respondents describe providing leadership within the context of change as it applies to particular professions, to the corporate organisation and to the business application of X Borough Council's services to the community. Respondent 4LN describes working with change as a professional leader combining with another local authority to ensure the business survival of the service through change:

*I guess in terms of implementing change one part of the partnership did involve a restructure. This meant that staff from Y local authority were required to relocate to X Borough Council. So I was very keen to try to ensure that in implementing that change there was a benefit to those individuals. (4LN)*

All respondents indicated that leadership was about movement, a dynamic of forward motion in the direction of somewhere other than the present context and situation. This implies that the work situation for both leaders and followers will change. Data suggest transformative changes in the workplace draw upon review, reflection, prioritisation and strategic planning for effective implementation of change through leadership activity. Leadership skills, knowledge and understanding are tested during periods of change. New or different skills and knowledge may be required. Change processes take time for reflection and planning if they are to be effective, but time may not be available. Respondents report being 'task rich and time poor'. Increasing workload may be a significant factor. Changes in type and levels of workload have an impact upon leaders and what they need in order to be effective. Table 5.4 summarises changes mentioned by respondents and the impact upon them.

**Table 5.4 The impact of change on the role of the leader**

<b>Rpndnt</b>	<b>Changing work and role</b>	<b>Impact on the leader</b>
1LN	Multiple projects that become too large and extend beyond original brief, an expectation of can do everything	Lack of focus, view of an endless resource, becoming unmanageable and begin to fail or go past the point at which you can give your best
2LN	Going beyond the best, resource implication, trying to satisfy politicians and the business environment	Managing dwindling resources, working in a political environment and trying to run an effective business, developing a wide range of networks
3LN	Efficiency and quality, doing more with less. Outcome measures, new technology	Balancing local and central government priorities, being influenced and influencing
4LN	Competing for business and working in partnership, reporting to many stakeholders	Time management, emotional ups and downs, speed of transformation, responding to business logic and political necessity

5LN	Sharing services, freedom of information, legal and political change, partnering	Constantly scanning the horizon, learning new areas of work, keeping up with the marketplace
6LN	A broader range of tasks, expanding service and corporate work, overload of paperwork, balancing service and political demands	Balancing a service unit and corporate work, efficiency and cost reduction, understanding and encompassing a wide range of activities, people and organisations, diversity management
7LN	Developing and implementing organisational policy and practice, running an effective service unit	Being open and listening to a wide range of influences, keeping up with initiatives, being in a position to influence the bigger picture

Changes experienced by the seven respondents have both similarities and differences. All service units are in the same organisation, coping with change through a context of increasing technology, local government politics, central government targets and outcome measures, audit and scrutiny, increasing workloads and diminishing resources. Local governments are political organisations with councillors wanting to make changes that show rapid progress over the short term of electoral processes. However, leaders are responding to both short and long term issues. Strategic planning for change over the longer term is militated against by less predictable political activities. Respondent 5LN expresses similar views to other respondents when stating:

*It's a political organisation, it is probably thinking much more in the short term than I am and I'm probably thinking over a much longer term and I have a further horizon. The organisation's destiny can change at a whim of government, a whim of politicians and financial circumstances.... The demand is to take action, to take action, to take action. This is the priority rather than to spend time finding out or understanding what you are dealing with or what is the real problem. (5LN)*

Change affects leaders in different ways. Some respondents perceived change to threaten the survival of the service unit and they prioritise the professional work of the unit. This may lead to retention of professional skills and responsibilities. For others change was perceived as an opportunity to work with the organisation in a broader more corporate capacity for the survival of the whole organisation. A concern for the survival of the business gives it high priority. Business survival draws upon professional expertise and data suggest this may militate against leaders dropping their professional credibility and work.

*...if we don't attract business then actually we do not have a business and then we don't have a niche or a role in the wider organisational structure. (LN4)*

*...if my unit fails then I have failed. And I think every unit head would say, if they are honest, that the priority is their unit. (LN6)*

Respondent LN4 uses the term 'we' to mean the unit's professional team and implies its first priority is to stay in business. Having a place and role in the corporate structure is perceived to be dependent upon business survival. Respondent LN6 identifies personally with the unit and the success or failure of the unit. The respondent also assumes that other unit heads are like minded. This assumption is not supported by the evidence; other leaders report different ways of responding to transformative change. Another respondent used the term 'we' but did so implying that the professional unit was prioritising corporate objectives rather than service unit objectives:

*For example here we work to the corporate objectives. (LN1)*

Another respondent takes a personal stance to corporate responsibilities and then goes on to use the inclusive term 'we', assuming that all leaders need a big organisational view:

*I think I have a good corporate view, generally, partially because of my role and partially because I am interested, and partially because I do think it is important. We need to have a broad an understanding as possible and to see the bigger picture. (LN7)*

Change places demands and challenges upon a corporate organisation. Consequently, professional skills, management skills, leadership skills and knowledge may need to be upgraded or renewed. When a corporate organisation implements a vision that changes a current to a different future state, a need arises to match the leadership capability with the challenges created by the change.

## **Challenge**

Leaders face a number of challenging tensions requiring some form of accommodation or resolution in order to make provision for identified organisational leadership requirements. However, research and evaluation makes judgements about leadership performance focused on the organisation as a corporate body, not on individual leaders (DETR, 1988; DfES, 1988; Citizen's Charter, 1991; Laffin, 2008). What may be implicitly assumed is that corporate leadership activity rather than individual leader activity is responsible for organisational achievement. A factor to consider concerns the effect of individual leaders and the effect of corporate leadership. This raises questions about whether leadership is homogenous or heterogeneous. One perspective is that organisational development

requirement may be expressed as an organisational process used to aid collective progress through the collaborative and expert stimulation and facilitation of abilities and knowledge supporting business goals (Harrison, 2006). The business of local government has multiple non-complementary business units, a broad remit and political factors. There are challenges to balancing non-complementary factors and identifying organisational requirements that will enable the business of local government to be effectively led. Table 5.5 identifies significant issues and challenges and presents some potential organisational requirements:

**Table 5.5 Issues and challenges creating potential requirements**

<b>Rpndnt</b>	<b>Issue</b>	<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Potential requirement</b>
LN1, LN2, LN5, LN6, LN7	Individual leader autonomy	Balance individual leader freedom with organisational cohesiveness	For leaders to lead both separate service units and the corporate whole
LN1, LN2 LN4, LN5, LN6	Political influence	Balance professional unit and corporate work with political desire and ambition	For leaders to be politically aware and influential, and operationally grounded and capable
LN1, LN2, LN4, LN6, LN7	Shifting priorities	Balancing priorities from central and local politics with those from corporate and service units	For leaders to be flexible, adaptable, aware of the big picture and direction of change and transformation
LN1, LN2, LN3, LN4, LN5, LN6, LN7	Diminishing resources	Balancing efficiently reductions in finance, staff and service costs with increases in workload and service demand	For leaders to make and defend tough decisions to politicians and staff, being able to give bad news and sustain morale and motivation
LN1, LN2, LN3, LN4, LN5, LN6, LN7	Changing working practices	Balancing stability and maintenance of service delivery with transformative change	For leaders to be agents of effective change capable of carrying staff with them through periods of instability and stress
LN1, LN2, LN5, LN6	Increasing projects and workloads	Balancing a 'can-do everything' culture with the limitations of time and resources	For leaders to create structures, partners and resources for effective project leadership and coping with growing workloads

LN2, LN4, LN6, LN7	Developing leaders and leadership	Balancing mandatory and voluntary approaches to standards of capability and competence	For leaders to display high standards, exemplifying the best of service unit and corporate leadership behaviour, being a model of good practice
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The organisation requires service unit leaders to offer leadership to professionals within particular service units. It also requires unit leaders to be part of a corporate team, to be committed to both a service unit and to the organisation as a whole. Unit leaders have both personal autonomy and powers delegated to them by law and this affords them a high degree of independence:

*I have a great deal of personal autonomy. (LN5)*

*I do very much have delegated powers. (LN6)*

Leaders independently run service units and co-dependently contribute to running the whole organisation. Respondents perceive corporate directors facilitating a balance between the service unit and the corporate whole by being supportive, acting as guide and over-viewer to the work of the service unit.

*Our equivalent directors are over-viewers and mentors rather than dictators. (LN5)*

*...you've always got the support of the organisation. (LN1)*

*...management team and chief exec and the board of directors there has been absolute full and 100 percent backing. (LN2)*

Support from directors may actually be conditional on the service leader going in what was described by respondents as 'the right

direction'. The right direction originates within the organisation's directorate corporate body, referred to as the management team.

*...you set a direction and then you get called in by management team. They want to know that the projects are still going in the right direction. (LN1)*

Another influence upon direction arises from the political nature of local government. Politics challenges leaders as they balance their perceived autonomy with political powers. Political awareness and influence is an essential requirement for local government leaders because politics have a big effect upon the organisation.

*But also if our political swing went a different way then that would have a very big impact on what we do and on our day-to-day running. (LN6)*

The statement by LN6 was made less than a month before a general election when a big political swing at national level did occur. An implication of national political change is that priorities at local government level change significantly.

*So priorities may get shifted around and so my response is to be slightly different at times. (LN3)*

Implications of shifting priorities for the organisation are requirements for adaptable, flexible leaders aware of possible changes in priorities and direction. A constant challenge perceived by respondents concerns efficiency; beyond efficiency is the requirement to deal with genuine cuts in resources. Corporate directors do not make decisions about specific service cuts, but

service unit leaders must do so about resources and balance operational delivery with corporate resources and priorities:

*...we have got to the stage where we have cut and cut and cut and now we need to make a decision on service levels. (LN6)*

Respondents perceive a challenging implication of service cuts as trying to maintain the morale and motivation of staff while at the same time being the messengers to staff of bad news:

*We now have a very little budget to make any pay increase at all, no cost-of-living increase, no automatic increments locally, and a tiny little pot to pay anything... And managers are having to go back to staff and explain why they have got nothing... It's difficult to keep people motivated... and very challenging for managers. (LN7)*

Leaders are required to balance a rate of transformative change to more efficient work practices while maintaining service quality. This is to be done when workloads are increasing and resources are decreasing. In periods of transformative change deskilling precedes acquisition of new skills so that quality and efficiency may suffer in the short term. Leaders are required to show confidence that new ways of working will be better but staff may be experiencing a worsening situation. It may be argued that a decline in standards is temporary. However, multiple changes and many new initiatives make such arguments unconvincing:

*...trying to look at different ways of working which means that you do not just continue doing the same thing as you did in the past. I think generally this is a big challenge. (LN3)*

Respondents express a positive approach to work projects and are challenged to strike a balance between wanting to respond positively

to every project request and having the abilities and resources to perform to satisfactory standards. Partnership with other organisations and sharing resources and abilities are perceived as a way of doing more with less:

*...we are a very positive can-do organisation... we try and do too much... we take on lots of projects and then try and stretch our resources... effective performance and productivity just drop off, because people are overstretched. (LN1)*

There is a requirement for leaders with the capability to respond to change and challenging situations. For those leaders who do not respond well to challenges, weaknesses may be noted and development courses may be provided. However, in this study, course attendance was described as voluntary rather than mandatory. Encouragement is used to persuade those identified with development requirements to attend courses. However, the language has changed from development need to weakness and been recognised by someone other than those in question. The leaders concerned may not be aware of any perceived weakness, not hearing the relevant feedback. If they fail to respond to development by encouragement, they are dealt with on an individual basis.

*...we do not use the mandatory word in this organisation... they have some weaknesses in their armour and we are trying to support them and trying to help them to develop... and that may not be bearing fruit so in those cases we have had to take some pretty drastic action. (LN7)*

## Capability

During periods of change there are challenges to be faced that require capable leaders. How an organisation builds capacity for leadership and ensures good organisational performance is crucial to this area of exploration. The literature review indicated that capacity building involves the analysis of the organisation's purpose, role and tasks through key task analysis, competency based analysis and problem-centred analysis (Reid et al., 2004). Evidence from this study does not confirm that this was an approach leaders adopted. However, capacity building may also involve a process of surveying various sources for information. Organisational requirements appear to be identified by a process of leaders scanning some selected sources of information. Respondents describe sources such as the corporate priorities, 360 degree appraisals, staff surveys and surveys involving Investors in People. However, these sources of information are not solely targeted at the requirements for leadership. They involve all staff and the organisation as a whole. Two of the respondents thought that because the organisation was relatively small it was easier to know by experience and scanning what leadership development the organisation requires:

*...the group report that came out of the 360 degree appraisal highlighted some of the areas that needed more attention. The staff survey also gives information...IIP as well. (3LN)*

*There is knowledge that some senior managers, leaders, have got what is necessary and some have not. We know that through experience, through feedback, we know that through morale, staff surveys, achievement of objectives. As a small organisation I think it is much easier to know. (7LN)*

The organisation faces transformational changes and challenging issues and this tests leadership capability. Appropriate leadership capabilities are required when there are increasing levels of challenge, change and transformation. When the respondent says 'necessary' in the above quote, it may mean leadership capability. Two different positions are adopted in response to the required capabilities of leaders; the first involves an acceptance that the title and hierarchical position of leader does not necessarily make for the enactment of good leadership. Some respondents think that there are some leaders without leadership and they will never gain leadership capabilities through development courses (quotes LN6 and LN7, p. 128). An assumption offered by respondents is that leadership draws upon some naturally occurring factors that cannot be developed or imparted by training:

*...there is a natural personality and tendency. (LN2)*

*...some people as leaders who bring themselves as individuals quite strongly. (LN3)*

*...there is something about a leader and the way they are... the organisation did not think a person who was head of a unit had what it would take... he was let go. (LN6)*

*I think that some of our senior managers have them naturally (leadership characteristics). (LN7)*

The perception is not that leaders are born. It is that there are some necessary personality factors or characteristics, and then the person can be developed and trained:

*I am not necessarily saying that leaders are born. (LN6)*

With a small number of individuals there may be performance issues and the issues are dealt with by offering and encouraging development. Organisations have a responsibility to offer appropriate formal development opportunities when issues of capability arise. Professional associations also have an expectation that formal development is thoroughly explored before other forms of performance management are implemented. If development is not taken up or does not work, described by a respondent (LN7) as 'not bearing fruit,' there is encouragement to change role or organisation:

*We are also trying to tackle individual cases where there are issues... that may not be bearing fruit so in those cases we have had to take some pretty drastic action and say enough is enough. (7LN)*

The other position adopted by leaders is to use the information from surveys to identify and highlight organisational development requirements. These are discussed by senior directors and then a development action plan is created and implemented:

*... headliner report done on the key areas... if there were any corporate ones there would be an action plan... if there was something around learning and development that would need to happen. (LN3)*

One corporate response is to offer a list of courses to all leaders in the organisation. Courses are marketed on the organisation's Intranet site and drawn to the attention of specific leaders as a form of encouragement to attend particular courses. The process relies on individuals voluntarily taking the initiative to opt for a course and apply or to ignore them in preference for operational work demands and priorities. Commissioning courses of development in response to

organisational capability requirement is an established process. The mechanism of using courses is understood, expected, easily justified and economic, offers consistency and deals with large numbers. Courses can also be evaluated with statistical evidence and individual feedback:

*...the response of people is to always ask about courses...it is easier to justify a course... the desire of the organisation to do things is far greater than the financial resources. (LN3)*

Leaders express a range of views about courses:

**Table 5.6 Support and concerns related to courses**

<b>Rpndt</b>	<b>No of refs</b>	<b>Areas supporting courses</b>	<b>Areas of concern about courses</b>
LN1	32	Provides practical tools and techniques, can choose useful ones, answers questions, helps to develop those with potential	A reactive tick box process with poor selection, lacks deep understanding of quality or need, post course evaluation is too late, limited finance
LN2	20	Provides practical tools, hints and tips, structure, theory and language	Variable quality, only partially useful, self-selecting, can be just another course
LN3	17	Offers learning and reflecting, are well known and popular, are easily justified, economic	Do not produce leaders, not always the best option, can be traditional, off the shelf
LN4	14	Combines professional and management learning, learning with and from others useful to individual and organisation	Are insufficient to meet requirement questionable quality and use of time must be up-to-date and relevant
LN5	38	Form of staff support and encouragement, provides practical tools and techniques, benefits the organisation by helping to achieve goals	Are finance dependent, sporadic, depend upon individual interest, variable quality, good and bad, not validated to any standard, do not teach leadership
LN6	75	Appropriate course identified, safe environment to explore difficult issues, meet other leaders, forum for debate and discussion of work based issues	Not essential, don't teach leadership, are ad hoc and sporadic, need to be practical, relevant, contextualised, active and economic encourages habitual course goes, need better participant selection
LN7	12	Learning from others, time for reflection, form of support and	Don't produce leaders, are not right for developing leaders, can

		encouragement, can be specific and targeted, partnership working	be costly, courses need to be prioritised and focused
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Although there are other options for development, the organisation makes significant use of courses for groups. However, sufficient concern is expressed about courses to suggest that the leadership requirements of the organisation are not being adequately met by courses on leadership development. Also the organisation appears to engage in a game of 'showboating', or posturing about taking leadership development seriously and being committed to building the capacity of leadership when it has other priorities (LN1). Indications for this are when the levels of dedicated resources of finance and staff are low. A respondent responsible for the corporate learning budget indicated that 80 per cent of it goes on professional development, leaving 20 per cent for everything else including management and leadership development. The post with responsibility for learning and development is part-time, and only part of this role is concerned with leadership development. Staff surveys used to identify organisational leadership requirements are subsumed into larger staff surveys and lack any specificity, focus and targeting to leadership requirements. Organisational leaders spend little time exploring what they mean by leader and leadership. This suggests a general normative understanding being used as a basis for identifying leadership requirements. The rigorous approach to analysis of the organisation's culture, values and purpose, role and tasks through key task analysis, competency based analysis and problem-centred analysis advocated by Reid et al. (2004) and Harrison (2006) does not seem to be applied. Although the organisation faces modernisation through transformative change and

many challenging issues, these may not be comprehensively taken into account when exploring the organisational requirement for leadership:

*...we want to support and provide development for leaders ...we will sign the cheques... we will allow people to go on the courses...but it is quite reactive it is not one of the top corporate priorities. (LN1)*

*...around 80% of the (learning) budget is spent on 'must do's' such as CPD. (LN3)*

If the methods of exploring organisational requirements for leadership development are inadequate and suffer low resourcing and prioritisation of targeted effort, leadership development requirements may also be inadequately identified and provided. Exploring this theme has illuminated the impact of transformative change and associated organisational challenges for leadership. It has also shed some light on how the organisation goes about exploring what leadership capabilities it requires. Although the organisation may not be exploring sufficiently requirements for leadership development, it may be that leaders are finding other ways to identify individual development they want and require.

This chapter has presented an interpretive analysis of two themes, becoming a leader and organisational requirements for leadership. The next chapter analyses perceptions about individual needs of leaders and explores the potential for improving leadership development.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Introduction**

Chapter five provided an analysis of the data related to the first two themes, becoming a leader and organisational requirements. This chapter provides an analysis of the data related to theme three and four. Theme three explores how individual development needs are defined, identified and satisfied. Theme four explores whether improvements can be made to the process of exploring organisational and individual development needs.

## Theme three: individual needs

### Conceptualising development needs

Ideas about development needs for the individual are important because they are the starting point for the activities that are described as personal development. If there is an absence of identified individual development needs or awareness of them, provision for them may be inadequate. The semi-structured interview specifically explored respondents' ideas about individual development needs which are recorded in Table 6.1:

**Table 6.1 Respondent perceptions related to development needs**

Rpdnt	Development needs		Ideas have a relationship with
	Ideas on what they are	Ideas on what they are not	
LN1	Not performing well, method for producing different results, make sense of feedback and contribution	Isolated from constant feedback, a criticism, don't permit staying the same, not easily recognised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance management</li> <li>• Change management</li> <li>• Personal awareness</li> </ul>
LN2	A missing competence, falling short of perfection, learning from experience, a method of stretching yourself and improving	Indicators of perfection, not failures, not negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards of performance</li> <li>• Improvement and growth</li> <li>• Learning strategy</li> </ul>
LN3	Doing a better job through learning , progressing career, immediate done in the short term	No single definition, not long term, not criticisms or something to hide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance management</li> <li>• Career progression</li> <li>• Positive regard</li> </ul>
LN4	Improve skills and knowledge, relate to better performance, specific things	Not easily recognised, not visible and obvious, not right or wrong, general things	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance management</li> <li>• Personal awareness</li> </ul>
LN5	Improve performance, change inability to ability, stimulates personal improvement	Not permanent, not updating and refreshing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance management</li> <li>• Personal awareness</li> </ul>

LN6	Improve performance in the role, preparation for a different role, progressing career, source of dissatisfaction	Not pleasing or satisfying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance management</li> <li>• Career progression</li> </ul>
LN7	To help self, others and the organisation to grow, they are the source of continuous learning and achievement	Never absent, never without them, not negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance management</li> <li>• Personal awareness</li> <li>• Wider awareness</li> <li>• Career progression</li> </ul>

Three aspect of development need identified in the literature review described them as the personal and individual expressions of development wanted, desired and chosen by an individual in order to satisfy an inner need, do a particular job well or to further the career prospects of the individual. Respondents' views are broadly related to doing a job better by performance improvement, a motivational need for self-awareness and to progress career prospects.

All respondents made comments related to a development need being about improving levels of performance in the job. Respondents report attempting to distinguish between personal development and development aimed at improving the quality and performance of service delivery:

*...To do with doing their job better as opposed to just doing it for my own sake. (LN3)*

When respondents recognise a gap between their actual standard of performance and an expected standard of performance, it indicates to them a development need. The gap in performance stimulates an enquiry into personal competence levels. Self-examination and

reflection on personal levels of performance and ability are reported to be significant factors used to recognise individual development needs:

*...When you identify an individual need you are being specific and there is recognition that something needs to change. (LN4)*

*...You identify something that either you struggle with or you think you are not doing as good as you could be doing. (LN1)*

Respondent comments about individual needs imply an understanding of an acceptable level or standard of leadership performance. An insight into this was provided by respondents indicating a perception of an ideal or perfect leader. The notion that there exists a perfect leader against which current individual standards of leadership performance can be compared was expressed directly by one respondent (LN2) and implied by the other six respondents. When respondents are talking about being better or improving they are implying moving towards some standard or ideal of leadership that current performance was not matching:

*I think it has a fairly good idea of what they see as a perfect leader. (LN2)*

*I want to know if there is anything that I am doing that is not meeting expectations and I want to know about it so that I can address it. (LN1)*

*It (development need) means something that will enable me to lead better. (LN5)*

Respondents may be assuming that the organisation was setting a standard of leadership performance. It would follow that the

organisation was expecting leaders to improve their individual development needs from levels that fell short of the expected standards of leadership. However, there was no documentary evidence found that demonstrated that the organisation had defined leadership or set standards of performance for leadership enactment. Leadership performance seems to be assessed by the extent to which they meet targets, outcomes and achievements. This would accord with Grint's (2003) sardonic truism that successful leaders are successful.

Leaders in this study present a picture of individuals striving for greater levels of self-awareness. In assessing their own performance, leaders are acknowledging a process of self-examination reliant upon awareness of the self as leader. Individual development needs may not be obvious; they can be difficult to recognize, hence the effort to become aware of them. Awareness of them may not be sharp, clear or visible to the leader; they can have blind spots:

*...there might be a blind spot, and you think it's all right but then other people can see something. (LN1)*

A perception of positive regard facilitates leaders' ability to develop self-awareness which is recognised as an important part of identifying development needs. Falling short of standards, not meeting expectations, having missing competences and failing in levels of performance could easily be experienced as negative criticism. However, five of the seven respondents report that acknowledging personal development needs does not imply a criticism and two perceive development needs to be universal and expected in roles subject to transformational change. Self-awareness

may require a context of openness, honesty and security. Self-awareness implies abilities of self-examination and self-criticism. This is evidenced by respondents believing they are to learn from models and to use techniques of self-awareness (p. 159):

*I'm always ready to admit I have a development need... I think everyone has development needs. (LN5)*

*I think you have to be honest and to have a critical look at yourself and to know what your weaknesses are in performance management terms... Well I don't take it as a criticism, I do take it as part of continuous development. (LN1)*

*...the charter makes it very clear that you will have learning and development needs in the role that you have. (LN3)*

The organisation embodies in a document entitled *X Borough Council's Learning and Development Charter* the notion that all staff will have individual development needs. There may be a motivational aspect to leaders wanting to see themselves accurately and having the positive self-esteem to see development needs not as failure in performance but as opportunities to learn. This would accord with the views of Gross (2007, p. 567) reported in the literature review, when referring to enhancing the self.

Recognising individual development need may be a factor in career progression. Respondents link personal career aspirations with satisfying individual development needs for capabilities and competence.

*...it may be career focused. (LN3)*

*I see my career developing and I do want to pick up other aspects and experience. (LN2)*

*...if you are continuing in your career then what is it you need to develop. (LN6)*

*helping others to grow with their development and career. (LN7)*

Progressing careers may also be aligned to what Gross (2007) refers to as self-enhancement. Career enhancement may be a motivational factor for individual leaders to take responsibility for recognising personal development needs and satisfying them. Respondent comments about personal career development needs suggest a desire to progress towards personal mastery and an encouragement of the self to become all that one can be (Maslow, 1943).

### **Identifying development needs**

Change implies development and development implicates leaders in a process of identifying development needs. A distinction can be made between changes that are located in the individual, changes in the job role of the individual and transformation of the organisation. A person on a journey of development will be changing with time. The role and the job of a leader are also subject to change. Job roles may change by organisational re-design and restructuring or change due to an incumbent enriching and extending the role by active involvement in what they do. Local authorities are also subject to change due to the activities of central government implementing processes of transformative modernisation:

*...you do not stand still as a leader... you should be developing yourself and continuing to develop your role. (LN7)*

*I mean you get identification of development need because local authorities are subject to change. (LN5)*

Leaders may be intending to do their best during the changes that are affecting them, changes to the job they do and changes to the organisation in which they work. However, positive regard within the organisation and towards preserving a self-image of a good leader may create a state of delusion. Leaders are trying to do their best but not much is known about the standard or model they are using and whether they think there is an ideal organisational leader to which they can compare their performance. Without knowing the standard, comparison cannot be accurate. The effort to achieve the superlative best may be being exercised in the presence of an internalised standard and the absence of an external statement that standardises leadership and leader:

*I am trying to be a good leader, I am trying to be a good manager and I'm trying to do my best. Of course I may be deluding myself... . (LN7)*

*...we have not had this perfect view of the leader... I have my ideas and I know what I think, management team have their ideas, but has it been explicitly said, I don't think so. (LN2)*

*...first of all you have got to know what type of leader that you want for the organisation. (LN6)*

How does an individual know they are performing well as a leader and how do they discover which personal development needs will help them to be a better leader? Within performance management systems a diagnostic technique of choice for identifying personal developmental needs is appraisal, which includes a process of self-appraisal. When LN2 states that they have their own ideas about a

perfect leader, they imply an internal standard against which they self-appraise performance. Self-appraisal is an implicit preparation stage for a one-to-one appraisal and is also a specific part of the organisation's 360 degree appraisal process. Ideas from the respondents on three types of appraisal are shown in Table 6.2:

**Table 6.2 Respondent perception of different types of appraisal**

<b>Rpndt</b>	<b>Self-appraisal</b>	<b>One-to-one appraisal</b>	<b>360° appraisal</b>
LN1	About self-awareness, identify personal development needs and get them agreed	Task orientated, used to discover if manager is happy with performance, about meeting expectations	Highly valued, validated from a number of sources, useful feedback that guides development identification
LN2	Set your own standards, identify your own interest and development needs agree action and budget	Time to reflect, about difficult performance issues, once a year with not enough time, agree budget for personal development	Just beginning to be used, much more useful than one-to-one appraisals, valuable feedback, useful for personal development
LN3	About personal responsibility and identifying personal development needs and getting them agreed	About work achievements, current performance levels and future objectives. A time to reflect	Very useful feedback can be used by the individual and by the organisation
LN4	A time for personal reflection and identifying your personal development needs	About achievement and effectiveness, most time is spent on business objectives future work and direction	Provides useful feedback to both the person and the organisation
LN5	A do it yourself process, no manager has ever said I think you need this form of development	A time when your manager asks you what you want and discusses the level of support available	A process for people to comment on you, no opportunity to comment on the most senior leaders
LN6	Leaders are autonomous, knowing how they are doing and what they want, enables you to go and ask for what you want	A processes with no surprises that rubber stamps what you already know and should be doing throughout the year	It is set up to match self-awareness and self-appraisal with the views and feedback of others
LN7	Self-assess first then compare your	A process that facilitates discussion	A fantastic tool and technique, feedback

	perspective with those of others, identify your own development needs	on past present and future work, personal needs and career aspirations	identifies strengths and weaknesses, but it is not a rigorous process
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Respondent views on appraisal suggest that it has limitations when used to identify personal development needs. However, self-appraisal processes may be usefully employed by leaders to identify their leadership development needs. An increasing use of 360 degree appraisal is perceived as offering leaders feedback said to be valuable, useful and a guide to identifying individual development needs. The 360 degree appraisal process also has within it a self-appraisal procedure. Leaders do not rely upon annual appraisals to identify personal development needs.

*Now this is what the individual personal development plan is supposed to be about, but it doesn't work like that. (LN6)*

The evidence suggests that leaders use a variety of methods, other than appraisal, to help them increase awareness and identify their individual development needs. An awareness of development needs was implied by respondent's use of modelling (pp. 128-29). Here the focus is on respondents increasing awareness.

Method 1. Identifying blind spots from feedback

*...There might be a blind-spot, and you think it's all right but then other people can see something, so it is something you take notice of. (LN1)*

Method 2. Establishing ideals of leadership

*...A perfect leader is somebody who is willing to engage in the change agenda, somebody who is flexible and adaptable,*

*someone who builds up relationships, and someone who can set a vision for the organisation. (LN2)*

### Method 3. Coaching

*In a one-to-one appraisal type process a lot of time is spent around looking at business objectives...In one-to-one coaching around leadership it is much more focused. (LN4)*

### Method 4. Speculative attendance on courses

*I might not know some other area and in a sense that's sort of why the courses are put on... I have also been on some very bad courses. (LN5)*

### Method 5. Participation in leadership discussions

*...If I can't contribute to it (the discussion) then I know that I've got a gap in my knowledge. (LN6)*

### Method 6. Interaction with peers

*...You also get that interaction between leaders and I think that itself can help you progress and develop as a leader. (LN6)*

The organisation, as employer, has put in place a formal mechanism for identifying individual development needs within an established annual appraisal system and also introduced 360 degree appraisal. However, respondent comments about one-to-one appraisals illuminate the experience as being operationally focused, task based with insufficient time to reflect, a self-identification process with rubber stamping of what is already known, with no surprises.

*Well the organisation needs a capacity for leadership but I think we are so busy with the day today stuff... I don't think they have actually looked at every individual or every individuals need... for my leadership I think I have just got to keep aware of myself and up to date. (LN6)*

This suggests that, at best, appraisal is only partially successful and is not the only way leaders use to identify individual development needs. Some key barriers to overcome are lack of time to reflect and get to know the leader, an emphasis on action and task and an assumption that the individual knows their development needs best. The data indicate leaders have developed numerous informal mechanisms to help them to identify their individual leadership development needs.

### **Satisfying development needs**

Leaders have development needs and use a variety of mechanisms to identify what they do not know and are not doing to an expected or adequate standard. An obvious way to satisfy an identified development need is to attend a course of development. However, the evidence from this study has indicated that courses are perceived as problematic, may not teach leadership and have a low level of usefulness as a preparation for the transition from professional to manager and leader. Evidence provided in Table 5.6 shows that four of the respondents (L3, L5, L6, L7), do not think leadership can be taught. This would accord with the views of Handy (1992) which posit the notion that leadership skills cannot be taught but they can be learned, discovered, grown and fostered. Leadership education or learning was explored in theme one and indicated that learning was perceived as primarily work based. However, respondents referred to courses over 200 times (Table 5.6, p. 147) suggesting significance and a desire to learn. An insight into the perception of respondents about courses is indicated by the type of development courses they value. This would seem to be when a course is structured for learning rather than structured for teaching. Respondent comments

suggest courses rich with process rather than laden with content are more likely to satisfy their leadership development needs.

Respondent comments indicate an environment of confidentiality, open discussion, sharing potential solutions to difficult issues, time for reflection and peer reviewing of workplace practice within an ethos of support and encouragement contribute to effective learning of leadership.

Courses may be viewed by respondents as problematic and they can be good, bad, miss the mark and fail to be relevant (LN1, LN5, LN6). They can also be appropriate, useful and provide the knowledge, structure, language and principles underpinning good work based practice (LN2, LN3, LN4, LN7). A distinction can be made between a development course and a development programme. A course is limited, event driven, restricted in time and scope and is designed to improve the effectiveness of specific areas of leadership for groups of attendees. A programme is extensive in range, includes varied formats (work based learning, varied forms of feedback, courses, mentoring, coaching and action learning sets) and designed to develop the individual over a prolonged period of time. Courses may be part of a programme, but they are not the only way to develop leaders (Sadler, 2003).

Comments from respondents indicate that courses have an increased application by satisfying development needs at an early career stage of transition from professional to leader. At this stage of entry into leadership, respondents report using courses to search actively for techniques, tools and solutions to the problems and challenges they face in daily leadership activities:

*...what I found is most beneficial is often things like you've been on training courses where you have learnt some simple techniques. (LN5)*

*...the tools that were taught were really practical tools and they helped you to solve these problems. (LN1)*

The data suggest that as leaders become more experienced the need to acquire useful tools and techniques on courses progresses to more complex and personal needs of leadership development. A significant way leaders satisfy more complex development needs makes use of the pattern and behaviour of other leaders and those displaying leadership skills. A development need can be satisfied by role modelling. Leaders not only follow the pattern, copy, imitate and emulate leaders they admire; they also want to be a model of good practice to their own staff and followers. Respondents say they want to be examples of the characteristics and values they believe make for good leadership:

*I act in a way that provides a role model for others... senior managers should be leading by example. (LN7)*

Leaders also use mentors, coaches and attend action learning sets. However, no consistent pattern or single method favoured by all leaders was found. Table 6.3 presents the views of respondents about development methods other than courses:

**Table 6.3 Respondent perceptions of some development methods**

Rpdnt	Modelling	Mentoring	Coaching	Action learning sets
LN1	Emulates work based leaders. Highly values top class leaders, seeks	Is like an informal apprenticeship, uses external mentors and in-house mentors.	Did not mention coaching	Supported by Director, needs able facilitators, can be badly run,

	to follow examples, personalises the abilities of leaders	Early career access and time is important		are costly, effective at dealing with personal issues
LN2	Develops a model leader with high standards. Influenced by the example of other leaders	Did not mention mentoring	Did not mention coaching	Did not mention action learning sets
LN3	Creates models of leaders showing best practice	Receives and gives mentoring, useful as feedback, is costly and works on one-to-one basis, has lower priority as a development tool	Restricted to senior leaders, 1 to 1 is expensive, useful expert feedback to senior leaders	Good stand-alone opportunity for senior leaders, can be part of a course at lower levels, can reduce costs through collaboration
LN4	Influenced by peers with good reviews	Useful to have access to leaders of high calibre. Has used mentors in other organisations	Highly valued as a one-to-one focused process, produces improvement in skill and learning, it brings in expertise from outside	Did not mention action learning sets
LN5	Influenced by model leaders and those thought to be good leaders	Directors and over-viewers are mentors, offers support and suggestions.	Did not mention coaching	Did not mention action learning sets
LN6	Identifies good leaders and feeds off their knowledge and expertise	Views mentoring as problem solving and prefers to solve own problems. Happy to mentor others	Coaching is part of a leaders role, knowledge and skill does not make a good coach need to mix and match methods of development	Did not mention action learning sets
LN7	Identifies characteristics of model leaders and seeks to emulate them in workplace	A loose system of critical friend and confidant, mentors need to be trained, useful for those new the organisation.	Did not mention coaching	Chief executive involved in action learning, good for those at senior levels

Methods for satisfying leader development needs are closely aligned to methods for identifying them. By contrasting their own knowledge and practice with those of a model, leaders become aware of their development needs. This may be satisfied by emulating or adapting the skill of the model to the context of the leader. Mentoring, coaching and action learning sets may also be used to increase awareness of development needs and promote action to satisfy them. These methods are person-to-person and focused around the individual. Action learning operates with groups, but individuals have specific air time when individual development needs are the focus of the group and facilitator's attention (Weinstein, 2003). Methods of satisfying individual leader development needs seem to be linked with the autonomy and individuality of the leader.

Implicit to discursive ways leaders use to satisfy their development needs is 'responsible gossip' (Baddeley, 1998, p. 56). Leaders become skilled in this through interacting with politicians. Methods such as mentoring, coaching and action learning are discursive; they are ways of chatting through issues and work based problems in a confidential setting. Leaders in this study expressed a preference for courses that allow time to interact, and gossip within ground rules of confidentiality and responsibility:

*...the interactiveness and getting members of that course speaking to one another is important... if you are on the course what is said on that course should stay in that course. (LN6)*

The organisation gains benefits from processing leaders on courses that assume a homogenous group requirement. However, leaders seem to prefer a programme that acknowledges their individuality

and allows them to learn and discover leadership through processes that include discussion, chatting and socialisation (Barker, 2001; Grint, 2003; Saunders, 2008).

## **Theme four: potential for improvement**

### **Organisational requirements**

This theme explores how well the system is working and investigates both the strengths and weaknesses for exploring and identifying organisational requirements and individual development needs. It has been argued in this study that a distinction can be made between organisational requirements and individual development needs for leaders and leadership. However, some confusion has been shown in reviewed literature in relation to these concepts and found to be the case in the field. A respondent with significant responsibility for policy and leadership development was unable to make a distinction between organisational requirements and individual needs. Organisational requirements are however, perceived to be more relevant since organisations pay for capabilities to perform certain tasks, undertake certain roles and to be responsible for certain business results:

*I cannot separate them out, I find it very difficult to separate them out. But to be honest when you're paying somebody a salary the individual need(s), to me are not as relevant. (LN7)*

The relationship between an organisation and leadership appears as more complex and different in nature to the relationship between a professional and the organisation. A professional has technical knowledge and skills that an organisation can identify and purchase

to satisfy a business requirement. Professional enactment applies custom and practice capabilities that are known to work to emerging practical problems. A leader may be offering to change or transform on the basis of a vision that has no foundation that it will work, other than the confidence and trust in leaders and their leadership:

*I think one of the key roles around leadership, in moving into a changing situation, became one of building trust. (LN4)*

A fundamental difference may exist between professional and leader associated with fear of change in professionals and excitement of change in leaders noted earlier. Leaders have more to do than a professional job. This may require leaders to have influence and to mould an organisation into something different, or to change the organisation in some way. The organisation accepts change if change affords the organisation some business improvement or adapts the organisation to a changing environment in a way that ensures the survival of the business. Senior leaders express hopefulness of an agreement that organisational requirements and individual needs for development overlap and are met:

*So there is a complex relationship in which, hopefully, there is some agreement and overlap with what individuals want and what the organisation is requiring them to do as a paid job... and to deliver on actual tangible outcomes. (LN7)*

A complex relationship between organisation and individual can give rise to problems associated with exploring, identifying and providing for organisational requirements and individual needs. A non-specific general learning framework when used to explore organisational requirements related to the business of the organisation has

limitations. Survey data from sources such as the corporate priorities, 360 degree appraisals, staff surveys, and surveys involving Investors in People include views from all staff within the data. Survey data is used to produce reports and headlines debated by senior leaders prior to producing and implementing development plans. The individual development need is missing from the process and an overlap between organisational requirements and individual needs is hoped for (LN7 above) but not taken into account.

*...with an organisational need your approach is very different. You are applying a learning framework across a larger group of people...The organisation is able to recognise requirements such as the need for transformational change and for partnership working. (LN4)*

Although the organisation has an ability to recognise business development requirements, this ability is constrained by the learning framework it uses to identify the requirement. In the absence of appropriate knowledge about the individual development need, the organisation relies on voluntary self-selection of organisational development courses on offer. Another approach is an organisation making a development course compulsory for all leaders, described as the 'sheep dip' approach (LN4). This is unacceptable to leaders because it bruises their sense of autonomy and choice. It means the development is applied to all, whether they need it or not, and may waste limited resources.

*I felt that the sheep dip approach was not as effective for me personally. (LN4)*

*What tends to happen is that the organisation says we are running this course and we want all managers above a certain grade to go on this course. (LN5)*

In this study senior leaders avoided using the terms 'compulsory' and 'mandatory' (noted above by LN7). Instead they use 'strong encouragement'. A fine line exists between strong encouragement and force by compulsion, particularly in a performance oriented context. If someone fails to meet performance expectations in a particular area and has failed to attend an organisational development course in that area, the organisation takes issue with the individual. Although there is an appearance of an autonomous free choice, there may be a subtle use of force:

*...the course was available and they said you would find it very useful. So there was encouragement... but they were not going to force you. (LN4)*

*We are also trying to tackle individual cases where there are issues. (7LN)*

For senior leaders to assess any overlap of organisational requirement and individual development need, good information is essential on both aspects. However, identification of individual development need seems to be left to self-recognition and identification by the individual:

*I think it is down to the individual to a large extent to recognise learning needs. (LN4)*

*...but I don't think they have actually looked at every individual or every individuals need. (LN6)*

*I think personally, I am someone who can identify my own development need. (LN7)*

When an individual takes responsibility for identifying their own development need they may also know how to satisfy that need. This

may lead to what has been described as a 'hands up' approach to development opportunities (Lumby, 1997b, p. 362). It can also lead to certain individuals self-selecting limited development resources in an unregulated and uncontrolled way:

*...if they did do some analysis, you would find that it is the same people who will go on a lot of courses. Because there are some people who will do course after course after course. (LN6)*

Satisfying individual development needs through self-selecting courses assumes that it offers delegates the opportunity to raise their skill, knowledge and understanding from a current standard to one that the organisation requires in order to achieve its business objectives. Performance outcomes offer a measure to the organisation about how well skill, knowledge and understanding are being applied across the organisation. Outcomes are measured after the enactment and are open to a variety of interpretations as to why they are or are not achieved. One possible interpretation is that leadership capability is responsible for the outcomes.

Leadership development is not required or prescribed as it is for professional development (CPD). The organisation is averse to mandatory courses and relies upon encouragement. This seems less than rigorous, since the organisation has certain responsibilities in terms of staff competence. For example, all staff must be inducted properly, managers and leaders have legal responsibilities to recruit, appraise, work to equal opportunities and diversity legislation and there are organisational standards and policies on customer service, best value and relationships with partners and politicians. The organisation can take responsibility for identifying a core set of

competencies that should be met by leaders and managers.

Respondent LN7 indicates that perhaps the organisation should have some mandatory courses. A core set might be appropriate for some identified key organisational business skills required by leaders:

*...we do not use the mandatory word in this organisation as a general rule, maybe sometimes we should but we don't. (LN7)*

In local government change is significantly driven by politicians in central government applying transformative modernisation policies. When transformative change is introduced it brings challenges and a requirement for new capabilities. One such capability is partnership working with various stakeholders. Having identified a development requirement for competence in partnership working, this organisation provided a course of development for its leaders and managers. Leaders were encouraged to attend this course on a voluntary basis. By using encouragement rather than a mandatory approach the organisation tacitly acknowledged that it did not know the performance standard of its leaders. Leaders assessed their own ability and development need and decided if partnership working development was for them or not:

*...they clearly see partnership working as a clear strand of leadership and transformational change in the delivery of services... So this was organisationally led it was not me as an individual. But you know, it was optional, but for me there was obviously a clear link with what I do day-to-day and with that course. (LN4)*

The data suggest there is scope for improvement in the process of exploring, identifying and providing for organisational requirements for leadership. Using staff survey data and a generalised learning

framework potentially omits significant information about individual needs and the more rigorous evidence cited by Harrison (2003) and Reid et al. (2004). Potential also exists to clarify the complex relationship between organisation and leader so that leadership development can be more accurately targeted to benefit both the organisation and the individual.

### **Individual needs**

Responsibility for identifying development needs of individual leaders may be shared between the organisation and the individual. The organisation uses a formal system for exploring and identifying the development needs of individuals included within the annual appraisal system. Appraisers are responsible for discussing personal development needs with their appraisee and to record the outcome as part of the appraisal records. On the organisation's appraisal form, Section D is concerned with career and personal development goals and has four questions about career and aspirations and two questions about personal development.

The two questions in Section D of the organisation's appraisal document are:

Question 5. What training and development activities have you been involved in since your last appraisal? How have these helped you with your work?

Question 6. What skills do you need to develop to do your work better?

Section F of the appraisal form requires a personal development plan to be completed. The development plan is linked to the workforce development database system and can be used by the organisation

to analyse its requirements and to record individual development needs. The personal development plan has four columns with headings as follows:

- what learning and development is required to help you achieve your individual work plan and personal goals?
- what actions need to be taken to meet these and by whom?
- target completion date
- approximate cost

The use of this formal appraisal system appears to be to justify the organisation's claim that it is taking the exploration and identification of individual development needs seriously. Introducing 360 degree appraisal for senior leaders supports the intention of the organisation to play its part in helping to identify individual development needs. However, the appraisal questions offer a light touch and may depend upon the appraiser's skill to explore development needs further. Respondents reported that the emphasis in appraisal is on task, operational issues and work objectives. Personal development needs appear as a minimal part of the process. As noted earlier, the organisation has not effectively identified individual development needs. Respondent comments illuminate why this may be so:

1. Development needs have low priority:

*...we have got our corporate priorities that we are trying to achieve and self-development ...is seen as important but do it and fit it in as it arises. (LN1)*

2. Development needs are not explored with any rigour:

*...it is not a ruthless assessment and I think there are very few people who get the opportunity for a ruthless assessment. (LN7)*

3. Poor knowledge of the individual and their development need:

*I don't think that they know you well enough to be able to say what your personal development needs are. (LN6)*

4. Time and finance available for development needs are limited:

*There is not enough hours in the day or enough days in the year and there's not enough finance to go on all these courses. (LN6)*

5. Autonomy and self-knowledge identify development needs:

*I think it is down to the individual to a large extent to recognise learning needs. (LN4)*

*So we are not able to keep deferring decisions and we don't have to ask about matters or need to check can we do this or that. So we are encouraged to take responsibility for decisions. (LN1)*

Some documentation was difficult to access; completed appraisal forms fell into this category. Three respondents supplied completed appraisal forms and they indicated a low level of rigour in identifying leadership development needs. An example of a development plan consisted of the statements:

*Keep up to date with the latest, relevant developments in my profession and the council. Attend relevant conferences and seminars. Target for development is ongoing throughout the year, no estimate for costs.*

As a development plan the posture is encouraging, but the language is vague, non-specific and does not identify CPD needs and fails to identify any leadership needs, set any particular development target or estimate cost. It suggests that the appraisal process fails to explore in any depth leadership development needs, therefore offers no basis of targeted need from which to produce a relevant leadership development programme. If the plan is typical, it suggests

that annual appraisals may not be an effective process for exploring leaders' individual development needs and that there is potential to make improvements to the way they are identified in appraisal.

Leaders do use other methods to help explore and identify their individual development needs, including personal reflection, responsible gossip and discussion as part of courses, networking and reviewing with peers, self-appraisal, mentoring and coaching. These methods may be reliant on self-awareness and feedback and they might be harnessed within an appraisal process.

This chapter has furnished an analysis of perceptions related to the personal needs of leaders and the potential for improving leadership development. However, there remain important questions about what may be concluded, what has been found and the implications for leadership development activities. The next chapter provides a discussion of the findings and implications emerging from the research and analysis of the data.

# Chapter Seven

## **Introduction**

Chapters five and six have provided an analysis of the research data. The analysis raises questions about the findings and implications of the research. This chapter describes the factors resulting in findings and implications being more appropriate than conclusions. It provides a discussion of the findings and implications within each of the four themes. The chapter concludes by considering the potential that may exist for improvement.

## **Findings**

A process of analysis may be taken to signal an end point to a research study. This may be followed by drawing conclusions from analysed empirical evidence, provided in this study by a qualitative and interpretative design and posture to research. The research design for this study emerged from an ontological position that assumed truths to be relative, circumstantial and propositional. This implied that any discovered reality would be shaped and constructed through the influence of social, political, cultural and economic, belief and value factors. A qualitative design, using a semi-structured interview instrument, gained access to respondent perceptions relative to their experience in the circumstances and context of their work and founded on inherent propositions about what constitutes leaders and leadership and development based on their requirements and needs. Data produced by the research design are reported perceptions, based on personal reflection, and are un-triangulated. The data were subjected to analytical thinking by breaking the data down into what appeared to be naturally occurring parts or themes and synthetic thinking that considered the data holistically in its context and circumstance.

Several factors have been considered that make drawing conclusions from the study inappropriate. Some factors are the volume, depth and richness of data drawn from reflection and perception. In the context of a small-scale study this has necessitated a process of evidence selection. Personal values and ontological positioning may unconsciously affect the selection of evidence and this in turn affects any conclusions that are drawn. A research strategy for unfolding meaning from data that is descriptive, subjective, perceptual and

interpretive may fall into natural parts, patterns and themes. But there is also the possibility that analysis may break the data down into what is described as codes and units of meaning, and that these are then used to construct patterns of meaning leading to conclusions other than those enfolded in the complete experiences and perceptions of respondents. Bohm (1985) expresses the view that this is appropriate when dealing with objects, for example stone. This can be appropriately fragmented and then used to produce something such as concrete (Bohm, 1985, p. 23), but it is not an appropriate action for human experiences and perceptions. Conclusions may also imply that this study is complete, definitive and concluded. However, this is not the case because the process of research requires further testing and is a continuous activity (Cohen et al., 2000). This study is a small-scale research project providing a limited and partial picture of a complex process involving numerous activities. It is therefore more appropriate to report findings and implications rather than conclusions that may imply that something definitive and ultimate has been achieved.

The study presents an interpretation of processes for exploring and identifying leadership development requirements and needs within one organisation. No claim is made that the study has external validity or that the findings may be generalised universally to a wider context outside of local government other than that being reported by the study. The study offers a unique perspective on the exploration and identification of leadership development requirements and needs because it is based on the reported reflections and views of leaders in the field. The study has been systematic and rigorous and has taken account of trustworthiness

and authenticity (Bassegy, 1999; Kincheloe and McLaren, 1998; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It can be trusted to provide an insightful contribution that illuminates organisational and leader development requirements and needs in local government.

The research contributes to our understanding of the process for identifying and exploring organisational development requirements and needs of leaders by drawing upon in-depth accounts of the experiences, reflections and perceptions of local government leaders. This is timely in that it comes when the impact of a change of central government has responded to national recession with a public sector spending review that will challenge leaders with potentially large-scale cuts in resources and this has many leadership implications. Leadership capabilities are called upon to preserve, sustain and ensure the success of organisations during periods of severe reductions in resources (Lyons, 2006). Building the capacity of leaders and leadership through development highlights the importance of this enquiry because it focuses upon exploring the development requirements and needs of leaders. Improving an understanding of development requirements and needs brings into focus work based activities for identifying and exploring development need and shifts attention away from what leadership development providers and theorists have to offer.

### **Potential implications**

Potential implications emerging from this study include the challenge of attempting to distil some objective wisdom from perception, interpretation and subjectivity. To be avoided when seeking to

improve is the error of zero sum, that is, thinking that more can rise to be above average. Excellence, best practice, competitive advantage and highest quality are, by nature, the province of the few rather than the many. Learning things that produce the best leaders is difficult in the sense that such learning is limited by complexity (Binney and Williams, 1995; Kay, 1993; Pfeffer, 1994). An implication for this study is that there is no simple way to apply the learning from the study to answer what local authorities should do to improve in relation to exploring and identifying leadership development requirements and needs.

Leaders in local government seem to inhabit a world in which priorities continually gyrate, resources regularly fall, demands to do more are pressurised by the claims of government, partners, customers and community for even greater efficiency, economy and effectiveness. Leaders in local government navigate a maelstrom of ambiguous factors, challenging issues and transformational change and in this context they explore organisational requirements and their own personal needs for developing the capabilities to offer leadership. Implied is a need for local authorities to make the business decision to regard the status quo as acceptable, given the circumstances and context. Although passive, this position is pragmatic and expedient. Increased resources including time, finance and expertise may be required to improve, but no realistic increase can be anticipated. After many years, much research and major investment, definitive concepts of leader and leadership remain profound and elusive. The relationship between organisational performance, leadership performance and the production of leaders through learning and development processes remains mysterious

and complex. Local authorities may acknowledge the imperfections and complexities of the current mechanism for exploring and identifying leadership development, but find it tolerable, given the limited resources available to make a significant improvement to the current mechanisms.

This study has been conducted with an ambition that potential improvement may emerge. Local authority organisations, practitioners and policymakers may take comfort from the study in that it raises the possibility that potential improvements for exploring leadership development requirements and needs do exist. Improvement suggestions for local government organisations to consider are provided in appendix 5. This study suggests a holistic approach, taking account of the work, environment, context and formal processes such as performance management and development processes combined in complex ways to facilitate the discovery of leader and leadership development needs and requirements. It implies that a variety of discovery mechanisms presented in programmes may be more successful than courses on specific leadership topics. Programmes of leadership development acknowledging the complexity, journey of discovery and unique individuality of leaders may prove to be of the greatest benefit to leaders in need.

An implied holistic approach to the development of leaders embeds leadership within the context of local government. Although the concepts of leader and leadership remain complex, theorising them in isolation appears to increase rather than decrease complexity (Shah, 2006). Leaders in context are active, busy, pressured by

increasing workloads, responding to conflicting and challenging demands from the community, partners and central government. A context in which priorities are constantly shifting implies that distinguishing between the important and the urgent and striking an appropriate balance between the two is a significant skill. Urgent things are pressing, demand immediate attention and are described as must do's (LN3). Important tasks may be strategic, and require planning and, provided they are scheduled, can be attended to when time permits. Data from this study imply the balance has shifted towards dealing with urgent activities, away from important and strategic longer term activities. Development of leaders and leadership may be important but may not be urgent. An implication is for the strategic importance of leader and leadership development activities to be prioritised so that they are planned rather than fitted in if time and resource allow:

*It is partly due to the nature of the workplace isn't it, we have got our corporate priorities that we are trying to achieve and self-development as an organisation is seen as important but do it and fit it in as it arises. It is not proactively undertaken. (LN1)*

An implication of a shift towards dealing with the urgent is that time for listening, identifying and exploring at a deeper level than the superficial is not available. Urgent activities may be implying crisis avoidance, quick fix actions and dealing with symptoms rather than systems. Causation of performance problems may be of lower priority than urgent action and immediate solution:

*People are not prepared to give the time to understanding what the real problem is, they want the sound-bites you know. People don't have the time to listen... Problems would not necessarily*

*have arisen if people were prepared to listen more in the preparation stage. (LN5)*

The use of performance management systems, including appraisal, imply a crisis monitoring element. When large gaps seem to appear between expected performance and actual performance, development issues become both important and urgent. When a large gap is perceived, the language changes from development need to weakness and is said to end in drastic action (LN7, p. 143). When a gap in ability to perform to expectations is perceived to be small, the focus of performance management is on operationally urgent objectives and issues. Leaders perceived to be performing to expectations self-identify development needs and self-direct access to self-development opportunities.

### **Becoming a leader**

As leaders prepare for the role of leadership, they describe taking on difficult projects and professional work while at the same time learning leadership by practical experience or self-identifying development needs, or both. The pattern established in early preparation seems to be mirrored by a similar process when a professional acquires a leader role. A finding from the study is that three significant factors influencing a successful transition to leadership are entry, experience and education. The process of becoming a leader has been shown to require time, to be complex and varied and progress through a range of job experiences and learning. Entry into leadership or management, or both, has been described as a 'journey of development' (Pedler, 1990, pp. 3-6) and involves, at some point in a professional's career, promotion to leader/manager. A journey into leadership has to start somewhere

and a start is made through the choice of a professional area of work and gaining qualifications through formal study.

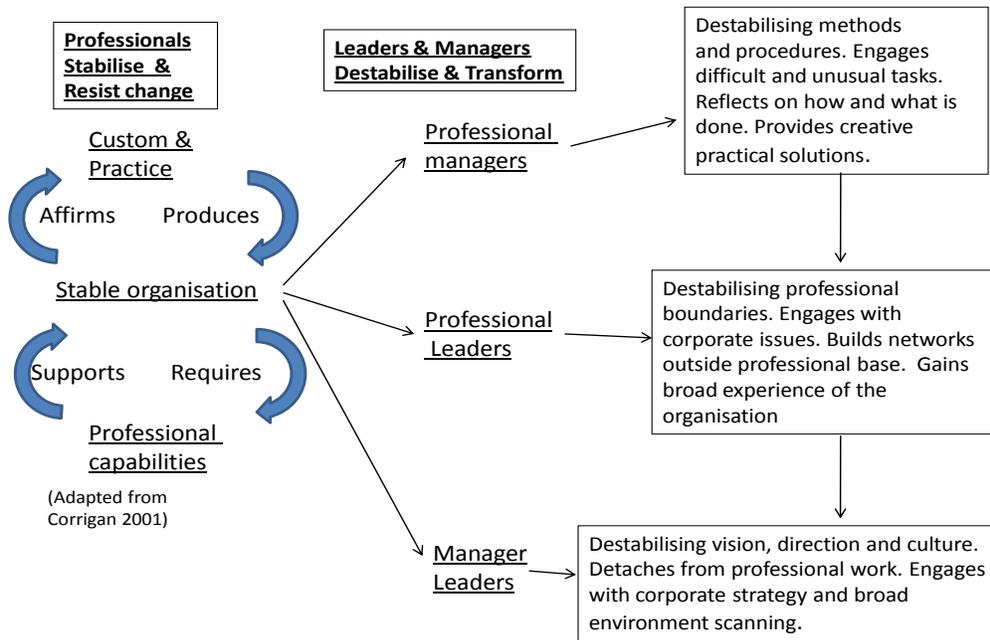
Corrigan (2001) contends that teaching and learning of required professional capabilities supports a stable organisation and affirms organisational customs and practices. Professionals face practical and work based problems that require technical knowledge and expertise that are tried, tested and sustained over long periods of time and that this establishes a context of organisational stability. Corrigan posits the notion of custom and practice producing a stable organisation requiring professional capabilities. Baddeley and James (1987) argue that, in the world of local government, professional problems and issues associated with service delivery are perceived in ways that make them amenable to established professional low risk solutions. Developing professional expertise is a complex process that may depend upon opportunities for engaging in difficult projects. This involves risk and relies upon recognition of potential by managers. One respondent (LN1) described the risk of allowing a junior professional the opportunity to run a difficult project; by this process professional development occurred and potential was recognised and evaluated.

Some leaders reported retaining significant professional elements in their role, while others reported they had dropped professional work in favour of management and leadership. However, all the respondents retained professional knowledge, skill and expertise and used their professional titles and qualifications on business cards and letters. This suggests that a professional element remains a significant factor in the role of service unit leaders. Some leaders

(LN1, LN2, LN7) said that corporate priorities were most important, but others (LN4, LN5, LN6) explained the imperative logic that, if the service unit was not effectively led and failed to survive, there was no place for a service unit leader in the corporate organisation.

Promotion to a leader/manager role facilitates experience of increased responsibility and engagement with change requiring capabilities of leadership. The evidence (Table 5.1, p. 119) suggests that combining roles of professionalism, management and leadership facilitates movement from the stability of professionally oriented work to less stable work as a leader/manager. An employer expectation of leaders is the implementation of a corporate vision and priority for change at the professional, departmental or organisational level. The enactment of leadership through processes of change enables transformative modernisation, and this is an expectation of central government. Transformative processes imply destabilising the status quo that, at managerial level, may require changes to professional methods and procedures. At a professional/leader level it may involve moving beyond the professional boundary and at the leader/manager level may involve high level corporate strategy, cultural change and direction. A potential model for this process is provided in figure 7.1 below:

**Figure 7.1 A process model**



The data indicate that leaders have a need to be educated in leadership and this study has found that educational needs are not primarily satisfied through formal preparatory courses. The classroom for leadership has been found to be the work base, with learning taking place while engaged in day-to-day work related activities. Work based experience may facilitate the growth and discovery of leadership and foster learning about what appears to work and what does not (Handy, 1992). Emerging leaders have an ability to reflect upon work based practice and this assists them in identifying specific learning needs. Formal courses may be used to satisfy leader needs for practical tools and techniques, skills, theoretical structure and language, principles that underpin good

work based practice and help with practical solutions to work based problems (Table 5.6, p. 147).

Delegates to formal development courses volunteer to them despite concerns about the quality, cost and relevance. Underpinning these concerns are beliefs that leadership cannot be taught and that courses of leadership study do not produce leaders (Handy, 1992; Sadler, 2003; Saunders, 2008). This implies that to enact leadership is not a simple matter of acquiring knowledge and competence on courses. It may also require characteristics that may be personality factors or developed through life, work and modelling aspects of leaders perceived as successful.

A significant factor concerns acceptability as a leader. Acceptability as a leader may in part be the character of the individual. Acceptable characteristics are reported as courage, strength of personality, integrity, trustworthiness, personable, flexibility, judgement and creativity (Table 5.3, p. 131). Becoming a leader seems to entail demonstrating commitment to a professional area, generating credibility with professionals, earning esteem from colleagues through being tested by work based difficulties, and constructing trust through congruence with words and behaviour. Constructing trust seems to be perceived as a key activity (LN4, p. 167) and is required when leaders' seek to influence followers to move from known professional activities into the unknowns of transformational change.

## **Organisational requirements**

The study has found that capabilities required by an organisation do not stand still. There is a constant requirement for appropriate capabilities to ensure that the business survives and flourishes in the face of transformative changes in service delivery requirements, competition, political direction, community participation and dwindling resources, material, financial and human (Bovaird and Martin, 2003; IDeA, 2008; Laffin, 2008; Laming, 2003; Lyons, 2006; ODPM and EO, 2003). Capabilities of leaders in times of transformative change and challenge are expected to be reliable when tested in daily practice, robust when tested by difficulties and results oriented when tested by performance measures.

Capacity building is the process used by local government to ensure that organisational capabilities are provided and developed to meet the business requirements of the organisation. It makes use of exploring, identifying and providing for the organisation's development requirements to support groups of leaders. A requirement to support leaders through transformative change is recognised by the organisation. However, the organisation also expects leaders to do the job for which they are paid and monitors work in progress through annual appraisals and one-to-one meetings. These performance management mechanisms focus attention on individual rather than group performance. Active organisational initiatives appear to be stimulated when performance is perceived to be at an unacceptable level. When this occurs development may be viewed as both urgent and important and leadership capabilities are explored in greater depth. The organisation may then act by encouraging forms of development and

investing in developing leadership capabilities, or taking other forms of drastic action.

The robustness of organisational leadership has been shown to be tested by a range of work based challenges. Challenges have a negative impact upon leaders (Table 5.4, p. 135) and leaders face increased workloads, shifting priorities, cuts in resources and political short termism. An implication for leaders is to accommodate ambiguity presented by non-complementary organisational requirements. On the one hand leaders think they have freedom, independence and autonomy to lead a service unit, yet on the other hand they are required to be compliant with the corporate team and be cohesive and sensitive to political ambition. Leaders believe they are required to respond to corporate priorities and local councillor and central government priorities whilst also ensuring that professional business priorities and survival of the service unit is prioritised and secured. Leaders view their position as both practical and operationally grounded, but also visionary, strategic and corporately focused. Leaders perceive an organisational requirement to be flexible, adaptable, personable and accepting of a corporate line, politically aware and influential and also to be single-minded, the taker and defender of tough decisions, the giver of bad news and the sustainer of morale and motivation (Table 5.5, p. 139).

Leaders say the organisation gives them absolute, total and one hundred per cent support (LN1, LN2, LN5, p. 140), but the study found support to be conditional and partial. Support was said to be conditional on service unit leaders going in the direction set by senior directors, which could be interpreted as service unit leaders

supporting directors rather than the other way around. Partial support is offered by the organisation through exploring, identifying and providing for the development of groups of leaders. This can only be partially successful, because the framework used to explore and identify organisational requirements for development takes account of a limited range of information. The complexities of ambiguity inherent in the position of service unit leaders outlined above and an acknowledgement and exploration of the difficult challenges faced by the unit leader does not appear to be taken into account (Table 5.5, p. 139). A framework used by the organisation to identify group development requirements is focused inwardly through collecting staff survey data. This largely ignores outward looking and external sources of data. A learning and development specialist is employed to collect data, analyse it and present reports prior to producing a corporate learning and development response. However, the employee is half time and has many 'must-do' duties (LN3) additional to exploring and identifying leadership requirements.

The organisation seems to rely upon sources of data shown to be inwardly focused and limited in scope and range, but used for identifying development requirements and producing a learning and development response. Leaders believe the organisation is being fully supportive and perceive activities such as staff surveys, appraisals, training budgets and development courses as providing evidence of the organisation's commitment to exploring and identifying development requirements. This may be ignoring contrary evidence (noted above) and that the outcomes of development courses are shown to be sporadically ad hoc, 'hit and miss', reactive and only partially useful (Table 5.6, p. 147). Leadership requirements are

perceived to have low priority and are said to be 'fitted in' (LN1). This suggests a lack of value and importance, accepting processes thought to be good enough for identifying leadership requirements.

However, when an organisation fails to perform successfully, significantly it is its capability for leadership that is called into question (Bovaird and Martin, 2003; IDeA, 2008; Laffin, 2008; Laming, 2003; Lyons, 2006; ODPM and EO, 2003). An organisational appraisal process is in place and is said to provide an opportunity to explore and identify individual development needs that feed into the organisation's database for analysing group development requirements. However, appraisal has been shown to be problematic, limited and only partially successful. As a multi-purpose tool, appraisal has an aspect that is used for exploring and identifying development needs, but it is a minimal part. Appraisal seems much more successfully applied as a tool for reviewing outcomes and identifying the coming year's work objectives. The study found five reasons why appraisal was not working effectively as a tool for identifying development needs (p. 159). This may be the experience when acceptable levels of performance are perceived, but if performance is unacceptable the organisation takes an increased interest in exploring capabilities and development needs.

### **Individual needs**

This study has not found individual leaders in an elemental pure form; no thoroughbred leader with specific identifiable features has been identified. Leaders have been found to have a mixture of roles – professional, management and leadership – and a mixture of

knowledge, skills and characteristics. The study has found some ideas consistent with normative perceptions of leaders along with ideas indicating a rich variety of perceptions (Table 5.3, p. 131). This study identified a sample of volunteer leaders from criteria associated with responsibilities, titles and positions in an organisational structure (pp. 33-4). Leaders for this study were not chosen because they possessed recognisable features that enabled them to be identified, defined, sorted, classified and measured (Bass, 1999; Boal and Hooijberg, 2000; Carless et al., 2000; Horner, 2003; House et al., 2004; House et al., 2002; Kirby et al., 1992; Roush and Atwater, 1992; Salaman, 2003; Tejada et al., 2001). This implies a position that contrasts with using defined characteristics to produce leaders as a product of development courses. This study has not found people emerging from formal courses fully prepared for leadership and made in the image of an effective leader. It has found individuals struggling with change, their leadership being tested by daily practice, difficult challenges and performance measures. The study indicates that, in the throes of difficult daily work, those with leadership responsibilities begin to recognise and accept they have personal development needs. They believe that if development needs are met they will overcome deficiencies in leadership and become better leaders. Initiative and pressure for leader development appears to come from the individual leader. The leader engages in work, assesses personal performance and seeks to improve as a 'do it yourself' development process (Pedler, 1990, p. 9). The organisation plays a minimal part in this provided the performance level is perceived as acceptable. A leader making a case for development is supported by the organisation with the provision of resources to facilitate and enable the development.

Self-assessment used for promoting being a better or good leader was also tinged with doubts that it may be an illusion (LN7). This would seem to question abilities of self-assessment and self-awareness. Doubts may be ever present because the views of others are important to a realistic evaluation of the self and performance. However, the reflections of others may be distorted because they come through the lens of personal paradigms and world views (Covey, 1999). Respondents in this study say they have a development need for self-awareness and use social reflective mirrors such as 360 degree appraisal and other feedback mechanisms. However, doubts persist about the accuracy of self-awareness and levels of performance. Respondents believe that everyone has development needs and doing something about them enables improvements in job performance. Leaders believe they are able to recognise their own development needs and expressed a variety of ways of conceptualising them (Table 6.1, p. 151).

When a leader thinks they have missed the mark it is an indication to them of a development need. Missing the mark was recognised by reflecting on performance, self-awareness and self-examination. This is acknowledged to be difficult and leaders can have blind spots in their awareness, recognised by being open to and seeking varied forms of feedback. The study found six methods other than appraisal that leaders use to help them improve self-awareness and identify personal development needs (pp. 159-60). Respondents also reported a variety of ways they attempted to be a better leader through self-development. A concept of self-development emerging from ideas of a 'do it yourself' activity done on your own, was revised

to taking charge and responsibility for one's own learning even in the presence of others (Pedler, 1990, p. 9). This study has found that the process of exploring and identifying personal development needs was perceived by leaders to be a 'do it yourself' process. Recognising a development need implies some standard of leadership against which current performance can be compared. Respondents assumed that a model of a perfect leader or expected standard of leadership exists (LN2, LN6, LN7). Identifying models of good practices may offer a way for leaders to become aware of different standards of leadership.

All respondents reported using some form of modelling as a process for learning about good leadership (pp. 128-9). For example, respondent LN1 described in detail how they recognised a leader able effectively to resolve negotiations in which there were disagreements. The respondent analysed various examples of the leader's skill and identified how they could emulate what they considered to be an example of best practice in this aspect of leadership. In this example LN1 identified a development need and addressed it through modelling. Although respondents said they used modelling in a positive way, the process is problematic. Without an objective external standard, comparison may be open to subjective assessments of a leader's performance and to subjective evaluations of a model's performance. This brings into question the accuracy of the comparative process. Respondent comments illuminate the difficulty of establishing an ideal or perfect model of leadership. There was no consensus on what constituted an ideal or perfect model of leadership, but respondents did recognise that others would have very different ideas to their own.

Barker (2001) posits that, without knowing what leadership is, it cannot be developed. An attempt is then made to define leadership:

Leadership is a process of transformative change where the ethics of individuals are integrated into the mores of a community as a means of evolutionary social development. (Barker, 2001, p. 491)

Not everyone will agree that a process of transformative change is leadership, although transformative change may require leadership. Evolutionary social development is not the same as transformation and ethics only partially explain an aspect that may be included in leadership. Many other researchers view leadership as a concept that is difficult to agree upon because it is complex, fragmented and contradictory (Adair, 2007; Barker, 1997; Chemers, 1997; Grint, 2003; Lumby with Coleman, 2007; Yukl, 2002). Contradictory understandings of leadership suggest an inability to know and agree upon what leadership is, preventing the generation of any agreement that is intellectually compelling (Rost, 1991). This suggests that leadership is understood hermeneutically to be discussed and interpreted contextually within an organisation. However, there are indications from this study that discussions on leadership are limited:

*I do not think we spend a huge amount of time talking about leadership within the organisation. (7LN)*

In the absence of meaningful organisational discussion, individual leaders may be making ipsative choices about development needs

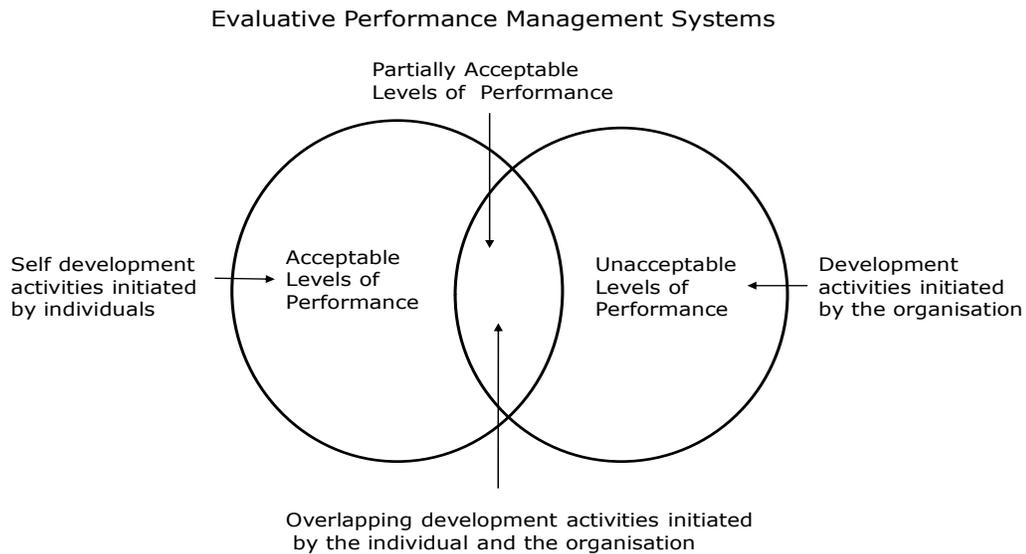
subject to constraints of normative understanding and observations of perceived models of leadership good practice. Methods for satisfying development needs cited by leaders include modelling, action learning sets, mentoring and coaching (Table 6.3, p. 163). All of these methods provide a strong element of confidentiality, are dialogue based, person-to-person and focused on the individual. Using responsible gossip to chat through issues is a political skill (Baddeley, 1998) and seems appropriate to leadership development methods. Respondents indicated a preference for conditions on courses that have ground rules of confidentiality, allow them to share experiences, discuss work based problems and solutions and are facilitated by people who know their business and can contextualise the content of the course.

## **Potential for improvement**

The study has found that a complex relationship exists between an organisation and leadership that is different in nature to the relationship between a professional and the organisation. This complex relationship may give rise to problems associated with exploring, identifying and providing for organisational requirements and individual needs for leadership development. Data reveal an expression of hopefulness for an agreement that organisational requirements and individual needs overlap and are met. However, the degree of a potential overlap appears to be constrained by the outcomes of evaluative performance systems. When performance is perceived to be in need of improvement by both individuals and the organisation attention, action and initiation of development activities may overlap. If performance is perceived by the organisation to be unacceptable, it may take independent action. If the organisation

perceives performance to be acceptable, individual leaders may self-initiate personal development.

**Figure 7.2 Development responding to performance**



When performance is perceived to be acceptable, initiation of development activity comes from an individual. However, a 'do it yourself' approach to development is problematic because it is partial and piecemeal. Individuals responding to workplace experience seem to be fixing gaps in knowledge, skill and understanding vicariously as they become aware of them in the throes of a busy working context. This would suggest that leadership ability is unexamined and untested until work experience reveals a potential deficit. There is potential here for a more holistic, strategically planned and diagnostic approach to leadership development that may depend

upon the individual and the organisation overlapping development activities.

When performance is unacceptable the organisation seems to go into crisis avoidance mode. The term changes from 'organisational development requirement' to 'individual weakness', and if improvement in capabilities cannot be achieved quickly drastic action is taken against individuals. Shared action by the organisation and the individual may prevent potential crises due to perceived unacceptable levels of performance. An indicator for shared action is when performance levels are perceived to be only partially acceptable. Perceptions of a partially acceptable performance seem to trigger the organisation to explore business development requirements for leadership development across groups of leaders and this gives economies of scale. Individual leaders become aware of potentially not meeting performance expectations and engage in exploring development needs. There appears to be potential for improvement by increasing the degree of overlap and shared responsibility and creating an indicator for recognising the degree of development needs and requirements.

It seems that development activity responds to perceived performance levels and is constrained by complex contextual factors, one of which may be the abilities of leaders. Development activity may be individual leader directed or organisationally directed, or a combination of the two. The degree of overlap may be recognised by a triage of development response indicated by the seriousness of the performance condition. Position one is when performance is organisationally acceptable. Individual leaders are engaged in a 'do it

yourself' process of exploring and identifying development needs to improve their perceived performance. Position three is when the organisation perceives performance to be unacceptable. The organisation is engaged in capability measures to avert performance crises or catastrophe. Position two is when performance is perceived to be partially acceptable. Both individual leaders and organisation are engaged in recognising development needs and requirements and sharing responsibility for improving performance capability. An indicator may be created by monitoring individual leader requests for personal development and organisational suggestions and mandated development for leadership. However, at the time of writing severe financial restrictions imposed by a context of recession and the effects of a public spending review may militate against organisations taking an increased level of responsibility for exploring development requirements.

This study has illuminated the experience and perception of leaders about their personal preparation and development as a leader and the organisational requirements for leadership. The study has found leaders busily engaged with complex service delivery issues, pressurised by the needs of the local community, the requirements of business partners and the implications of transformative modernisation imposed by central government. The perception is of a context of diminishing resources and increasing workloads in which priorities are shifted towards the immediate, the pressing and the urgent, militating against activities for exploring leadership development. In a context overshadowed by financial limitations that is 'task rich and time poor', perceptions and expectations of leadership performance are variable. Although selected literature

contests linking organisational performance with leadership, performance management systems seem to assume such a link. Individual and organisational performance seems to be of fundamental importance to initiating the exploration and recognition of leader and leadership development requirements and needs. This study suggests that overlapping responsibilities and action by the organisation and the individual optimise mechanisms for exploring leadership development requirements and needs.

Although the organisation in this study possesses an ability to recognise development requirements for leadership, there is potential for improving this ability. The organisation appears to focus on inward looking data with little attention to external sources of data to inform leadership development requirements. Appraisal seems an underperforming mechanism for exploring development needs. Also offering voluntary participation in leadership development courses appears problematic. Activities initiated by the individual for leadership development may result in ad hoc, deficit 'gap filling' of knowledge, skill and understanding. There are processes and mechanisms available to assist organisations and individuals explore and identify individual development needs and organisational requirements. However, where they are applied they are perceived to lack the rigour and effectiveness to explore thoroughly and identify development requirements and needs. In consequence, development opportunities are used speculatively and found to be 'hit and miss' on a target that is not clearly identified, leaving an organisation's leaders in need.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Issues, contributions and significant arguments

Issue	Contributions to the issue	Significant arguments
1A. Modernising local government	Baines Report, 1972; DETR, 1988; Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008; DfES, 1988, 2004; Jay, 1967; Lilienthal, 1967; Maud Report, 1967.	Argue for local government to be more efficient, economic and effective through being more competitive, customer focused and entrepreneurial in the same way as the private sector. Modernisation implies job specific requirements for senior leaders.
1B. Differentiating local government from the private sector	Baddeley, 1998, 2008; Baddeley and James, 1987; Stewart, 1990; Clarke and Stewart, 1993, Hartley et al., 1996, Leach et al., 1994.	Argue the unique features of local government, especially the political dimension. Political and officer leadership are different but should be complementary.
2. Concerns about the performance levels of local government	Bichard, 2000; Bovaird and Martin, 2003; Clarke and Stewart, 1993; DfES, 2005; IDeA, 2008; Laming, 2003; Laming, 2009; Lyons, 2006; Walsh, 1991.	Argue that local government has performance issues that rest at the door of leadership and indicate that leaders are in need of development. The nature of the development is not clearly specified.
3A. Understanding leadership	Adair, 2007; Barker, 1997; Chemers, 1997; Grint, 2003; Grint, 1997; Lilienthal, 1967; Lumby and Coleman, 2007; Rost, 1991; Yukl, 2002.	Argue leadership is confusing, complex, contradictory, uncertain, abstract, plural and partially understood. Implies multiple understandings of leadership will exist in local government.
3B. Investigating leadership	Bass, 1999; Boal and Hooijberg, 2000; Carless et al., 2000; Horner, 2003; House et al., 2002, 2004; Kirby et al., 1992; Roush and Atwater, 1992; Salaman, 2003; Tejeda et al., 2001; Lumby, 1997a.	An argument is that leadership has recognisable features that can be identified, defined, sorted, classified and measured. Others argue leadership is an art, subjective and interpretative and has few objective features.
4. Change, modernisation and links to transformational and transactional leadership	Alimo-Metcalf and Alban-Metcalf, 2001; Bass, 1985; Bass, 1996, 1999; Bass et al., 1996; Broussine and Fox, 2002; Kotter, 1990; Rosner, 1990.	Argue the mix of transformational and transactional styles are important in times of change. However there are a number of inherent leadership issues.

5. The requirement for leadership development during periods of modernisation and change	Adlam and Plumridge, 1990; Barker, 1997; CIPD, 2004; Day, 2001; Harrison, 2006; Hofstede, 2001; Lumby et al., 2005; O'Donovan, 1990; Pedler et al., 1990; Rodgers et al., 2003.	Argue for a distinction between leader and leadership development, employer requirements and personal needs, raises issues about how this impacts upon the nature of development and organisational performance.
6. Identifying development requirements for the job, role and key tasks of leadership	CIPD, 2001, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008; IDeA, 2008; Nunn, 2007; Reid et al., 2004; ODPM and EO 2003.	Argue for the requirement of a job description and key tasks when identifying development requirements.
7. Performance management systems and identification of leader needs and leadership requirements	CIPD, 2004; Harrison, 2006; Lockett, 1992; Osborne, 1996.	Argue the necessity for a performance management system to identify development needs.
8. Appraisal and coaching as key elements for development and performance management systems applied to professional and leadership development	Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998; Bornholdt, 1978; Boyd, 2005; Cherrington, 1987; Cousins and Rogus, 1977; Daley, 2003; Devries, 1986; Grider and Toombs, 1993; Harrison, 2006; Oberg, 1972; Oliver et al., 1997; Rice, 1985; Seldin, 1988.	Argue the importance and use of appraisal and highlight the many difficulties with appraising especially as applied to senior professionals. Coaching is introduced as an appropriate professional alternative but development needs are covert and confidential.

## **Appendix 2: The semi-structured instrument**

### Interview instrument

The following areas of questioning are designed to open up topics that will enable the respondent, with subsequent exploration, to give a reflective description that is as comprehensive as possible. The purpose of the schedule is:

- To provide an outline framework for the research interview with each of the respondents
- To provide a structure for the interview based upon the research thesis themes and research questions
- To provide the flexibility for each respondent to both reflect and respond upon their views and perceptions

### The semi-structured instrument

#### Area one: Exploring becoming a leader

- What was your preparation for being a leader?
- What does it mean to you to be a leader?
- Talk me through your job as a leader (what is it you do as a leader day-to-day and longer term?)
- As a leader have you experienced any changes in what you do, how you work, or in what you need to know?

#### Area two: Exploring organisational requirement for leadership

- Would you talk me through a particular organisational event that made demands and challenges on leadership?
- What is your experience of the organisation finding out about leadership development requirements?
- How does the organisation respond to leadership requirements, what happens to groups and individual leaders?
- What is your experience of organisational sponsored leadership development programmes?

Area three: Exploring individual development needs

- How do you as a leader get to know what abilities to develop?
- In what ways are your individual/personal leader development needs the same/different to those of the organisation?
- What types of leader development has been offered to you?
- How do providers of leader development get to know your specific leader development needs?

Area four: Exploring the possibility for improvement

- What may be hindering you as a leader from performing better?
- What may be hindering group/corporate leadership from performing better?
- What can be done to improve your performance as a leader?
- What can be done to improve group/corporate leadership?
- What are the most effective aspects of leader and leadership development?

## **Appendix 3: The ethical protocol**

### Ethical protocol for conducting and reporting research

- All the participants will be made aware of the nature and scope of the study and the degree of anonymity being offered before agreeing to participate and this will be the basis of their consent.
- Absolute anonymity of the participants and organisation cannot be offered. However, a degree of anonymity will be offered and the final report will only refer to participants and organisation by pseudonym and or numerical code. The context of the organisation may be described and minimal biographical details may form part of the research data.
- Security of the data will be maintained and anonymised as to the source of the material obtained.
- No information will be used as the basis of any professional judgement relating to the work of any of the participants.
- Permission will be sought regarding the use of quotations taken from the basic research data. This will be made clear in the respondent information.
- During the course of the enquiry the researcher will be acting as a student of the University of Southampton. This status and capacity will be maintained throughout in both the collecting of the data and the presentation of the findings.
- Drafts of the interview material will be compiled from digital recording of the interviews. These will be shared with the participants for comments and correction. Any differences in interpretation will be resolved wherever possible through

negotiation. If this is not possible the difference will be noted within the research data.

- The researcher will have ownership of the data, the analysis, findings and conclusions of the final report.
- Access to the final report will be through the regulations and control of the University of Southampton library.
- A summary report of the overall findings will be prepared and distributed to the participating organisation.
- The researcher and the University of Southampton reserve the right to publish the result of the research within the guidelines of this protocol.

## Appendix 4: Summary of respondents and interview

<b>code</b>	<b>sex</b>	<b>Leadership level</b>	<b>Professional area</b>	<b>Experience</b>	<b>data</b>
1LN	<b>M</b>	Unit Head	Regeneration and Planning	Experience of several local authorities. Involvement with future leaders and many other leadership courses	9,000 words, 80 mins
2LN	<b>F</b>	Unit Head	Customer Service and IT	Commercial experience as an IT specialist and consultant. Some work with local authorities before taking on customer services	7,800 words, 75 mins
3LN	<b>F</b>	Service Manager	Learning and Development	Some experience of private sector management and working with charity organizations. Then into local government organizing training and development	8,000 words, 75 mins
4LN	<b>M</b>	Unit Head	Building Control Partnership	Building control specialist in a unitary authority gaining an OU diploma in management before taking on a leadership role in partnerships	7,000 words, 70 mins
5LN	<b>M</b>	Unit Head	Law and Democratic Services	Was developed by the civil service before taking on roles in London and many other councils gaining an MBA and attending many leadership courses	7,000 words, 70 mins
6LN	<b>F</b>	Unit Head	Revenue and Benefits	Has 31 years of experience in one local authority developing her career to a senior leadership position	12,600 words, 85 mins
7LN	<b>F</b>	Unit Head	Human Resources	Experienced in the NHS and public sector before heading an HR Unit in local government	7,500 words, 75 mins

## **Appendix 5: Suggestions for local authority consideration.**

Personal needs and organisational requirements for leadership development emerge from a context that is complicated by many different activities and undertaken by varied players with multiple levels of responsibility. Varied contexts resist simple universal solutions and approaches especially if they do not take account of complexity. Although local authorities must take account of unique contextual factors some suggestions, signposted from indicators emerging from this study, may assist the improvement of leadership development. The following suggestions are offered for consideration by local authority organisations as they move forward with leadership development activities.

- Create an effective organisational structure with specific leadership development roles for the board of directors, human resources and line managers.
- Create a strategic plan for leadership development activities that is holistic in design and appropriately prioritised.
- Create more time for discussing, debating and clarifying how leadership and leadership development is understood within the organisation.
- Create a broad range of rigorous information gathering systems related to leadership development that include internal, external and performance management sources.
- Create appropriate levels of resource (human, material and financial) for leadership development facing the challenges of transformative change.
- Create more time for appraisers to devote attention to identifying and clarifying individual leadership development needs and producing effective personal development plans.
- Review the balance of professional, management and leadership roles of emergent leaders.
- Base decisions about leadership development provision on the overlapping of identified needs of individuals and requirements of the organisation.
- Ensure that work based experience and learning is challenging, stretching and monitored so that each year's work and learning can be reviewed.

- Ensure there is an appropriate balance between individual and organisational initiated leadership development activity.

The following are explanatory notes to some of the suggestions listed above.

### **1. Create an effective structure.**

Leadership development requires a location in the geography of an organisational structure. There are important strategic decisions about an organisation's priority, approach, planning and resourcing of leadership development that rest with a chief executive and board of directors. A significant role for top level involvement is establishing and implementing a strategic approach to building capacity for leadership. Proactive planning of leadership development activities at the highest level of an organisation may minimize reactive responses to perceived crises of leadership performance.

Effective decision making at the highest level will depend, in part, upon the availability of sufficient, appropriate and accurate information about organisational requirements and individual needs for leadership development. A significant player in gathering and providing information through policies relating to leadership development is the human resource unit (HR). Performance management systems and policies relating to the development of leaders are required to be rigorous when gathering information and reporting on leadership development to a board of directors. Structural systems for gathering and reporting information require practical tools embedded in policies and performance management systems which the HR unit could create and monitor.

Appraisers and line managers are responsible for implementing performance management and policies relating to leadership development. A structural foundation for leadership development activity is built upon the activities of appraisers and line managers. Effective leadership development may begin with appraiser and line manager activities interacting with potential and existing leaders. The quality of leadership development activity will depend, in part, upon the quality of the activity between leaders and appraisers. Appraiser activities require action and implementation. Accurate description and general statements of intent may offer protection from criticism. However, this may not be rigorous enough to ensure leadership development is appropriately implemented.

## **2. Leadership development and the board of directors.**

Part of the role for a board of directors is to encourage, support and resource leadership development. Local authorities may improve leadership development by committing more time to raising the level of organisational debate about what it means to be a leader.

Leadership may be understood in many different ways. It is therefore helpful for senior leaders in an organisation to clarify how leadership is understood within the organisation. This could mean facilitating discussions about organisational leadership and the characteristics of leaders valued by and acceptable to the organisation. An implication is a consideration of the effect of combining roles of professional, manager and leader.

A board of directors implementing a transformative vision could review the level of resources, status and priority of leadership development requirement. During a period of transformative change different skills, knowledge and understanding may be required. A corporate organisation implementing a future vision may be required to match capabilities with a changing environment, context and transformed future. This requires a board of directors to consider the impact of external changes and challenges upon the organisations requirement for leadership.

Local government is challenged by multiple business units, a broad remit and political factors. Transformative change creates challenging issues that may indicate a variety of requirements for leadership development. The board of directors should consider the impact of internal organisational challenges upon requirements for leadership development. Transformative change affects performance. A board of directors could ensure the resource allocation for leadership development matches the concern for organisational performance.

## **3. Leadership development and Human Resources.**

Part of the role of a human resource unit is to provide the policies, information and programmes of leadership development required by the organisation and needed by leaders. They should be rigorous and practical when applied to leadership development. Involvement with work based learning could be increased. This may mean developing opportunities for emergent leaders to engage with a wide variety of challenging and stretching professional work and projects. This implies curriculum vitae building for a future offering greater levels of

responsibility that may include management and leadership. It may also mean creating a development learning record that has room for reflection and comment. Human resources should ensure that experience is logged and supervised so that each year's work may be reviewed, is varied, extends and challenges the individual and reduces the potential for repetitive work experience.

Formal training courses should be offered that are based on the development needs of leadership in the workplace after an appropriate level of experience as a leader/manager has been achieved. Formal courses could provide the tools, techniques, theoretical structures and language of leadership in relation to the stage and level of leadership needed. Courses could offer discussion, confidentiality, sharing of experiences and principles that underpin good practice and are contextualised to the organisation. They could utilise the reflective practice and work based experience of emergent leaders. Courses could be integrated into development programmes of leadership that offer a broad range of developmental activities over an extended period of time.

Human resource units should base decisions about the provision of organisational requirements for leadership and the needs of individual leaders on informed sources of information. Broad spectrum survey data may not be appropriate. Appropriate information on leadership development should contain both inward looking data obtained from staff surveys conducted within the organisation and outward looking data obtained from scanning government documents and external sources of information obtained from the community and business partners.

#### **4. Leadership development and appraisers.**

Appraisers have a crucial role in relating the strategic approach of a board of directors and the policies of HR to the practical work based activities of leaders. Appraisers could devote more appraisal time and attention to the development needs of leaders. Appraisers need to know individual leaders much better. This means discovering more about what is challenging the leader, how they are recognizing gaps in performance, how they understand development need and the mechanisms they are using for self awareness and self development. Appraisers could consider developing a process for exploring individual needs that includes information from self appraisal, peer review, and a variety of feedback mechanisms that may include information from 360<sup>0</sup> appraisal, mentoring, coaching and action learning. A broader range of information should be used by

appraisers and leaders to construct a development plan that is specific, targeted towards identified need and allocates appropriate resources.

Appraisers could identify examples of people exhibiting good work based practice and facilitate access to models of good leadership. There could be a greater degree of reflection by appraisers and leaders upon how patterns of leadership behaviour may be emulated and learned. Appraiser and leader could collaborate to balance leader initiated and organisationally initiated leadership development activity.

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