



Talent Management and Queensland Schools: A Proposed Research Methodology

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Introduction

There is a leadership crisis looming in education (Williams & Morey, 2015). Finding suitable aspirants who want to lead a school as the principal is becoming more challenging (Ainley & Carstens, 2018; Cranston, 2007; Roza, Celio, Harvey, & Wishon, 2003) and the role of the principal is becoming less attractive to qualified and suitable applicants (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, LaPointe, & Orr, 2010; Fink & Brayman, 2004; McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy, & McMillan, 2014). A talent management system is a response commonly used in business to attract, develop and retain leaders (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Thunnissen, Boselie, & Fruytier, 2013). However, talent management is typically a private sector approach to succession planning and the effects of its transference into the public sector, such as the field of education is still relatively unknown (Ingram & Glod, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to outline the research methods that I will use to answer the question, 'Is talent management a solution to the growing school leadership crisis in Queensland schools?'

To answer this question, I will first discuss some considerations in choosing my approach to research and justify the adopted tools and methodology. I will then describe how I use conceptual analysis to better understand talent management and its potential use and presence in schools prior to conducting research. Next, I will justify the use of Narrative Inquiry as my research method to perform a deep dive into understanding the lived experiences of selected aspirant leaders, existing middle leaders and school principals in Queensland schools. Finally, I will conclude with a summary of my intended procedures for data collection, data analysis and ensuring ethical conduct is addressed throughout my research.

Determining an approach to research

House's (2018) research of the pragmatics of research methodology and data collection, describes that there needs to be a new way of thinking about research methodology. House (2018) proposes, that rather than a black and white view of research being either qualitative or quantitative, research should be considered on a continuum. While we can consider a continuum of methodologies with quantitative and qualitative methods at each extreme, understanding the purpose and intent of qualitative and quantitative research in their basic sense can help determine how to best utilise them for particular research questions and problems (House, 2018).

The basic function of qualitative research is to understand human behaviour, which is rooted in the philosophical strand of Hermeneutics, whereas the basic function of quantitative research is to explain human behaviour (Cohen et al., 2013; Creswell, 2008; House, 2018; Lakshman, Sinha, Biswas, Charles, & Arora, 2000). This does not mean quantitative research does not seek to understand or that qualitative research does not explain human behaviour. As Stueber (2012) argues, the distinction is more about a conceptual difference of the terminology of, to understand or to explain, and that through qualitative approaches, there is a greater focus on empathetic understanding to make sense of the significance of isolated facts as part of the larger whole.

Reswick (1994), unpacks the distinctions between qualitative and quantitative approaches further by explaining that there is a difference in process rather than just purpose. Quantitative research is more orientated to the physical and biomedical sciences and follows a streamlined process of; a. formulating a hypothesis; b. defining an experimental model/system, variables and measurements; c. performing an experiment or carrying out study; d. analysing data and testing for reliability and validity; and e. deducing the truth or falsity of the hypothesis. In contrast, qualitative research is normally associated with the social sciences and undergoes a constant comparative analysis while progressing through the stages of; a. conjecturing the theory; b. defining a model/system/questions, study format, variables and instrument design; c. carrying out study, gathering data, interviewing, leading focus groups, participating and observing; and d. analysing data and testing for reliability and validity, for example formulate a theory grounded on data. Qualitative research also provides a deeper, richer description of a phenomena being studied, with a depth of examination of the way the phenomena impacts participants and their perceptions (McDuffie & Scruggs, 2008).

Regardless of research method, Atkinson and Hammersely (2007) and House (2018) argue that the driving factor determining the choice of research approach and methodology is the research goal and question. My research has the purpose of understanding the growing school leadership crisis in Queensland schools and grappling with the concept of talent management, its relevance to schools and any potential transferability of its success in the private sector to the schooling environment. Building on my earlier paper, 'The growing school leadership crisis in Queensland schools: An introductory literature review of talent management', this paper further contributes to my research. It outlines the research methods I will adopt to develop a better conceptual understanding of talent management. The paper will also provide an evaluation of the suitability of talent management practices to schools in Queensland, its viability as an approach to identify and develop aspirant principals, and some considerations if engaged as an approach to broader human resource management practices.

This study will aim to determine the suitability of talent management practices to schools in Queensland and is therefore embedded within the social sciences, with its intention to understand human behaviours. It also seeks to explain, what is currently occurring with respect to leadership development and identification of future school leaders in Queensland. Consequently, it is appropriate for a mixed-methods approach to be adopted for this research. It is rare to find a 'pure' method of research (House, 2018; Reswick, 1994) and the selection of

methodology can be complicated, messy and full of ambiguity (E. Clarke & Visser, 2019). Frost and Nolas (2011) encourage that rather than choosing between methodological approaches, researchers should move to a position of choosing from methodological approaches to make meaning. Further, having a combination of approaches will assist in gaining useful insights into a particular phenomenon and enable greater possibility of triangulation (House, 2018; Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2016).

Therefore, conceptual analysis, a logical and analytical approach to understanding a concept will be first used to develop a robust understanding of talent management and how it might appear in the context of schools. This will be supported by a quantitative study using a cross-sectional web-survey to explore the existence and trends of talent management practices in Queensland Schools. These two approaches will guide the method of Narrative Inquiry in deepening the understanding of talent management in Queensland schools by re-storying the lived experiences of aspirant principals, middle leaders and existing principals in their journey towards school leadership.

In the following sections, I introduce the approaches of conceptual analysis and Narrative Inquiry that will be used to answer my research question.

Talent Management: A Conceptual Analysis

This section describes how conceptual analysis will be used in my main research thesis to achieve an understanding of the concept of talent management and its potential for adoption in Queensland schools.

While there are many possibilities to addressing the school leadership crisis in Queensland, I am focusing on talent management for the following reasons:

- There is a growing field of research into talent management in the private sector (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Michaels, 1998).
- Research and exploration of the role of talent management in education, is only beginning to emerge (Asplund, 2019; Mohd Izham Mohd & Shuhaida, 2017; Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011; Schiemann, 2014).
- A significant research and literature gap for the Queensland context exists. Other than research around principal preparation in Queensland, by Lester (2001), S. Clarke, Stevens, and Wildy (2006) and Simon Clarke and Stevens (2009), there has been little research into leadership development in Queensland schools. Queensland is diverse in its school sizing, distances that schools are located from metropolitan areas and workplace reforms and employee conditions in Queensland schools are significantly influenced by trade unions.

- Existing practices of annual performance review and developing performance planning are currently not valued by teachers or school leaders (Rothman, Ingvarson, & Matthews, 2018).
- Lastly, as research practitioner and principal in a school in Queensland, I question whether my experiences of leadership identification and development are the same for other principals and aspirant leaders in Queensland.

Ingram and Glod (2016) identify that talent management is relatively unknown in the field of education and the understanding of what defines talent management is widely contested (Asplund, 2019; Hoff & Scott, 2016; Khorida & Meliala, 2018; Vaiman & Collings, 2013).

Bozeman and Feeney (2007) identify that the most important rule for developing a concept is to be able to define its parameters. Therefore, to be able to effectively study whether talent management is a possible solution to the growing leadership crisis in the context of education in Queensland, the boundaries of the concept must first be determined. This process is often referred to as conceptual analysis and can be used to refine and clarify overused or vague concepts (Walker & Avant, 2019). Ultimately, it results in a precise definition that increases validity to a construct and allows an investigator to construct statements or hypotheses that accurately reflect relationships between concepts (Walker & Avant, 2019). Further and more importantly for my research, conceptual analysis will be very useful in constructing research instruments and interview guides prior to conducting research (Walker & Avant, 2019).

Progressing through the eight stages of conceptual analysis as described by Walker and Avant (2019), will provide clarity of concept prior to interview questioning within the Narrative Inquiry. The stages of conceptual analysis as described by Walker and Avant (2019), while normally listed sequentially are to be employed iteratively through my research as outlined next, in Table 1.

Table 1. Conceptual Analysis

Stage of Conceptual Analysis	Role of the Researcher	Within my Research
Selecting a concept	The researcher chooses a concept to analyse that can contribute significantly to knowledge development about the phenomenon.	Identifying the leadership crisis in education Examining the literature on principal preparation, declining applicant pools for school principals and the use of talent management from the theoretical understandings of social exchange theory.
Determining the aims or purposes of analysis	The researcher focuses their attention on exactly what use they intend to make of the results. It essentially answers the question: "Why am I doing this analysis?". Conceptual analysis is not an end in itself but should be a bridge to further related work (Walker & Avant, 2019, p. 171).	Justification of the research question, Is talent management a solution to the growing school leadership crisis in Queensland schools? Defining the expected impact of the study and explaining why it is important that the concept of talent management is clearly defined.
Identifying all uses of the concept that you can discover	The researcher uses dictionaries, thesauruses, available literature, friends and colleagues to identify as many uses of the concept as possible. It consists of implicit and explicit uses of the concept.	Defining talent management Undertaking a detailed literature review to examine the use of talent management in the private sector such as business as well as the public sector including education.
Determining the defining attributes	The researcher makes notes of characteristics of the concept that appear over and over again,	

	creating a list of defining attributes. These defining attributes change as understanding of the concept develops.	
Identifying a model case	The researcher develops an example case that demonstrates all of the defining attributes of the concept. This can be developed simultaneously with the attributes, identified first in the analysis or may emerge attributes are tentatively determined. The researcher can develop the model case from real life examples or literature.	Establishment of a theoretical 'model case' and 'additional cases' of what talent management looks like in education built from the literature. This will be articulated as a chapter within the main thesis and used identify the prevalence of talent management within schools in Queensland.
Identifying Additional Cases	The researcher identifies cases that are borderline, related, contrary, invented, and illegitimate cases to further develop the defining attributes.	The model case will continue to be refined with the assistance of the web-based survey and Narrative Inquiry and will be discussed in the research findings.
Identifying antecedents and consequences	The researcher identifies the events or incidents that must occur or be in place prior to the occurrence of the concept (antecedent), and identify the events or incidents that occur as a result of the occurrence of the concept (consequence or outcome).	Antecedents and consequences will be identified through the examination of literature and clarified in the Literature Review. The web-based survey and Narrative Inquiry will be used to clarify and examine any evidence of antecedents and consequences in practice and will be discussed in the research findings.
Defining empirical referents	As the final step of conceptual analysis, the researcher identifies classes or categories of actual phenomena that demonstrate the occurrence of the concept. The empirical referents become important to improve content and construct validity of new instruments and provide clear, observable phenomena to determine the existence of the concept.	Empirical referents will identified and developed through the development of the theoretical model case, and may be further refined following the web-based survey and Narrative Inquiry and will be discussed in the research findings.

As talent management is relatively unknown in the field of education, undertaking a conceptual analysis will be an important foundation for conducting my research. Furthermore, as talent management may be relatively unknown in Queensland schools and is only beginning to emerge in the literature, what is discovered by exploring the general trends and practices of talent management or other human resource management practices in schools and delving deeply into lived experiences through a Narrative Inquiry, may likely further shape and refine the practical outcomes of my research such as a model case.

Defining Narrative Inquiry

Further to understanding the concept of talent management and potential relevance to Queensland schools, my research will aim to understand the lived experiences of school leaders and their possible engagement with talent management. In this section, I outline how Narrative Inquiry will be used in my research thesis.

Narrative Inquiry is a term first used by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) to describe a new research methodology in education, focusing on using stories to understand a phenomena. Its dual function as a method of inquiry and means of personal and professional learning has facilitated its use in educational research, teacher development and teacher preparation (Conle, 2001). Narrative Inquiry can be simply expressed as the study of experience as a story.

'Narrative Inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative Inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomena. To use Narrative Inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomena under study.'

(Connelly & Clandinin, 2012, p. 477)

While the use of Narrative Inquiry as a methodology to conduct research is relatively new, to live and tell stories about living is an old practice (Clandinin, 2006). However, Narrative Inquiry is more than storytelling (Byrne, 2017; Clandinin, Pushor, & Orr, 2007). It is an overarching principle where data, analysis and representation are all narrative in form (Byrne, 2017) and the stories of the participants are retold by the researcher through a process seeking to identify 'time, place, plot and scene' in a chronological sequence (Creswell, 2008; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). These can be expressed in three dimensions of: the personal and social (interaction); past, present and future (continuity); and place (situation) (Clandinin, 2006; Clandinin et al., 2007). Through the writing of the narrative, a researcher adds rich detail and makes causal links and identifies themes to provide a fuller narrative (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

Narrative Inquiry can be identified from seven common major characteristics: individual experiences, chronology of the experience, collecting of individual stories, re-storying, coding for themes, context or setting, and collaborating with participants (Creswell, 2008). While there are numerous types of narrative research including, but not limited to: autobiographies, ethnohistories, oral histories and narrative interviews, Squire (2008), identifies there are three distinct approaches that focus on Narrative Inquiry. Narrative Inquiry can focus on narrative syntax or structure, narrative semantics or content, or narrative pragmatics or context. For the purpose of my research, the approach through Narrative Inquiry will focus on the semantics of the individual stories developed from field texts. Engaging in this methodology from a narrative semantics approach provides a hermeneutic approach to analysing stories, aiming at full interpretation and understanding of the lived experiences of participants.

Why Narrative Inquiry?

Conle (2000), provides a strong case for the use of Narrative Inquiry as a research method. In referencing Verene (1991, p. 71), where "understanding something is to discover its origin and to narratively recreate its genesis", Conle argues it is through storytelling, that we understand the history and reasons for why behaviour and actions exist. By entering into dialogue with others, Narrative Inquiry also has the potential to challenge existing theories and status quo, leading to the development of new theories that resonate more with people's lives (Fraser, 2004).

As a methodology, Narrative Inquiry has grown in popularity over the last 30 years, particularly in education (Byrne, 2017; Clandinin et al., 2007; Squire, 2005, 2008). It provides "researchers with a better understanding of the culture, historical experiences, identity, or lifestyle of the narrator" (Butina, Campbell, & Miller, 2015, p. 187).

My research aims to not only understand the processes existing school principals undertook in their journey into school leadership, but how they identified and developed future aspirants for the role of school principal. Huber, Caine, Huber, and Steeves (2013) through an analysis of the evolution of Narrative Inquiry in education, justify

that through bringing the methodological understandings of Narrative Inquiry into education, researchers see who a teacher is, who they are becoming and how they connect with the processes, strategies, or styles of instruction lived out by a teacher, in other words the pedagogy in education. By further extension of this idea, using Narrative Inquiry will enable my research to see who a school principal is, who they are becoming and their connection to the processes, strategies or styles of leadership and development of others, in other words the andragogy in education.

Improving Validity, Trustworthiness and Procedural Issues

While Narrative Inquiry is growing in popularity and use within education, it is still contested around its validity and authenticity as a research methodology (Bignold & Su, 2013; Byrne, 2017). All qualitative and quantitative research methods have limitations and risks associated with their use, but by being aware of these risks and limitations, and careful consideration of practices, robust risk management can be achieved, and overall validity, reliability and generalisability of the findings can be improved (Loh, 2013).

Quantitative methodological approaches have traditionally been seen as the most valid form of research (House, 2018; Reswick, 1994). However, even this methodological approach is still vulnerable. Lakshman et al. (2000) provide a simple example of how data that should be transparent is easily manipulated through the examination of mortality rate and how the classification of still births, prevents this information from inclusion in the data around mortality. They further propose that the survey tools themselves in quantitative approaches can present the challenge. This includes respondents often being misled or misunderstanding questions, and therefore presenting false responses and impacting upon the validity of data.

However, quantitative methods work best when there is a minimum of dependent variables, all under the control of the researcher. This becomes a particular challenge for the researcher when some variables are unknown or are unmeasurable (Lakshman, et al., 2000). There are so many variables that impact on what is considered as effective principal leadership and the skills required to be developed in aspirants in preparing them for principalship, ranging from personal histories, system requirements, school context and lived experiences of the diverse range of members of the schooling community that they may lead. Each of these variables will influence how principals need to lead within their schools and therefore the preparation required and the traits used in identification of who is a suitable leader for that school. These variables are a particular risk for my research because of the focus on studying leadership preparation and identification of talent within schools. As Nelson and Slater (2013) assert, being a leader in one time or place, does not prepare you for being a leader in a different place. A qualitative method can counter this by providing access to potentially crucial information, which otherwise must be surmised by the researcher. According to Lakshman et al. (2000), the use of qualitative methods can build an essential understanding of complex problems.

Conversely, qualitative methodological approaches can also provide misleading findings. House (2018) highlights that due to the nature of qualitative research and the small field sampling, it is difficult, if not

impossible to make a generalisation from results. Using a combination of methods to build understanding will assist in strengthening the legitimacy of data captured and findings presented from my research. Using a cross-sectional, web-based survey that intends to capture a minimum response from 350 participants across three tiers of leadership will assist in understanding the prevalence and trends of talent management practices in Queensland schools (see Table 2.). Following the survey, with an in-depth exploration of the journey towards leadership through the use of Narrative Inquiry will allow greater exploration and understanding of trends identified through the survey's analysis.

Narrative Inquiry as a qualitative method has several other considerations to take into account. Creswell (2008), identifies that authenticity of the story is a significant challenge where a participant may distort the data. To counter this, a collection of multiple field texts, triangulation of data and member checking is beneficial in providing good data. Further to the issue of authenticity is the risk of telling the 'real story' (Creswell, 2008). This can occur from a participant when the individual fears sanctions or the real story may be too traumatic. Confidentiality and protection of identifying information will be an important consideration in this research as stories may reflect undesirable or challenging practices around leadership identification within education.

Other challenges that create risk in the use of Narrative Inquiry as a methodology include contextual complexities, positionality and participant voice (Bignold & Su, 2013). To improve the validity of qualitative research, Trainor and Graue (2014) propose a set of criteria while undertaking the research. The foremost criteria is the role of theory in the study. They state that the study must be clear about the role theory has played in the design, implementation and writing. It must also be consistent across its application within the research. In the case of this study, the premise for the consideration of talent management as a solution to the growing leadership crisis in education, is founded on the theory of social exchange and builds upon the literature around talent management within the private sector.

The second criteria that Trainor and Graue (2014) present is Transparency viewed from three points. Firstly, there is Methodological Transparency providing clarity about what the research does in terms of design, sample, data collection and analysis. This is identified for this research through Table 1. *Conceptual Analysis* and Table 2. *Research Methods and Analysis*. The second form of transparency is Interpretive Transparency. This is achieved through clear articulation of the logic of inquiry and the path from identification of the general topic through to the assertions made as a result of the inquiry. Using the Standards for Reporting on Empirical Social Science Research (American Educational Research Association, 2006) in the analysis and presentation of results will further assist in the studies' validity. The third form of transparency is Narrative Transparency. In qualitative research, the process of communicating narrative is a critical part of the analysis process. It must be clear that the narrative belongs to the participant and what is presented through re-storying is agreed to by the participant.

The last criteria presented by Trainor and Graue (2014) is positionality and reflexivity. In short, within my research it must be evident the role that my personal and professional experiences have in informing the study design. It will be relevant to acknowledge positionality with sufficient detail to reveal personal and professional identity while avoiding overshadowing the participants' voices. As a current school principal in Queensland, the diverse experiences through my journey into various leadership roles, has significant potential to influence my sympathies and reactions to responses provided by participants and may unintentionally bias findings. Further, my position may impact upon the responses provided by participants, particularly during the Narrative Inquiry, due to concern about repercussions from responses. Providing clear information to participants about my current work role, my role within this research and measures undertaken around confidentiality will be important. In addition, by consistently following the processes of Narrative Inquiry, through the re-storying and seeking confirmation from the participant that the Narrative is a true reflection of their story will be essential. Jeong-Hee (2016), further describes reflexivity as reflection upon reflection or a constant evaluation of personal position, attitude and values throughout the entire research process.

A final consideration and challenge to Narrative Inquiry is that stories are always unfinished and in the midst of continuing to be composed (Huber et al., 2013). It will be important to present the stories of participants with clear articulation of where in the journey of leadership each participant is situated and exploration of the futures of each participant's journey of leadership.

Having outlined the importance of undertaking a conceptual analysis of talent management prior to deepening my understanding of the journeys of aspirant and school leaders towards leadership through a Narrative Inquiry, and exploring the mechanisms to improve validity and procedural issues of a qualitative approach to research, I now unpack the pragmatics of undertaking my research in the following sections.

Research Methods and Analysis Procedure

Research methods and analysis for this study will consist of seven stages (Table 2.) and will sequentially include a conceptual analysis, a cross-sectional web-based survey, analysis of the survey, identification of participants for a Narrative Inquiry from the survey, narrative interviews, narrative re-storying and narrative data analysis.

Table 2. Research Methods and Analysis

Phase	Purpose & Procedure	Product
Conceptual Analysis	Developing a deep understanding of the concept of talent management and the growing school leadership crisis through an examination of literature.	Literature Review Stipulative Definition of talent management Theoretical model case of talent management in schools
Cross-sectional web-based survey.	<p>Explaining Human Behaviour and exploring a link between a current school leader's (principal) development/aspiration and how they identify and develop others (their approach to talent management).</p> <p>Understanding the prevalence of Talent Management practices across State run Primary and Secondary Schools in Queensland.</p> <p>Cross-sectional web-based survey using Survey Monkey. Three target groups: existing school principals, existing middle leaders and aspirant leaders with questions themed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in programs that develop skills to identify and develop future leaders. • Methods and approaches to identifying aspirants (performance vs potential). • Methods and approaches supporting aspirant leaders and moving leaders from middle leaders to school principal. • Barriers to identifying, developing aspirants and aspiring for leadership. • Reasons and motivators for aspiration to leadership (internal / external influences) • Understanding of talent management. • Impact of locality and sector upon leadership development and aspiration. • Impact of individual principals upon culture of aspiration within their school. <p>Sample Size Target: 350 Sample Selection: Convenience Sampling</p>	Numerical Data
Web-based survey analysis	<p>Analysis findings from the Cross-sectional web-based survey to identify prevalence of Talent Management practices.</p> <p>Analysis: Descriptive Statistics to identify trends of data.</p>	Tabulated and graphical representation of central tendency, variability and relative standing.
Narrative Inquiry participant identification	<p>Identification of participants for Narrative Interviews and Re-storying as part of the Narrative Inquiry.</p> <p>Sample Size: 3. 1 x existing school principal, 1 x existing middle leader, 1 x aspiring leader. Sample Selection: Purposeful selection</p> <p>Development of Narrative Interview Questions and protocol.</p>	Participant identification 3 Interview protocol
Narrative Interview	<p>Understanding Human Behaviour to inform future needs for school leaders to address the leadership crisis.</p> <p>Individual in-depth telephone interviews with identified participants. Questionnaire. Elicitation materials. Collection of other field texts to assist in understanding engagement with leadership, development and Talent Management practices.</p>	Field texts Text data (interview transcripts, artefact description)
Narrative Re-storying	<p>Understanding Human Behaviour.</p> <p>Re-storying of interviews and field texts to create a chronological story.</p>	Individual Narratives
Narrative Data Analysis	Coding and thematic analysis.	Visual models Codes and themes

Research Sites

This research focuses on the contextual specificity of schools in Queensland and will include State owned and run, Primary and Secondary school locations. The proposed research sites comprise of two geographic school

regions of North Coast Region and North Queensland Region. These regions are identified for diversity of school sizes ranging from small schools through to large – multicampus colleges. These regions differ in their accessibility and location to the capital city of Queensland. Schools in North Coast Region extend from Agnes Water on the central coast of Queensland to Moreton Bay, forming part of Greater Brisbane. Schools in North Queensland spread along the coast, South to Airlie Beach, North to Ingham and West to the Northern Territory border, capturing the Gulf of Carpentaria including Mornington Island. These regions include rural, remote and regional locations. North Queensland Region comprises of; 81 primary schools, 15 secondary schools, 7 P-10/12 schools, 2 Schools of Distance Education, 3 Special schools, an Education and Training Centre, an Environmental Education Centre and approximately 2,778 teachers. North Coast Region comprises of; 166 primary schools, 34 secondary schools, 10 P-10/12 schools, 10 special schools and approximately 8,832 teachers. (Queensland Government Department of Education, 2021).

Proposed Research Participants and Sampling Approaches

Through the cross-sectional web-based survey, a target response of 350 participants from three different leadership pools of existing principals, existing middle leaders including Deputy Principals and Heads of Department and aspiring principals will be sourced using convenience sampling as defined by Creswell (2008). To reduce sampling error, Creswell (2008) identifies that surveys should aim for a minimum sample size of 350.

The cross-sectional web-based survey will not only capture trends around talent management linked to eight themes as outlined in Table 2. It will be used as a tool to identify participants for the Narrative Inquiry, measured against alignment of participant responses to the theoretical model case of talent management in schools.

Three participants will be identified through purposeful-selection including one aspirant, one middle leader and one school principal. It is preferable that these participants also reflect the two sectors of Primary and Secondary schools.

Analysing Data

The results from the cross-sectional web-based survey will be scored using a five-point scale on single-items with the intent to describe the trends identified through each question across the eight themes. Descriptive statistics will be used to analyse the data to indicate general tendencies, spread of scores and comparison of scores to all others (Creswell, 2008).

The analysis of results from the narrative interviews and re-storying of narratives initially includes developing a general sense of the transcribed data, coding description and themes and clarification of themes with participants (Creswell, 2008). The purpose of the coding is to make sense out of text data. To achieve this, Creswell (2008) identifies that a researcher typically reads through the text, divides this text into segments and labels these segments with often a large number of initial codes. The researcher then reduces the number of

codes by identifying overlap and redundancy. The codes are then collapsed into themes which are then reported on. I will be following this approach with the assistance of NVivo so in developing the themes evident within the individual narratives.

Maintaining Ethical Conduct

Following the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (National Health Medical Research Council, 2018), I will uphold the principles of responsible research conduct in all aspects of this research. Prior to the commencement of research, written permission will be received from the Queensland Education Research Inventory (QERI) and ethics approval will be sought from the Central Queensland University Ethics Committee.

As highlighted earlier in this paper in the section on improving validity and procedural issues, positionality presents a key challenge and consideration to ensure that I maintain ethical practices. Three key considerations are the subjectivity of Narrative Inquiry, secondly the power and positioning of the researcher as an existing principal studying other principals, middle leaders and aspiring leaders and thirdly the unintended bias created as a research practitioner operating within the industry of research.

To address these challenges, Jeong-Hee (2016) in his research around Narrative Inquiry identifies that it is often the switching back and forth between roles of the researcher and colleague that presents a major challenge. Ensuring the selection of participants in the Narrative Inquiry have no line management or pre-existing relationship with myself as the researcher will assist in overcoming some of this challenge. To further this, maintaining the confidentiality of the participant through the use of pseudonym names for the participant and schools if mentioned, and use of generalisations of school locality and size such as a rural, small school will be important.

In using Narrative Inquiry, reflexivity will be an integral process to address subjectivity (Jeong-Hee, 2016). In addition, as this research is occurring within my own field of employment and examines situations and scenarios that I have personally experienced, it will be important I develop a detailed personal reflection of my own journey into leadership, identifying values, emotions and experiences. This will assist with continuous reflection throughout the research process to assist in removing bias in questioning, interpretation of data and accuracy of stories. In addition, developing strong collaboration with participants in the Narrative Inquiry processes during re-storying to ensure that it is the participants story that is being told will be critical.

Finally in overcoming bias, Smith and Noble (2014) identify that there are five stages of bias that must be considered during research: design bias, selection/participant bias, data collection bias, analysis bias and publication bias. The engagement of a third party to review questioning and the continuous collaboration of the participant during the re-storying process will also assist in the reduction of bias particularly during data collection and analysis stages of the research. The design of this research is mixed methods, with both

convenience and purposeful sampling. The use of different methods for both data gathering and participant identification will further reduce bias as a researcher (Smith & Noble, 2014).

Conclusion

The challenge for schooling systems in addressing the growing leadership crisis is immense. Understanding the reality of what is occurring in schools with regard to the way that aspirant principals are identified, developed and the role existing principals have in contributing to their identification and development is vital to addressing this leadership crisis. One potential avenue for approaching this crisis is to examine the successes of talent management in the private sector in addressing talent shortages and consider its transferability to schools to identify, select and prepare aspirant school principals. My research will provide a strong conceptual understanding of talent management integrated with what we can learn from school leaders through Narrative Inquiry to provide some answers to the question 'Is talent management a solution to the growing school leadership crisis in Queensland schools?'

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