





**Teachers leading school improvement  
and education reconstruction in Palestine**

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## **Declaration of authorship**

*I hereby declare that the sources of which I have availed myself have been stated in the body of the essay and in the references, and that the rest of the work is my own. This essay does not exceed 80,000 words in length.*

## **Abstract**

This dissertation presents an intervention-based study that aimed to enable teachers to improve teaching and learning in one school in Ramallah, Palestine. The non-positional approach to teacher leadership was adopted as a means to mobilise all teachers in the drive towards bottom-up, participatory school change processes that increase teacher self-efficacy and collaboration, build professional capacity and social capital, and promote sustainability. The Teachers Leading the Way programme provided a contextually tailored strategy, and set of instruments and tools that through reflective exercises and dialogic activities aimed to support teachers to innovate practice, and impact organisational structures and professional culture. This is significant in the Palestine setting for facilitating the building of locally based and sourced knowledge to inform an authentic Palestinian vision and agenda for policy-making and education reconstruction, with implications for countries of the Middle East and North Africa region. In the process, a grassroots change movement is intended to shift historical and continued reliance on foreign intervention and international assistance, and lay the foundation for democratisation and social transformation. The intervention was investigated using a critical action-based, participatory methodology that emphasised context and researcher reflexivity in one school and amongst a cohort of 12 participants. Data were collected using a range of research-designed and programme-based methods and instruments, analysed deductively and inductively, and narrated critically to maintain coherence, and convey experiential and temporal dimensions. The study outcomes indicate that teachers in Palestine are capable of leading school improvement, and impacting school structures and professional culture for system-wide change, when the proper support is provided. Non-positional teacher leadership is the vehicle and can be developed through Teachers Leading the Way. At the individual level, this is enabled through a transformation in teachers' perspective towards a self-empowered, agential mindset that leads to action on ways to improve practice. The transition process underscores the role of effective facilitation as an enabling condition for developing non-positional teacher leadership in Palestine and similar settings.

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To my late beloved father Mustafa, revered Palestinian educator who departed before I could fully appreciate his person, I dedicate my doctorate

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## **List of abbreviations**

EDSP	Education Development Strategic Plan
IT	Information technology
ITL	International Teacher Leadership
LfL	Leadership for learning
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MoEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
NGO	Non-government organisation
NIET	National Education and Training Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PLC	Professional learning community
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
PT	Programme team
SLT	Senior leadership team
TL	Teacher leadership
TLDW	Teacher-led development work
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency

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## **Introduction**

I am a founder and owner of a kindergarten through secondary level school in Ramallah, Palestine. As Director, I have been overseeing operations with a focus on governance and policy-making since the school's establishment in 1995. This has endowed me with organisational power and authority. In 2012, I embarked on a doctoral programme at the University of Cambridge starting with a master's degree. My aim was threefold: to improve my practice and that of colleagues in my school, to influence the Palestinian education agenda and to generate knowledge on education in Palestine. Given my leadership role, I was interested in the field of educational leadership, specifically the area of headteacher preparation and development. My topic of concern was driven by the challenges I faced in recruiting headteachers for my school. The absence of formal headteacher education programmes in the local context underscored my difficulties and the significance of my research.

Upon completion of my master's and despite the value of my study (Ramahi, 2013), I reflected on its worth to Palestinian education in general, and to my practice and school in particular. While extending it into a larger PhD project could generate useful evidence for informing local policy-making, I could not be sure that it would have impact on educational reconstruction efforts. My dilemma was born out of the substantial human and material resources that I would be investing in a doctoral programme in the UK and the extent to which engaging with it would impact my professional practice and educational setting.

Concurrently, my study of educational leadership had introduced me to conceptualisations of leadership as an activity and practice instead of strictly a role. This discovery led me to reappraise the benefits of concentrating on developing organisational authority figures, in this case headteachers, which account for a small percentage of education systems, when I could be exploring ways to enable the development of shared forms of leadership that could extend to a wider workforce. The prospects of expanding my school's leadership base had tremendous appeal for me as a school owner and senior leader.

Teacher leadership stood out as a means to activate the potential of the most influential and largest human resource in schools and education systems, teachers. Thus I recognised the

benefits of supporting devolved leadership practices at my school. However, further research on teacher leadership in the discourse on distributed leadership led me to see its limitation. Essentially, the hierarchical nature of leadership was being re-theorised, this time with the inclusion of a select set of teachers that held both managerial and teaching posts, something that was already common practice at my school. This seemed to me to be contributing nothing that could challenge orthodoxy or inform new directions for educational change.

The UK-based HertsCam Network ([www.hertscam.org.uk](http://www.hertscam.org.uk)) provided the alternative that I was seeking for my vision of change. It offered a means to mobilise all teachers in the drive towards educational reconstruction, regardless of position, status or authority. The usefulness of its approach lay in the ability to develop every willing teacher's capacity to improve teaching and learning from the bottom up, where locally relevant and problem-based knowledge is co-built by teachers themselves and not mandated by authority figures or delivered by external experts. The offshoot International Teacher Leadership project conducted in over 15 countries convinced me of its adaptability to international contexts. By this time, HertsCam had been operating in a number of schools for over a decade, with events and activities that I could see for myself and not merely read theoretical propositions about. As a practitioner, witnessing teachers taking charge of their own professional learning and growth, and influencing their colleagues' practice and school policies was inspiring because of its ability to empower teachers to challenge restrictive educational structures and because of its wider implications for school improvement.

Enabling the development of the non-positional approach to teacher leadership (Frost, 2012) in the Palestine context has potentially far-reaching educational and socio-political implications. Palestine's history is one of dispossession and disenfranchisement, where Palestinians have only recently taken control of their political, economic or social institutions. Foreign rule, and external intervention and control of resources had deprived the indigenous population of the capacity to direct the development and modernisation of local institutions and practices. More recently, Israeli occupation of Palestinian land has continued to paralyse democratic processes and economic growth, and thwart political self-determination, while ongoing international development initiatives have reinforced global agendas that obstruct authentic social transformation.

With regard to schooling in Palestine this has prevented the development of an organically grown, contextually relevant education system. A patchwork of global education programmes has obstructed the creation of an education that is capable of playing an instrumental role in the Palestinians' struggle for national independence and promotion of social justice. At the teaching level, transmission modes pervade practice despite efforts to transition pedagogy towards more learned-centred approaches, while teachers continue to await top-down directives on ways to improve education. Complex socio-historic forces have led to a mentality submissive to authority that is manifested in teaching and learning, a condition that plagues post-colonial and developing countries, and threatens to perpetuate the status quo.

In this context, I have identified the teacher-led development work (TLDW) model (Frost and Durrant, 2003) on which the HertsCam Network programme rests as a vehicle for breaking the pattern of subordination to authority prevalent in Palestinian life, starting with teachers. I begin with my school, where I have the means to introduce its democratic principles of flattened hierarchy and participatory leadership. Given the disparate socio-political, economic, cultural and educational reality of Palestine when compared with that of the UK, I adapted the programme to suit the needs of my school setting. 'Teachers Leading the Way' is the name I gave to my programme.

This dissertation is an examination of the intervention that I conducted in the form of a programme that ran over a period of 15 months. An account of the study therefore is most suitably presented through a critical narrative that preserves the complexity of human experiences and temporal dimensions. Storytelling enabled me to capture the programme's development, wherein I employed an action-based methodology that allowed me to act, monitor, evaluate, adjust and act once again on ways to improve the programme. This dissertation highlights the issues and insights gleaned throughout my initiative into ways to facilitate the development of non-positional teacher leadership for educational improvement, using the TLDW framework amongst a group of teachers and educators in one school in Ramallah, Palestine, when the necessary conditions are provided.

At no point throughout this dissertation do I pretend to conceal my agenda of educational and socio-political transformation but consider it to be among the primary forces driving the overall study. Neither do I attempt to gloss over my positional power and authority throughout the intervention but highlight its advantages and limitations, accordingly. My guard against both

is a stream of reflexivity that permeates the entire work and negotiates its influencing role on my research and initiative.

The dissertation is divided into three thematic parts that comprise ten chapters in total. Part A presents the preparatory elements of the study and consists of three chapters: Chapter 1 lays the background and highlights the significance of the context; Chapter 2 conceptualises teacher leadership, with a focus on the non-positional approach and its suitability to my change-driven aims; Chapter 3 examines the methodology employed and research design, and their appropriateness to my study. Part B critically narrates the study process in four chapters: Chapter 4 shows how I facilitated the conditions for the programme; Chapter 5 examines the beginnings of the programme; Chapter 6 discusses the process of establishing teacher leadership practices; and Chapter 7 illustrates how I concluded the programme and planned for its sustainability. Part C considers in three chapters the contributions of my study: Chapter 8 examines the role of transformational learning in developing non-positional teacher leadership; Chapter 9 presents the implications, recommendations and contributions to knowledge; finally, in Chapter 10 I reflect on the inquiry and intervention, and consider future research. I begin my dissertation with an introduction to Part A.

## **Part A**

### **The study elements**

In this first of the three parts of the dissertation, I present the elements that prepared me for my investigation. These comprise the context, conceptualisation, and methodology and programme design. Each of these components was written with the intention of supporting the study aim of developing non-positional teacher leadership by way of an intervention in my school in Ramallah, Palestine. Accordingly, the research concern that I presented in the Introduction is a thread that runs throughout the three chapters that make up this first part. The significance of context to educational studies, and leadership in particular, has led me to assign special attention to the role of Palestine in my study. Hence Chapter 1 starts by examining the setting of Palestine, wherein I expound on the historical, political, geographic and demographic background that shaped and continues to influence the Palestinian education system, with an emphasis on teacher education and professional development policy. In Chapter 2, I conceptualise teacher leadership as a vehicle to foster school improvement and education reconstruction for my school and the national setting, focusing on the non-positional approach as the one most suited and pertinent to my intervention and inquiry aims. Chapter 3 concludes Part A wherein I discuss my research methodology, consisting of my philosophical perspective, theoretical approach, study strategy, methods and instruments of data collection, analysis technique, quality assurance and ethical considerations, with limitations permeating the entire chapter. I begin by examining the context of the inquiry.

# **Chapter 1**

## **The context: Palestine**

The purpose of my research was to find ways to enable teachers to build contextually relevant and locally sourced knowledge for improving teaching and learning in my school in Palestine, with the broader aim of informing national education reconstruction efforts. This view is grounded in the need for a bottom-up change process that accounts for contextual realities and conditions. In Palestine, this is problematised by a history of systematic denial of educational autonomy by different ruling powers. Palestine has been and remains a site of international and regional intervention, with education being one of these foci. Consequently, Palestinians have never had control of their education system. Hence any educational reform initiative will need to attend to the historical, political, economic and socio-cultural forces that have given rise to the present education system and continue to shape its current climate.

This awareness is imperative when conducting a programme that is adapted from a setting such as the UK with its history of democratic practices, economic prosperity and individual freedoms, features that are for the most part absent in Palestine. International policy-borrowing and programme transferability are problematised by contextual disparities (Phillip and Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, 2010). In some cases, programme adoption is based on political alliance, or personal or financial interests (Silova, 2008; Silova and Steiner-Khamsi, 2008). Hence the extent to which I am able to succeed in meeting my intervention aims will depend on my sensitivity to the local realities and exigencies, and ability to adjust my programme thereby. My adaptation of the HertsCam Network to my own school drew on this knowledge, as did my development of the programme throughout the intervention.

In this chapter, I explore the contextual factors that influenced the current state of education in Palestine and led to recent education reform, with an emphasis on teacher education and professional learning. The chapter is divided into five sections. The first presents the historical and political events that led in 1994 to Palestinian self-rule. The second section examines two decisive periods in recent Palestinian education: Israeli military occupation from 1967 to 1993 and the start of Palestinian National Authority (PNA) rule from 1994 onwards. The third explores the tensions arising from the creation of an autonomous Palestinian educational

system, while section four surveys the schooling system in the PNA-governed territory. The fifth and final section describes the setting of one private school on the West Bank in occupied Palestine, which I co-founded and where I serve as Director, and is the site of my study. The chapter concludes by foregrounding the significance of teacher leadership to my intervention aims. I start with the historical and political forces that have shaped the education system in Palestine.

### **History, geography, demography and politics**

History, geography, demography and politics have played a significant role in influencing the development of Palestinian education (Barakat, 2007). Ruling forces and geographic location have dictated educational provision that has marginalised the indigenous population. At the same time, educational attainment has increasingly become tantamount to survival, forcing the Palestinians to become heavily reliant on exclusionary education systems for their subsistence and mobility (Fronk, Huntington and Chadwick, 1999). Gradually, a disconnection between the content of learning and purposes for which it is deployed began to create a sense of disempowerment and disaffection amongst Palestinians towards their education (Asaad, 2000; Van Dyke and Randall, 2002).

Historically, Palestine has been and remains a heavily contested geo-political entity. Throughout the centuries, education was controlled and administered by foreign rule from the arrival of the Ottoman Empire in 1517 until the establishment of the PNA in 1994. Over the years the ruling powers varied their education agendas to maintain the status quo while denying the indigenous Palestinian inhabitants the opportunity to manage their education system according to their needs and aspirations (Asaad, 2000; Van Dyke and Randall, 2002).

Under Ottoman rule formal education first emerged and was delivered in the Turkish language to the overwhelming majority Arabic-speaking Palestinian population. The resultant language barrier initiated a system that alienated Palestinians from education and established an elite learned class (Brown, 2003). This reinforced a growing sense of alienation by the majority of Palestinians and began to create a socio-economic and cultural gap. Following the demise of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, in 1917 British rule over Palestine expanded

educational provision for the purpose of supplying a growing need for civil servants in the British Empire (Barakat, 2007). Under a 20-year period of British governance, the aim of education was to strengthen colonial rule and imperial expansion. In addition to failing to meet the needs of the Palestinians, British policy reinforced a growing class rift by inculcating foreign culture and ideology into Palestinian society.

Any prospects of Palestinian educational self-governance came to a complete halt in 1947 when the UN partitioned historic Palestine with an overwhelming Palestinian majority into two states, Arab and Jewish (Said, 1992), and the ensuing war resulted in Zionist forces seizing and annexing more Palestinian land (Pappé, 2006; see Figure 1, p. 9). The overwhelming majority of the Palestinian population that was forcibly expelled from Palestine became refugees in the adjacent countries of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt (Said and Hitchens, 2001; Pappé, 2006; see Figure 2, p. 10). Most were set up in camps administered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which provided relief, health care, education and other social services. UNRWA schools were subject to the educational policies and curricula of the host countries (Hanafi, Hilal, and Takkenberg, 2014), which were not concerned with the changing reality of dispossessed Palestinians. This led Palestinians to continue receiving a disaffecting education that failed to accommodate their needs or prepare them for their changing socio-political and economic realities.

Regardless of where or by whom Palestinians were educated, the role of education became increasingly tied to their survival, improvement of socio-economic circumstances and political status (Barakat, 2007; Fronk et al., 1999). Steadily, the value of educational credentials became more than an instrument for social mobility and came to represent a gateway to the World. The fact that Palestinians have consistently had the highest rate of education amongst Arab countries (ibid.) may in large part be explained by this geo-political development. The significance of educational qualifications to the Palestinians applied equally to those in the diaspora and to those living in what remained of historic Palestine.



Figure 1. Map of Palestinian land between 1946 and present

Palestinian land became known as the two geographically discontinuous entities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (see Figure 2, p. 10). The countries of Jordan and Egypt were entrusted respectively with the remit of governing these territories. In administering education to Palestinians who resided in what was internationally acknowledged to be Palestinian land, both countries disseminated their national curricula. Given the propagandist and instrumental nature of state sponsored-curricula (Beyer and Apple, 1998), educational provision failed to address the increasingly urgent political and socio-economic needs of the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This stage in the recent history and development of the Palestinian education system perpetuated the suppression of Palestinian historical, cultural and national distinctiveness and aspirations by depriving the Palestinians of the ability to set their own educational agenda (Brown, 2003).

Still, the devastating blow to Palestinian educational provision came in 1967 with the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. An era of Israeli rule was thus heralded that had

destructive implications for the Palestinians. Military authorities enforced draconian measures over all aspects of Palestinian life. Education policies included maintaining the existing Jordanian and Egyptian education systems as a means of suppressing Palestinian national aspirations (Barakat, 2007). Thus, by 1987, following two decades of brutal Israeli rule, a mass movement of protest through civil disobedience erupted in the West Bank and quickly spread to the Gaza Strip (Marshall, 1989).



Figure 2. Map of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (occupied Palestinian Territory) and neighbouring Arab countries

The *intifada*, as the movement became known by its Arabic term, sought to free Palestinians from occupation and to secure statehood. However, it was ruthlessly suppressed by the Israeli

army, which targeted Palestinian civil institutions (Finkelstein, 1996). Education was among the sectors that were severely damaged (Asaad, 2000), leading to the closure of schools and universities for periods of several months to two years at a time (Rigby, 1995). The adverse impact on Palestinian education led to a long-lasting decline in academic standards at all levels of education (Nicolai, 2007; Sfeir and Bertoni, 2003), that reached emergency proportions by 1993 (Rigby, 1995). This deprived Palestinians of the instrumental role of education as a means to liberation in their national struggle for political freedom and self-determination.

The *intifada* eventually led to the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993 between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people. The interim Palestinian National Authority (PNA) was established in 1994 and entrusted with limited civil rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip pending final Palestinian statehood status talks in 1999 (Said, 2001). Henceforth, in 1994, the first Palestinian Ministry of Education was born and entrusted to establish and administer the first ever Palestinian national education system (Nicolai, 2007), inaugurating an era of Palestinian educational autonomy.

### **Education policy: background to reconstruction**

An analysis of recent education policy in Palestine illustrates the extent to which education has been used as a site for political, social and cultural repression by Israel, and a means to maintain the occupation. As stated above, education in the West Bank and Gaza Strip deteriorated severely under Israeli military occupation starting in 1967 (Asaad, 2000; Rigby, 1995). Below I examine the policies that led to the decline of the quality of education provision leading up to Palestinian limited self-rule in 1994, which I briefly introduce.

#### ***Israeli military occupation: 1967 to 1994***

During Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, the military enforced educational policy at the three levels of facilities, curriculum and teachers. I discuss each below.

School facilities provided the most concrete structure for Israeli rule over Palestinian education. In addition to being a site of physical control and surveillance, the need for school expansion and new buildings was completely ignored. During 27 years of military occupation, the number of students enrolled in basic education tripled without proportional growth in the

number of school buildings (Nicolai, 2007). Student overcrowding and insufficient access to schools was a deterrent to the development of effective teaching and learning (Rigby, 1995), as teachers and students struggled to cope with deteriorating school conditions.

Military authorities aimed to control the sources of knowledge for Palestinians. One of these tactics was to distort the already disaffecting existing Jordanian and Egyptian curricula. Hence, textbooks with any reference to Palestinian heritage, geography and Arab nationalism were censored (Asaad, 2000); by 1992, 103 school textbooks had been banned (Rigby, 1995). In textbooks that they retained, all maps of Israel were changed to include occupied Palestinian lands (Alzaroo and Hunt, 2003). Thus Palestinian national identity and geographic presence were systematically erased from formal education sources.

Occupying forces approached teachers as the medium through which a subversive Palestinian identity and presence could be articulated and promulgated. Accordingly, teachers were targeted for their political viewpoints and were recruited more often for their neutral political views (Nicolai, 2007); upwards of 1,300 teachers lost their jobs for political reasons (Rigby, 1995). Equally, the occupiers sought to deprive teachers of relevant qualifications and professional learning. Teacher preparation and in-service education was essentially non-existent during the occupation, while many teachers were actively prevented from attending courses offered by Palestinian universities and colleges (Nicolai, 2007). Effectively, Israeli military authorities systematically deprived the Palestinian teaching force of access to professional learning and self-improvement.

Evidently, under Israeli military rule between 1967 to 1994 the Palestinian education system in the West Bank and Gaza Strip faced fierce repression. Palestinians were denied representation and decision-making rights in their educational affairs, and at no time up to this point had they held any direct control over their education system. Such is the background to education and the teaching profession in occupied Palestine as recently as 25 years ago and the backdrop for educational reconstruction under PNA rule.

### ***Palestinian National Authority rule: 1994 to present***

In 1994 the PNA inherited an outdated, amalgamated and fragmented education system that needed extensive resources to rebuild it (Barakat, 2007). Nevertheless, education represented a vital sector in which the PNA had relative autonomy from continued Israeli rule (Asaad,

2000). This provided a historic opportunity to advance Palestinian interests and lay the foundation for statehood that was heralded as possibly the only good to come out of the Oslo Peace Accords (Baramki, 2010). However, the inexperienced Ministry faced the daunting challenge of reconstructing an education system that was no longer adequate for the needs of an emergent state and its aspirant citizenry in an increasingly complex global information economy. Doing so under extremely challenging political, economic and social conditions necessitates a Palestinian vision, strategy and resources. In the existing Palestinian education context, these components remain highly subject to foreign influence.

### **Palestinian educational philosophy**

Education is a moral endeavour that emanates from cultural and social values (Dewey, 1903; Hodgkinson, 1991). For a people with newly acquired educational self-rule, articulating these values becomes all the more imperative for constructing an educational philosophy and agenda, and building a national education system that meets their social, political and economic needs and hopes. This is vital and underpins change processes that facilitate locally relevant knowledge-building and grassroots socio-political transformation.

Leaders in post-Accord Palestine identified education as one of the main socio-cultural values. They claimed, however, that the realisation of these values was being hindered by the absence of an autonomous Palestinian educational philosophy, alongside the existence of political obstacles and economic barriers (Van Dyke and Randall, 2002). The lack of a Palestinian education vision has contributed to what some argue is the continued deterioration of the quality of education, this time under PNA rule (Affouneh, 2007; Baramki, 2010). Ministerial policy-making that fails to correspond to local realities and needs may be at the root of this decline (Shinn, 2012) and may also be the outcome of dominance by international aid and NGO-sponsored educational programmes that impose foreign values onto a nascent Palestinian state (Affouneh, 2007).

Closer investigation of the sources of educational reconstruction in the Palestinian Territory supports this argument. Since its founding, the Ministry has relied heavily on foreign funding. In 2011 the World Bank reported the Palestinians to be among the highest per capita recipients of assistance in the world ('World Development Indicators 2011 database,' 2014), of which

the United States Agency for International Development, European Union and World Bank are primary donors. In developing countries foreign assistance at the programme level is conditional upon policy-borrowing that often proves to be ineffective (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010). This supports the claim that “traveling reforms” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010: 324) have inhibited development of an independent Palestinian educational agenda at the local policy level (Affouneh, 2007; Baramki, 2010; Velleso de Santisteban, 2002).

International donors’ advocacy of a global agenda for education has advanced foreign values and interests over local ones and weakened emergence of a locally driven strategy (Shinn, 2012). This has led to the rise of a hidden curriculum (Velloso de Santisteban, 2002) that has created a conflict of values at the local level (Affouneh, 2007; Ramahi, 2013). Development discourse is imbued with power and can perpetuate new forms of hegemony over indigenous societies and cultures (Escobar, 2004; Gaventa, 2003). In Palestine, Ministerial reliance on politically motivated international assistance has compromised autonomy in policy-making and undermined the quality of education (Affouneh, 2007; Baramki, 2010).

### ***Teacher education***

Teacher education was identified by educational leaders as key to overcoming barriers to educational reconstruction, second only to the articulation of a Palestinian education philosophy (Van Dyke and Randall, 2002). Not surprisingly, when in 1994 the Ministry was entrusted with an underqualified teaching workforce, teacher education became a priority (Nicolai, 2007; Rigby, 1995). Among the challenges to improving teaching quality was once again the absence of a comprehensive and locally driven Ministerial strategy. Provision and delivery by different actors, such as Ministry officials, and international and local NGO trainers continued to fragment efforts to construct a unified Palestinian agenda for teaching improvement (Nicolai, 2007) and impeded the development of relevant and sustainable education policy (Shinn, 2012). Shinn (2012) notes that despite the Commission for the Development of the Teaching Profession’s central role in reform efforts, the governmental agency “suffers from a lack of political influence, leadership, and expertise” in part because key stakeholders in the Palestinian education system “have not been included in the conversation about teacher development reform” (p. 616).

For this reason, the impact of government agencies on improving teacher quality remains questionable (Shinn, 2012). In the Palestinian context, despite extensive reconstruction efforts

teachers continue to be excluded from influencing the direction of educational and teaching improvement, which may be leading to a sense of marginalisation and disaffection. Still, teachers are not the only casualty of what appears to be an increasingly disempowering and disenfranchising foreign-guided national reform policy trend. Headteachers complained of the same voicelessness and exclusion in a study on their perceptions of their preparation and professional development under PNA-rule (Ramahi, 2013), which supports Shinn's (2012) conclusion that key educational stakeholders are being excluded from setting the Palestinian education agenda.

Nevertheless, the challenges of foreign approaches to reconstruction of the education system may offer opportunities for locally grounded change initiatives. This can be seen in the recent Ministry's launch of the third 'Education Development Strategic Plan 2014-2019, Palestine 2020: a learning nation' (MoEHE, 2014), calling for a learning-centred strategy. Despite being internationally funded and shaped, the hope is that the Plan will be a catalyst for moving education change beyond a patchwork of globally informed programmes with a shift towards contextually relevant and problem-based approaches, whereby teachers address classroom practices and how to improve student learning through local knowledge-building efforts. Doing so would free the Ministry from continued reliance on foreign aid and external reform agendas, and enable establishment of a Palestinian evidence base from which to articulate a unified national education vision and strategy, and inform impactful local policy-making.

### **Schooling system in Palestine**

Ministry policy is useful for understanding the current Palestinian schooling system and for positioning teacher leadership in efforts to foster professional learning and school improvement. All schools, colleges and universities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are licensed by what has become the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE). The three main school service providers are categorised according to their funding sources as state, UNRWA and private (MoEHE, 2018); the latter includes commercial enterprise, and religiously affiliated and not-for-profit organisations. In 2013 state schools serviced 67 per cent of the Palestinian student population, UNRWA supported 24 per cent and the remaining 9 per cent by the private sector (MoEHE, 2018). In the West Bank with its lower refugee population compared to that of the Gaza Strip, private schools comprise a higher proportion rate, up to 15

per cent of all schools, and UNRWA schools, 10 per cent. Although the Ministry maintains responsibility for basic curricula, general standards and national examinations for all schools, UNRWA and private schools are governed and supervised by their funding bodies (Kanan, 2005).

General education is divided into two levels: years 1 to 10 are compulsory; 11 and 12 are optional. UNRWA schools only provide compulsory education, after which students transfer to government or private schools for the final two years. The latter stage is further divided into two tracks: an academic one, comprising scientific and literary streams; and a vocational one, consisting of industry, agriculture, commerce, nursing and tourism. Both tracks culminate in a general national examination, the *Tawjihi* (MoEHE, 2018). The examination is required for enrolment in tertiary-level education where a student's average mark dictates entry into academic specialisation.

The Ministry governs schools through 17 district directorates that oversee all state schools and their personnel. UNRWA and private school teachers answer to organisational administrative structures (Kanan, 2005). All teachers are subject to Ministry qualification standards, which currently require a minimum bachelor's degree in the taught subject. No teaching qualification was required until 2015, when a teaching-subject degree became mandatory. However, this policy is yet to be enforced strictly. Still, despite teachers' continued lack of teaching education and credentials, the Ministry neither provides for, nor requires of private schools, in-service professional learning support.

In general, the Ministry does not enforce accountability pressures on government-operated or accredited schools, as is done in some industrialised and Western countries, such as the UK through Ofsted visits or publication of league tables. Government officials periodically visit all schools to conduct inspections to insure compliance with Ministry policies and to give feedback to schools. However, the absence of measures that strictly oversee schools' academic performance may be owing to the emergent stage at which the Palestinian education system remains. The historical deficiency of quality schooling and tertiary education may account for the Ministry's limited interventionist policy, whereby the establishment and support of independent educational institutions is a strategic national aim and an unstated policy. While limited Ministerial monitoring may compromise the quality of educational provision, it

nevertheless frees schools from the potentially restrictive role enforced by government agencies. My school is one such case.

### **One private school in Ramallah, Palestine**

In 1995 I co-established a private, co-educational school in Ramallah, Palestine, that offers education to all age levels. The impetus behind its founding was to provide for the educational needs of repatriated Palestinian youth from North America who had returned with their families *en masse* to Palestine following the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords and the prospect of statehood. At the time, the Palestinian education system was unequipped to service an exclusively English-speaking student population. To meet this demographic need, my school was established to provide a dual-language academic programme of Arabic and English whereby students are prepared for the US Scholastic Aptitude Test and receive *Tawjihi* equivalency. In order to qualify for the equivalency, the school is licensed and accredited by the MoEHE, and hence enforces state educational policies.

Currently, the school enrolls over 700 students and employs more than 80 men and women. I hold the position of Director, which oversees the general operations of the school, with a focus on governance and policy-making. The Deputy Director conducts most of these tasks in my absence with authority over the Headteacher. The latter is responsible for the academic programme and supervises all matters related to teachers. The overwhelming majority of the approximately 50 teachers are recruited locally and do not hold teaching qualifications. Thus, in an effort to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, in 2003 the school began providing formal teacher professional support.

The significance of this initiative is in its coinciding with the second *intifada*, during which in 2000 the Palestinians rose up against Israel for refusing to grant Palestinians statehood in 2000, as stipulated in the Oslo Accords. Once again, Israeli reprisals were severe, leading to tremendously difficult political, economic and social conditions (Allen, 2008; Baroud, 2006) that led privately owned and funded schools to struggle for physical and financial survival. It is reported that countries in conflict areas are less likely to spend on education (Novelli and Lopes Cardozo, 2008; UNDP, 2005). Despite this, the school's owners and senior leaders recognised the importance of developing human resources, namely, teachers. At a time of

existential challenges, creating a policy that invested extremely scarce resources in enhancing teachers' professional capacity might have appeared to be an indulgence. Nevertheless, the school's leaders envisioned improving teaching and learning as a vital strategy for both short- and long-term survival. It was a bold decision underpinned by a profound vision, the goal of which was to improve educational provision regardless of the circumstances and as a means to counter continued Israeli assault on Palestinian education. The rationale was that if the school was to survive the latest Israeli aggression, it needed to be strong and poised for the post-*intifada* period. Providing quality education became at once the struggle and ultimate aim.

Up until the start of my intervention in 2014, over a period of 11 years the school had provided teachers with 19 professional learning courses and workshops. The primary objective was to provide underqualified teachers with basic pedagogic skills as a means to improve teaching and learning. Provision focused on fundamental teaching competencies, such as lesson planning, time-management and assessment, and gradually progressed to more modern approaches, such as collaboration. Despite this, as school Director, I questioned the extent of the programme's impact on teachers' practice and was aware of their general sense of disaffection with professional learning support. This provided the impetus for identifying teacher leadership as an effective approach to school improvement at my school, particularly as a means of raising the quality of teaching and learning.

## **Chapter summary**

This chapter has examined the historical and political forces that have shaped the development of Palestinian education and has underscored the significance of establishing teacher leadership as a vehicle for school improvement and education reconstruction. Whether as a consequence of direct foreign rule or external intervention, Palestinians have yet to construct their educational philosophy and agenda. Under PNA rule the struggle for educational self-determination has shifted to one of values and realities, and led to the continued marginalisation of Palestinian stakeholders. At the school level, teachers feel disaffected from their practice, partly owing to limited preparation and effective professional learning opportunities. In the following chapter, I discuss the potential for teachers to lead educational innovation in schools through problem-driven, job-embedded knowledge-building. I begin by conceptualising teacher leadership within the broader school improvement field.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The role of teacher leadership in school improvement and education reconstruction**

The aim of this study was to examine an approach that could support teachers in efforts to improve teaching and learning in one school in Palestine, with broader implications for systemic reconstruction. A history of dispossession and disenfranchisement underscores the need for quality education and teacher empowerment in Palestine (see Chapter 1). In the drive towards a nationally relevant education reconstruction agenda capable of informing authentic socio-political transformation, there is an equal need for context-driven and locally sourced approaches to school improvement. This calls for a vision of teacher leadership that is capable of leading bottom-up change processes aimed at improving pedagogic practices, enhancing student experiences, and promoting social justice and well-being within and beyond the school community. As such, it is as much about the procedures involved as it is about the achievements gained for school improvement.

In this chapter, I trace my understanding of the activity of teacher leadership as a central means to promote professional learning and school improvement. In doing so, I draw on educational literature from the areas of school improvement, educational leadership, capacity-building, distributed leadership, teacher leadership, teacher professional development and learning, and professional learning communities (PLC). There are five sections: the first reviews the scholarly debate that gave rise to school improvement from whence the focus on leadership emerged; the second explores concepts of teacher leadership and determines the non-positional approach as the one most suited to my aims; the third identifies the enabling conditions for non-positional teacher leadership, which include headteacher leadership practice, organisational structures and school cultural; the fourth section examines the teacher-led development work model, a means of developing the non-positional approach that is applied in the UK-based HertsCam Network, which I present in the fifth and final section and on which my programme is based. I start with a discussion of the significance of the field of school improvement to my research aims.

## School improvement

Research on school improvement started as a response to the growing school effectiveness movement that was limited to understanding the variables that were perceived to influence student outcomes to the exclusion of processes and practices aimed at improving student achievement (Stoll, 1992). Increasingly, researchers and practitioners had been finding the school effectiveness approach to be prescriptive and problematic (Hopkins, 1994). The up-scaling of the movement led to global comparative studies, such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study and the Programme for International Student Assessment that have been criticised for decontextualising the historical, social and cultural realities of countries and promoting a global education agenda (Riley and Torrance, 2003; Wiseman, 2013). The distinction is significant when it comes to informing education reconstruction in Palestine, with its history of foreign rule and external intervention.

What became known as the school improvement paradigm shifted the focus to qualitative, explorative studies grounded in theory that aimed to develop understanding of *how* to make schools more successful and thus have impact on raising student achievements (Hopkins, 2001, 2013). In an ‘epidemic’ of educational change (Hopkins, 2001: 34)

... school improvement represented a distinct approach to educational change that aims to enhanced student outcomes *as well as* strengthening the school’s capacity for managing change. (p. 13)

This extended beyond obtaining fragmented indicators and involved understanding the conditions that lead to and explain student performance, the entire school process and education systems for the purpose of informing policy in order to improve education. Thus schooling and the activities within it began to be viewed as part of a larger social setting, and to be questioned for its contributions to, and potential for, social change (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Elliot, 1991). Action-based methodology became an approach for making meaning from school-based processes (ibid.). The movement thus supports the view of educational reconstruction in Palestine as a lever for bottom-up educational improvement and authentic socio-political transformation.

Accordingly, school improvement sought to decentralise the management of education change and relocate it to the centre of educational activity, the school itself (MacBeath and Mortimere,

2001). In this light, Fullan (1993, 2007) argued that successful school improvement efforts depended on understanding the challenges of change at the level of practice and, correspondingly, the school. While decentralisation promoted locally driven efforts, managerialism reinforced a technicist, instrumental view that drew heavily on organisational sciences and seemed to align itself more with the school effectiveness movement (Fielding, 2001). In contrast, school improvement approached schools through community-centred and person-based optics that enabled emphasis on local and individual needs and realities.

Developing strategies for improving individual practices and school performance led to a shift from management to one of leadership (Bush, 2003, 2008). Educational leadership was emphasised for its capacity to enlist and guide the talents and energies of teachers, pupil, and parents toward achieving common educational aims (Day and Sammons, 2013; Swaffield and MacBeath, 2008). Several studies provide clearer definitions of leadership most closely associated with enhanced student performance (Day and Sammons, 2013; Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom, 2004). At the school level, leadership could facilitate capacity-building, which supported the drive to decentralise decision-making and produce contextually relevant knowledge (Hargreaves and Fink, 2004; Fullan, 1993, 2007). Underpinning this movement was the argument focusing on the contextual reality of leadership (Sperandio, Hobson, Douglas and Pruitt, 2009; Walker and Dimmock, 2005). For these reasons, educational leadership became the new method of managing change and employing comprehensive approaches to large-scale education reform (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006; OECD, 2008). At the same time, capacity- building became increasingly linked to leadership practices that included larger segments of the school community (Crowther, 2010; Lambert, 2003).

This called for leadership that could support more participatory and devolved forms of school leadership practice. The singular leader model was no longer compatible with this approach. In response, diverse views of leadership developed that sought to demystify hierarchical leadership roles (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006). Among these, distributed leadership theory gained currency for providing an alternative conceptualisation whereby the focus shifted from leaders and what they do to the leadership activity itself and how it is played out (Gronn, 2003; Spillane, 2005). Leadership came to be viewed as an interdependent activity of agency, structure and situation that focused on contextuality and relationality rather than a static phenomenon represented by hierarchical roles. This helps us to

understand it as a fluid, inter-reliant activity that both influences and is influenced by other aspects of educational settings and school life (MacBeath, 2005b).

Distributed leadership theory's representational allure, however, has led to its becoming the 'catch all' term to describe any form of devolved or shared leadership practice (Crawford, 2012). While this distinction is significant with respect to identifying its normative power to spread the leadership work across many members of the school, it need not mean that distributed leadership is necessarily more effective when it comes to improving teaching practice, student learning or organisational performance (Hartley, 2007). Rather, it is useful in underscoring the ways and patterns that leadership is allocated and dispersed, and the conditions of its activity (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004). The appeal of shared leadership for school improvement and capacity-building led to a proliferation of diverse views of leadership practices that have been represented semantically through an adjectival phenomenon (Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; MacBeath, 2003), such that nearly every year a new kind of leadership is introduced (Crowther, 2011), for example, transformational, instructional, learner-centred, participatory, democratic, moral, servant, ethical, emotional and others.

Nevertheless, the fundamentally hierarchical and structured design of schools along vertical lines of authority and power (Ball, 2012) challenges distributed and similar devolved views of leadership. Effectively, there is no escaping the authority, power and influence vested in the position of the headteacher (Leithwood et al., 2007; Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz and Louis, 2009). The pivotal role of the headteacher is a reality that school improvement efforts must acknowledge and work with, regardless of the extent of perceived distributed leadership. This is particularly evident during the implementation of new policies and introduction of change initiatives for school improvement (Webb, Vulliamy, Sarja, Hämäläinen and Poikonen, 2012). Some critics claim that the hierarchical architecture of school organisations entails accountability channels that inhibit authentic devolved leadership practices and undermine their feasibility (Corrigan, 2013; Hatcher, 2005). Although the literature is sparse on the power complexities involved in distributed leadership, this does not detract from its significance and presence in distributed leadership practices (Corrigan, 2013). Sharing leadership thus raises issues of power for headteachers in school organisations (Lambert, 2003; Murphy, 2006), particularly in settings that espouse charismatic, person-centred leadership models and power-distant norms (Hairon and Dimmock, 2011) such as in Middle Eastern and North African countries (MENA), of which Palestine is one. The complexities of promoting distributed forms

of leadership raise challenges for developing teacher leadership in these contexts, to which I now turn.

### **Teacher leadership**

Teacher leadership emerged as a means to mobilise the largest and most pivotal segment of the school workforce in the drive towards school improvement (Crowther, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Frost, 2014; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 1996; Lieberman, 2011; Murphy, 2005; Smylie, 1995). Views of teacher quality being the single most important school variable influencing student achievement within the education system (OECD, 2009a, 2011) strengthen its appeal. This underpins the increasing championing by researchers of the role of teachers beyond one of implementation and delivery. The term ‘leadership,’ however, problematises attempts to arrive at a coherent understanding of teacher leadership. Within the growing field, attempts continue to be made to arrive at a coherent understanding and operational feasibility. Most commonly, the exercise of teacher leadership is conceived as a process of influence (Yukl, 2009) operating at the instructional, professional and organisational levels (York-Barr and Duke, 2004), with some adding personal and interpersonal dimensions (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 1996). Generally, the focus is on the formality or otherwise of teacher leadership roles and positions.

Hence, teacher leadership falls into formal and informal categories (Spillane, 2005). The formal ones consist of mid-level management that take on full-time or part-time duties in conjunction with a teaching schedule, for example department heads, curriculum specialists and mentors. Less agreed upon, however, are concepts of informal leadership, to which are attributed in-class practices, such as planning, regulating activities and creating a pleasant workplace environment (Harris, 2003). Others see it as part of outside classroom involvement, such as coaching peers to resolve instructional problems, encouraging parent participation and working with colleagues in small groups or teams (York-Barr and Duke, 2004). The distinctions of formal and informal have taken root in the literature, with equal capacity to influence teaching and learning processes.

Accordingly, Frost and Durrant (2003) question whether the term ‘informal’ could be taken to mean simply the absence of a formal position and not that of leadership practice. They

distinguish between functions that are described as leadership by others and deliberate activity that is planned and exercised by individual teachers. The terms ‘positional’ and ‘non-positional’ are suggested as more useful for distinguishing between appointed teacher leaders and purposeful, self-directed teachers exercising leadership as a form of personal, professional and organisational influence (Frost, 2012; Frost and Durrant, 2003).

For the purpose of my inquiry the concepts of positional and non-positional teacher leadership are suitable for several reasons. Firstly, they help to distinguish between appointed forms of teacher leadership positions and self-guided, strategic leadership activity. Secondly, they provide a way of attributing leadership activity to any teacher, regardless of official post or title. Thirdly, they help to foster understanding of leadership as an activity that extends beyond role or delegation. Fourthly, they enable analysis of leadership as a situational practice within context and between relations. Finally, they facilitate a way of articulating the expansion of leadership capacity in schools and the extent to which it is “stretched over” (Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004: 5). Accordingly, I begin my conceptualisation of teacher leadership based on positional status.

### ***Positional teacher leadership***

The overwhelming majority of the literature conceptualises teacher leadership in terms of traditional, one-person forms that assume a hierarchical role and hold teacher leaders accountable for improving practice. The Teacher Leadership Exploratory Consortium (2011) identified standards that constitute the knowledge, skills and competencies needed for teachers to hold leadership positions in their schools, the profession and beyond, but limited the role to teacher leaders and not to the activity. So, although most writings claim new approaches to the concept, there is nothing inherently different about leadership exercised by teachers from that of traditional top-down senior leaders (Frost, 2013). In the case of my school, positional forms of teacher leadership have been common practice since its establishment (see Chapter 1) and thus fail to underscore its ground-breaking approach to school leadership or contribution to school improvement. In its origins, the concept has been influenced by context, namely that of Anglophone countries.

The significant role of positional teacher leadership was first highlighted in the USA in the 1990s, where it was envisioned as a massive, untapped force for change in the school reform movement. Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) were amongst the first to affirm its significance.

[T]eacher leaders lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others towards improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership. (p. 6)

However, their proposal is cast in terms of a select few ‘leaders’ who have expertise, are willing to invest the time and effort, and do not mind the possible resentment of, and resistance from, co-workers. How teachers are to gain expertise when only a handpicked few are invited to lead stands at odds with the authors’ rationale for teacher leadership as a source for democratic modelling, teacher empowerment, organisational capacity-building and enhancement of teacher professionalism, particularly given the authors’ call for the creation of PLCs as the ultimate goal.

The paradox of how teacher leaders are supposed to concurrently act as peers and authoritative experts, and the resultant tensions arising from this are taken up by Mangin (2005). To resolve this dilemma, she suggests the need to reconceptualise the role so as to include trust among peers in order to facilitate substantive teacher learning. Equally, and in line with Katzenmeyer and Moller’s (1996) call for PLCs, she assumes the need for a school culture that embraces evaluation, reflection, collaboration, dialogue and deprivatisation of practice. However, none of these writers proposes how such a culture is to be fostered given the hierarchical nature of leadership that they espouse and that of schools.

Conversely, PLCs are not considered necessarily a guarantee of improved teaching practice, specifically the elimination of the student attainment gap, as Fink and Markholt argue (2011). To achieve this, the authors call for reciprocal accountability, implying a “culture of public practice” (p. 10) or modelling so that the extent to which leaders deprivatise their own practice and make it public can help teachers face their own vulnerabilities and improve practice (ibid.). Again, this implies a genuine sense of camaraderie and community among members of hierarchically structured organisations, which is a challenge for many schools and educators working from within them.

Still, the need for teacher leaders to act as change agents in re-culturing schools is echoed by Lieberman (2011) who proposes that it should be a shift from an accounting *of* learning to accountability *for* learning. Hers is another American perspective driven by the need to

eliminate the student achievement gap (Lieberman and Miller, 2011). Like Fink and Markholt, Lieberman (2011) agrees with the need for deprivatisation of teaching practice. However, Fink and Markholt (2011) insist that the type of leadership necessary to support egalitarian and other instructional improvement processes is ultimately a matter of skills modelling that “is all about expertise, not one’s motivation, beliefs, and values” (p. xxiii). The undermining of the personal and affective components of leadership activity is questionable given its centrality to leadership (Hodgkinson, 1996; Sergiovanni, 1992).

Alternatively, in Australia values characterise a framework of teacher leadership that advocates “a better world... a conscious-raising process, confronting of barriers to just educational practices and student well-being, and encouragement of self-respect in students’ communities” (Crowther, 2009: 32). To achieve this values-led approach, the author envisions a “parallel leadership” where teacher leaders attending to pedagogy operate alongside headship focused on setting organisational vision and direction. Still, Crowther’s model similarly limits teacher leadership to a select few. Nevertheless, the author claims that parallel leadership is the ‘silver bullet’ that will achieve successful and sustainable school reform because teacher leader roles are seen to be of equivalent importance and value to the headship (Andrews and Crowther, 2002; Crowther, 2009). While this view may be a reaction to the traditional focus of educational leadership studies on headship as the locus of school leadership practice, it assigns hierarchical authority to teachers and restructures leadership authority into parallel lines between headteachers and teachers. This fails to address or resolve the tensions inherent in hierarchical school structures and is likely to set one path against the other, with the potential for confusing and conflicting lines of authority for school staff. Instead, what is needed is a shift away from conventional hierarchical models towards more shared and devolved leadership practices.

In the United Kingdom, the concept of teacher leadership was later to emerge as a distinct form of leadership practice. For some it was simply a new way of looking at leadership, whilst for others it represented a form of continuous professional development. Rather than implying a leader/follower divide, teacher leadership is suggested to be part of organisational meaning-making through interdependence and more aptly situated in the larger discourse on distributed leadership (Frost and Harris, 2003).

Drawing on distributed leadership, in England ‘Leadership for Learning’ (LfL) offers “a qualitatively different way” of understanding teacher leadership (Swaffield and MacBeath,

2008: 20). It envisions a discursive process in which leadership and learning are inter-relational components of educational practice exercised by all members of the school community, including students and parents. Rather than a theory, its originators conceive of it as a set of concepts or principles that can be adapted depending on contextual factors. LfL is defined in the following way.

[A] distinct form of educational practice that involves an explicit dialogue, maintaining a focus on learning, attending to the conditions that favour learning, and leadership that is both shared and accountable... conceived as 'activities' linked by the centrality of human agency within a framework of moral purpose. (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2008: 42)

LfL derives its distinctiveness from a conceptualising of both leadership and learning as activities that are moderated by human agency within school organisations through moral purpose. Its defining feature, conclude MacBeath and Dempster (2008), is that individuals and collectives are able to be self-consciously reflective about their part in the schooling process and their capacity to act upon it.

A recent US report refers to lessons to be learned from the story of England's leadership development (Supovitz, 2014). According to Supovitz (2014), the evidence suggests that:

...any systematic strategy for educational improvement necessitates more attention to the essential role of multiple levels of leadership in schools. The American system would benefit from a formal expansion of leadership positions in schools... toward a more deliberately integrated system of school leadership. (p. 33)

Despite Supovitz's recognition of the merits of England's more devolved and process-led approach to leadership, he nevertheless conceives of it in terms of position rather than activity. This may underscore the challenges of conceptualising authentic participatory leadership practices and the transfer across national and educational contexts of leadership as shared activity.

Evidently, mainstream understandings of teacher leadership lack conceptual coherence and agreement about meaning. Common to all, however, is a clear and varied emphasis on agency, collectivity, structure, policy and culture. Now I examine the non-positional approach as an alternative and theoretically more coherent model of teacher leadership.

### *Non-positional teacher leadership*

The non-positional approach to teacher leadership (TL) rests on deliberate, self-willed exercise of influence that seeks to improve teaching and learning at all three micro, meso and macro levels (Frost, 2012). Far from being a haphazard activity, it is a systematic, values-based practice that involves procedures and instruments, requires the support of school members and external expertise, and flourishes in conducive cultures (Frost and Durrant, 2003). Frost et al. (2000) were among the first to advocate the view for its capacity to challenge the orthodoxy of hierarchical school organisations and prescriptive teacher development programmes. As a heuristic, notional device, Frost (2017a) recently articulated teacher leadership in the following way:

*[A]ll educational practitioners can exercise leadership as a dimension of their professionalism rather than by virtue of a designated formal role in their schools provided that they have the right kind of support. (p. 1)*

The approach focuses on human agency in realising moral purpose through exercising leadership by means of knowledge building and collaboration. It is a reflective practice that entails setting values, having a vision and strategising (Durrant and Holden, 2005). Frost (2006) sees leadership as a fundamental aspect of humanity that needs to be fostered in everyone where agency is the ability to make a difference beyond one's immediate confines in realising one's moral imperative. Accordingly, it is an entitlement and a goal in itself rather than just a means. Therein lies its capacity to empower and activate the potential of individual teachers within schools and to extend beyond top-down implementation of impersonal and non-relevant professional development programmes (Ramahi and Eltemamy, 2014). An LFL report concludes the following:

Teachers really can lead innovation; teachers really can build professional knowledge; teachers really can develop the capacity for leadership, and teachers really can influence their colleagues and the nature of professional practice in their schools. However, what is abundantly clear is that teachers are only likely to do these things if they are provided with appropriate support. (Frost, 2011: 57)

An essential means of providing teachers with 'appropriate support' to develop their leadership capacity is planning (Frost, 2013). The teacher-led development work (TLDW) framework was developed by Frost et al. (2000) as a means to facilitate non-positional teacher leadership development wherein teachers are enabled to engage in job-embedded knowledge-building strategies within a large community of schools. The framework is successfully applied in the

award-bearing HertsCam Network in the UK (Mylles, 2005; Hill, 2011), which along with TLDW I discuss in an upcoming section. Drawing on development work, teacher-led projects illustrate teachers' ability through leadership activity and networking events to create innovative teaching practices and build a knowledge base about teacher practices to inform teacher reform (Frost, 2014, 2017).

Clearly, I have shown that non-positional teacher leadership offers a conceptually more coherent and useful lens for framing teacher leadership as an inclusive, contextual and relational activity. As such, it is capable of mobilising a larger segment of the teaching force and enhancing leadership capacity-building in the drive to achieve sustainable school improvement. Research conducted within the International Teacher Leadership project provides further evidence of the complexity of contextual factors involved in its enablement. Identifying and facilitating these conditions becomes a challenge that opens up opportunities for TL development in Palestine, which I now explore.

### **Enabling conditions for non-positional teacher leadership**

Schooling is a highly context-bound enterprise (Sperandio, Hobson, Douglas and Pruitt, 2009). Given that the enactment of any type of teacher leadership is more likely to succeed in a culture in which participation in decision-making is the norm (Frost, 2012), it is necessary to examine the conditions that enable teacher leadership (Fairman and Mackenzie, 2014). Some of these conditions intersect with both positional and non-positional forms of TL, and are constitutive of arguments centring on distributed leadership as shared practice and of PLCs. This is vital for unindustrialised, developing countries and emergent education systems, such as that of Palestine and similar resource-limited settings, that are undergoing democratisation and struggling to emerge from a limited knowledge base (in Chapter 1). Below I explore school features that foster participatory practices in school settings. The literature suggests three key considerations: headteacher leadership, organisational structures and school culture. Whilst there is overlap, I address each dimension individually starting with the headteacher as the primary facilitator of the other two.

### ***Headteacher leadership***

The headship holds significant authority, power and influence in schools (Murphy, Smylie, Mayrowetz and Louis, 2009). The hierarchical architecture of school organisations entails accountability channels that inhibit authentic shared leadership practices and undermines the feasibility of devolved forms of leadership (Corrigan, 2013; Hatcher, 2005). Accordingly, and as a practice of shared influence, teacher leadership raises issues of power for headteachers in school organisations (Lambert, 2003; Murphy, 2006) and senior leaders. In settings that espouse charismatic, person-centred leadership models and power-distant norms (Hairon and Dimmock, 2012), such as the MENA region, of which Palestine is a part, sharing influence with teachers may represent a real risk to headteachers. This underscores the need to address the relationship to the headteacher of power dynamics inherent in organisational structures before the remaining conditions can be created. In the case of my intervening to enable TL at my school, the stark power asymmetry stacked in my favour as an owner and senior leader underscores the challenges inherent in my role as programme facilitator.

To mitigate the power tension commonly conceived in the position of the headteacher, some writers have appealed for the reconceptualisation of the role of power within the headship. Sergiovanni (1992) calls on headteachers to distinguish between the exercise of “power over” from “power to” where the former is about control, is rule-bound and exemplifies managerialism, while the latter is goal-oriented and represents the source of energy to achieve shared goals and purposes (p. 133). The moral stance views the school as “a moral order in action” (Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993: 222) represented by the headteacher who is capable of altering the moral climate and moral destiny of his or her organisation (Hodgkinson, 1983, 1991). Hence, the driver for the school and all functions of the headship is conceived as a moral imperative, with all else being in its service (Fullan, 2003, 2010).

Values-driven leadership is espoused in the active pursuit, cultivation and support of those goods in and for a humane school community (Starratt, 2007, 2012). Accordingly, school leaders that aim to enable teacher leadership need to re-envision the source of their power to rest within the values of the school community and the role of power to be in the service of the collective good. In this way, the great leader is seen, firstly, as a servant (Greenleaf, 2002) for the dual ends of enhancing the quality of teaching and raising student achievement. The headteacher’s role is to lead the organisation into becoming the virtuous school whose goal it

is to create self-learners and self-managers (Sergiovanni, 1992, 2007), where moral leadership is a matter of securing the social conditions of effective learning (Evers, 1999).

This underpins the headteacher's reconceived role from that of the singular leader to one of leader of leaders (Drago-Severson, 2007, 2012b), whose legitimacy emanates from the enablement of every teacher to become involved in, and contribute to, the schooling endeavour (Blase, 2001). Therefore it should not be assumed that every headteacher will respond favourably to TL, if at all. This constitutes grounds for the need to develop school leaders for their new role (Murphy et al., 2009; Smylie, Conley and Marks, 2002); it should not be left to the goodwill or trialling of headteachers to facilitate TL, but should be embedded in their capacity to strategise for its development. Among the first steps that headteachers need to be educated in is ways to adapt organisational structures to foster and support TL, to which I now turn.

### ***Organisational structure***

As an activity, teacher leadership requires tangible means for its facilitation, which headteachers are in a position to foster (Frost and Durrant, 2004; Murphy et al., 2009). School structures represent the most concrete and visible feature that can be adjusted to enable TL. For the purpose of its development, I draw on Frost and Durrant's (2003) TLDW framework and identify the following six main structural components: time, facilities, activity opportunities, outside support, recognition and reward, and planning.

The most often cited factor involved in promoting teacher leadership in the literature is time (Leonard, 1999). In many countries teachers are overworked and complain of not having enough time to complete their daily tasks (Grenville-Cleave and Boniwell, 2012; Timperley and Robinson, 2000). Thus making time for teachers is vital for facilitating individual and collaborative work, including freeing them from certain teaching or non-academic duties, or scheduling learning opportunities during working hours. Some of these changes necessitate teacher substitutes, which require financial resources (Easton, 2008). Unless such resources are available, this creates a disadvantage for schools with limited funding and can lead to the wrongful appearance of ineffective TL development. In such settings, headteachers need to be innovative in creating opportunities for development, that do not lead to additional organisational costs or work for teachers.

Another important facilitator of TL activity is provision of an appropriate venue for teachers to meet. The physical design of schools is not generally conducive to communal activities (Galland, 2008). Hence, headteachers need to provide common areas that are conveniently located to encourage teacher meetings and promote collaborative work (Bolat, 2013), preferably on school premises to facilitate access and workplace relatedness (Easton, 2008). Such venues also serve to break down the isolation of teachers, especially in school systems that assign teachers to subject teaching rooms, and can help to break up the routine of daily work. Essentially, headteachers must recognise the importance of the spatial components of TL development and create them within the school's means.

Activity opportunities designed to foster teacher enthusiasm for learning and raise interest in leadership is another key feature (Frost and Durrant, 2004; Mullen and Jones, 2008). Headteachers need to organise events and activities that correspond with teacher interests and school needs. Effectively done, such activities could serve to stimulate teacher thinking and convey the important message that SLT is committed to promoting teacher learning. Equally, they could contribute to breaking down teacher isolation and reducing the potential misconceptions of TLDW's self-guided learning methods as solitary and burdensome work. To enhance organisational harmony, headteachers are wise to consult with teachers on selection of events as a way to extend participatory decision-making and promote teacher ownership of the learning process.

Providing access to external support facilitates TL development. Teachers indicate that external support in the form of networking can be very valuable for work-related learning (Berry, Norton and Byrd, 2007). Networking has been shown to expand teachers' knowledge base and enhance professionalism (Earl and Katz, 2007; Hopkins, Rulli, Schiff and Fradera, 2015). Incorporating networking with teachers in other school settings is a viable strategy for leadership development (Frost and Durrant, 2003). Also useful is access to knowledge and expertise, usually through literature, to ensure that teacher learning is not idiosyncratic but based on informed scholarship. Finally, the critical friend who poses challenging questions can prompt self-reflection on, and reappraisal of, teaching practices and work-related assumptions (Swaffield, 2007). The idea for headteachers to bear in mind is that despite TLDW's self-guided approach to professional improvement, teachers should not be left on their own to build knowledge and innovate practice but should be encouraged to draw on available resources, both material and human.

Recognising and awarding teachers' work may encourage TL development and lead to a life-long commitment to self-led learning and leadership (Mylles, 2017). However, financial incentives have not always proven effective in enhancing teachers' work experience, with evidence indicating that affective dimensions can be more influential (Tekleselassie and Villarreal III, 2011). Feeling valued and appreciated for contributing to one's organisation is referred to as a non-material reward (Ipe, 2004), a view that supports the promotion of morally driven leadership activity. Incentivisation can be conducted formally or informally. Formal models include a university-level award in conjunction with school development work. Others offer a less structured award in which local education authorities or NGOs in association with participating schools issue a certificate of programme completion (Frost, 2011). Informal models consist of symbolic recognition at school events or publication of final work. Whatever the form, acknowledging and rewarding leadership projects promises to encourage teacher involvement and commitment to leadership activity.

Because non-positional TL is individually led and may appear to be unstructured or random, headteachers are advised to enact a school-level strategy for its development, such as inclusion in the school improvement plan. Hence self-motivated and self-guided individual teacher development work and learning is best not left to teachers but enabled by the headteacher and embedded within a larger school-level strategy that takes into account factors related to students, staff and the organisation (Easton, 2008). Enabling this requires an intervention that entails headteacher orchestration of the necessary conditions (Frost and Durrant, 2004). Thus planning by the headteacher is central to TL success and represents a critical structural component.

However, structural change by itself is not enough. Without a supportive culture, organisational change runs the risk of becoming a series of top-down directives leading to empty, uninformed fluctuations (Fullan, 2007; Murphy et al., 2009) that if not successfully conducted may lead to frustration and negativity towards educational reconstruction on the part of teachers and headteachers alike. The complexity of improvement-driven change processes requires re-culturation of the school, that involve a set of key features.

### ***School culture***

Culture is a powerful, yet elusive, element in school organisations (Sergiovanni, 2003) and represents the unstated set of values, norms and beliefs that foster organisational meaning and

distinctiveness (Hofstede, 1984). There is a clear relationship between school culture and improving school practice (Prosser, 2012). As a theme, school culture runs throughout much of the theoretical and empirical literature on TL (Avalos, 2011; Crowther, 2009; Drago-Severson, 2012b; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 1996; Lieberaman and Miller, 2011; Murphy *et al.*, 2009). Schein (1985) argues that culture may represent the only thing of real importance that senior leaders create and manage. In order for teachers to improve practice and lead change, headteachers will need to facilitate leadership-enabling cultural practices throughout the school community (Frost and Durrant, 2004).

I have identified a set of key intersecting school cultural features in the form of practices. These are: reflection, moral purpose, shared vision, agency, inquiry, collaboration and social capital. This is by no means intended to serve as a sequential typology, instead it represents an unfolding and inter-relational process whose features appear to different degrees in various models of professional learning communities (Avalos, 2011). The literature supports the assumption that student learning increases when teachers participate in PLCs (Vescio, Ross and Adams, 2008). However, I employ the phrase cautiously as it has been so overused as to risk losing meaning (DuFour, 2004). Instead, I propose conceptualising school cultural norms and practices as a fluid set of features and processes rather than fixed characteristics that, depending on context, weave together to form the fabric that improves teaching and learning, and represent the guiding purpose of PLCs (Vescio *et al.*, 2008). Hence, the following discussion is significant because it highlights cultural features that promote TL development and practice.

Reflection is key to fostering TL as part of a self-monitoring, self-evaluating and self-adjusting practice. Advocates of reflective practice have shown that professionals do not base their work on organisational rules and regulations but instead on principles and self-developed guidelines (Schön, 1983; Sergiovanni, 2007). While reflection is not new to teachers, professional reflection differs in its invitation to base work-related thinking on personal values and individual experiences in place of prescriptive measures and technicist exercises (Edwards and Thomas, 2010). Studies suggesting that teachers who engage in reflective practice develop leadership capacities (Hunzicker, 2012; Vaughn and Saul, 2013) confirm its centrality to effective leadership activity. Headteachers leading schools that hope to foster TL need to promote a culture of work-related reflection.

Reflective practice is a necessary condition for mobilising the moral purpose of educators (Frost, 2008b). TL is a commitment to innovating practices as a means of enhancing learners' educational experiences and performance. Therefore the question that must be reflected upon by teachers is whether or not they are to make a difference in the lives of their students and, if so, how they should do so (Bezzina, 2012; Greenfield, 2004). These are fundamental questions that must be addressed as moral purpose represents the compass for educational endeavour (Hodgkinson, 1991; Starratt, 2012). In order to stimulate school-wide moral purpose, headteachers are wise to encourage a shared vision of what that means.

Shared vision is an integral component of strategic leadership (Dempster, 2009; Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins, 2008). The dispersed nature of teacher leadership risks creating as many visions as there are practitioners, thus fragmenting a communal ethos and approach to school improvement. This hazard can be reduced through the cultivation of shared vision. While individual teacher vision remains central to the personalised nature of leadership activity (Frost and Durrant, 2003), a collective direction is essential to guiding its ultimate purpose and aligning its intended impact with school improvement plans, otherwise, it threatens to splinter the school vision, and inhibit the development of shared leadership and a sense of empowerment (Leonard, 1999). School leaders are in a position to promote a shared vision (Zimmerman, 2008; Williamson and Blackburn, 2009).

Self-efficacy, or people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives, is central to being human (Bandura, 1989, 2001). Acting agentially secures teachers a higher degree of ownership of innovative practices (Rion-Gaboury, 2005; Ketelaar, Beijaard, Boshuizen and Den Brok, 2012), and authorship of knowledge fosters recognition of one's own professional learning and actions (Bolton, 2006). Self-efficacy, is thus, a fundamental feature of TL, which is rooted in deliberate and strategic influence and rests on the will of teachers to impact their work environment (Frost and Durrant, 2003). When deliberating on the extent of TL impact and who is influenced by it, an enhanced sense of agency amongst teachers offers positive outcomes.

Provided the right conditions are met, teachers will turn to their practice and tacit knowledge to improve teaching and learning (Frost and Durrant, 2003). This leads to a process of inquiry that in the form of development work provides an effective and powerful source of professional learning (DuFour and Eaker, 1998). Teachers leading their own learning and disseminating it

is a process that over time develops TL capacity as an agent of change for school improvement and innovation of practice (Hardy, Edwards-Groves and Rönnerman, 2012). It is complex and interrelated, emerging through connectivity and mutuality whereby leadership leads to professional learning and professional learning, to leadership (Frost, 2012).

Teachers leading professional learning encourage peer and extended collaboration. As a form of situated learning, TL reinforces the need to collaborate and network with colleagues as co-learners and co-builders of knowledge (James and McCormick, 2009; Jurasaitė-Harbison and Rex, 2010). The individually driven nature of TL activity promotes collegial norms of collaboration that probe more deeply into teaching and learning (Durrant and Holden, 2005), as opposed to top-down initiatives that lead to contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994). This induces knowledge-sharing and deprivatisation of practice (Lieberman and Pointer-Mace, 2010), a form of reciprocity that ultimately fosters collective efficacy (Tschannen-Moran and Barr, 2004).

Interdependent teacher relations lead to trust-building, a feature of leading schools, and a blame-free, risk-taking environment that promotes innovative teaching practices and PLCs (Bolam et al., 2005). Teacher participation and contribution to school improvement efforts that move beyond the realm of socialising over mundane issues reinforce social capital amongst teachers and school members (Johnson, Lustick and Kim, 2011; Stoll and Louis, 2007) and enable transfer of explicit and tacit knowledge. In this way, collegial professional relations become constitutive of TL and a fundamental feature of its development (Hunzicker, 2011; Murphy et al., 2009).

This section illustrates the key conditions that enable development of the non-positional approach to TL: headteacher leadership, organisational structures and school culture. While they are not exhaustive, the above discussion serves to highlight the practices and features that are instrumental to promoting TL and are reinforced by it. As such, they represent a set of constitutive features that through interweaving and overlapping establish and embed TL practices, which headteachers are in a position to promote. Now I examine a framework that operationalises these features, assisting schools and teachers to develop non-positional TL.

## Teacher-led development work

The teacher-led development work (TLDW) framework provides a strategy for developing non-positional TL through the building of professional knowledge and dissemination of innovative practices (Frost and Durrant, 2003). Rather than a research methodology aiming to foster university or academic scholarship, professional knowledge building is reinstated in the locus of practice: the teacher and the school (Elliot, 2006a; Somekh, 1995). TLDW is distinguished by its advocacy of leadership, the act of deliberate influence, as a fundamental and driving force behind the operationalisation of the programme and an enduring result of it. This contrasts with approaching TL as an isolated programme outcome, which may pose challenges for leadership capacity-building and reform sustainability (Frost, 2013).

TLDW is a process in which teachers are enabled to lead developmental work in the form of a project that improves practice and creates or enhances professional knowledge (Frost, 2012). A key feature is development work as a leadership strategy, whereby teachers explore relevant literature, and collect and analyse evidence. Knowledge-building is enriched through “mode two” learning that is socially generated, practical, trans-disciplinary and subject to multiple accountabilities (Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2003: 179). Through dialogue, collaboration and networking, knowledge-building embeds learning in a social process that focuses on dialogue and reinforces participatory practices (Kemmis, 2010; Somekh, 2006), leading to the establishment of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Central to developing leadership capacity through TLDW are three components: values, envisioning and action (Frost and Durrant, 2003). Teachers are led through exercises that assist in identifying and articulating personal and professional *values*, a fundamental feature for the exercise of leadership and serves to motivate and maintain teacher stamina throughout the programme. Once values are identified then *envisioning* becomes the next step in enabling teachers to envisage how their practices, student outcomes and school environment can be improved. Finally, vision is realised by creating an *action* plan for a project that culminates in evidence of both innovation and leadership practices. Leadership is conceived within the development work process, wherein teachers strive to influence colleagues through consultations, evidence collection and knowledge dissemination, and ultimately adoption of innovative practices.

TLDW cannot be left to the individual efforts of teachers but requires two kinds of facilitation: structural and cultural through headteacher support; and practical by way of a comprehensive plan with procedures and tools, as argued above. A set of clearly planned and organised instruments, such as pro formas and facsimiles, facilitate programme operationalisation that is led by a designated programme leader (Frost, 2000). The HertsCam Network has successfully adopted the TLDW model and developed an extensive set of tools and procedures to assist in developing TL in the UK and abroad. The strength of TLDW is underpinned by its adaptability to diverse settings by way of its methodology and context-friendly tools and instruments. This distinguishes it from programmes and initiatives that fail to have a substantive impact when transferred internationally, as research has shown (Phillips and Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2010). As I argued in the introduction, for the Palestine context this is crucial because ineffective international policy-borrowing by excluding Palestinian stakeholders, has inhibited authentic education reconstruction and led to foreign-resource dependency (see Chapter 1).

The evidence backing TLDW's adaptability lies in the International Teacher Leadership (ITL) project, which adopted TLDW in a research and development project involving researchers and practitioners in 16 countries that included Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, New Zealand, Portugal, Romania, Serbia and Turkey (Frost, 2011), and, more recently, Egypt and Kazakhstan. The ongoing initiative seeks to identify principles, strategies and tools for TL development that can be applied in a range of schools, policy climates and cultural settings. While not all projects in participating countries met with success, researchers thematically analysed the cultural contexts and policy environments to identify the obstacles to TL and nature of the support strategies employed. Two significant studies conducted in Turkey (Bolat, 2013) and Portugal (Flores, 2013) illustrate the significance of creating conditions that foster TL as a means of promoting school improvement and highlight the challenges of introducing certain teacher practices in light of contextual factors.

The methodological underpinnings of the TLDW model and hence international flexibility underscore its characterisation as a form of professional learning in contrast to professional development. The latter has come to be associated with top-down approaches that use lectures, seminars and workshops intended to inform teachers on how to improve their work (Easton, 2008; Martin, Kralger, Quatroche and Bauserman, 2014). Conducted by well-meaning officials, university lecturers and educational instructors from outside the school, the term

‘development’ tends to reinforce hierarchical, delivery-centred pedagogy that *trains* teachers as passive recipients instead of enabling them to *lead* their own learning (Easton, 2008). Frost (2012, 2017b) argues that the phrase ‘continuous professional development’ is an extension of this discourse, wherein teachers are pathologised and seen as in need of fixing, detracting attention from system-wide conditions at the heart of authentic educational reform.

Professional learning, on the other hand, views the process as an ongoing, growth-enhancing activity that leads to the development of self-regulatory skills (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung, 2008). Learning is done by teachers for teachers, as they deem needed and in their workplace. This creates spaces for changing beliefs and attitudes that ultimately lead to innovation in individual and group practices (Easton, 2008; Martin et al., 2014). The difference surpasses semantic parsing but is ideological and exposes issues of power. Professional learning holds teachers to a higher standard and encourages them to take responsibility for and ownership of, their own development (Martin et al., 2014), in which authorship enhances a sense of agency (Conle, 2000; Huber, Caine, Huber and Steeves, 2013). Throughout the TLDW-based HertsCam Network, professional learning is integral to developing TL, which I now explain and with which I conclude this chapter.

### **HertsCam Network**

The UK-based HertsCam Network ([www.hertscam.org.uk](http://www.hertscam.org.uk)) is a successfully running group of schools that apply professional learning as an integral component of non-positional TL. I became familiar with the Network through a colleague, who was conducting a similar study in Egypt, and upon attending a seminar given by Dr. David Frost, the programme founder and Director at the time. Conversing with him revealed to me our shared values and the appeal of HertsCam to my own vision of teacher empowerment. Henceforth I attended HertsCam Network events and activities, and held conversations with members. This led me to adopt and draw on the model to customise a programme that served my intervention aims and suited the school’s educational and socio-cultural setting (Ramahi and Eltemamy, 2014). ‘Teachers Leading the Way’ is the name I gave my programme, which I explain in the next chapter. Before doing so, I firstly introduce the HertsCam Network programme.

The programme is a year-long, school-based intervention facilitated by an on-site tutor. Teachers are guided through a project based on an individually chosen, work-place problem or concern. Participation is voluntary and limited ideally to groups of eight to 15 members. There are a number of related activities and exercises designed to assist teacher development projects that draw on a kit of tools and instruments. These are: school-based group sessions, one-to-one supervisions, network events, an annual conference, a portfolio of evidence and programme certification. I explain each below.

***School-based group sessions*** There are on average six school-based group sessions designed to facilitate TL (see Appendix 1). Sessions take place after school hours and are led by the programme tutor. Programme tutors have the flexibility to adjust the content and nature of the session to suit the cohort's needs and school circumstances.

***Supervision*** In addition to the support provided in the school-based group sessions, each participant receives one-to-one supervisions with the programme tutor, usually three times during the course of the academic year. These opportunities entail exploration of leadership of development work, that include guidance on writing an action plan, maintaining and compiling a portfolio, and preparation for network events. Meetings last 20 to 30 minutes and represent valuable opportunities for teachers to receive individualised support.

***Network events*** Members conducting TLDW-based programmes from different schools gather to share stories about their development work and engage with peers. Of the six network events spread evenly throughout the year, participating teachers are expected to join three in which they either present or display in a poster their work, or simply interact with other participants.

***Annual conference*** At the end of the year, a one-day annual conference brings together the entire network of teachers. The event is high-profile with a distinguished keynote speaker, seminars and posters that allow for in-depth discussions of development projects and knowledge-building. The entire day's event is organised and led by HertsCam members.

***Portfolio*** Participants document evidence of teacher development work and leadership practice in portfolios. These include completed forms, evidence of consultation, gathered data, reflective narratives and examples of knowledge dissemination. Portfolios are assessed on completion of the programme for work quality and extent of leadership activity by the group

tutor, and programme director and manager. Criteria for assessment of portfolios are: participation, development work, impact, analysis and reflection, and presentation. Teachers observe BERA and the individual school's ethical guidelines.

***Programme certification*** An integral component of the HertsCam Network programme is formal recognition of project work. Participation in a TLDW group leads to the award of the HertsCam Network Certificate in Teacher Leadership equivalent to Level 7, providing attendance and completion of the portfolio are satisfactory.

***Tutor*** The programme is facilitated by a tutor who is usually school-based. She or he is responsible for leading the sessions, conducting the supervisions, assisting in organising the network events and annual conference, and helping in assessing the portfolios. The tutor liaises with the HertsCam Network through TLDW programme leaders.

## **Chapter summary and research themes**

In this chapter I argue that in the drive for school improvement and education reconstruction, teacher leadership is a vehicle for mobilising the largest and, arguably, most pivotal segment of the education system. I also make a case for conceptualising TL as an inclusive, non-hierarchical activity of educational knowledge-building and influence that recognises the capacity of all teachers to improve pedagogy and learning through community-based activity. However, this is contingent upon the provision of supportive conditions that consist primarily of the headteacher's leadership practice, organisational structures and school cultural norms.

In order to develop non-positional TL at my school in Ramallah, Palestine, I conducted an intervention in the form of a programme that I modelled on the TLDW-based HertsCam Network. I began the intervention by establishing the conditions necessary for my particular school setting. Approaching my study using a distributed leadership analytical framework, my focus was on themes that revolve around teachers (individual), the school (structure) and professional culture (situation). The main concepts discussed above led me to identify key themes and sub-themes that I employed during my research to monitor and evaluate my programme development, and make adjustments thereto (see Appendix 2). My choice to be guided by a set of themes instead of a list of questions was led by the appropriateness of

maintaining a broad view of the action-based, change-driven nature of my study, which I discuss in the upcoming chapter on research methodology and strategy.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research methodology and study design**

My study was driven by the need to improve teaching practices in order to enhance student performance and experiences in my school in Ramallah. In the Introduction, I clarified how I arrived at non-positional TL as a vehicle for mobilising every willing teacher in the drive towards school improvement and education reconstruction. This I followed with a set of key themes, as identified in the literature, that I aimed to investigate when facilitating its development in the form of a programme at my school. In order to achieve my study aims, I utilised a correspondingly change-driven and participatory approach to knowledge creation.

This chapter presents the research methodology I employed in my investigation. It highlights the organic link between the purpose of my study and the process in which it was conducted. There are eight sections. The first considers the philosophical principles that underpin my research, followed in the second by the theoretical perspective that was most suitable. In the third, I explain the study design starting with my programme, Teachers Leading the Way, on which the intervention rests. Section four discusses the instruments that I employed to gather my evidence, whilst the fifth and sixth examine the composition of participants and approach to data analysis, respectively. This is followed in section seven with quality assurance, after which I conclude in the eighth with ethical considerations. I now start with my philosophical view of educational research.

#### **Philosophical perspective**

An arguably fundamental purpose of the social sciences is to advance the human condition by promoting social justice, equity and wellbeing (Giroux, 1989; Kincheloe, 2008). Any other aim, such as knowledge creation for its own sake or in return for financial incentives, is unethical for several reasons. For one, it can be an intrusion into the lives of other human beings and communities, with no intent of making any reciprocal contribution. Similarly, it can objectify participants and render them unable to represent themselves, a matter not conducive to promoting individual or collective agency for social transformation. In addition, when

societal improvement is not the impetus, valuable resources are wasted. In the case of a PhD, the vast human and material resources required for successful completion necessitate justification of the value of knowledge produced for advancing human society (Zuber-Skerritt and Perry, 2002) and is the foremost principle guiding my doctoral study.

As a Palestinian educator leading a school in occupied Palestine, I consider that this view gains urgency, given Palestine's oppressive conditions, dispossession of its people and limited resources, as explained in Chapter 1. Any opportunity to produce knowledge must thus be viewed within a larger socio-political agenda to improve people's life chances (Kemmis, 2010; McTaggart, 1991). As school Director, I feel bound to guide the knowledge I produce towards improving my school and to contributing to the framing of a Palestinian educational narrative. Hence the fundamental purpose of my doctoral study in education is to conduct an inquiry at my school that will have the most immediate benefit to the largest possible number of individuals, using minimal resources with the potential for long-term impact to achieve socio-political change. This is the view with which I approached knowledge construction in my study.

Fittingly, I advocate for research with explicit socio-political intent to transform human and social conditions for the greater societal good (Gómez, Puigvert and Flecha, 2011; Kemmis, 1995). This is not the same as relating it to a research question (Sanger, 1996) or to filling a gap in the literature. Instead, it starts with a problem or concern to which I intend to contribute solutions (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005; Noffke, 1997). It neither claims post-positivist, objective discovery of truth claims, nor to purely interpretivist, hermeneutical understandings of a social phenomenon, but draws on both (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). My understanding of the purpose of research did not emanate from a particular worldview, though it may have been guided by it at some level. Nevertheless, the iterative process of research has led me to retrospective consideration of my ontological view, which has proven useful to the extent that it raised my awareness of the basis on which knowledge is conceived and the extent of human access to it and influence on it.

The politically driven nature of my research agenda and the commitment to promote social transformation demands concrete action and tangible outcomes, hence I cannot subscribe to a post-modernist, ultimately relativist view of reality but believe in actual truths. At the same time, I acknowledge that accessing reality and truth is a highly individualistic and intersubjective process that is dependent on psychological and social factors, and autobiography

(Crotty, 1998). The critical realist view, which holds that while there is an actual reality, human access to it is limited and particular, is a dialectical approach that concurrently draws on objective and subjective perspectives (Bhaskar, 2013; Pring, 2010). This view underpins my attempt to enable the transformation of human conditions while maintaining an awareness of my biases in the process and openness to opposing viewpoints and external evaluation. My heightened awareness of the inter-subjectivity of meaning-making guards my view of knowledge-building from the dangers of an imperious stance and prescriptive deployment. This perspective informs my research methodology to which I now turn.

### **Theoretical approach**

As a social and thus moral endeavour, I approached educational inquiry with the main goal of improving practice rather than strictly constructing knowledge (Elliott, 2006a). As stated in Chapter 2, among my main research aims was to understand ways to improve practice and generate knowledge through an innovative change process that would correspondingly impact organisational structures and school culture (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996). When designing my study, I was mindful of the need to employ a methodology that was suited to its aims, whilst optimising data collection and theory formation. My epistemological choice was thus guided by the objectives of *acting* intentionally on something in order to *improve* it for the overall good, while *involving* as many individuals as possible in order to enable others to *transform* socio-educational discourse and conditions. My intent underscored the notion that the process of educational science was as valuable as the outcomes and hence constitutive of the knowledge that I sought to produce (Elliot, 1991; McNiff and Whitehead, 2002).

This view afforded me a unique opportunity to approach meaning-making in a way that was harmonious with my study aims through a knowledge-creating strategy that resembled the TLDW framework upon which my programme was based (see Chapter 2). Effectively, I sought a transformative approach to knowledge construction that paralleled the principles of my programme. My programme, which I explain later in this chapter, was underpinned by the principles of articulating and acting upon personal values, was driven by a strong sense of moral purpose to improve teaching and learning, and featured practices characterised by enhanced agency, reflection, dialogue, collaboration, knowledge-building and leadership.

Such a vision, however, problematised attempts to identify a single methodology that entirely suited my needs. This led me to adopt an approach that extended beyond paradigmatic boundaries and which optimally utilised available methods to serve my research aims, particularly one that was practitioner-led, action-based and conducive to impactful education inquiry (Elliot, 1991). The pragmatic method to research enabled me to draw on a variety of knowledge-producing systems for generating practical understanding and useful insights (Biesta and Barbules, 2004; Morgan, 2014), which I now explain.

### ***Critical participatory educational science***

My study is thus positioned at the intersectionality of action research and critical social science, a methodological marriage espoused by several educational theorists for its synergy and complementarity (Apple, 2011; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Elliot, 1991; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1989; McLaren and Kincheloe, 2007; McTaggart, 1991). My approach included elements of auto-ethnography and traces of case study research, that I address later. Critical participatory educational science (Carr and Kemmis, 1986), my overarching method, calls for praxis as the underlying principle of social change, wherein individuals and communities reflect on theory in order to change their reality. McTaggart and Kemmis (1988) defined it as:

[A] form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. (p. 1)

It is a dialectical view of life and knowledge production that recognises individual and community agency in understanding lived experiences through reflection on means and ends for the larger purpose of acting to improve life (Freire, 1970, 1973). Fundamental to this approach are the roles of collaboration and dialogue, with collaboration creating dialogic channels between different social groups that secure a more equal and less hierarchical distribution of power between them (Flecha and Soler, 2014; Kemmis, 2010). This facet was essential to my intervention in order to reinforce democratic leadership at my school and to help to reduce the stark power differential in my favour. To this end, collaboration and dialogue helped foster a collective sense of agency (Bangs and MacBeath, 2012; Tschannen-Moran and Barr, 2004) characterised by a reciprocity of mutual respect and trust that built solidarity (Kemmis 2006, 2009) and enhanced social capital (Somekh, 2006).

Thus my approach enabled me to create spaces for people to conduct their work, leading to consensus being replaced by a sense of plurality and a cooperation pact that ensured a unity of process instead of outcomes (Weiskopf and Laske, 1996). This helped me to reinforce the primacy of process-orientations towards learning over results-based models amongst my sense-making collaborators. Hence “ethical values are realised in, rather than as a result of, praxis,” and thus theory does not predate action but is embedded in a dialectic with action in the pursuit of moral practice (Elliott, 2007: 107; Whitehead, 1989, 2000).

The interlocking of action and theory in educational practitioner research is pivotal for several reasons. Primarily, it re-establishes the practitioner as the creator and purveyor of professional knowledge, and the workplace as the locus of theory production (Stenhouse 1981, 1983). This liberates the profession from the traditional hold of the university as the exclusive site of knowledge production (Elliot, 1991) and frees practitioners from age-old misconceptions of theorising as the privileged domain of scholars and academics (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002). By reclaiming the right to knowledge creation, I endeavoured to free myself and enable the freeing of my participants from institutional control and socio-cultural dominance in everyday practices, and to enable them to build practical and impactful knowledge. This has a bearing on changing socio-cultural norms and behaviours that are subservient to structural authority, a concern I discussed in my Introduction. Practitioner authorship serves to reinforce professional self-efficacy and enhance personal self-confidence that leads to improved practices (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). This has relevance to the debate on structure and agency and the role of critical social science in empowering the individual in relation to institutional power structures (Somekh, 1995).

Accordingly, my epistemological approach aimed to help redirect the attention of policy-makers towards those who are immediately affected by educational reform, the practitioners and students themselves (Somekh and Zeichner, 2009). This goes beyond calls for practitioner research as a form of professional development; rather it is an agenda for change and improvement in teaching practices and education systems (Elliott, 2006b; Frost, 2017b). In the Palestinian context of externally led policy-making, this development can assist in shifting the agenda towards more locally relevant and hence impactful conversations.

The action-based component of critical participatory educational science enabled me to apply the cyclical process of knowledge production whereby I started with a workplace problem,

which I planned for, acted upon, monitored, reflected on and evaluated, and repeated the iterative process of improvement, leading to a state of illumination (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014; McTaggart and Kemmis, 1988). I conducted my investigation in cycles that were suited to the span of my intervention and were underpinned by the following research principles, which outline the activities I performed.

- *Agency is key to initiating educational innovation.* I intervened in my school to develop non-positional TL.
- *Reflection on, and evaluation of, practice is central to envisioning new approaches.* I reflected on and evaluated how the programme impacted on school members, organisational structures and professional culture, and the best ways that this could be achieved.
- *Reflexivity is fundamental to guarding against subjectivity.* I remained mindful of how my values, beliefs, behaviours and status influenced my judgments and related to other peoples' attitudes and practices, and established mechanisms to help guard against bias.
- *Dialogue is crucial for promoting democratic practices, enhancing social capital and supporting professional learning.* I engaged in dialogue with school staff, which helped to achieve all these practices and improve the programme.
- *Collaboration is vital for enhancing social capital, building professional capacity and reinforcing democratic practices.* I collaborated with school staff as co-sense-makers to facilitate these practices and improve the programme.
- *Transformation is essential as an outcome.* I aimed to improve teaching and learning, empower teachers, expand leadership capacity and enhance professional learning.

These principles and practices enabled me to achieve some of my goals and highlight the organic process of the orientation of knowledge-building that I advocated in my programme and adopted as a method for my study. Increasingly throughout the research process, my approach developed into more than a method and became a practical philosophy (Carr, 2004, 2007; Elliot, 1991), a view of meaning-making that aims to help individuals and communities interpret the circumstances of their lives and to act more wisely.

Critical social inquiry is not without its risks, however. Firstly, it is underpinned by the researcher's deliberate attempt to guide the inquiry towards a particular set of desired outcomes (Cohen et al., 2013). This underscores the power held by those initiating change processes and questions their superiority, whilst acknowledging it as unavoidable (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Webb, 1996). Secondly, by drawing attention to the researcher, it is accused of detracting from theory formation and generalisability (Hammersley, 2012). Thirdly, claiming to 'empower'

and ‘emancipate’ participants implies their passivity and reliance on others, thus reinforcing the elitist notion of the intellectual’s task to liberate the masses (Sanger, 1996). These are some of the main criticisms launched against critical social research.

I make the following defence of my epistemological choice. Firstly, all paradigms carry within them the seeds of their own methodological contradictions. Post-positivist assertion of scientific objectivity and normative detachment is refuted by initial value judgements of deductive assumptions and research questions (Greenfield and Ribbins, 1993; Hodgkinson, 1996). Similarly, interpretivism is replete with researcher-centredness, guidance of participants towards self-discovery and issues of transferability (Hammersley, 2007, 2012). Critical social theory’s chief safeguard against methodological limitations is its emphasis on researcher reflexivity at all stages of the investigation to measure soundness and ethical practice (Somekh, 1995; Williamson and Prosser, 2002). To engage researchers in self-reflection on their value system, working assumptions and research ethics is transformational and enhances their intellectual and moral capacity, in addition to advancing practical knowledge of the research topic (Carr, 2004, 2007; Elliot, 1991). In this capacity, auto-ethnography reinforced deep reflexivity.

### *Auto-ethnography*

I drew on auto-ethnography for its complementarity to my primary methodology and suitability for achieving my research aims. As a method, it combines autobiography and ethnography to empirically explore the cultural practices of communities (Ellis, 2009; Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). Central to this approach is the researcher’s personal and inter-personal experiences throughout the research process (Chang, 2016; Ellis and Bochner, 2000). By highlighting the auto (self) and ethno (culture), equal emphasis is given to both process and outcomes, and illustrates their constitutiveness in meaning-making. This underpins the political and socially conscious dimensions of it as a research method (Adams and Holman Jones, 2008), and thus relates to critical social inquiry in that it challenges canonical social research and representation, and creates spaces for personal and collective accounting that provide alternatives to authoritative discourses (Quicke, 2010).

The ethnographic feature of this approach was highly useful in enabling me to focus on the cultural dimensions of my school. As shown in Chapter 2, school culture was fundamental to my study aims, both in its antecedent form and as an emergent outcome of the intervention.

Hence, as an approach, auto-ethnography underscored the need to acknowledge the cultural values, beliefs and norms that might have hindered and/or facilitated development of TL. As such, it was instrumental in emphasising the significance of cultural practices when I was trying to understand the challenges and opportunities of facilitating socio-cultural change through TL development.

Equally significant was the range afforded in emphasising autobiographical dimensions of my research as a primary epistemological feature (Ellis, 2004; Ellis and Bochner, 2000). The permission to fully articulate my experience was crucial for highlighting my presence and legitimising my reflexivity. This represents a vital thread that runs throughout my dissertation and lends it authenticity and relatability. The methodological license to foreground the researcher's involvement and self-awareness as primary and necessary features of the meaning-making process was highly significant in terms of representing the power complexities of my role as the school's Director and founder, and promoter of participatory leadership. Auto-ethnography thus enabled me to problematise my multiple identities as part of the research process without it appearing to be an intrusion, rather it was an act of quality assurance and validation. This also lent credence to considerations of social and work relations (Ellis et al., 2011), as I was researching my workplace and bound to my participants in a professional setting.

Equally significant was auto-ethnography's capacity to showcase the power of storytelling as a means of knowledge production (Ellis, 2004). This enabled me to recount my intervention in the form of a critical narrative, whilst concurrently focusing on analysis and aesthetics (Conle, 2000; Ellis, 2004, 2009). Through the writing process I was able to identify emergent insights and issues of significance (Denzin and Lincoln, 2002). Narrative also enabled me to retain the temporality of my intervention and the flow of lived researcher and practitioner experience. The ability to maintain these dimensions of my study without disruption enhanced representation of the inter-connectedness of socially built knowledge, while acknowledging the myriad of factors influencing the process.

As for quality assurance, auto-ethnography is dismissed by orthodox social scientists for being data-biased and insufficiently rigorous and theoretical, a form of self-therapeutic naval-gazing with the researcher indulging in aestheticism and emotionality (Ellis et al., 2011). In defence, auto-ethnography questions the dubious positioning of art and science as being at odds with

each other and considers issues of reliability to refer to the narrator's credibility and the actuality of their experience based on the evidence. Similarly, validity can be measured according to the degree to which the study is believable and resonates with the reader, and extent of its usefulness in having an impact (ibid.). This is where the underlying context gained significance and led me to include elements of case study research in my investigation strategy.

### ***Case study research***

Case study method is useful for research that aims to closely examine a phenomenon within a specific setting and time. In most cases, a geographic entity, programme or group of individuals is selected as the subject of study. Yin (2013) defines case study research as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. This approach was useful to my methodology, enabling me to emphasise the contextual parameters of both my school and the larger Palestinian setting (see Chapter 1), while drawing on an array of relevant sources during the process of evidence collection. It also helped to underscore the inter-relatedness of TL development within the social, political, cultural and educational context of Palestine. The attention paid to the particularities of complex social situations, while maintaining a view of the whole (Stake, 1995), enabled more persuasive negotiation of the micro, meso and macro factors.

Case study research typically asks questions of 'how' or 'why' (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2013). Key to my investigation was the 'how' of developing my programme and TL in my school setting, and thus the appeal of the approach to research. In exploring procedural dimensions of a bounded phenomenon, the method similarly recognises the advantages that a researcher with in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon and sensitivity to the context brings to the study (Yin, 2013). This feature highlighted the benefits of my practitioner role to the investigation and insider relationship to the school, whereby my reflexivity could be drawn upon to gain deep insight.

Detractors of case study research question its scientific basis and legitimacy of its claims. Its boundedness in terms of space and time is criticised for being incapable of advancing broader understandings of phenomena (May, 2011), in which focus on a single unit of analysis may lead to narrow generalisations (Eisenhardt, 1989). As long as it is conducted "systematically, skeptically and ethically" (Robson 2002: 18), the approach can lead to "fuzzy" propositions

(Bassey, 2000: 5), a view of meaning-making that contrasts with claims of truth and certainty, and redirects attention to the processes and dynamism of knowledge production.

### ***Overview of sections on philosophical perspective and theoretical approach***

I have illustrated that my view of social science is underpinned by its capacity to contribute to the improvement of the human and social condition. This guided my choice of methodology the usefulness of which I have discussed for achieving my research aims. My approach can be characterised as that of critical participatory education science with elements of auto-ethnography and traces of case study research. I now discuss my research strategy.

### **Study design**

My study was based on an intervention in the form of a programme aimed at facilitating TL development at my school in Ramallah. The intervention took place during a 15-month period, between June 2014 and September 2015, when I travelled frequently to Palestine to conduct the programme and also maintained a presence in the UK to attend HertsCam Network activities and events. My project entailed periodic reflection and deliberation on ways to ensure programme improvement and impact. As data emerged and were captured from action (McTaggart and Kemmis, 1988), this rendered every feature constitutive of my research project.

Thus my investigation began with my initial efforts to set the conditions needed to facilitate the programme. In Chapter 2, I showed that organisational structures and school culture were among the primary conditions for TL development. Hence I started the intervention by visiting my school in June 2014, at the end of the 2013/2014 academic year, to introduce my initiative to senior leaders and assess the programme's relevance to, receptivity by and potential impact on, teachers and the school (Ramahi and Eltemamy, 2014). Once senior leaders' commitment had been secured and teachers' professional learning needs had been gauged, I introduced the programme to the entire school staff the following academic year and commenced at that point.

As an emergent process, my research strategy entailed documenting the intervention, programme development and review of impact. Apprehending the effectiveness of these processes rested on the authenticity and variety of gathered data. Therefore I drew on

programme activities along with research-specific instruments for data collection. This comprised two approaches to evidence collection: deliberate and opportunistic. The former consisted of systematic data-gathering tools specifically designed for my doctoral research. The latter included existing programme activities and artefacts that could be used for evidence collection. While the difference between the two forms is notional, the distinction was useful to the extent that it reinforced my ability to approach data collection from within the programme activities as a practitioner instead of strictly from outside through the gaze of the external researcher.

Accordingly, I drew on a variety of evidence gathering instruments, which I discuss subsequently. The constitutive role of the programme in the data-gathering process underscores the need to present my programme before explaining how I employed its activities for data collection.

### **The programme: Teachers Leading the Way**

Teachers Leading the Way is the programme I adapted from the HertsCam Network model (in Chapter 2). I drew on a set of context-friendly tools and procedures from the ITL project when designing my programme. When making adjustments I was mindful of three differences between the HertsCam Network and my programme: firstly, contextual differences in education systems, societal cultures and school environments; secondly, the absence of other schools in Palestine conducting my programme with which to hold networking events; and thirdly, the effect that my positional power could have on my role as programme tutor and its influence on participants' decision-making and behaviour during the programme.

When adapting my programme, I aimed to maintain fidelity with the HertsCam Network model because of the extensive research illustrating the soundness of its approach and the extent of international impact (see Chapter 2). At the same time, I was mindful of the need to maintain a critical view of members' activities and claims. Thus I relied on the external eye of critical friends (Swaffield, 2007) who shared my academic interests, national and cultural background, and researcher role.

In addition to adjusting to take account of the above stated differences, the action-based methodology of my research enabled me to make further modifications throughout the intervention as this became necessary. Below I present my programme, discuss adaptations made to each of the HertsCam programme features and introduce new components. Analysis of programme development was a key feature of my study and is examined extensively throughout my critical narrative in Part B.

### ***School-based group sessions***

I had anticipated that some of the central concepts of my programme, such as work-related reflection and non-positional TL, would be new to most participants. So I envisioned needing more time to introduce them and to foster deep understanding, something that I considered to be key to ensuring a strong start. Accordingly, I divided the first introductory group session into two. This way I was able to allow more time for participants to express their views of, and assumptions about, educational innovation in our school and the local context. The additional introductory session was also useful for facilitating deep reflection on values articulation and envisioning, which were fundamental components of the programme. The two preparatory sessions also afforded me more time to ensure that I, as a first-time programme tutor, had the opportunity to address these and other pertinent issues. Change processes in education require diligence and time (Fullan, 2007) and are supported by skilled facilitation (Poekert, 2010).

My programme ultimately comprised seven sessions in all. This did not veer much from the six-session HertsCam model to which I tried to remain faithful because of its sensitivity to teachers' high workload and its established viability in the UK (see Appendix 1). For the same reason, sessions were kept to two hours and held on the school premises for convenience. Participants chose to meet on a weekday, with lunch and childcare provided by the school.

### ***Supervision***

The newness of the programme's approach to professional learning led me initially to extend the number of supervisions to four instead of three, with the possibility of a fifth, depending on need. In addition to the support that they provided for participants (Wearing, 2011), I had also expected participants to require additional one-to-one opportunities to ask questions or address issues that they might feel embarrassed or awkward about tackling in front of their peers during group sessions. Extra supervisions would also increase opportunities for provision of individualised support, which teachers are known to benefit from (OECD, 2009b).

Ultimately, only three supervisions were conducted, which suggests effective programme progress. While I could have retained the 20-30-minute duration, I extended the first and second meetings to 45 to 60 minutes for research purposes to gauge participants' experiences in the form of interviews. Initially, I had intended to conduct the meetings with my co-tutor to increase support for participants and enhance research quality. However, upon reflection I became aware of the potential intimidation that might be felt by the participants when facing two tutors. In the end, I held the supervisions myself, remaining highly reflexive in relation to my status at all times and documenting it in my research journal (see below, pp. 65-66).

### *Network events*

Conducting networking events posed a significant problem for my programme as it required the involvement other schools running TLDW, with which my participants could hold actual networking events. As my school was the only one conducting the programme, I considered alternative options in terms of event frequency and composition of participants; these ranged from inviting teachers from non-programme-participating schools to including non-programme-participating teachers from my own school. Extending the range of teachers from diverse school settings promised to enhance knowledge sharing, collaboration and professional learning (Earl and Katz, 2007; de Lima, 2010). In my analysis below (see pp. 147-151; 161-164), I problematise the different options and their potential impact, and present the rationale behind the final, collectively arrived at decision.

In the end, I held a single in-school, intra-group networking event two-thirds of the way through the programme. While this arrangement limited engagement with teachers from other school settings with regard to knowledge-building, the event had the advantage of enabling every member to present their project to their colleagues and receive feedback at a timely stage in their development work, contrasting with the few who would have presented at a larger scale networking event. The single event was referred to as a 'knowledge-building' activity.

### *Annual conference*

Initially, I intended to hold an annual conference that I would incorporate with the final networking event. Teachers from other schools, along with my programme participants, would hold seminars and display posters to teachers, senior leaders and education officials. The event would be high-profile involving Ministry officials and high-ranking members of the educational and local community, with a keynote address and coverage by local media, as was

conducted in an ITL programme in Turkey (Bolat, 2014). A certificate-awarding ceremony at the end would accentuate the focus on TL development. This would mark the conclusion of the programme with a celebratory event that would introduce senior leaders and teachers from other schools to the Teachers Leading the Way programme and potentially catapult TL into the Palestinian education scene.

The complexity of facilitating TL and sustaining its practice at the organisational level, however, led me to refocus my efforts on ensuring its impact on my school before venturing to introduce it elsewhere. This took the form of managing with the SLT the knowledge built by programme participants. Organisational knowledge management is essential to the dissemination and impact of workplace-based innovation and learning (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995), which I examine below in Chapter 7 (see pp. 176-179). For this reason, I changed my plan from an end-of-programme conference to a series of participant presentations to the entire school staff and leadership team. The activity comprised part of the school's teacher professional learning programme and inaugurated the subsequent academic year with TL at the helm.

### ***Portfolio***

My programme required completion of the portfolio as evidence of leadership activity and development work. One of the aims of the portfolio was to promote reflection on these two dimensions. However, the literature on the use of portfolios as a tool to promote reflection in leadership development programmes in developing countries and centralised education systems indicates failure in some instances (Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi, 2011), a matter which I explore in my critical narrative (see pp. 171-173). This may in part be due to traditional pedagogical practices using summative, numbers-generating assessment that most teachers are accustomed to. Hence, as I expected, compiling the portfolio of evidence as an assessment tool would pose a challenge to my participants.

The HertsCam Network triangulates portfolio assessment by involving a team of reviewers. Thus, initially, I intended to co-assess the documents with my co-tutor, whose role in the programme I explain below. However, when the latter joined the programme as a participant, her involvement posed the risk of a conflict of interest that joint assessment potentially created. In the end, this, in addition to the challenges presented to participants as a result of having to compile the document, led me to assess all the portfolios myself.

### ***Programme certification***

Participants who completed the programme received certificates indicating project completion and were jointly sponsored by the ITL project and my school. Initially, I intended to explore possible links with local universities and Ministry-based accreditation for the certificates. Non-monetary incentives have been shown to act as an inducement for teacher learning (Tekleselassie and Villarreal III, 2011) and by providing these I aimed to enhance the value of my programme certificates. However, while conducting the programme, I realised that extending such links was a premature move; the programme would need to be run several times, and its impact and sustainability established, before I would be ready to associate it with local educational bodies. My concern also stemmed from the possibility of the programme being misapprehended and coopted by less democratic, TL-minded or TL-conversant parties. In the end, the certificates were sponsored by the school and ITL project (see Chapter 7, pp.176-182).

### ***Tutor***

I acted as programme tutor because of my knowledge of the TLDW model on which my programme rested, my direct exposure to HertsCam Network activities and events, and my understanding of the broader school context. Strategic facilitation is instrumental in advancing teacher professional learning (Poekert, 2010). At the same time, I was strongly aware that my positional power raised significant methodological, practical and ethical issues for my research. In my discussion of leadership practice (see Chapter 2), I explained the need to mitigate the effects of power tensions during the change process by reconceptualising my role as exercising ‘power to’ *facilitate* teacher leadership instead of ‘power over’ teachers to *enforce* the programme. In relation to my research, I constantly reflected on the influence of my status, and guarded against biases and assumptions, alluding to them when and where necessary (Finlay, 2002, 2009), and created mechanisms for its curtailment. As stated earlier, reflexivity is a fundamental feature of my methodology, was documented in my research journal (see p. 61) and runs throughout this dissertation.

### ***Co-tutor***

For my programme, I created the role of a co-tutor to assist with activities and to enhance evidence collection. Co-tutors in the form of collaborators were employed for similar purposes in the concurrently running CairoCam Network in Egypt (Eltemamy, 2017) and in Kazakhstan (Kanayeva, 2017), with evidence of positive impact. As with the tutor, the co-tutor needs to be

a member of the school staff because of their insider knowledge of school operations and culture, and cannot hold an evaluatory position over teachers lest it influence participants' performance in the programme. This adaptation served several practical and methodological purposes in my programme. Firstly, the co-tutor acted as an alternative to me should I be unable to complete the programme for any reason. Secondly, her role expanded the school's leadership capacity and established her as a facilitator of future programme enactments, in turn promoting programme sustainability. Thirdly, she assisted in my study by acting as co-sense-maker and source for triangulation. Finally, by sharing the programme tutoring role and responsibilities with me she helped to reduce the marked power imbalance in my favour.

Procedurally, she had the responsibility of co-facilitating the group sessions. Whenever I returned to Cambridge to attend HertsCam Network activities and events, she acted as school-based tutor. Her presence at the school and concomitant teaching post enabled participating teachers to view her role in the programme more as that of an equal and thus with more ease, leading them to approach her frequently. This feature assured me that participants had school-based access to support. The co-tutor was also helpful as a link with the programme team.

### ***Programme Team***

The programme team (PT) is a structure that I innovated to assist with programme development and to enhance the quality and legitimacy of knowledge production. The team was mainly responsible for providing support for the tutor and co-tutor during programme development. This took the form of assistance with adapting tools and procedures, verifying translations, and reviewing progress and impact. Equally significant was the PT's contribution to the knowledge-building process wherein their role as co-sense-makers in evaluations and periodic reviews contributed significantly to my study. Both roles are examined in the critical narrative of my dissertation, starting with the team's establishment in Chapter 5 (pp. 96-97).

The team was made up of the programme tutors and SLT; the tutors comprised myself in my capacity as primary programme tutor and the co-tutor who held mid-level management and teaching duties; the SLT consisted of myself as Director, the Deputy Director (with teaching responsibilities) and the Headteacher. The range of the members' expertise, experience and perspectives was pivotal for practical purposes and for strengthening epistemological credibility. The team met frequently at the beginning of the intervention to ensure a well-

founded start. As the programme progressed, we held three meetings to conduct periodic reviews.

### ***Participants***

Participants were expected to complete a project aimed at improving or innovating practice. Participation was voluntary in order to promote teacher commitment to the programme and ownership of development work. However, my programme deviated slightly from the HertsCam model in that teachers were asked to submit an application that included the problem that they wished to solve through the programme *before* joining. The PT was responsible for selection and based its decision on the following rationale: firstly, it enabled membership to be limited to a maximum 15, should there be an excess of interest; secondly, selection exclusivity aimed to raise the programme's status amongst teachers. The final cohort comprised 12 members and the entire selection process is discussed in Chapter 5 (pp. 106-110). All participants are referred to by pseudonyms.

### ***Ethical criteria***

Ethical guidelines are not universal and must be context-driven (Gil and Bob, 1999). Accordingly, I did not prescribe a set and instead invited participants to formulate their own ethical code early in the programme as a constitutive activity, with the only requirement that it should not conflict with the school's criteria and BERA code (see Chapter 5, pp. 116-117). My school maintained high ethical standards in the Palestinian education context, in some respects surpassing them. This assured me that if participants were to fall back on the school's minimum standards, the cohort would be well within the acceptable code of conduct. This opportunity accomplished two aims: firstly, it facilitated articulation of a code of procedures that corresponded with Palestinian socio-cultural values, the school's norms and participants' beliefs; secondly, through authorship it reinforced participants' role in leading school improvement, in this case of envisioning and directing an optimum way for conducting professional learning in their setting, which helped generate a sense of empowerment.

### ***Section overview***

In the concluding section I have presented my programme, Teachers Leading the Way, on which my study is based by way of the adaptations that I made to the HertsCam Network model. While endeavouring to maintain fidelity to the UK-based programme, I adjusted for organisational and socio-cultural differences, the absence of a network of schools conducting

the programme and the potential influence of my positional status. Most of the changes I made involved modifications to existing structures and procedures. The main innovation was the creation of the PT, which was instrumental for methodological purposes and programme development. Now I examine the instruments used to gather my evidence.

### **Data collection instruments**

As stated earlier in this dissertation, my primary research aim was to arrive at insights about developing the non-positional approach to TL in my school in Ramallah by means of a TLDW-based programme that I adapted from the HertsCam Network. Appendix 2 lists key themes that I focused on in my study. To achieve my aims, I gathered data using a cyclical research process of action, observation, monitoring, evaluation and subsequent action throughout the intervention and programme. To obtain an optimum range and depth of evidence, I employed two means: the intervention and programme activities; and research-guided tools. The intervention generated vast and substantive evidence of programme development and TL activity, while research-driven instruments enabled collection of pointed data that further informed and enriched my study, with both approaches invariably intersecting. Hence, though the distinction between the two may be notional, conceptualising them thus served to reinforce the naturalistic aspect of evidence collection. I list them below.

Tools designed for the study:

- research journal
- participant observations
- research cycles and periodic reviews
- reconnaissance
- focus group interview

Tools facilitated by the programme:

- group sessions *servng as* focus group interviews
- individual supervisions *servng as* semi-structured interviews
- portfolios *servng as* documents

Below I examine the usefulness of each instrument to my investigation.

### ***Research journal***

Keeping a research journal, also a reflective log or reflexivity journal, was a key strategy for ensuring and maintaining self-reflection on my subjectivity (Cowan, 2014; Ortlipp, 2008). As a primary data-collecting instrument, it enabled me to make visible my thinking, feelings and biases with regard to aspects of both the research process and programme development. The self-interrogative nature of the research journal corresponded with methods used in ethnographic studies (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Because I was investigating my workplace where relationships are paramount, the research journal similarly afforded me a medium where I could confidentially express and explore private feelings and thoughts about my colleagues.

The literature on reflective journal writing is complicated by the somewhat contradictory published advice (Cowan, 2014). There appear to be few well-documented evaluations of the effectiveness of reflective journal writing in achieving learning outcomes (White, Fook and Gardner, 2006), although there have been recent moves towards a technical rationality model, where it is used as a way of identifying appropriate means to achieve predetermined ends (Thompson and Pascal, 2012). Narrative writing that is devoid of the deeper reflections and higher-order thinking intended to lead to new understandings should also be avoided (Cowan, 2014).

Research journal writing helped me to achieve deep reflexivity and aided in methodological development (Lamb, 2013; Ortlipp, 2008) for which I created mechanisms and procedures. Writing preceded the intervention and concluded after its completion. The journal was kept electronically and comprises over 21,000 words. When making my entries I endeavoured to look beneath the surface of talk and events, relate personal views to others and critically place self and thinking in a broader context (Cowan, 2014). This facilitated the capture of data that were useful for triangulating evidence during analysis. Equally, it helped to develop my self-interrogative skills and cultivated my selectivity in matters worthy of self-questioning, of which assumptions and personal values are at the heart. As a tool, reflective journal writing served as a method of inquiry (Ortlipp, 2008) and enriched insights gained from the investigation.

### ***Participant observations***

My study enabled me to gain close and intimate familiarity with a group of individuals and their practices through direct involvement in their professional and workplace environments

over a relatively extended period of time. The access to a profuse amount of data with which this type of research provided me was well served through participant, or naturalistic, observations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2002). This meant that I could capture evidence without intruding on activities or disrupting their flow. My participant status, being an integral part of the community I was studying, underscored the naturalistic aspect of the process and the capacity to obtain rich evidence of human experiences *in situ* (Spradley, 2016).

Critics of participant observation underscore its subjectivity, particularly the observer's bias and selectivity when it comes to what is deemed significant to record (Galibert, 2004; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Equally problematic for data validity is the observer or Hawthorne effect, wherein the observed member or group behave in ways that correspond with the researcher's expectations or aims (Smith and Coombs, 2003). Given the socio-political nature of my research aims and complexity of my positioning, this posed a legitimate hazard and threatened to compromise the trustworthiness of the collected evidence, and by extension, my investigation.

As with qualitative research instruments for data collection, a useful and rigorous method to use for evidence validation is triangulation (Cohen et al., 2013; Denzin and Lincoln, 2002). Thus, in addition to employing alternative methods, such as the research journal and others that I explain below, I included the co-tutor as an alternative participant observer during group activities because of her role as a staff member who happened to have experience in social science research. The co-tutor's recordings were instrumental in corroborating my observations and reflections, and revealing discrepancies in understandings. Jointly conducting participant observations during group-based programme activities enabled us to capture the verbal and non-verbal comments of participants (Cohen et al., 2013). Additionally, during group sessions that I facilitated, the co-tutor's observations were vital for noting data that I might have missed or forgot to document. Between the two of us, there was an increased chance of obtaining a holistic view of programme activities and generating "thick description" (Geertz, 1994: 213).

### ***Research cycles and periodic reviews***

A fundamental component of the action-based research methodology I employed was its capacity to capture the development of a change process (Elliot, 1991; Kemmis, 2010). Key to this approach was the cyclical nature of its application, which comprised problem identification, planning, action, monitoring, reflection, evaluation and renewed action

(McTaggart and Kemmis, 1988). This contrasts with obtaining end-of-programme evaluations by participants when data is gathered *post hoc* in order to improve programme operations, evidence that may be compromised by the effect of memory and subjectivity of individual perceptions. Instead, throughout the intervention I relied on *in situ* analysis aimed at facilitating an organic, emergent process of development that is supported by a variety of evidence-gathering methods and sources (Elliot, 1991; Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

Cycles took place at different intervals and in response to various programme features. Thus it is more useful to visualise them as multiple, recurrent and ranging in focus and scope. Nevertheless, in order to give a structured evidentiary trail and provide focused documentation, I, along with the PT, held three distinct periodic reviews of programme development. The team's diverse composition, span of experience, and intimate knowledge of the school and teachers ensured a more comprehensive and thorough evaluation of programme development and impact, as well as insightful input. Periodic reviews were documented in meeting minutes taken by the co-tutor. Her role in the programme ensured that note-taking was done by someone involved and informed about TLDW features, practices, language and activities, which enhanced the accuracy of the accounts.

While the school-based composition of the PT members may be seen to have fostered an insular view and thus weakened the group's ability to be critical of the programme's development and impact, it can equally be argued that their insider perspective might have been an advantage because of their knowledge, insight and proximity to participants and the school. As such, members acted as co-sense-makers in a secondary capacity in the investigation, with their collaborative role being advantageous in terms of enhancing my understanding of the gathered evidence and research process (Somekh and Zeichner, 2009; Tschannen-Moran and Barr, 2004), and thus represented a validation group (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

### ***Reconnaissance***

The impetus behind my research was to find ways to improve teaching and learning at my school. Accordingly, it originated from a concern, which is the starting point of action-based research (Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005). Reconnaissance is a method employed by action-based researchers to identify the issues and problems in need of addressing (Elliot, 1991). One of the early steps I took was to involve school members in ascertaining thematic concerns through the use of a school self-audit, or self-evaluation (MacBeath, 2005a). In order to

increase the participatory and collaborative nature of my intervention, and enhance the reconnaissance's impact, I involved the PT in designing and applying the self-audit.

The reconnaissance focused on teachers' views of the school's professional culture and professional learning provision (Ramahi and Eltemamy, 2014). I based it on a portrait of the school organisation that drew on a school self-evaluation. Portraiture is a methodology that attempts to combine empirical and aesthetic description in speaking to broader audiences in order to link inquiry to public discourse and social transformation (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997). Hence, school self-evaluation is a means of improving schools through critical self-reflection on teaching and learning quality without reliance on external parties (MacBeath, 1999, 2005a). For the activity, the PT and I adapted tools and instruments from the context-friendly ITL toolkit. Chapter 4 examines both collaborative activities in analytical detail.

Criticisms pertaining to the limitations created by the absence of external expertise in the programme may be mitigated by my researcher status and the knowledge that I had acquired whilst preparing for the intervention and study. The methodological significance of the reconnaissance was its ability to gauge teachers' views of the school culture and teacher professional learning provision, which enabled identification of the school's developmental needs from within and generated a discussion that introduced a change-driven discourse. Practically speaking, the activity enhanced shared leadership and teacher engagement, and introduced school staff to new educational concepts and practices.

### ***Focus group interviews and programme group sessions serving as research-driven focus group interviews***

Throughout the year-long programme, the cohort had ample time to develop reflection and collaboration, increase social capital and extend communicative competence. This was facilitated by rich dialogue that proved illuminating when it came to data collection. Hence group sessions became eligible to serve as focus group interviews. For one thing, there was safety in expressing conflicts and concerns within the group (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Also, the programme group range of eight to 15 members corresponded to the ideal group size for focus group interviews (Denscombe, 2010). Finally, group sessions usually lasted two hours and were close to the usual focus group duration range of one hour to 90 minutes (Robson, 2002). So I approached the seven group sessions as instruments for data collection in the form of focus group interviews. They provided an occasion when participants exchanged

views of the development of their projects and emergence of leadership practice. During the meetings, I acted as moderator and facilitator, and invited the co-tutor to give feedback on group dynamics and for the purpose of cross-checking (Cohen et al., 2013).

Concomitantly, I planned a single research-driven focus group interview that was specifically intended for verification purposes with group members. The meeting was held a year after the programme concluded, following *post hoc* data analysis, when I had identified the key study outcomes. However, being highly conscious of my positional status, I avoided influencing participant responses by not announcing the outcomes before the interview. Teachers were invited to share perceived changes to their practice a year after participation in the programme. In order that I might be free to guide and engage in the discussion, and to preserve the meeting in its entirety, I audio-recorded the interview and transcribed pertinent segments (Bucholtz, 2000) in Arabic for enhanced authenticity before translating them into English for use in the analysis.

During the group sessions that served as focus group interviews, I was aware of some of the disadvantages of my data collection approach. These included the propensity of some participants to dominate the discussions and activities, and of others to hesitate due to shyness or sensitivity to collegiality. To counteract this effect, I relied on individual supervisions to provide less outspoken participants with opportunities for confidential self-expression and questioning. Another hazard was the possibility that the method might foster groupthink (Cohen et al., 2013), serve to support the group (Robson, 2002) or build consensus (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), which were mediated by the frequency of group sessions and my ability to intervene. Overall, the instrument was invaluable for capturing data from group dialogue that enriched my understanding and the study.

### ***Programme individual supervisions serving as semi-structured interviews***

Interviews are useful data-collecting instruments in qualitative research. The semi-structured kind seemed ideal for my research purposes because of its flexibility and allowance for an exchange of ideas (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Equally useful is the fact that it is sufficient for the interviewer to provide a framework of themes to explore, instead of a strictly predetermined set of questions (Strauss and Corbin, 1994). This would have enabled me to address the key themes that I identified from the literature and others that arose during

programme activities. However, conducting research-specific interviews would have added to the programme's substantial requirements and burdened participating teachers.

Programme supervisions thus served as conversations with the characteristics of semi-structured interviews, as explained earlier. I approached the three individual supervisions that I conducted with each group member as such. Meetings represented interviews, which allowed for the illumination of participants' understanding of TL development and practice. This enabled me to identify conceptual and practical issues and challenges faced by participants, make clarifications and suggest solutions (Gómez et al., 2011). The three supervisions adhered to the three themes of the thematic interview model, consisting of a beginning, middle and end. This provides participants with the opportunity to temporally (re)construct their experiences and reflect on their meanings (Seidman, 2006), which further enhanced methodological triangulation.

At all times throughout the supervisions that served as interviews, I was mindful of the inherent power asymmetry between myself and my participants. For one thing, structural positioning may lead interviewees to deliberately express what they think the researcher wants to hear (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Similarly, if Foucault's theory (see Gutting, 2005) on power inherent in discourse and institutional structures were to be applied to my situation, it was bound to be in my favour, given my institutional power and theoretical knowledge. These factors remained inevitable realities during the interviews, regardless of efforts to reduce them. So, I maintained caution in exaggerating the impact of attempts to eliminate the power differential that might have led to contrived equality (Seidman, 2006) and relied on constant reflexivity (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) and an evidentiary trail of genuine attempts to do so. Despite such limitations, the approach generated a wealth of thick data.

### ***Programme portfolios of evidence serving as documents***

Documents provide data collection sources in qualitative research. In combination with other methods that study the same phenomenon, they are often used as a means of triangulation to support convergence and corroboration (Denzin and Lincoln, 2002). Both printed and electronic documents provide material that can be systematically examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge (Samaras and Fox, 2013; Zeichner and Wray, 2001). The portfolio of evidence as a programme artefact qualified for this status.

All programme members were required to compile a portfolio that illustrated their development work and leadership activity. The content represented evidence that tracked participants' thinking (ibid.) from the start, and the means of and changes in their thinking during and at the culmination of the programme. While group sessions and individual supervisions provided in-depth insights about key research themes and enabled emergence of new ones, they were filtered through my optics and corroborated by the co-tutor. In contrast, the portfolios were vital for revealing participants' perceptions and self-understanding of the issues in question. Assessing these documents raised additional questions for the current study.

### ***Section overview***

The above section illustrated the instruments I employed to gather data in my study. These consisted of research-designed tools developed in tandem with an opportunistic set generated by the programme. Both means proved useful for extending the depth and breadth of the gathered evidence, and enriching insight generation.

### **The participants**

Paradigmatic choice and research design influence the nature of participant sampling, while researcher bias or an unsystematic approach in selection can skew study outcomes and thus validity (Cohen et al., 2013; Robson, 2002). My study aims required the presence of two samples: the school and programme participants. The intent to improve educational practices at my school underpinned my school selection and rendered it purposeful, while the voluntary nature of participant selection classified it as convenience sampling (Denscombe, 2010), approaches that are conducive to case study research (Yin, 2013).

My status as a school owner in the Palestinian education scene influenced the type and choice of school(s) that I could conduct my programme and investigation in. In terms of access, the three education providers, state, UNRWA and privately run (see Chapter 1), represented different challenges. The first and second would entail time-consuming bureaucratic procedures, which I could not afford as my programme needed to commence at the start of the academic year. Working in other private schools would have created a conflict of interest. Privately owned schools in Ramallah are highly competitive and consider me a rival. Realistically, I could not see myself improving any other school rather my own. Conducting

the programme at my school seemed the only choice for me at the time. Equally, I could not be sure that the selected school(s) would have school cultures and organisational structures that would be conducive to running my programme, or senior leaders that exercised shared leadership. Hence, these two choices were not practical.

My second study sample comprised the group of teachers at my school who took part in the programme. The voluntary nature of participation meant that I had no direct control over selection. The only stipulation was that the cohort should range between eight and 15 members, matching the HertsCam model. I involved the PT to assist in establishing guidelines for participant selection, a process which I examine in Chapter 5. In the end, two managerial members were included for a total group size of 12. Now I explain my data analysis technique.

### **Data analysis**

The object of analysis is to obtain meaning from the evidence. In qualitative research, there is no single right way to analyse data, instead there are suitable approaches depending on paradigmatic choice, methodology and study aims (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Given the interventionist nature of my research, I needed a method that was most suitable for developing understanding of the happenings and meanings of a developmental, action-driven process. Most appropriate was analysis that takes place throughout the research process and afterwards (Altrichter, Feldman, Posch and Somekh, 2013), both *in situ* and *post hoc*. *In situ* analysis deployed data sources to inform programme and TL development, while *post hoc* reasoning led to the generation of insights and hypotheses about the process and its impact. Before I expand on both, I address the matter of language and translation.

### ***Language and translation***

Language is a socio-cultural phenomenon that influences understanding and communication (Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz, 2008) and is imbued with structural issues and matters of power (Gutting, 2005). The intersection of the English and Arabic languages raised conceptual and practical issues for my intervention and inquiry. Conceptually, non-positional TL translated into Arabic was challenging for teachers and senior leaders alike, as were other programme concepts and practices, which I explored in the critical narrative as it arose throughout the intervention. Practically, the range of data collected in Arabic, during the supervisions that

served as semi-structured interviews and in the portfolios as documents, prohibited translation in its entirety. Thus I translated into English selected relevant sections that I used in the critical narrative.

### ***In situ reasoning: deductive and inductive analysis***

Throughout the intervention I analysed the content of data collected for my study through deductive and inductive means (Huberman and Miles, 2002). My deductive approach was inevitable given the range of literature that informs my conceptual understanding and practitioner viewpoint. This involved a system that incorporated both thematic and open coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1997). Codes that I was open to were difficult to predict but could be broadly sub-grouped under themes that facilitated or challenged my study aims (see Chapter 2). Concurrently, I remained open to discovery and new knowledge that emerged through inductive reasoning. Emergent topics and themes were reassembled through axial coding to enable conceptualisation and theorising (Strauss and Corbin, 1997). *In situ* reasoning that was conducted throughout the intervention is illustrated throughout the *post hoc* analysis, which is presented in the form of a critical narrative.

### ***Post hoc reasoning: narrative analysis***

The year-long process-driven, contextual and inter-relational nature of my study underscored temporal and experiential dimensions. Thus I decided to utilise an approach that retained the entirety and integrity of an emergent activity and how I came to make sense of it. This led me to conduct a narrative analysis, which facilitated piecemeal data examination as the intervention unfolded. Writing is a mode of inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 1995; Goodall Jr, 2012) and helps to illuminate insights and issues. The approach was practical for managing the range and volume of data that I had amassed and for cohering it into a story (Conle, 2000; Moen, 2006), a very popular form of human communication and learning. This contrasts with analysing the entire set of data and fragmenting it into codes for comparison purposes (Polkinghorne, 1995).

I started from the beginning of the intervention, examining each activity separately, while drawing on the evidence and linking it to the relevant literature whenever needed (Conle, 2000; Moen, 2006). Handling intervention activities individually did not detract from linking the content of the analysis to socio-cultural, organisational and educational factors. Instead, it facilitated focus on what each activity was revealing to me on its own and in connection with

subsequent developments, while preserving a sense of the whole (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

Although I had conducted the programme myself and was aware of subsequent occurrences and outcomes, I had not yet analysed ensuing activities and thus could not anticipate the themes or issues that would later emerge. This method was useful to the extent that it enabled me to give ample attention to inner and deep meaning lodged beneath the surface of a particular instance or event without reference to similar themes elsewhere that might guide the analysis in different ways. The technique also facilitated deeper reflexivity on my research practice (Latta and Kim, 2009), such as quality assurance, which I discuss next. Before I do so, I acknowledge the logistics of handling the copious amounts of data generated throughout my study. In order to facilitate safe and easy storage and retrieval, I used electronic documentation devices, namely computer, relevant software programmes and several data protection techniques.

### **Quality assurance**

The quality of knowledge claims rests on ideological position. In qualitative inquiry, this is an ongoing process (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). Critical participatory social research relies on reflexive practice (Hall, 1996) and rests within a separate paradigm that entitles it to quality criteria suited to its transformative purpose (Herr and Anderson, 2005). Therein lie the criteria of the quality of its outcome: its agenda and the extent to which it has been achieved. This leads back to the study's stated epistemology (see Chapter 3) as the set of quality criteria, which were determined according to the following research principles: reflection, enhanced agency, collaboration, dialogue, reflexivity and transformation.

The study's quality control may be descriptively characterised in the following ways. *Outcome validity* is the extent to which the research process stirred participants into action and transformation. *Democratic validity* addresses the degree to which community members at the research site were engaged in addressing, solving and learning from research issues. *Catalytic validity* is concerned with how well the research process transformed ways of thinking about reality in order to transform it (Herr and Anderson, 2005). *Pragmatic validity* refers to the extent to which problems and challenges with regard to practice were reformulated and solved

to enable continued learning. *Communicative validity*, or dialogic intersubjectivity, is the degree to which the research process was subjected to review by participants or peers (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

Additionally, I took measures to mitigate the influence of my positional power by embedding epistemological procedures and mechanisms in my research that involved different perspectives and enhance triangulation (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Firstly, the range of my data instruments ensured diversity of sources. Secondly, the PT as co-sense-makers and members of the validation group ensured cross-checking of my perspective, as did the co-tutor. Thirdly, the role of the co-tutor lessened my power as singular programme facilitator. Fourthly, the iterative and cyclical nature of the research design enabled periodic review of the impact of my role on both the research and programme, and provided ample opportunities for adjustment. Finally, corroborating with programme participants the study outcomes enhanced truthfulness and authenticity. Still, perhaps my most important claim to having actively and reflexively controlled the epistemological risks posed by my positional power is the fact that not doing so would threaten the achievement of my intervention aims to enable emancipatory learning for socio-political transformation, starting with teachers.

On the matter of generalisability, the action orientation and case study nature of my inquiry similarly precluded it from being subject to traditionalist research measures of reliability and reproducibility (Pring, 2010). Transferability (Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007) and naturalistic (Stake, 1995) or fuzzy (Pring, 2010) generalisations are suggested as more appropriate descriptors, as is resonance (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Irrespective of terminology, as a solidly grounded, rigorous study of an individual action-based case it needed to reach the stage of being relatable to other inquiries focusing on the same concerns in order to advance theory formulation, and relate to the readers (Bochner, 2002). The ITL initiative has generated several studies related to teacher leadership and based on the TLDW framework, which supported my research (Bolat, 2014; Čelebičić and Vranješević, 2013; Eltemamy, 2017; Flores, 2013; Frost, 2014, 2017a; Hill, 2008, 2011; Kanayeva, 2017; Mylles, 2005; Vranješević and Frost, 2016).

Additionally, throughout the programme I maintained contact with members of the HertsCam Network and sought others throughout the ITL project for their guidance and feedback on TLDW activities. Their combined experience served as a source of critical friendship

(Swaffield, 2007). During intervals of limited activity in the programme, I returned to the UK to attend HertsCam Network activities and events, which similarly helped to enhance fidelity with my programme. Incorporating and embedding the above quality assurance measures contributed to ethical practice with which I conclude this chapter.

### **Ethical considerations**

Social inquiry with an explicit agenda to socio-political transformation is replete with ethical considerations that must be attended to throughout the research process (Hall, 1996; Williamson and Prosser, 2002). As knowledge is socially mediated and as I was a key data-gathering instrument, I maintained vigilance over various factors that might have influenced my thinking, decisions and actions (Merriam, 1998). I faced two key issues at the individual level: my positional power as school founder, owner and Director; and my dual practitioner-researcher, insider-outsider roles.

The power that I wield at my school cannot be diminished. Thus I realise that some teachers could have felt compelled to participate in the programme, and senior leaders and mid-level managers obliged to support the intervention and facilitate the investigation. To lessen the likelihood of this happening I relied on two factors: mechanisms for triangulation discussed earlier in this chapter; and an egalitarian cultural ethos and principles of social justice that I have nurtured since the school's founding in 1995, which constitute the school's vision and mission, and inform its practices. The latter is akin to the features that underpin the principles of non-positional TL that I drew on for my programme. Hence, any deviation from enacting these principles would contradict the fundamental aims of my intervention and defeat the purpose of my study.

For my dual identity of practitioner-researcher, or insider-outsider, I remained mindful of its influence during both research and programme processes (Finlay, 2002, 2009; Finlay and Gough, 2008). The insider-outsider continuum, which encompassed my American-Palestinian, Western-Middle Eastern and Anglophone-Arab identities, affected how I approached my Palestinian participants during the programme and research processes, and my Anglophone audience during reporting. I recognise that the relationship between my multiple identities might have created certain operational and ethical tensions for me (Holliday, 2010; Magyar

and Robinson-Pant, 2011). For this, I relied on my research journal to expose and negotiate such issues. Past experiences led me to expect the relationship between any of these dualities to be less isomorphic, with one role overtaking the other at times (Hammersley, 2004). This represents yet another challenging dialectic that I mediated through a heightened reflexivity and used to my advantage through insights that binary identities could have afforded me (Subreenduth and Rhee, 2010).

On a technical level, my study adhered to BERA's Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, which focus on participant consent, safety, confidentiality and copyrights, among others (BERA, 2011). However, while institutional standards and guidelines for ethical practice are essential they cannot replace individual and contextual judgements about respect, fairness and sensitivity towards participants and culture, particularly during data collection. In this light, genuine care and respect for the wellbeing of my participants guided my ethical reasoning (Rallis and Rossman, 2010), and I approached them at all times as colleagues and collaborators in the knowledge-building enterprise. Equally, as an intervention that involved programme development, all teachers were explicitly informed before joining the programme that their involvement would entail participation in my research project. Doing so prior to joining the programme and not afterwards, as a *fait accompli*, ensured teachers' right to make their own decision and gave them ample time to deliberate, as opposed to finding themselves obliged to continue once they had joined the programme because of my positional status.

### **Chapter summary**

This chapter has examined the methodological approach to my study. Starting with a philosophical stance that views knowledge production as a means of human advancement, I have explained my critical participatory action strategy, which drew on several methods. My study design enabled me to create knowledge on the development and impact of a process of educational innovation. The 15-month investigation generated a vast range of data for which I used diverse instruments of collection that included research-driven and programme-led data sets. The inquiry's two sample constituents, the school and cohort, were dictated by its aims; the latter by the programme team. Content analysis was conducted using deductive and inductive methods, whereby the writing process took place alongside data analysis. While reflexivity permeated the study, I embedded several epistemological measures, such as the PT

and co-tutor role, into the research process to enhance authenticity and resonance. By helping to reduce the power differential, these devices also reinforced ethical practice wherein vigilant reflexivity made visible my feelings, biases and assumptions, and enabled me to consider their influence on programme development and study proceedings. This concludes my discussion of my research methodology and leads to an examination of the evidence in my next chapter.

## **Part B**

### **A narrative of change**

In this second part of my dissertation, I present a critical narrative analysis of the evidence gathered throughout my 15-month programme-based intervention. As argued in Chapter 2, the teacher-led development work model, that I drew on for my programme aimed at developing non-positional teacher leadership at my school, is a process-led methodology for professional learning and school improvement that I deployed as a means of bottom-up system change in Palestine. It is an approach that is grounded in the distributed leadership model, which rests on the three dimensions of activity, relationality and context. My programme, as explained in the previous chapter, involved a sequential series of activities and events that added temporality as a key dimension. Researching an extended change-driven, process-oriented and action-led programme was more effectively conducted through a range of data collection sources and instruments (see Chapter 3). To make sense of the copious evidence generated I employed a method of analysis that facilitated the accounting of the complexity of human experience vis-à-vis the above-stated dimensions, while preserving the integrity and maintaining the entirety of the intervention.

Narrative is a mode of analysis that enables the cohering of a diverse set of human experiences and elements into a meaningful whole (Latta and Kim, 2009; Polkinghorne, 1995). Bruner (1986, 1994) has argued that as a form of storytelling, narrative is a distinctive way of ordering experience and constructing reality, which fosters human learning. Narrative analysis, or narrative reasoning, assembles from the happenings and events as its data to produce explanatory stories. This contrasts with analysis of narrative, or paradigmatic reasoning, which gathers stories to produce taxonomies and categories (Bruner, 1986). In my dissertation, I use narrative analysis as a means to examine an episode of development work in order to produce practical and theoretical knowledge.

The intuitive appeal of narrative to researchers who are embedded in the qualitative and interpretivistic approach, and for whom causality is not an aim (Casey, 1995; Polkinghorne, 1995) is in large part due to its capacity to represent the complexity of lived experiences through the configuring of disparate elements into a unified story (Huber et al., 2013; Moen,

2006). This is done through the continuous exploration and interweaving of the literature as the need arises to understand a particular issue from a wider perspective through the use of diverse data sources, which often emerge from the inquiry activity rather than being externally defined (Conle, 2000; Moen, 2006). The approach allows reflexivity throughout the analysis and becomes a form of praxis (Latta and Kim, 2009), making it particularly suitable for my study. As such, critical narrative is undeniably applied and theoretical (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989; Moen, 2006), a method that is congruent with the practical philosophy I espoused for my research methodology referred to in Chapter 3.

Practicality in creating order from experience through storytelling need not imply oversimplification that leads to everything working out well (Barone, 2007; Conle, 2000). Instead, the interrelatedness of happenings and events is an admission and explanation of the complexity of human experiences *in situ* (Bolton, 2006; Polkinghorne, 1995) and is aimed at raising questions. Thus, narrative inquiry is fundamentally tentative to a degree, producing a 'likelihood' instead of certainty (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989) that is open to the ongoing hermeneutic process (Moen, 2006) in which the particular, and not the general, triggers emotions and generates resonance (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). Open-endedness becomes less a reflection of arbitrariness than an invitation to the reader to join in the sense-making process and to re-interrogate held assumptions (Barone, 2007; Latta and Kim, 2009).

As a form of storytelling and a highly popular medium of human communication (Elliott, 2005) there is an artistic endeavour as well as an intellectual one intended to engage the reader till the very end (Conle, 2000; Huber et al., 2013). Whilst this genre may popularise the approach, for the narrator it also fosters a dialectic tension between expressing the aesthetic and theorising the intellectual (Conle, 2000).

Detractors of the use of narrative in inquiry have accused it of being a form of catharsis or therapy, a totally introspective pursuit (Conle, 2000). While that may be a legitimate allegation, I am of the strong opinion that narrative can equally be a highly ethical and political form of analysis (Barone, 2007). For my study purposes, narrative analysis has enabled me to make sense of my intervention and its contributions to school improvement and education reconstruction in order to improve the human condition in Palestine, whilst making visible my own reflexivity and ethical practice.

In the following four chapters, participant experiences, and programme activities and events are emplotted to provide a beginning, middle and end. Three chapters illustrate programme enactment and development, and are preceded by a fourth that acts as a prologue and presents the preparatory stage of my intervention. Hence, all four chapters examine the intervention. Chapter 4 explains how I set the conditions for the programme. Chapter 5 illustrates the beginnings of the programme. Chapter 6 examines how teachers engaged with the programme. Chapter 7 shows how I concluded the programme and facilitated its sustainability. I now commence my narrative analysis.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Creating the conditions for the programme**

The development of non-positional teacher leadership rests on the headteacher's leadership practice, organisational structures and school culture (see Chapter 2). Hence, my first task was to ensure that at my school these dimensions were conducive to conducting my programme. My 20 years of work experience at my school, and knowledge of its leadership ethos, professional culture, and organisational policies and structures assured me that the setting was favourable for my intervention. Still, two issues remained a concern: firstly, how best to secure teachers' interest in a programme that: a) promotes a new approach to professional learning, b) requires year-long commitment and c) rests on moral purpose; secondly, how to account for my positional power influencing: a) teachers' voluntary participation in the programme and genuine adoption of TL practices and b) senior leaders' commitment to the programme and TL. These two aspects constituted the first main challenges facing my initiative.

To start preparing the school for my programme and addressing these matters, I returned to Ramallah in mid-June 2014 (Ramahi and Eltemamy, 2014). I planned my visit to coincide with the end of the academic year when senior leaders and teachers were more available for consultations and meetings. It also afforded me the entire summer for planning. Substantive change processes are rarely seamless endeavours and need diligent planning and contextual understanding (Fullan, 1993, 2007). In the case of teachers, changing practice is not always welcomed or easily apprehended and requires smooth transitioning (Hargreaves, 2005). Thus I strove to have adequate time to establish the conditions for my intervention.

Addressing the above issues represented the first stage of my research and led to my planning for the subsequent action stage. In this chapter, I discuss the meetings that I held with senior leaders and the activities I conducted with teachers to tackle these potential challenges. These took place in the following ways: a) introducing the principles of my programme to senior leaders; b) joint planning with senior leaders on optimum ways of laying the foundations for the programme amongst teachers; and c) co-conducting with the Headteacher a school self-audit with teachers and support staff. The following analysis draws on periodic reviews of

activities in which I reflected on data gleaned through monitoring and observation, and my research journal.

### **Introducing the programme's principle to senior leaders**

Headteachers can play a pivotal role in promoting TL (see Chapter 2). When introducing my programme to the Headteacher and the Deputy Director, who along with myself constitute the senior leadership team at my school, I had three objectives: a) to ensure that both senior leaders become familiarised with the programme principles; b) to secure the Headteacher's genuine commitment to the programme; and c) to prevent my positional power from interfering with the Headteacher's effectual facilitation and support of programme development. I now examine how I attended to these matters.

#### ***Introducing my intervention to senior leaders***

I held the first of a series of meetings in a school conference room. Doing so in a neutral location instead of my office was aimed at reducing the symbols of my authority. The Headteacher needed to feel a sense of power symmetry with me to reduce the pressure to comply. Otherwise, she might have viewed the programme as being forced onto the school, as happens with foreign-sponsored programmes in Palestine (Ramahi, 2013). I was concerned lest this foster contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994) in contrast with the genuine partnership and collaboration that I was seeking. Equally, preserving her decision-making autonomy reinforced the school's democratic and shared approach to leadership, and underpinned the participatory principles of my programme.

I introduced the intervention using a slide show presentation that explained the principles of TL and TLDW, HertsCam, ITL and my programme (as explained in Chapter 2). The ITL project was pivotal for establishing programme credibility and providing evidence of TL's impact in international settings, that included emergent education systems. As I discussed in Chapter 2, international transfer of educational policy and initiatives has had a questionable impact in developing countries (Steiner-Khamsi, 2010; Steiner-Khamsi, Silova and Johnson, 2013). Thus I strove to emphasise to senior leaders that I was not proposing yet another foreign reform agenda, but a locally driven initiative.

### ***Generating senior leaders' commitment to my programme***

In order to secure senior leaders' commitment to my initiative, I began by highlighting the relevance and timeliness of the programme's aims with respect to the school. I started by recapping the school's teacher improvement needs and concerns based on previous evaluations of the school's professional needs, with a particular focus on teacher capacity-building. The following excerpt from a slide encapsulates the school's needs:

- *We have been conducting teacher development [sic] for 11 years now and have reached a stage where we are having difficulty finding new programmes that are useful;*
- *We have often discussed ways of drawing on individual teachers' skills and knowledge to enrich school improvement but have not found the tools for it;*
- *We want a teacher development programme that has school-wide impact;*
- *We want teacher development support that is relevant to our school setting;*
- *We want teacher development provision that impacts the classroom;*
- *We want a teacher development programme that engages teachers;*
- *We want a teacher development programme that enhances teacher attitudes towards their profession.*

(Presentation slide)

When mobilising teachers to improve their practice and student learning, contextualising the processes facilitates smoother transitioning (Fullan, 1993, 2007). In reviewing the above list, I aimed to establish my programme as a response to school-based needs, and an alternative to previous and available programmes of questionable impact. In doing so I achieved two goals: presenting the rationale for my programme and including senior leaders in its origins. My usage of the phrase 'teacher development' instead of 'teacher learning,' as I argued for in Chapter 2 (pp. 38-39), represents an earlier stage in my thinking.

The first goal validated the suitability of a programme aimed at meeting the school's improvement plans. The second involved senior leaders in the decision-making process that guided my thinking. In doing so, I strove to foster ownership by senior leaders, particularly the Headteacher, of the change process that I envisioned. Ownership of a professional development programme among school members is vital for effectiveness (Smith-Burke, 1996; Seglem, Kiser, Wood and Gardner, 2009), a fundamental feature of reform success (Betz, 2012; Day and Hadfield, 2004) and a means of embedding change in school culture (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012).

Including the Headteacher as a key participant in the inception of the programme similarly enabled me to preserve her role in leading teachers' professional learning support. Prior to my intervention, this had been solely her responsibility. Thus initiating the programme potentially risked my impinging on her managerial territory, and threatening her sense of professional autonomy and identity. I reflected on this matter in my research journal.

*I don't want the Headteacher to think that I'm trying to prove that I can do her job better than her... I must come across as trying to assist senior leaders in their improvement of the school and supporting teacher learning, and not as a top-down enforcer of some faddish new foreign programme.*

(Research journal, 13.06.2014)

At this early stage of my intervention I was mindful that she needed to see that her voice was part of the thinking that fostered the initiative. By making her participation visible, I aimed to encourage her adoption of my programme and reduce potential feelings of fault or inadequacy for not having introduced TL practices herself.

Building senior leaders' professional capacity is an integral part of sustainable school-wide reform (Thoonen, Slegers, Oort and Peetsma, 2012). I recognised this as a necessary component when introducing new teacher practices at my school. Otherwise, if senior leaders are sidestepped a gap may develop between their knowledge and that of teachers.' Given that my programme minimised the Headteacher's role in its activities as a means of reducing the influence of school authority figures (see Chapter 2), I was intent on retaining and making visible her part in the initiative to teachers and staff. The need to do so was compounded by power distance cultural norms in Middle-Eastern societies (Hofstede, 2001), which underpin the need to preserve the role and status of authority figures, in this case the Headteacher's.

While I created a programme monitoring role for the Headteacher within the programme team during programme development (in Chapter 3), nevertheless in order to secure her genuine support and ensure her facilitation of the enabling conditions, I strove to establish her involvement as an integral and foundational component of my initiative. Accordingly, I guided the ensuing discussion as a conversation about senior leaders' existing vision for school improvement through effective teacher learning and capacity-building. This provided a segue to introducing my programme as a viable approach, as the following slide illustrates:

- *Teachers solve work-related problems and learn throughout the process;*
- *Programme success is linked to process development;*
- *Teacher projects stand to benefit students, colleagues and the entire school;*
- *The programme facilitates solving school-based problems;*
- *The programme helps teachers to enhance their agency, collaborate with peers and build professional capacity.*

(Presentation slide)

These ideas were very well received and generated a vigorous discussion, which I used as a transition to introduce my programme aims. I concentrated on the conceptual level, preferring to highlight the principles rather than to delve into a technical exchange of queries and clarifications. This enabled elaboration on the programme's potential for effective school-wide impact. Senior leaders were encouraged by the practical nature of TLDW, context-relevant design of the projects and potential for professional capacity-building.

Particularly appealing to the Headteacher was the programme's ability to support teachers to find solutions to school-based problems, which she could subsequently adopt as school policy. The potential for practical school-wide impact to improve teaching and learning is a key strength of the non-positional approach to TL (Frost, 2014) and a primary feature of the programme strategy's viability with regard to my school and context. By providing a means of school improvement, the programme represented an incentive that facilitated the Headteacher's work and enhanced her leadership performance. Headteacher attrition is on the rise and a mounting worry for stakeholders (Brundrett, Rhodes and Gkolia, 2006). Financial incentives have not always been an effective retention strategy, with evidence indicating affective dimensions as more influential (Tekleselassie and Villarreal III, 2011). Thus the potential for TL to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and foster a PLC promised to create a growth-enhancing environment for the Headteacher that might encourage retention and promote career longevity.

The wide-scale benefits of TL that I was proposing were sufficient grounds for adopting my programme at any school and did not require much justification and advocacy. Therefore the lengths to which I was going to enlist senior leaders' support demonstrated my honouring of their leadership autonomy and my intention to engage them as equal partners in the decision to adopt and enact the programme. In addition to reinforcing democratic leadership, I hoped this would further contain power asymmetry amongst the SLT.

### ***Programme feasibility***

Despite the positive reception of my proposal, the Headteacher indicated concerns about the practicality of the programme. She feared that the additional work and time required of teachers by the programme would undermine the quality of their schoolwork. Heavy teacher workload and demands are compounded by additional work (Wilson and Hall, 2002), such as engagement in professional development activities. In ITL programmes, similar concerns were indicated by school headteachers and teachers alike (Bolat, 2013; Flores, 2013). I reflected on this matter in my research journal.

*The Headteacher confirmed my worries about the practicality of my programme... She said, 'These are practices that most of our teachers are unfamiliar with. Learning and applying them will add much work to teachers' already heavy workloads.' But since participation is voluntary only those who are genuinely up to it will join, I assured her.*

(Research journal, 13.06.2014)

Emphasising the absence of mandatory participation and the invitational nature of TLDW's call to leadership assuaged her worries. Unlike leadership styles that employ power, leadership by invitation promotes collaboration and shows consideration and respect for individuals (Egley, 2003). The lack of compulsion underscored its potential as a means to promoting morally driven change.

I concurred with her cautionary stance and remained watchful of the programme's applicability. When the TLDW model was successfully introduced in Turkey, the programme tutor had similar uncertainties (Bolat, 2013). I suspected that its success in the UK-based HertsCam Network to be partly due to school cultural and organisational factors that facilitate innovative practices, and partly to socio-cultural norms of democratic practices that include individuality and autonomy. However, attending HertsCam Network events and the 2014 Annual Conference in Cambridge, UK, the same year and seeing the level of teacher engagement and dialogue raised my hopes that teachers elsewhere could lead change and build professional knowledge when adequately supported (Frost, 2014, 2017a). The process-oriented nature of the programme, which incorporates reflection, dialogue, consultation, collaboration, networking, authorship, leadership and knowledge-building, is bound to develop teachers' professional capacities. I aimed for such practices to edge my school closer towards a PLC.

The Deputy Director, who holds a part-time teaching post at the school, was visibly more optimistic than the Headteacher. Seeing the programme as a great opportunity, he stressed the importance of choosing a workplace problem and receiving year-long, school-based support, a view echoed by teachers in the literature (Guskey, 2003). Equally, he emphasised the significance of voluntary participation.

As a practising teacher, his opinion was particularly important (Gabriel, Pereira and Allington, 2011) for gauging the programme's potential reception by teachers. I reflected on its value.

*As a practising teacher, his reaction is important to me. He said that he particularly liked the voluntary aspect, choosing a workplace problem and receiving guidance throughout the year to see the project through. So, I was encouraged in the sense that I was receiving feedback from a teacher. I felt that his support both as a teacher and SLT member was significant.*

(Research journal, 15.06.2014)

Receiving feedback from a teacher was important at this stage because I had no plans to solicit teachers' responses just yet. His ten-year teaching experience and familiarity with the school culture and professional learning provision to date underpinned the value of his observations. Nevertheless, he lacked the Headteacher's managerial experience. So I remained guarded about his enthusiasm and mindful of the Headteacher's caution.

The meeting ended positively, illustrating the synergy between us as an SLT. Responses were measured yet positive, assuring me that my status did not discourage them from challenging the programme's relatedness and viability.

*I'm glad that I have critical senior leaders that don't take anything new at face value but are willing to scrutinise it for feasibility in our school context.*

(Research journal, 13.06.2014)

The discussion alerted me to issues that might arise during programme enactment, which I needed to monitor and adjust for should the need arise. Effectively, I was confident of having secured, at least in principle, senior leaders' endorsement of my initiative to develop TL at my school.

## **Planning and designing the school self-audit with senior leaders**

In keeping with the participatory nature of my intervention, I involved senior leaders in planning the audit. We met the following day to design a set of activities that would engage teachers in a discussion about the school's professional culture, and the quality and impact of its teacher learning programme. It is accepted that a school's professional culture influences the nature of teachers' professional learning (Battersby and Verdi, 2015; Sullivan, 2010). However, the concept of professional culture had yet to enter the discourse at my school. By introducing it, I aimed to elevate teachers' understanding of the role of school culture in their profession in the hope that it would increase their expectations of the school's professional learning provision. Similarly, I wished to expand teachers' vision of the school as a thriving, learning and knowledge-generating community as opposed to an information delivery hub. The envisioned teacher activity was intended to be simultaneously exploratory and illuminating for senior leaders and teachers alike.

We planned the self-audit based on a portrait of the school organisation (in Chapter 3). I drew on the context-friendly tools and instruments that were developed by ITL (Frost, 2011) to co-design a teacher activity that introduced key programme concepts and practices. Doing so during this exploratory stage enabled senior leaders and me to determine the extent of teacher responsiveness to and readiness to participate in the programme. The activity had the following aims: a) to generate discussion amongst teachers and with senior leaders about the school's professional culture; b) to enhance the school's egalitarian ethos by engaging teachers with senior leaders; c) to enable teachers to participate in decision-making, voice their concerns and lay the foundation for participatory, bottom-up educational change; d) to highlight senior leaders' openness to collective self-evaluation and willingness to involve teachers in school-wide change processes; and e) demonstrate to senior leaders teachers' readiness for TLDW (Ramahi and Eltemamy, 2014).

To achieve these outcomes, we designed a two-part activity in which the Headteacher and I each led an individual exercise. I would conduct the first, which involved administering a self-audit of the school's professional culture. The exercise was not intended to measure results, rather to obtain a general understanding of teachers' views of the school's professional culture. We agreed to translate the tool into Arabic and extend the answer scale from three to five in order to give teachers a wider response scale (see Appendix 3A and B). This was suggested by

the Headteacher, who suspected that some key concepts in the self-audit would be new to teachers and might create uncertainty; hence, a wider response range would offer respondents more finely grained answer choices (Cohen et al., 2013; Fink, 2003). The Headteacher's recommendation illustrated her engagement and growing commitment to teacher involvement and bottom-up school change.

We also decided that teachers would firstly conduct the self-audit individually and then in groups of three. Group discussion, it was hoped, would generate more dialogue and provide alternative viewpoints to consider (Flecha and Soler, 2014). The Headteacher suggested that the exercise be conducted in that order so that teachers have an opportunity to reflect on the concepts before engaging in discussions. By suggesting a way to enhance reflection, she had recognised its significance with regard to developing TL practice, and started to adopt it. Her progressively more active role in designing the exercise suggested an increased sense of ownership. This marked a further development in her relationship with the programme. As stated previously, the Headteacher's commitment to the programme is essential to fostering TL and demonstrates a leadership style that is supportive of distributed forms of leadership (Mylles, 2017; Murphy et al., 2009).

We agreed that the Headteacher would conduct the second teacher exercise, which comprised a discussion with teachers about the school's professional learning support to date. She was becoming increasingly engaged by the prospect of leading the exercise, which I very much favoured.

*[B]y jointly delivering the activity, I reduced the possibility of appearing to overpower senior leaders; her participation provided an organic and smooth transition to a school task that until then had been mostly in her remit; it demonstrated to teachers her endorsement of the programme; and it promised to enhance her feelings of ownership and potentially self-efficacy during the change process.*

(Research journal, 19.06.2014)

Co-facilitating the self-audit with me promised to enhance the Headteacher's self-efficacy. Studies indicate that self-efficacy is a significant outcome of effective professional learning (Jamil, 2012; Shanks, Miller and Rosendale, 2012) and school change initiatives (Dimmock and Hattie, 1996). I saw the Headteacher's role in this activity as contributing to her own professional learning, which I hoped would reinforce her support for the initiative. Enhanced

self-efficacy in the face of coping with and administering change can also be an important mediator in accomplishing reform and reducing stress levels for headteachers (Dimmock, 1996). She recommended that we hold the activity on teachers' last working day, to which the Deputy Director and I both agreed.

### **Conducting the school self-audit**

We conducted the school self-audit in the school hall during the last two hours of teachers' last working day of the academic year. Seating was arranged in groups of three and in a manner that enabled maximum group visibility. Refreshments and snacks were provided, and the atmosphere was friendly and cheerful. We tried to make the event a celebratory culmination of the school year and an activity that would join teachers, mid-level managers and senior leaders in a communal gathering that married social bonding with engaging professional discussion. The event consisted of two exercises led by myself and the Headteacher, respectively.

#### ***Teachers discuss the school's professional culture***

The first exercise aimed at raising teachers' awareness of the concept of school professional culture and exploring the one at our school. This comprised a self-evaluation of the teachers' professional practices and the school ethos. I started out the activity by emphasising that my work experience and recent research confirmed to me the primacy of teachers' role in student learning. Strategic facilitation is instrumental in advancing teacher professional learning (Poekert, 2010; Zhang, Lundeberg and Eberhardt, 2011). I aimed to validate teachers' roles and contributions to schooling and its improvement. Involving teachers in the conversation on the process of educational reconstruction was central to my mission, which I strove to establish from the start. Teacher voice contributes to the effective development of professional learning (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992; Frost, 2008b). The foundation of the change process that I was leading needed to be built on teachers' sense of their own importance to the organisation and their belonging to it (Fullan, 2007, 2014).

I distributed the self-audit instrument with the aim of obtaining teachers' views of 'the way things are done' at the school (Deal and Kennedy, 1983). Equally, I meant to embed professional culture as a feature in the wider school language. Such norms of discourse create a generative learning environment where teachers are encouraged to be as forthright and

analytical as possible, leading to a critical culture that is vital for reflective practice (Moon, 2013).

While attending to the items, teachers appeared to be responding relatively quickly. This was corroborated by the observations of a staff member, who noted the following:

*Most [teachers] don't appear to be spending enough time reflecting before answering.*

(Participant observation, school staff)

I had a similar observation.

*When completing the forms on their own teachers didn't seem to be reflecting much. I sensed this from the quickness of their responses.*

(Research journal, 19.05.2014)

Reflection is not a common practice among teachers in developing settings and centralised educational systems (Sangani and Stelma, 2012) and was among the audit items that teachers requested clarifications on. Senior leaders and I went around the hall answering teachers' queries. I noted the following.

*The Headteacher and I tried to clarify concepts that were unfamiliar to them. There were many questions.... Concepts in the audit were clarified but I'm not sure that they were adequately understood, like reflection, leadership and agent of change.*

(Research journal, 19.06.2014)

This confirmed the Headteacher's and my expectations that certain concepts, practices and statements in the self-audit would be obscure to many, if not the majority, of teachers. I thus noted it as a capacity that would need developing throughout the programme. I kept encouraging those who were struggling with reflection to answer to the best of their knowledge and understanding, emphasising the discursive nature of the exercise. However, a few seemed to be trying to prove the correctness of their responses.

*Clearly, there were different perspectives. Some were expressing their opinion while others were trying to convince their peers of the correctness of their views.*

(Research journal, 19.06.2014)

My observation was corroborated by a staff member.

*Some teachers seem to be arguing for their own points.*

(Participant observation, school staff)

The tendency for some teachers to insist on their point of view could be accounted for by several factors. Firstly, some teachers, particularly senior ones, might have been concerned about their standing and prestige in front of their colleagues, and thus strove to appear more knowledgeable than more junior teachers. Secondly, despite announcement to the contrary, a traditional results-based approach to learning manifesting in the need for a ‘correct answer’ might have prompted such behaviour. A performance-based mentality is common in the Palestinian educational context and to those in similar settings (Ramahi, 2016b), and represented a challenge for my process-oriented programme.

Once the exercise required involvement as a group, the discussion became vigorous and engaging. Teachers became visibly animated when expressing their views.

*The group activity was lively and engaged, with teachers expressing themselves vociferously.*

(Research journal, 19.06.2014)

Group work has been shown to foster organic professional learning and teacher leadership (Maloney, Moore and Taylor, 2011). Teacher discussion can raise awareness of different views, and enhance mutual respect and trust (Kemmis, 2010; Somekh, 2006), which are features of PLCs (Stoll et al., 2006). Although, I was not sure how well teachers were accepting differing views, most demonstrated openness to other perspectives.

This exercise seemed to expand teachers’ appreciation of the diversity of viewpoints amongst their peers. Teachers from the primary and secondary levels specialising in different subject areas were jointly discussing school-related matters for the first time. Grade level and subject matter distinctions collapsed, giving way to a more collective conversation on improving teaching and learning (Ramahi, 2016b). Genuine dialogue amongst teachers can enhance community ties and foster collaboration (Kemmis, 2010; Somekh, 2006). This is vital for

teachers whose work is solitary (Galland, 2008) and rarely affords opportunities for dialogue and genuine engagement with peers about school-related matters.

The group exercise also appeared to challenge certain assumptions held by teachers about pedagogic practices and learning styles. This reinforced the value of dialogue for expanding perspective and generating new ideas. Teachers can be a valuable resource for each other (Bolam et al., 2005; Flanigan, 2012), leading some to discover their pedagogic usefulness. During the break that followed the exercise, teacher conversations illustrated the impact of the activity.

*I liked answering in a group. It made me think how differently some of us see the school.*

*Those questions really make you think. Some are really hard to answer.*

(Research journal, 19.09.2014)

These statements indicate the potential for change-driven, focused group dialogue to lay the foundation for initiatives that aim for substantive change in teacher beliefs and practices. The capacity for practitioners to engage in critical reflection and critical dialogue is significant. In Middle-Eastern organisational settings where authority rests on power distance norms (Hofstede, 1984; Kabasakal and Dasmalchian, 2001) and is thus concentrated with senior leaders, criticality in open group settings may be conceived of as a risk to authority figures. However, this was not the case during the day's event.

*[T]he activity definitely prompted teachers to discuss what is going on at the school.*

(Participant observation, school staff)

Criticality and transparency suggest a culture of trust and respect for opposing views, a key condition for enabling TL (see Chapters 2 and 3) and a feature of PLCs (Cranston, 2011; Hord, 2004). The activity seemed to reinforce these features at my school.

Overall, the activity offered outspoken teachers an opportunity to express themselves and encouraged less vocal ones to contribute. Fostering criticality in open group settings and in the presence of senior leaders is vital for enabling teacher empowerment and is a precursor to

enhanced agency, the latter being key to professional learning (Priestley, Biesta and Robinson, 2012; Riveros, Newton and Burgess, 2012) and an essential feature of TL (Frost, 2012).

### ***Teachers evaluate the school's professional learning programme***

The Headteacher continued the self-audit by leading a group evaluation of the impact of the school's professional learning programme since its start 11 years previously. Carrying through an atmosphere of critical reflection and dialogue, she began the exercise by asking teachers as a single group to identify the benefits and usefulness of their professional learning support. Teachers were engaged and forthcoming in their responses, and generated a list of features. This she followed by inviting teachers to consider the helpfulness and limitations of provision of content and delivery. Here teachers were similarly generative and even more critical, producing a second list about which, as with the previous one, there was consensus (see Appendix 4).

Identifying provision that inadequately supported teacher self-improvement was in some sense a way to unlearn ineffective approaches. There is support in the literature for unlearning as a strategy for organisational development (Lei, Slocum and Pitts, 1999), which applies to teacher learning (Cochran-Smith, 2003). My programme required shifts in learning style from transmission and results-based modes to self-led, process-oriented approaches. The nature and extent of such a change necessitated an equal shift in learning strategies. For the education system in Palestine and arguably throughout the MENA region, where traditional modes of learning prevail (Arab Knowledge Report, 2011), ineffectual methods first need to be unlearned. By eliciting teachers' assessment of ineffective professional learning provision, the Headteacher was effectively invoking what they thought constituted successful learning approaches.

After compiling an inventory of the benefits and limitations of previous provision as suggested by teachers, she invited recommendations for improvement. Teachers were particularly animated during this session, possibly the liveliest session of the day's event (Research journal, 19.09.2014). This illustrated the extent of teachers' eagerness to express their opinions and participate in change processes, when given substantive opportunity. It was also a strategic move that demonstrated to all teachers the extent of teacher inclusion in the school improvement process and impact on policy-making.

Effectively, teacher voice had been given rein by the Headteacher, arguably the most pivotal person in the school. This is highly significant given that teacher voice has been silenced and excluded from policy, making reconstruction processes meaningless to teachers (Fullan, 1993; Hargreaves, 1996). To truly promote teacher voice, teachers must be given real opportunities for leadership in the areas of policy-making, their professional learning and overall school-level improvement (Bangs and Frost, 2012). Inviting teachers to join in a consequential decision-making process safeguarded the exercise from being misconstrued by teachers as pretence. Had it been viewed as such, it might have proven counterproductive and created a sense of disillusionment with senior leaders' claim to participatory, teacher-led school change.

There was agreement by teachers about the changes that needed to be made to the school's professional learning support (see Appendix 4). Notably, teachers' recommendations corresponded directly to the features of the TLDW model on which I was basing my programme (see Chapters 2 and 3). As such, they represented a significant outcome of the self-audit that was instrumental in facilitating my programme for several reasons. Primarily, it illustrated to senior leaders the close fit between teachers' self-identified needs and my proposed programme. This was pivotal in reinforcing the Headteacher's support of the programme and not mere compliance (Gurr, Drysdale and Mulford, 2006; Lok and Crawford, 2004) and key in convincing senior leaders of the suitability and timeliness of my initiative.

*Now senior leaders could see for themselves that my programme bore direct relevance to teacher needs ... [and] will be convinced of the sagacity of my vision to introduce TL as a way to school improvement.*

(Research journal, 19.06.2014)

Similarly, the recommendations would prove highly useful for demonstrating to teachers the relatedness of my programme to their needs once I embarked on the programme at my school, a development that underpinned their voluntary participation.

*I was extremely pleased with how teachers' recommendations for improved teacher learning provision linked directly with what I was proposing for the school. I couldn't have imagined a smoother transition to the programme's introduction.*

(Research journal, 19.06.2014)

There were enough similarities between what they requested and what TLDW offered that would lead teachers to feel a sense of ownership of my programme.

*Now teachers will see the programme as a response to their recommendations for effective professional learning support.*

(Research journal, 19.06.2014)

The outcome was essentially an endorsement by teachers of my vision of change. This assured me that my practitioner knowledge of the school's professional learning needs matched the actual reality. Thus my confidence in the programme's viability and potential to improve teaching and learning grew as a result of this exercise, as did my self-efficacy. At this stage I strongly believed that the day's outcome enhanced my organisational positioning towards a more democratic and participatory leadership.

Eventually, the self-audit culminated in more than just a portraiture of the school's professional culture. The day's exercises and activities enhanced social capital amongst teachers, a matter that required continued cultivation for effective embedding into the school professional culture (Adler and Kwon, 2000; Lesser, 2000). This represented a significant juncture in the school's transition towards more reflective, dialogic and collaborative practices. It also indicated to senior leaders, particularly the Headteacher, the extent of teachers' awareness of their needs and the tremendous source for school improvement that they represented. I believe this might have similarly showcased the school's intellectual capital (Basile, 2009) and professional capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012), which was facilitated through social capital (Lesser, 2000), a development that would serve to enhance teachers' respect for each other, their leadership activity and the school's professional culture.

We concluded the day's event with relaxed socialising, with lunch being served and gifts being presented to parting teachers and to a mid-level manager in recognition of her exemplary work. By honouring departing school members, senior leaders rose above managerial grudges and exemplified values of community, fraternity and gratitude, an act that further reinforced social capital. The atmosphere was especially warm and friendly, and conducive to strengthening collegiality (Evans, 2012), with everyone looking forward towards a new approach to school improvement.

## Chapter summary and emergent insights

In this first of four critical narrative chapters, I examined the preliminary stage of my intervention wherein I strove to establish the conditions for developing my programme at my school. This entailed introducing TL principles and practices to senior leaders and teachers in a manner that would generate commitment to the programme and ownership of its outcomes, whilst taking account of the influence of my positional status on school members. Periodic planning, monitoring and evaluation enabled me to attend to my aims and concerns, and helped to spawn a set of insights about the optimum means of facilitating programme development. Below I list insights and themes in relation to the activity from which they emerged.

Preparing the conditions for the programme is important for:

- Reinforcing programme relatedness to local realities and needs;
- Securing senior leaders' support and commitment;
- Generating conversations that foster understanding of programme principles and approach;
- Gauging the preparedness of senior leaders and teachers for the programme and TL.

Introducing the programme principles to school senior leaders is effective when:

- There is knowledge of the school's professional learning needs;
- There is knowledge of the local educational and socio-political context;
- It marries the school's professional learning needs with programme features;
- It underscores programme relevance and timeliness as a school improvement initiative;
- It highlights the headteacher's role in the thinking that led to the programme, which helps enhance commitment and ownership;
- It highlights the programme's capacity to assist in solving school-related problems, which enhances senior leaders' performance.

Involving the school's senior leaders in planning the school self-audit helps to:

- Foster an organic link to the programme for development effectiveness;
- Share the leadership of a school-wide change-driven initiative;
- Model distributed leadership to teachers and school staff;
- Reduce the power differential in my favour.

Conducting a school self-audit assists in:

- Gauging teacher receptivity of, and readiness for, the programme;
- Assessing programme suitability and relatedness to school needs;

- Increasing teacher involvement in a school-wide change initiative;
- Increasing teacher influence on school policy-making.

Jointly conducting a school self-audit with senior leaders helps to:

- Illustrate to teachers and staff senior leaders' commitment to TL, especially the Headteacher's;
- Demonstrates the school-based origins of the programme;
- Prepare teachers and staff for a smoother transition towards the change process.

At the completion of this stage of my intervention, the cyclical, action-based nature of my study led me to formulate my subsequent key concern: how to effectively launch my programme at the start of the upcoming academic year. This question represents my next focus, which I examine in the following chapter along with subsequently emerging foci.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Programme beginnings**

The narrative analysis in this chapter, as with the previous, draws on periodic reviews of programme activities in which I reflected on data gleaned through monitoring and evaluation, and my research journal. This enabled me to evaluate programme development and achievement of study aims. After laying the conditions for the programme in June 2014, as discussed in the Chapter 1, I returned to my school in Ramallah in late September 2014 to commence the programme. The academic year in Palestine begins at the end of August or early September. I deliberately postponed starting the programme until teachers were settled in their daily routine and past the busyness of the first month of the academic year. Through electronic communication I coordinated initial programme dates with senior leaders in order to maintain their role in programme planning. As discussed in the preceding chapter, I aimed to preserve the centrality of the Headteacher's role in establishing the conditions for the programme.

Accordingly, this chapter represents the beginning stages of the programme. This includes preparation with senior leaders for its introduction, the manner in which I introduced it to the school staff and the early stages of its enactment. The chapter covers a set of activities that took place between 29<sup>th</sup> September and 13<sup>th</sup> November 2014, that I narrate in six sections: establishing the programme team (PT); introducing the programme to school staff; selecting the participants; the first group session; the second group sessions; and the first individual supervisions. I begin with the PT.

#### **Establishing the programme team**

My first step was to establish a school-based advisory body that would fulfil several important functions in developing the programme. I named it the programme team (PT) in order to emphasise its collective and participatory nature. The PT drew on distributed leadership models and their contribution to democratic organisational practices (Woods and Gronn, 2009). The following were its main objectives:

- *Conduct periodic review of programme development;*
- *Draw on school-based leadership and managerial experience and expertise for programme development;*
- *Promote senior leaders' commitment to the programme;*
- *Reinforce participatory leadership within the school and throughout the programme through senior leaders' involvement;*
- *Facilitate professional capacity building for programme sustainability;*
- *Reduce my decision-making role in programme development;*
- *Distribute programme decision-making responsibilities and accountability onto senior leaders;*
- *Enhance programme status by having an advisory body;*
- *Strengthen the validity and rigour of data collection and research process.*

(Research journal, 06.10.2014)

The team was composed of three senior leaders and a mid-level manager. The latter served three purposes: to assist me as programme co-tutor, to act as my replacement in case I was unable to complete the programme for any reason and to help build capacity for programme sustainability. Capacity-building is an essential feature of sustainability (Byrne-Jimenez and Orr, 2012) and necessitates strong leadership (Dinham and Crowther, 2011), as does establishing organisational systems (Byrne-Jimenez and Orr, 2012).

The PT met as frequently as needed in the early stages to ensure joint decision-making and thorough preparation. Thereafter, it met periodically to monitor and review programme development and make recommendations for improvement. These meetings were occasions for illuminating power-related tensions throughout my initiative and investigation.

### ***Primacy of vignettes as a programme tool***

On 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014, we held the first PT meeting with the main objective of co-designing the session in which I introduced the programme to the entire school staff and invited voluntary participation. During the selection of tools and instruments, team members were keen to employ vignettes of teacher stories from the ITL toolkit, citing them as the most effective way to lead into the programme.

*[A] suggestion, which there was strong agreement on, was to transition into the programme through teacher stories. This was in order to give a sense of the workings of the programme and how relatable it is to teachers' work lives. Team members really liked the teacher vignettes.*

(Research journal, 08.10.2014)

Narrative is a powerful device for conveying meaning and work experience for teachers (Bolton, 2006; Clandinin and Connelly, 1996). Given that teachers' professional knowledge is socially negotiated and continually reconstructed within the classroom and schools where they work, sense-making was best served by a medium that embraces the complexities and ambiguities of lived experiences (Conle, 2000; Johnson and Golombek, 2002). Hence vignettes of teacher stories appealed to team members for their relatability to teachers' workplace (Research journal, 08.10.2014).

Before concluding the meeting, we had selected three tools that needed translating and created two of our own (PT meeting 1, minutes), and assigned Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2014 as the day of the introductory session. It would be an all-day event, so we needed teachers to attend at a weekend, for which they would be given a day off at a later time in the school year. Every effort was made to avoid having the programme viewed by teachers as just another burdensome professional learning activity, which the literature indicates is the view of teachers globally (Opfer and Pedder, 2011; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi and Gallagher, 2007).

The second meeting, held on the following day, was dedicated to technical and logistical matters. First of all, we verified the accuracy of translations into Arabic, after which we planned the introduction schedule and finalised matters related to venue.

### **Introducing the Teachers Leading the Way programme to school staff**

All teachers, support staff and senior leaders gathered in the school hall on a Saturday morning for the introduction to my programme. The atmosphere was very positive, buzzing with anticipation and excitement, a residual effect of the self-audit in June. The hall was appropriately set up, with tables once again laid out pedagogically to facilitate small and large group discussion. I had two slide presentations prepared, one in Arabic and another in English, to accommodate language proficiency.

*[T]he room was arranged in a professional manner... with appropriate hospitality, ample preparations for the subject and worksheets in both Arabic and English.*

(Nawal's reflections, introductory session)

With a mixture of native Arabic- and English-speaking attendees, I ensured that the introduction to my programme was linguistically accessible to all. Language was not to be an obstacle to the change process that I was advocating, neither were school conditions, such as childcare for any teacher who required it, all part of the enabling conditions I discussed in Chapter 2.

The introductory session had two main goals: to raise teacher morale as educators in order to mobilise them to lead educational innovation; and to explain the programme features and requirements in order to generate teacher interest in joining the programme. Knowing that the foundation of TL lies in teacher values (Frost, 2012), I began the day's activities by clarifying my own educational values vis-à-vis my research aims and school intervention goals. I explained that one of the main research aims was to generate knowledge on how to develop teachers' capacity to improve teaching and learning, and lead educational reconstruction in the Palestinian education system. My programme was thus a vehicle for achieving these goals by providing teachers at my school with a knowledge-producing opportunity that was comparable to that of my doctoral course. The difference was one of depth and breadth wherein teachers' efforts would comprise a development project that would lead to practical knowledge instead of an enquiry that was subject to academic research conventions (Frost, 2013). I presumed that appealing to teachers' academic aspirations would encourage many to participate in what might have been viewed a radical approach to professional learning.

Throughout the day's activity I addressed teachers as *tarbiwiyyun* (plural; *tarbawi*, singular) so as to elevate their professional role and rank in society. The term *tarbawi* is Arabic and is used to characterise an individual who cultivates human character and values, and is commonly assigned to teachers (Al-Adili, 1985; Rabeh, 1990; Al-Shibani, 1993). The role is highly honoured in Arab and Muslim societies (Al-Rushdan and Janini, 1994) and is linguistically attributed in the Quran to one of the names of God in Islam, *Al-Rabb*. Many Arab countries' ministries of education, including Palestine's and others like those of Lebanon, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, incorporate it in their Arabic title ([www.moche.ps](http://www.moche.ps); [www.meve.gov.lb](http://www.meve.gov.lb); [www.moe.gov.jo](http://www.moe.gov.jo); [www.moe.gov.ae](http://www.moe.gov.ae); [www.moe.gov.eg](http://www.moe.gov.eg)). However, its absence from the English titles may be owing to the difficulty of translating the term.

I emphasised the term and value of teachers' role in society as I was mindful of the ever-diminishing status of teachers in many MENA countries, of which Palestine is one (Badrawy,

2011; Ramahi and Eltemamy, 2014). I wanted teachers to know that their personal and professional growth was central to my initiative. Thus I linked my doctoral pursuit to enhancing teachers' capacity to become experts in an education-related area of their choosing, one which drew on their values and tacit knowledge. In the process, I positioned my doctoral research as a moral imperative to enlist all resources at my disposal to improve teaching and learning at my school and beyond, as mentioned in the Introduction, and I invited teachers to do the same by joining the programme.

Teachers were visibly moved by the appeal to their moral duty and role. One experienced teacher, who was highly engaged throughout the day's activities, wrote the following in her reflections on the event.

*Hanan Ramahi, that person who carries with her all the meanings of humanity and manners... I do not have the words to describe her, whose main concern is to see her teaching staff as one of the most competent, successful and most experienced. She decided to include us in her doctoral research and to conduct a project that I feel will be marvelous.*

*I wished every Saturday would be like this Saturday, one in which hope is reinstated.*

(Nur's reflections, introductory session)

This highly exaggerated description illustrates the intense affective response elicited from some teachers. It is not surprising given that teaching is an emotional practice (Mitchell, Riley and Loughran, 2010). By grounding my research aims in teachers' professional improvement, I was honouring teachers and the work they do. Teachers are not always valued for their hard work and vital societal role (Mackenzie, 2007; Ramahi and Eltemamy, 2014). My gratitude resonated with several of the attendees, as I illustrate below.

### ***Invoking values and drawing on context***

To persuade teachers of the relatedness of my programme to the Palestinian educational, political and socio-cultural settings I drew on the centrality of knowledge acquisition and dissemination to the Islamic faith to which the overwhelming majority of the school's employees adhere. Islam advocates learning and knowledge as a fundamental religious value and precept, a means to seeking the Divine and "a human ethic of responsibility" (Alatas, 2006: 168). As such, TL, as a vehicle for knowledge-building and active dissemination, represents

an effective means of realising a central Islamic tenet. The following observations emphasise this.

*The reasons given to be a part of the programme were great because they dwelled on the values of each person and the importance of sharing knowledge in our religion.*

(Participant observation, co-tutor)

*[The session] had a significant and positive impact on the whole school. I was amazed at the way and manner in which topics were presented... that stimulated the audience and motivated in them the desire to learn... [Hanan] employed her personal experience, and background in Eastern and Western countries.*

(Nawal's reflections, introductory session)

Invoking faith is a powerful tool in a Muslim context. The Islamic concept of *islah* calls for improvement and reform in the sense of taking corrective measures to remedy earthly conditions (Ali, 2014; Kamali, 2013). Summoning *islah* is a powerful tool for motivating teachers towards changing educational practices. Accordingly, I presented knowledge creation and dissemination as a duty incumbent upon every Muslim. For teachers, I focused on it as a means of enhancing their educational and societal *tarbawi* roles.

At the same time, I took care not to overemphasise the role of religion as I aimed to enhance teachers' sense of agency and individual freedom. Institutionalised religion can stymie individual freedoms (Haidt, 2012). With learning being more effective when intrinsically motivated (Cordova and Lepper, 1996; Ryan and Deci, 2000), underscoring knowledge production as a response to religious teachings could complicate self-generated innovation. Correspondingly, faith can be a powerful source of inspiration when mobilised for the greater good (Batson, Floyd, Meyer and Winner, 1999; Koenig, 1997), a source of community welfare (Ramahi, 2016a). Harnessing the twin polarities of institutionalised religion (structure) and non-positional TL (human agency) appropriately can advance both individual and collective goods, leading to socio-political transformation.

To further underscore the relatedness of my programme, I discussed the relationship of the political, economic and societal sectors to education in Palestine (see Chapter 1). I proposed that TL offered corrective measures to address certain educational and socio-cultural issues, with the potential for long-term influence on broader societal matters. By tracing the historical

development of the education system and methodically leading up to the advantages of establishing TL as a means to achieve school improvement and educational reconstruction, I sought to raise the value and potential impact of my programme.

*The accuracy of the information provided in the presentation, where ideas were presented systematically and in organised fashion... heightened the importance of the topic... Hanan presented the programme and employed her personal experience... to come up with a topic that relates to the realities of a particular school community, or rather educational improvement in the state of Palestine.*

(Nawal's reflections, introductory session)

Drawing on context is vital for attracting interest to TL (Frost, 2011). By wedding religious tenets that encourage learning, knowledge dissemination and *islah* to national aspirations for freedom and self-determination, I underscored the relevance and emancipatory potential of my programme, leading to the urgency of its adoption in Palestine (Ramahi, 2016 a and b). Essentially, I urged teachers to break free from foreign colonisation of both land and mind, and uphold religious tenets and local values that call for knowledge production and leadership.

The effectiveness of my approach could be seen from the audience's undivided attention, which I noted in my research journal.

*The presentation went extremely well. From the start teachers exhibited a high level of engagement, great interaction and offered excellent responses. Many showed enthusiasm and interest in the topics of my presentation. At no time did I feel that I had lost their interest. Their eyes were always fixed on me attentively and seriously. I truly believe that contextualising the programme was crucial in achieving and sustaining such a high level of interest and deep engagement.*

(Research journal, 11.10.2014)

The historico-political and socio-educational contextualisation of my programme clearly set it apart from all previous initiatives for school improvement at my school. A professional learning programme's adaptability to the local setting is key to its international appeal and applicability (Frost, 2011; Ramahi, 2017). My invocation of local values was highly effective and set the tone at my school for the need for future programmes to be founded on contextual realities and to target local needs.

### ***Teacher reflections***

As shown above, teachers responded positively to my presentation of the programme. I was particularly pleased when throughout the day's activities several attendees came up to me and expressed excitement about the programme and gratitude for my bringing it to the school. A couple of teachers were so emotionally overcome that one needed to leave the hall to compose herself (Research journal, 11.10.2014). I requested those who had shared their feelings with me to document their reflections. Reflection in the workplace can be a powerful tool for obtaining insights (Messmann and Mulder, 2015; Zhao, 2012). I intended that these reflections should advance teachers' own thinking and should be used as opportunistic data for my research (see Chapter 3).

The programme promised teachers hope and prospects for personal and professional regeneration. In her reflections, one teacher stated that just a day before she had been feeling despondent about being a teacher due to a sense of stagnation.

*This programme inspired in me a sense of optimism and opportunity to develop. Now, I have a specific goal for this academic year, not just teaching and correcting, but a tremendous programme. I'm going to develop myself in order to solve a problem that's been facing me for years, which I can't find an expert to help me with.*

(Nuha's reflections, introductory session)

The reference to solving a persistent problem facing her for years is key. In addition to illustrating the usefulness of problem-based learning (Schultz and Kim, 2008; Walton, 2014), the appeal of individualised professional learning is significant. It suggests relief from the restricting need for external expertise to solving work-related problems. In this sense Nur's learning acquired an emancipatory dimension and represented the roots of a fundamental shift towards enhanced agency and relevant knowledge-building, as a study on emancipatory education in Palestine concluded (Ramahi, 2016a).

The potential for emancipatory learning to unleash untapped sources of creativity and innovation links back to Katzenmeyer and Moller's (1996) plea for TL. The following statements by attendees clearly reinforce this view:

*I felt that I had a dormant energy within me that I can employ to solve problems in education.*

(Huda's reflections, introductory session)

*I expect that this programme will enliven in us capacities that have been dormant for long and are ready to explode.*

(Nuha's reflections, introductory session)

These emotionally charged statements indicate that drawing on teachers' reserve of moral capacity to improve practice may be key to unleashing untapped sources of professional vitality (Frost, 2008a; Frost and Roberts, 2013).

By awakening teachers' moral purpose as educators, or *tarbawiyun*, I aimed to enable the raising of teachers' sense of self-worth and self-esteem. I expected this to prove motivational for the many whom I suspected had been feeling dejected due to aspects of the education system and local society. The following testimony exemplifies one teacher's response.

*During the past few years I got caught up with all the schoolwork, and difficulties in my classroom. I lost track of who I am as a teacher, and have asked myself, 'Why is it I'm still working as a teacher?' I have thought about resigning, or changing my career. While Hanan was presenting her proposal about the programme, it all came back to me. Hanan reminded me why I became a teacher, and what my mission is as a teacher. She refreshed my memory, and made me realise that there are other teachers out there just like me; that there is hope and I am not struggling alone. Thank you, Hanan, for helping me to remember the greatness and impact a teacher can have in her classroom.*

(Rawan's reflections, introductory session)

Rawan's words illustrate the profound power of invoking moral purpose to arouse teachers' sense of self-worth and their role in society. With the continued increase in teacher attrition being a global matter (Martin and Mulvihill, 2016), proper preparation and ample time for professional learning can have a positive impact on retention rates (Brown and Wynn, 2008; McCreight, 2000), as does recognition of effort (Malloy and Allen, 2007). The programme appealed to the possibility of professional renewal and purpose for teachers.

### ***Teacher engagement***

Presenting the programme features as a response to teachers' recommendations for improved professional learning provision at our school during the self-audit the previous June (in Chapter 4) was strategic in terms of generating deep discussion. The approach prompted dialogue amongst school staff, leading to a seamless transition to introducing the programme. The co-tutor noted this.

*The presentation flowed so well that by the time the project was introduced, the teachers were already stating some of its objectives.*

(Co-tutor participant observations)

Nawal, a mid-level manager in her fifth year at the school corroborated the co-tutor's observation.

*Teachers engaged in an excellent way with the topic and for the first time I saw such a high level of harmony and passion for knowing more about a programme.... in order to advance and develop individually, to elevate one's character, and raise the level of the school's teaching and learning.*

(Nawal's reflections, introductory session)

Teachers' eagerness to know more about a professional learning programme is significant, particularly given their limited engagement with such opportunities (Opfer and Pedder, 2011). This illustrated the appeal of provision that offers opportunities for growth at both the personal and professional levels.

The extent of teachers' level of engagement and enthusiasm was exemplified by one teacher's change of heart at having to attend on a Saturday.

*To my surprise, after I started listening to Hanan Ramahi and the programme features, my feelings started changing for the better and I was engaged with all my senses; and I didn't feel the passing of time because I benefited, in addition to enjoying the session, which had been missing from previous professional learning sessions... I came to school on a weekend feeling upset and forced to do so, but now [after hearing about the programme] I am very pleased.*

(Sawsan's reflections, introductory session)

Sawsan's enthusiasm illustrates that teachers are willing to exert themselves and put in extra time towards professional self-improvement when it is useful and relatable to their realities. Most attendees were lively and contributed meaningfully to engaging, dialogue-filled activities. I had never seen such excitement among teachers since the school's establishment 20 years earlier, confirming the centrality of emotions to teachers' work (Hargreaves, 1998; Malm, 2008). Given the impact of leaders' behaviours on teachers (Berkovich and Eyal, 2015; Frost, 2004), I strove to stimulate teachers' emotional response.

Of the tools that I utilised, the co-tutor pointed out that teacher narratives were highly effective.

*Teacher stories created the most discussion.*

(Co-tutor, participant observations)

Narrative has the power to foster commonalities among people, as I discussed earlier in this chapter and in Chapter 3, and reinforced the programme's feasibility. The co-tutor's observation underscored the PT's insight and skill when it came to tool selection, and raised my confidence in the value of its role in the programme, for which their next step was participant selection.

### **Selecting the participants**

The PT met on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014 to attend to the following tasks: selecting the programme participants; evaluating the introductory session; and finalising the date and preparing for the programme's first group session. We had given applicants three days to consider joining, during which they could ask for clarification of programme-related issues or concerns.

*[Teachers had] time to ask Hanan, the Deputy Director and the Headteacher questions that made the requirements of the project more clear and dealt with their concerns. It also gave the team time to make clarifications based on teachers' questions... [which] included personal and project-related topics.*

(Programme team meeting 3, minutes)

The team's decision to give teachers time was both practical and sensible. Prospective participants were requested to complete an application developed by the team aimed at aiding

the selection process (see Appendix 5). Reviewing the applications enabled the team to examine teachers' comments, queries and concerns, which proved revealing and useful. These focused mainly on the following:

- *The time required for participating in the programme;*
- *The risk of teacher projects not succeeding;*
- *The image of senior teachers should their projects 'fail;'*
- *Teacher insecurities about their writing abilities;*
- *The nature of group sessions.*

(Research journal, 11.10.2014)

Inviting teachers to voice their concerns supported workplace inclusion, while involving them in decision-making processes reinforced participatory school practices (Mullen and Jones, 2008; Nazareno, 2014). Engaging with teachers and their queries alerted me to issues that might affect the programme's development and impact.

The team and I were encouraged by the high number of volunteers wishing to join the programme. Of the school's 37 teachers, 20 submitted applications. However, the programme limited each cohort to a maximum of 15 participants (see Chapter 3). This posed a challenge for the selection process.

*Who are the teachers who filled out the participation forms, what are their topics, and whom do we take?*

(Programme team meeting 3, minutes)

I strongly believed that we needed to do what was best for the school. Leadership requires making decisions that are in the best interest of the entire school community (Sergiovanni, 1992; Woods and Roberts, 2016) in contrast to narrow, performance-related concerns.

*I suggested that we consider acting strategically by encouraging key teachers and mid-level managers to volunteer whose projects would have impact on the school. I didn't feel any ethical qualms because the school should benefit from the programme and teachers' projects. On the contrary, I thought that for the betterment of the school that every effort had to be made for the first attempt at conducting the programme to be as successful as possible. What mattered most was that we be methodical and fair about it.*

(Research journal, 15.10.2014)

The team agreed with me and considered my recommendation sensible for promoting the school's interests, given that the school was responsible for providing teachers with an innovative professional learning opportunity. The strategy offered a way to limit the number of participants somewhere within the range of eight to 15 members.

Incidentally, upon my return to the UK I had a four-way conversation with the HertsCam Director and one of its tutors, who is a Headteacher, in addition to a colleague similarly conducting a TLDW-based programme in Cairo, Egypt, and an educational entrepreneur also based in Cairo, Egypt. The Headteacher agreed with my above rationale. I noted what transpired.

*When the Director problematised my decision to select volunteers based on criteria that included their work-related problem, the Headteacher understood that it was a necessary move to ensure the success of this first cohort. I agreed with her. The Director was persuaded. I assured him that participants wouldn't be required to work on the original concern but could tweak or change it. I also indicated that they had three days to think about and consult the Headteacher and Deputy Director on the significance of the focus/problem. That seemed to assuage his concerns.*

(Research journal, 15.11.2014)

This approach had been modelled previously in an ITL programme conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, where schools similarly had to apply to participate (Vranješević and Čelebičić, 2014). The approach is best understood as an adaptive measure that is common to international programme adoption.

Back in Ramallah, the team and I had proceeded to devise a set of criteria for applicant selection that aimed to maintain a balance between school interests and teacher welfare. These were:

- *Relevance and potential impact of problem to school improvement;*
- *Diversity of project topics;*
- *Range of school level taught;*
- *Teacher professional characteristics;*
- *Teacher level of commitment to school;*
- *Teacher seniority.*

(Programme team meeting 3, minutes)

These items represented guides that were at no time restrictive. So, on more than one occasion, we accepted candidates who did not meet one or more of the criteria. Thus the PT was instrumental in validating the selection process and relieved me of potential accusations of favouritism and using my power inappropriately, had I made the selection myself. Management of strategic issues that responds to signals in 'real time' in comparison to periodic strategic planning improves the performance of organisational management (Ansoff, 1980). Some of these criteria, particularly less objective ones that required close knowledge of teachers' performance and character, drew on senior PT members' school knowledge and familiarity with teachers. This underscored the significance of working from within an organisation when promoting TL development (Eltemamy, 2017; Ramahi, 2016b).

In order to build capacity for school-wide improvement, I suggested including among the participants two key school employees. Both agreed that while they were not teachers and held authoritative roles, which conflicted with the programme's premise of non-positionality, they would be able to conduct useful improvement projects in their respective areas. My main aim was to build professional and leadership capacity.

Their inclusion completed the 12-member, a number that we agreed would be optimum for the first programme trial. Despite having sufficient applicants for the 15-member recommended maximum, we decided on 12 for two reasons: to distinguish the programme and elevate its status by making membership exclusive; and to reduce the pressure on me as a first-time programme tutor by reducing the number of participants. Change processes in schools need diligence and good execution (Fullan, 2007; Hargreaves, 2005), so we opted for depth of impact.

The team was useful when it came to identifying translation problems with some of the tools that I had selected and prepared for the first group session. They recommended enhancing translation quality and clarity by exploring different translators, and by having a school-based native Arabic-speaking English language teacher review the soundness of the Arabic translations.

Before I examine proceedings of the first group session, it is important to point out that initially I had intended to include the co-tutor in the planning, selection of tools and instruments, and designing of the first group session programme. However, time-related factors prevented her

from being able to do so. Hence, for practical reasons, I designed the group sessions myself. Now I examine the proceedings of the first group sessions.

### **First group session**

The cohort chose Sunday, the first day of the working week in Palestine, for holding the group sessions. This represented the first instance of the group's participatory decision-making and a suitable start for my democratically oriented programme. We held the first session on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2014. It was an important session because it promised to set the tone for the rest of the programme. Care must be given to the particulars of every stage of a change process. Foremost on my mind was reducing my positional power and its role during the group meetings. My aim was to avoid disingenuous agreement by participants with my claims or statements, or any hesitation to express critical opinions.

*One of my concerns was that my position at the school not be an influencing factor during my facilitation of the sessions, particularly teacher discussions. I wanted participants to feel free to say whatever they thought.*

(Research journal, 26.10.2014)

I strove to reinforce an atmosphere in which teachers felt confident to challenge ideas in the programme. Similarly, I sought teachers' views of school-related matters, such as policy and professional culture. Observations by the co-tutor and myself indicated that the group discussion was vigorous and lively.

*Teachers were highly engaged. This was evident from the nature of their discussion, which was very different from the usual topics and exhibited a pent-up desire for discussion and new ways of doing things.*

(Research journal, 26.10.2014)

*Overall, discussion was great and engaging. Teachers really got into the topics at hand, like influence [and] impact.*

(Participant observation, co-tutor, group session 1)

Participant engagement suggested a high level of ease and risk-taking.

*There was trust among the group members, even with my presence and the Deputy Director's. I think this fostered a higher level of engagement and deeper, more honest discussion and reflection. They didn't hesitate to question matters in my presence.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 1)

Facilitating deep discussion drew teachers into the session and generated an eagerness for future group meetings. The Leadership for Learning project, on which I drew for my conceptualisation of TL in Chapter 2, identifies dialogue as one of its principles (MacBeath and Dempster, 2008; Swaffield and MacBeath, 2008). Evidence of dialogue fostering communal growth (Flecha and Soler, 2014) led me to keep the discussion from turning into a lax group conversation merely consisting of opinions and anecdotes. Teachers' appetite for an opportunity to share their thoughts with colleagues on matters pertinent to their practice and workplace realities was one of the strongest features of the session (Ramahi, 2016b), as has been reported by the HertsCam Network and ITL (Eltemamy, 2017).

During critical discussion of context-relevant professional learning, I employed an ITL-based instrument to introduce the concept of process-led learning. The vignette illustrated a fictitious teacher's development work wherein a false start to his project is presented as part of his learning journey (see Appendix 6).

*Hanan pointed out that Sami noted his experiences whether they were successful or not. That is very important. Even if you tried something that did not work, note it and write what you learned from it.*

(Participant observation, co-tutor, group session 1)

Highlighting failure in one's project as an integral part of the learning process contrasted with the way in which teachers had been accustomed to view learning and representation. This provided an opportunity to engage participants in a discussion of the learning that takes place *throughout* process-oriented approaches in contrast to result-focused models.

Enabling teachers to shift their views of learning towards process-led approaches is significant considering that the majority, if not all, were taught through traditional transmission, rote-style methods (Ramahi, 2016a and b, 2017). The impact of this change promised to extend beyond individual teacher learning and into the classroom.

*If this proves to be an effective way of learning for them they're likely to apply it to their students' learning. This is a highly important outcome that should have significant pedagogic implications for teaching practice and student learning inside the classroom at my school.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 1)

The discussion centring on learning styles generated an appreciation amongst teachers of the role of peers in professional learning. Several started to recognise the potential contribution to their own self-improvement and growth.

*The discussion that ensued conveyed a developing understanding of the interconnection of the school community as a whole, which would be a highly beneficial outcome of my programme. This was visible from a discussion that revolved around how if one teacher solves a problem that other teachers would be able to apply it to their practice or in the classroom.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 1)

The conversation represented the beginnings of a breaking down of teacher isolation caused by the requirement to teach different subjects and grade levels, or physical separation. Human characteristics, such as openness, trust and respect, supportive leadership and social cohesion can be more critical to development of collaboration than structural conditions (Newmann and CORS, 1994). Hence this development could be a necessary precursor to teacher collaboration and collective efficacy, which I discuss in subsequent chapters. Participants' statements below illustrate this new-found awareness.

*All our projects have the capacity to influence us.*

*When a colleague's problem is solved, mine will be as well.*

*We can learn so much from each other.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 1)

Discussing the advantages of process-based learning and collaboration for teacher professional learning led to critical questioning of the socio-educational factors behind traditional, authoritative approaches to teaching and learning. As the programme was still in its early stages and participants had not yet fully experienced what I believed to be its transformative capacity, I was careful to ensure that the discussion not appear to be a foreign importation and raise

suspicious of a questionable underlying agenda. This is common in the Palestine context where some international educational reform initiatives have failed to have impact (Shinn, 2012) and are met by Palestinian educators with a sense of scepticism and sometimes all-out suspicion (Ramahi, 2013).

Nevertheless, on their own and without prompting, teachers reflected critically on local values and norms, which they suggested had a role in discouraging self-expression and restricting individual freedoms.

*The social context was discussed in terms of wanting to improve yourself and how society is lacking in this area.*

(Participant observation, co-tutor, group session 1)

*One discussion revealed the level of comfort at [the school] to express one's need for assistance... a learning ethos where asking questions reflects pursuit of professional learning, where there is support and scaffolding. Several participants indicated this as unique to [the school] in Palestinian society, arguably in Arab societies.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 1)

Fostering teachers' sense of awareness and criticality of the socio-cultural and educational norms and forces that discourage individual initiative and innovative practices is key to developing TL. In kinship-oriented and power-distant settings, such as Arab societies (Obeidat, Shannak, Masa'deh and Al-Jarrah, 2012), reflecting on the role of societal culture in guiding educational practices can enhance agency. Equally, by doing so, it poses a threat to authority figures and orthodox practices. Members of ITL faced similar challenges in less democratically oriented settings where the term leadership was viewed as subversive and thus replaced by less threatening expressions (Frost, 2013).

The first group session ended well, despite a sense of unease at the perceived amount of work required. Hence I made sure to hold the second group session soon afterwards to assuage any disquiet amongst group members.

## Second group session

The second meeting was held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2014 soon after the first, in order to ease any programme-related worries or concerns amongst participants and to clarify possible misconceptions. By this time there were some changes to the cohort. One teacher pulled out, citing a higher programme workload than expected and another needed to be relieved for personal reasons. They were replaced by a previous teacher applicant and the co-tutor. The choices were made by the PT, to whom I had recommended including the latter so as to facilitate firsthand experience with the programme methodology. It is common practice for tutors in the HertsCam Network to have conducted TLDW before becoming tutors themselves (Hill, 2014). Including the co-tutor as a participant would enhance her self-efficacy when leading future programme cohorts and thus promote programme sustainability.

Before walking into the second group session venue, I noticed how relaxed I was in comparison to the introductory and first group sessions. My initial concerns about facilitating the programme gave way to a sense of ease, while remaining attentive to the requirements of the programme and influence of my status.

*Session two went well, at least for me. I felt more at ease and in command. I was less apprehensive than in session one. This made for a better group meeting.*

(Research journal, 09.11.2014)

Enhanced self-efficacy contributes to releasing creativity (Ozkal, 2014) and is a fundamental feature of leadership activity (Lawson-Graves, 2012). While still early in the programme, my enhanced self-confidence encouraged me to start trialling new approaches in programme activities. I aimed to model innovative facilitation methods as a means of broadening teacher approaches to pedagogy.

In contrast, teachers appeared disoriented and a bit apprehensive in comparison to the first group session. Following some probing, several expressed uncertainty and bewilderment about programme procedures, and requested more explicit instructions and guidance on tasks and requirements.

*I could see that participants were confused about the programme... I think the initial euphoria and excitement has settled... Now the serious business of development work is underway and they're beginning to struggle with the challenges that come with shifting one's learning mind-set.*

(Research journal, 09.11.2014)

Although teachers' response might have been attributable to my novice programme tutoring skills, I identified their unease to have primarily stemmed from their uncertainties in the face of process-oriented learning and insecurities that accompany self-directed inquiry.

*Participants were a bit lost... I heard several accounts about not knowing what stage they need to be in at this point in the programme, whether their work was sufficient or on the right track... I approached the situation positively noting that it reflected the pangs of shifting to a different learning style...*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 2)

Participants' disorientation signalled the start of unlearning, which is a requisite for shifting learning modes (see p. 91). By disrupting their expectations of the learning process, I aimed to foster a cognitive dissonance that would clear the path for formulating a new approach to learning. I illustrate examples of this below.

### ***Response to prompt questions***

One such opportunity appeared when I asked teachers to respond to a set of questions intended to prompt reflection on practice. Most teachers expected me to correct their reflections and return them.

*Participants still think that they're expected to submit something to me, which implies a right and wrong answer... I opted not to collect them [prompt questions] in return for disrupting their concept of learning to one that is self-led and self-motivated, and not subject to pre-conceived assessment criteria but part of a process. Changing this mind-set is more valuable for my work than reviewing their responses at this stage. Later on, possibly after the third or fourth session I will ask to look at their work to make sure they're on the right track.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 2)

I was convinced that the group discussion was more useful for engaging teachers in dialogue and unleashing their professional capacities than feedback to a written assignment would be.

Several teachers were surprised at not receiving comments to their ‘answers.’ They seemed to need validation.

This offered an instance when I was able to invite teachers to collectively reflect on and discuss the usefulness of a results-based exercise in comparison to the experience of the activity itself. Of course, by not giving individual feedback on the task, I risked prolonging any confusion. Nevertheless, the opportunity to engage in dialogue was more valuable for its instrumentality in illuminating a change process (Jabri, 2012) and highlighting long-held assumptions on what constitutes impactful learning approaches.

### ***Negative consultation***

A similar opportunity arose during a discussion centring on a ‘negative consultation,’ wherein a teacher considered a consultation to have not been useful because it had failed to arrive at what she viewed to be a satisfactory response.

*Shireen and some other teachers couldn't quite grasp the value of 'negative results'... This provided another good opportunity to highlight the learning that takes place throughout a process. During the first session, my claim to this was abstract and theoretical. This instance offered a practical example, which was comprehensible to all the participants. I was pleased that concrete examples were becoming available through teachers' development work.*

(Research journal, 09.11.2014)

Teachers could see the value of sharing and learning from workplace examples and the variety of learning experiences that can be drawn on. The discussion about the usefulness of negative results prompted some teachers to reflect on the countless opportunities for learning that they had failed to appreciate because in their minds the experiences did not constitute instances of orthodox learning. This example underscored the value of process-led professional learning and contributions made by colleagues.

### ***The programme's ethical criteria***

The above discussions laid the groundwork for participants' formulation of the programme's ethical criteria. Allowing teachers to determine a fundamental component of the programme was critical for emphasising the centrality of teachers' role in school improvement.

*The discussion... was very rich and insightful. Actual examples from the programme enriched the discussion and gave it an urgent relevance. I was pleased with how some members posed questions and related them to their projects. Such a value-laden topic raised the matter of context, and local values and norms. The fact that one member suggested that 'we' create our own ethical standards in the absence of suitable ones was very forward looking....*

(Research journal, 09.11.2014)

The exercise was significant for several reasons. Firstly, it enabled group members to create workplace realities and norms in a socio-cultural and educational setting that seldom offers such opportunities. Secondly, it fostered ownership of a fundamental component of the programme, potentially enhancing their commitment to the programme and TL. Thirdly, it was arguably more instructive than an entire course on the ethics of professional learning, and more likely to influence their ethical practice beyond their development work.

### ***Leadership as influence***

Towards the completion of the group session I realised that most participants had not yet understood the concept of leadership as a form of influence. This was evident from the frequent queries about leadership when completing the 'Record of participation' that is required at the end of every group session (see Appendix 7A). I explore this matter further in the next section.

### **First supervision**

By mid-November I observed that participants needed individual support and thus scheduled supervisions that were convenient with respect to their work schedules. The meetings had two aims: to address queries related to individual participants' projects and to monitor the progress of the programme. The latter was pertinent to my study and revealed several issues that were useful for its development. In the form of a conceptual interview that resembled a conversation (see Chapter 3), I framed the meetings around the following questions:

1. *What is working well for you?*
2. *What has been helpful so far?*
3. *What challenges are you facing?*
4. *How are you resolving them?*
5. *What is becoming clearer?*
6. *What remains unclear?*

Participants were forthcoming in their responses and pointed to various issues. Of the themes that I identified, the most significant were: disruption of traditional learning methods; role of methodology and structured support in professional learning; early stages of enhanced agency; and problems understanding TL. I now explain each.

### ***Disrupting traditional learning methods***

As discussed earlier in this chapter, several participants indicated experiencing a sense of disorientation and insecurity at the start of the programme as a response to its self-directed, process-led learning approach. Munir expressed this in the following way.

*I'm not used to doing something and evaluating it myself. Usually, we're used to being asked to do something by someone and to have someone else evaluate it. For me to change in the way I find information on my own makes me question my confidence...*

(Munir, secondary level teacher)

Having the responsibility for one's own learning appears to be one of the first challenges that is faced and must be overcome by participants. Munir's worries were shared by a colleague who underscored the difficulties that are associated with this shift.

*Anything unknown is scary at first. In the beginning, I was unsure and in a state of bewilderment and disorientation because I didn't have in my hands something that is clear and identifiable, with features.*

(Naim, primary level teacher)

Naim's uncertainty and confusion may be an understandable response given the results-based approach to learning that prevails in Middle-Eastern educational systems (Arab Knowledge Report, 2011). The intellectual plasticity needed to reshape one's learning style was identified by participants as a skill that was undeveloped in the local context.

*The mind developed in a way that isn't flexible. Teaching wasn't done in a way that guided learning or enabled thinking, creativity or problem solving. It was all lots of information.*

(Huda, manager)

Programme activities were requiring that participants shift their way of thinking and approach to learning. This needed time and practice, two fundamental components of substantive change processes (Hargreaves, 2005).

For some participants, this prompted reflection on the role of the local learning culture in shaping learning strategies. Commenting on the TLDW approach, Munir considered the role of culture.

*It's a method that goes against the way we do things around here, which I've been used to learning in for many years. All of a sudden, I'm going to learn in a new way. I'm going in the opposite direction, like someone who has always been driving on the right side and now has to drive on the left.*

(Munir, secondary level teacher)

Munir indicates the beginnings of a fundamental change to his learning method. The disruption to participants' traditional mode of learning and consequent disorientation and uncertainty might have been a necessary transition before abandoning banking (Freire, 1970) and results-based modes of learning in favour of a self-guided and process-led approach. This transitional stage was facilitated by the TLDW methodology.

#### ***A methodology and structured support***

Following the initial unease that accompanied participants' encounter with self-directed professional learning, several members increasingly began to exhibit appreciation for the programme's strategy, structured support and tools. Some expressed gratitude for the programme's approach as compared with previous methods of self-improvement. For one of the non-teacher group members, the programme methodology highlighted the random and unsystematic nature of previous attempts at problem-solving.

*Before, a person was working in a confused, haphazard way. Some things work, others don't. You think of problems but can't find solutions to them because you don't have a method. Once the strategy became available [TLDW] you present your problem in a methodical way. Now you can deal with a problem by following steps.*

(Huda, manager)

The programme's strategy and steps provided structure for participants, especially at the start during the stage of transitioning between learning modes. Guiding members on ways to organise their thoughts and systematise their work fostered a sense of groundedness. Shireen expressed this eloquently.

*When we start building a project that is on solid foundation, it's, stronger than working haphazardly... when it's based on a foundation, you feel like you're walking on solid ground, not on water.*

(Shireen, primary-level teacher)

The metaphor of walking on solid ground as opposed to water underscores the self-confidence and certainty that participants were developing and feeling at this early stage of the programme. This was vital given the fundamental changes to professional learning that participants were being encouraged to make.

Asked how she had progressed since joining the programme, Rawan employed the same water/ground imagery to explain her improvement.

*I've progressed in the way I'm approaching my students. I think I'm walking on the ground more than I was before. I thought I was walking on water... [where] you don't know what's underneath. You're always guessing. Walking on the ground you have solid facts and proof, you know where to begin. Before I felt like I didn't know where to begin. I didn't know whom to ask and whom to consult. Now I do.*

(Rawan, primary-level teacher)

Employing the tools of systematic development work enables teachers to generate and work with evidence. This extends integrity and credibility to teachers' knowledge-building and innovation, essential factors in legitimising knowledge production (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011). Enhanced teacher self-confidence to improve practice might have signalled the development of self-efficacy.

Noteworthy is the fact that participants started to gain appreciation for the programme's strategy and techniques once their usefulness became apparent. This reinforced the significance of problem-based, work-related professional learning support which leads to embedding such practices as reflection, dialogue and collaboration. There is copious scholarship to support the impact of action-based teacher learning (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 2008;

Giles, Wilson and Elias, 2010; Goodnough, 2011; Ross and Bruce, 2007), which leads to a sense of enhanced agency.

### ***Enhanced agency***

Enhanced agency is one of the guiding principles of TL and by extension the programme (see Chapter 2). At this stage, participants were starting to understand the central role of agency in developing and disseminating innovative teaching practices. Increasingly, their language began to take on a more assertive, self-assured tone. For example, when I asked Munir what had changed for him since starting the programme, he replied:

*In all honesty, a major change in the way of thinking. The idea now has to emanate from me and not be ready-made from elsewhere. This for me is the biggest thing. I am the source of the idea and information. After I've collected the information properly, then I will come up with something correct.*

(Munir, secondary level teacher)

Enhanced agency for Munir was 'the biggest thing,' which he linked to the shift in thinking mode. There is vast support for the role of enhanced agency in professional learning (see Chapter 2). Emphasising participants' role in improving and innovating practice may be key to school improvement and system-wide change.

Naim conveyed in quite profound terms a similarly new-found liberation.

*It's like someone who was shackled and this programme removed these constraints, and opened the door for me to work freely and not be afraid about the outcomes of my work.*

(Naim, primary level teacher)

This powerful admission reveals the extent to which teachers were constrained by conventional prevailing teaching and learning methods, and the programme's capacity to illuminate these constraints and enable teacher empowerment (Ramahi, 2016a and b, 2017). In Chapter 1, I discussed key forces behind the current state of education in Palestine. The programme's capacity to prompt teachers to reflect on the role of the education system in restricting teacher innovation is vital and encourages development of a critical perspective, an essential practice for improving teaching practice, as argued by Carr and Kemmis (1986).

A critical view of societal culture and its role in restricting freedom of thought emerged amongst group members. Munir continued:

*Our society doesn't allow us to think on our own or express our individual thoughts. All of a sudden, I'm going to solve the problem, I'm the owner of the idea and the solution... it contradicts the local environment. It's from this reality that one has low confidence. I have confidence in a lot of things, but I'm doing this for the first time and God willing it will progress and succeed.*

(Munir, secondary level teacher)

Agency-enhancing programme activities are transformative and can lead to emancipatory learning (Ramahi, 2016a). By enabling participants to think freely and independently, teachers began to recognise the forces and structures that have led to their disempowerment. Still, despite this crucial development, participants' understanding of TL practices remained obscure.

### ***Understanding the concept of non-positional teacher leadership***

While participants were realising the implications of enhanced agency for professional learning and improving practice, TL remained obscure. When asked what TL meant, only a few had anything to say, with each conveying a different understanding.

For one participant, leadership was understood as the act of being methodical.

*Leadership is developing in me in a strong way. I now feel that I can face any problem using steps, not just haphazardly or by ignoring things.*

(Huda, manager)

Although systematic development work is key to strategic, self-directed leadership activity, it is merely a component (Frost, 2013).

Shireen, on the other hand, associated leadership with active learning.

*When we first started talking about leadership I envisioned it as ambition that for a teacher cannot be realised. Now its meaning changed to something much wider and that can be realised by teachers through active learning.*

(Shireen, primary-level teacher)

While still conveying a limited view of TL, she at least had shifted it from the traditional charismatic model to a more achievable one that could be realised through activity. Her new understanding aligned with distributed and practice-based views of leadership (MacBeath, 2005b) and represented an encouraging start from which to move forward.

Effectively and despite hesitation, Naim came closest to grasping and explaining TL.

*Leadership... I can't say that I understand it completely. I still have issues understanding its meaning... from what I understand so far, teacher leadership is about teachers that can change the status quo for the better; teachers who can reach goals regardless of the obstacles, maybe teachers who have the means through which they can achieve what's required of them.*

(Naim, primary-level teacher)

Naim's recognition of the capacity for TL to act as a vehicle for change 'regardless of the obstacles' was poignant. The ability for one teacher to arrive at this understanding assured me that the programme could lead others to self-empowerment. It also raised issues to do with my facilitation skills.

### ***Facilitating teacher leadership***

Teachers' continued uncertainty about the meaning of TL led me to deliberate on my role as programme tutor. I had reflected earlier in my research journal, following the second group session, on the reasons that several participants were still challenged when it came to understanding the concept of TL.

*I noticed that the understanding of leadership as an activity had yet to be grasped, particularly the non-positional kind. I don't see this as a deficiency, rather as a concept that needs nurturing and time to mature... Once they've developed their own strategy, approach or technique then they'll have something to contribute to others and may start appreciating the value of leading its adoption.*

(Research journal, 09.11.2014)

Although I again considered the possibility that this was a weakness of my facilitation skills, I believed that as a fundamental programme feature it needed additional time to mature given the challenges of individual initiative and enhanced agency in power-distant societies.

*I prefer not to force the concept onto participants... because TL presupposes enhanced human agency. This is not well developed in Palestine, an Arab/Middle-Eastern society that values clan and family ties over individual freedoms and liberties.*

(Research journal, 09.11.2014)

Facilitating the enhancement of human agency is a complex process involving many psychological functions (Bandura, 1991). Its centrality to TL required that it be cultivated organically and patiently. Otherwise, I risked rushing participants and potentially frustrating the emergence of authentic, self-led leadership practice.

My reflections led me to consider ways of facilitating a more coherent understanding of the programme's approach to leadership in subsequent activities, particularly during the group sessions. In addition to increasingly highlighting it in practical terms, I reworded the 'Record of participation' pro forma required of participants at the end of every group session in a way that made the concept more accessible (see Appendix 7B). Several participants responded favourably to the adjustment.

### **Chapter summary and emergent insights**

In this chapter I have examined the beginning stage of conducting the Teachers Leading the Way programme at my school. This consisted of senior leaders' involvement in preparations for the programme and its actual introduction, leading up to the point when participants began to comprehend programme mechanisms and TL practice. Three activities were covered: first and second group sessions; and first supervisions. Focus was given to facilitating participants' understanding of new concepts and practices. Examination of these activities generated significant insights for programme development, which I list below. I have grouped them under headings that relate to programme features.

#### Programme introduction:

- Situating the programme in the Palestinian historical, political, social-cultural and educational context establishes the relevance and urgency of TL as a means of school improvement and educational reconstruction;
- Invoking socio-cultural and religious values reinforces the programme's relatedness and purposefulness;
- Introducing the programme to the entire school staff familiarises all members with the programme's change-driven discourse and fosters a common language amongst participants and non-participants;
- Illustrating the capacity for all school staff to contribute to TL activity reinforces the programme as a school-wide initiative;
- Vignettes of teacher development work are an effective tool for promoting programme relatability and achievability.

#### Programme operation:

- Disrupting traditional transmission and results-based learning modes is an initial key impact;
- TLDW-based programme methodology and structured support are essential to facilitating the transition to self-guided, process-led learning;
- Teacher dialogue reflects welcome opportunities for addressing pertinent, school-related and socio-educational topics and issues, and stimulates deep reflection and engagement;
- Vignettes narrating teacher development work are effective tools for provoking a shift in views of teacher learning;
- Co-tutor role facilitates programme operations and promotes sustainability.

#### Participants:

- Participants recognise the role of the education system and socio-cultural forces behind teacher disempowerment;
- Enhanced agency begins to surface and becomes apprehended as an integral component of self-directed, process-led professional learning and self-improvement, and TL activity;
- Role of peers in professional learning and self-improvement becomes apparent;
- TL as an activity remains obscure, requiring additional time and opportunities for practice.

#### Programme team:

- Is key to facilitating effective programme introduction, launch and development;
- Is instrumental for selecting, adapting and refining programme tools;
- Is pivotal for systematising and democratising participant selection process;

- Is useful for ensuring alignment between school interests and teacher welfare;
- Is vital for monitoring my role in programme development;
- Is strategic for enhancing research quality.

Research process:

- Programme team and co-tutor roles enhance research legitimacy and soundness;
- Methodological openness to collecting opportunistic data is highly useful for enriching evidence collection;
- Researcher positional power requires constant reflexivity, and embedding of accounting procedures and containment mechanisms;
- Constant monitoring, evaluation and adjustment of programme events and activities enhances ethical practice.

These insights were generated from activities conducted during the early stages of the programme. The first set of supervisions marked completion of this stage and generated new problems and concerns for the PT and me to address and monitor. In the following chapter, I examine teachers' increasing engagement with the programme and adoption of TL practices.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Teachers engage with the programme**

This chapter examines the stage of the programme when participants engaged more actively with teacher-led development work and started taking on leadership roles more enthusiastically. Progress with teachers' projects promoted understanding and adoption of TL, enabling the trialling of new strategies and practices in the classroom and amongst peers. This reinforced participant self-confidence and self-efficacy. At this time, facilitation played an instrumental role in supporting teachers, helping them to face the challenges that arose throughout the programme. This took place during dialogic group sessions that created a space for risk-taking and trust-building, leading to a breaking down of teacher isolation and discovery of the capacity for mutual support. In addition to fostering social capital, collective efficacy and a community of practice, these occasions generated a group identity that promoted collaboration. Individualised support offered during supervisions provided opportunities for affirming teachers' innovations and shifting identities during a time of uncertainty and self-doubt. Hence this chapter examines a crucial and formative stage in the development of TL at my school, when teachers began changing from a transmission, results-based mode of learning to a self-guided, process-led approach.

As with the previous chapters, the following account draws on data obtained through routine observation and monitoring, periodic review and *in situ* analysis of programme development. This stage comprised the following activities: third, fourth and fifth group sessions; second and third supervisions; and first cycle review. The period in question spanned from 21<sup>st</sup> December 2014 to 8th March 2015. I begin my discussion by examining the third group session.

#### **Third group session**

There was an approximate five-week interval between my last meeting with participants, during the first supervisions, and the subsequent third group session. At this time, I expected that many participants would have developed new worries about their projects. Thus I designed

a remedial third group session aimed at reinstating self-confidence and raising morale. I reflected in my research journal.

*I suspect that many participants may be anxious about their development work. Although I assuaged some worries during the first supervisions, additional concerns are likely to have surfaced since then during work on their projects. Therefore, I will need to specifically design a group session that eases their particular anxieties and answers their immediate concerns.*

(Research journal, 15.12.2014)

I envisaged that in order to restore participants' confidence in their capacity to innovate practice and exercise leadership, at this stage I needed to provide affirmation for the extent of their progress.

### ***Praise***

I dedicated the first 15 minutes of the two-hour group session to commending group members on their work so far. I did this by highlighting their courage in participating in such a challenging and demanding programme. The co-tutor observed this.

*Hanan praised the participants' work so far and the teachers seemed very happy to receive this praise because you can tell they have been working very hard on their projects and needed this affirmation to let them know they are on the right track.*

...

*The beginning of the meeting, where Hanan praised the participants, made them more confident during the meeting to discuss their concerns and challenges.*

(Participant observation, co-tutor, group session 3)

Reform initiatives can strongly affect teachers' emotions (Darby, 2008). For this reason, raising participants' morale throughout the process was highly beneficial (Schmidt and Datnow, 2005). At this stage, this seemed vital for two reasons. Primarily, it promised to strengthen their resolve in the face of the challenges and frustrations that may accompany abandoning entrenched ways of learning. Emphasising and affirming achievements is one way of combating frustrations amongst teachers during reform (Blazer, 2010). It also encourages risk-taking, which is integral to substantive change processes and is altered by perceptions of uncertainty (Reio, 2005). Secondly, while I received no indication of anyone wishing to withdraw from the programme, I was mindful that if anyone wanted to do so at this stage they

might hesitate for fear of disappointing me, as school Director. This was an instance when my status might have complicated matters for participants, a persistent concern of mine throughout the programme (see Chapter 3).

For these reasons, I strove to assure participants that they were doing the work expected of them in the programme. However, in doing so I was mindful of the risk of having potentially encouraged mediocrity in the quality of their development work. Thus, in order not to compromise the quality and impact of programme outcomes, I employed examples of progress from participants' own projects to date. I drew on evidence that I had garnered from their work during the first supervisions.

*... Rawan who after making observations, consultations, reflections, trials and readings considered herself not to have made any progress. Why? Because the 'outcome' she was expecting hadn't been realised... I highlighted how their [participants'] thinking was changing by the kinds of questions they were posing and their reflections. I encouraged them to doubt things and question them, but not to doubt themselves.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 3)

Using examples from participants' work proved highly effective for its relevance to their experiences and realities. This provided evidence of the advantages of context-based learning (Strand, 2013). At the same time, I was mindful of the hazards of its leading to intellectual and professional insularity. Moving forward, I remained aware of the interplay of both effects during group dialogue.

### ***Group dialogue***

Restoring participants' self-confidence in their learning and leadership abilities was vital at this stage for realising my aim of promoting group dialogue. Self-confidence plays a key role in teacher learning (Sadler, 2013) and assists in facilitating group dialogue. I aimed to generate dialogue amongst participants in order to help reveal commonalities between their experiences. By opening up a communicative space in which people could reflect together on their practices and its consequences (Flecha and Soler, 2014; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2005), I was hoping to promote the growth of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

I designed the session around an ITL tool entitled 'The challenges of leading a project: tell us about your project' (see Appendix 8). The goal of the one-hour exercise was to have each

participant present his or her project in three minutes and to allow two minutes for questions and answers. Although I did not expect participants to be experienced in spontaneously making a concise and focused presentation, I wanted the activity to give them a first-hand opportunity to learn the skills of doing so whilst in a safe and supportive environment. In communities of practice, learning is viewed as a relational as well as an individual experience (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

The first three presenters took longer than three minutes, and were neither focused nor coherent. I took this opportunity to discuss with the group how the presentations could be improved.

*At that stage I started highlighting to the group members how their colleagues were taking too long, saying too much and not explaining enough. I used the [first] three cases to explain how NOT to present one's project... This was an effective method because participants experienced the frustration of having to listen to long-winded, incoherent presentations and realised that they didn't want to do the same... the subsequent three to four presentations were better but still 'messy.'*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 3)

By the time we reached the last two participants, the presentations were precise, succinct and measured. The gradual improvement from the earlier ones was evident.

*With tips from Hanan, the participants began to learn how to be concise when discussing their projects and challenges.*

(Participant observation, co-tutor, group session 3)

This was a significant development and arguably as effective as a workshop on the skills of presentation. Learning was taking place through proximity to other learners and practitioners by way of an apprenticeship model. Such are the hallmarks of communities of practice that conceive of learning as a socially interdependent process (Lave and Wenger, 1991). In this case, my approach helped to embed the skills of effective presentation and increase professional capacity.

Still, I wondered how fair the activity was to the participants who presented at the start and whether I had in any way wounded their self-esteem. I sensed no such effect and concluded

that the benefits outweighed the potential individual hazards. I was relying primarily on a supportive school culture.

*[T]his requires a judgement-free culture of trust and risk-taking. Fortunately, the school has this. This session seemed to be based on it and to reinforce it. Of course, I kept a jovial air to the discussion and thanked teachers that were willing to act unknowingly as guinea pigs for the greater good, making their mistakes opportunities for group leaning and individual growth.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 3)

This activity engaged participants so intensely in the discussion that keeping the group on task became a challenge for me. Sound and strategic facilitation that focuses on skills-building is key to teacher development through inquiry (Poekert, 2010). I remained mindful of my instrumental role.

*I noticed that during the first and second presentations members were not completely focused on the speaker... when I started actively but indirectly referring to the mistakes members were making by suggesting how they could be improved, group members become increasingly attentive to the discussion and engaged vigorously.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 3)

Navigating this activity towards impactful outcomes requires effective facilitation skills. Building capacity to facilitate dialogic learning at my school, I surmised, would require great effort. This would have implications for capacity-building aimed at programme sustainability.

Most of the participants became so engrossed in the dialogue and keen to continue that halfway through the session, after a ten-minute break, all the group members returned to the meeting room on time and before I did. This was a level of eagerness that I had never witnessed among teachers or staff in my 20 years at the school.

*[T]eachers' faces were lit up. There was such a sense of engagement, excitement, enablement... liveliness and much, much more. By the time we completed all presentations the room was bustling with great energy. One could see capital-building on so many levels – intellectual, social, professional.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 3)

An unprecedented level of excitement and energy was inspired by an approach to learning that surpassed any previous programmes provided at the school. This was facilitated by group dialogue, which, by promoting social capital and fostering critical friendships, was helping to lay the foundation for the growth of collaboration and leadership amongst teachers (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2008).

### ***Social capital***

A significant development for participants was the growth of social capital as an on-site professional resource that provided peer support and access to knowledge.

*[E]vident was the development of a sense of mutual support and prospects of collaboration, resources from which they can draw on for their projects. They realised that in some cases they didn't need to go beyond the school for help or ideas.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 3)

Mutual professional support helps develop critical friendships among teachers, that can provide focused and constructive feedback (Swaffield, 2007). Its availability at school facilitates affordability and ease of access. This is vital for under-resourced and geographically restricted educational settings, such as Palestine (see Chapter 1). I observed the seeds of this growth.

*Another aspect was the critical friendships that were emerging. Because participants were all in the same boat, they valued supporting their colleagues... Its reciprocal nature gave the relationship more value.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 3)

The ability to draw on organisational social capital and the constructive criticality of its members illustrated participants' capacity to reconceptualise the role of social ties (Lesser, 2000). In tribal societies, such as those in the Middle East (Pappé, 2014), this raises questions about the nature of organisational social relations. The programme's discursive and collaborative activities could be leading to a re-culturation of social norms and practices.

Ultimately, the activity dedicated to narrating one's project extended 30 minutes beyond its scheduled time. Despite my efforts to remain on task, I recognised that it was a critical event in the programme that would have significant impact on participants. Teachers were given the

opportunity to narrate a journey of growth, a rare and valued occasion. Accordingly, I decided to allow the exercise extra time.

*The whole idea of having most of the time allotted for teachers to share their projects was great because you can tell that all of the teachers wanted to share their work with others to gain recognition, to receive feedback, and to identify with each other's problems and concerns.*

(Participant observation, co-tutor, group session 3)

The chance for participants to narrate the unfolding of their professional learning journey was significant for several reasons. Firstly, storytelling for teachers is a form of sense-making that enables understanding of the extent of one's learning (Clandinin and Connelly, 1996, 2000; Johnson and Golombek, 2002). Secondly, it gives voice to teachers who are generally disenfranchised and rarely receive such opportunities in their workplace (Bangs and Frost, 2012). This may reinforce commitment to the programme and promote TL development.

At the end of the meeting participants were so positive about their experience that several suggested holding an additional session soon that would be solely dedicated to sharing with each other their stories, on the condition that I be present to provide feedback on any advice given by peers. The following represent some of the emphatic statements made by participants.

*This is the best session yet.*

*This has been so invigorating.*

*We need more such sessions.*

(Participant observation, tutor, group session 3)

While group members usually sped away at the conclusion of group meetings, at the end of this one the majority continued their discussions till much later than usual. Again, this was very uncommon, given teachers' busy work schedules and family responsibilities, and suggests that, when invested and engaged, teachers will make time for authentic opportunities for self-improvement. Participants elaborated on their experiences during the second supervision.

## Second supervisions

A week after the third group session I held the second round of supervisions. Well into the programme, most group members at this stage still needed considerable assistance in finalising their action plans, a major component of their development work. Therefore I gave each participant ample time to discuss their plans and offered guidance on improvement. Equally, I devoted sufficient time to gauging their views about programme activities for development purposes and used the opportunity to collect data. This generated the following valuable insights.

### *Breakdown of teacher isolation*

The third group session was still fresh in participants' minds. In response to its favourable impression on them, I decided to explore its impact through conversations that took the form of semi-structured interviews (see Chapters 3). All were unanimous in their positive assessment, with resounding enthusiasm for its impact. Huda's remark illustrates this.

*The last session was very beneficial such that I felt it was the divide... when every member presented his/her project I felt that we entered the heart of the matter. The beginnings were introductory and we stored ideas but weren't sure how we would work... After this session, nothing remained unclear. Now we could start working because my colleague can help me because we're following the same steps and thinking and methodology, despite the difference in topic and student level.*

(Huda, manager)

For her 'the divide' in the programme, or turning point, represented the moment when authentic learning started happening, or 'the heart of the matter.' Teachers elsewhere have demonstrated an improved response to authentic professional learning opportunities that draw on contextual realities and problems (Strand, 2013) and include dialogue (Webster-Wright, 2009).

Structured group dialogue was the means by which authentic learning and development took place during the third group session because it fostered the learning of useful skills and practices. One skill was attentive listening to peers and its impact on professional learning.

*The last session was first of all something that we were oblivious to - listening to each other. You gave us the opportunity to understand what the others have reached, what they're doing, how they're thinking. This helped me a lot in my project. I benefited a lot from the last session.*

(Naim, primary-level teacher)

Naim's comment illustrates the capacity within teachers to recognise the professional resource available to them in their peers and to learn from them when given the opportunity. This reinforces the value of PLCs in revealing the teachers' capacity for mutual learning (Fink and Markholt, 2011; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 1996) when the right conditions are provided (Frost and Durrant, 2003).

Some participants remarked on the extent of learning achieved during group sessions through sharing of experience in comparison to other methods. Huda reflected enthusiastically on the exercise aimed at developing participants' presentation skills.

*I suggest that after a while meeting more regularly would really be good... I feel that I benefit more [in groups] because thinking develops more through sharing and experience. It may have taken me 100 years to learn to present concisely, but when it was shown in front of us, you feel more convinced of its effectiveness.*

(Huda, manager)

Her remark underscores the capacity for structured group dialogue to promote impactful teacher learning in short periods of time. Professional learning programmes place additional pressure on an already overworked teaching force (Timperley and Robinson, 2000). The TLDW model illustrates an approach to enhancing the impact of teachers' professional learning and thus reducing its characterisation as burdensome, school-mandated activity.

Despite the challenges for teachers to find time for 'meeting more regularly,' if at all, the programme gains value because of its ability to create structured opportunities for teachers to meet. Nur elaborated on this.

*Honestly it was the first session we heard from each other. The pressures of work don't allow for meetings to discuss our projects. If I want to meet with someone, I need to coordinate between classes. It's hectic.*

(Nur, secondary-level teacher)

In addition to embedding time for group meetings, some participants noted that the programme facilitated provision of the physical space to bring together teachers who otherwise rarely, if ever, have opportunities to discuss issues related to teaching and learning.

*At this school... we're separated by floors. I feel that primary teachers are in one world and secondary in another. So, when we met during the [last] session and talked about our work, it was the first time we sit and listen to each other...*

(Shireen, primary-level teacher)

[Now] *When I see Shireen [primary-level teacher] I ask her how her work is going. I ask Reema [primary-level teacher]. This is new because of the physical distance in our teaching and teacher rooms. Now whenever I pass the primary teachers' room, I take the opportunity and take 10 minutes to ask them how they're doing.*

(Amal, secondary-level teacher)

Structured programme activities broke down teacher isolation, giving way to purposeful social interaction. Dialogue forces teachers out of traditionally conceived roles of autonomy and isolation and into communities of learning (Mangin and Stoelinga, 2011). This was a significant development for teachers in the cohort. Generating discussions within and across school levels helped to break down structural barriers and to reinforce the growth of social capital and a community of practice amongst participants.

### ***Community of practice***

The open disclosure of challenges in participants' development work seemed to prompt an awareness of the common nature and sources of these difficulties, and bring group members closer. The relief felt by participants in hearing about their shared challenges and experiences reinforced a growing sense of community. Reflecting on the third group session, a teacher observed the following:

*[T]his session gave us a chance to find out more thoroughly and in brief the challenges. So, one discovers that they're not alone in his/her confusion, that there are commonalities.*

(Shireen, primary-level teacher)

The act of sharing challenges promoted a sense of connection that fostered mutual support. This encouraged the development of social and professional bonds amongst group members

that reinforced mutual learning, features of a PLC (Bolam et al., 2005; Stoll et al., 2006) and a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

*The last session was really nice because we had the chance to hear what other teachers are working on and discovered that many of us are really connected. I really want to hear what their outcomes will be because many of their problems are like ones in our classrooms. Hopefully we can learn from each other.*

(Ghadeer, primary-level teacher)

*I imagine that everyone now feels that the others could assist him or her. Now we say to each other that we want to sit and talk... It's a great thing; we feel that we can benefit each other.*

(Nur, secondary-level teacher)

The significance of sharing and receiving expertise beyond one's project focus supports the growth of social capital and the extension of professional community boundaries, illustrating development of a broader approach to professional learning. This was noted in the following excerpts.

*Now we feel like a team. When we run into each other we ask each other about our progress. We learn from each other... We support each other regardless of focus... Now is the time that one can work more thoroughly... Listening to our discussions makes you feel that you've learned new methods... new ways of solving problems...*

(Huda, manager)

*Nawal, Naim and I have agreed to meet to discuss [matters]. Even though my project is not similar to theirs and so I may not benefit but I have things I would like to share with them. I'm going to benefit from their thinking and they in turn, I'm sure, will benefit from mine.*

(Nawal, mid-level manager)

This new-found connection amongst participants that is based on the reciprocal capacity for benefit enhances professional growth. The ability to learn by mere proximity underscores the dynamic of communities of practice in which learning is underpinned by relational proximity (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and that reciprocally reinforces social capital. Munir conveyed this sense poignantly.

*It's very useful to know the problems that your colleagues are facing and the means of solving them. I was surprised by their work. There is depth and vision in their thinking. It's not superficial. Issues are being worked on in profound ways. If their problems get solved then we'll become a perfect school. I was very pleased to hear about what everyone is working on and their methods. This expands my understanding. Hearing about examples, realistic ones from one's context and not Britain or America where the setting and students are different. This made the session beneficial and enriching. We may have just talked but it was brilliant. I absorbed a lot from hearing about the other projects. It clarified things for me. It made me want to change things.*

(Munir, secondary-level teacher)

The relational dynamic of learning underscores the significance of local and present-day workplace realities to TL development and school improvement efforts. Context-relevant change initiatives that address locally based practical problems and issues are much more likely to foster grass-roots educational reconstruction (Frost, 2014; Fullan, 1993), which led Munir to identify it as the impetus behind his intent to change. The inclusion in, and support of, a community of practice had the capacity to lead to the emergence of efficacy, both individual and collective.

### ***Self-efficacy and collective efficacy***

The sense of belonging to a community that is capable of providing support and solutions to practical, work-related challenges is able to foster collective efficacy. This arises when teachers in a given school perceive that as a group they can make a difference to learning (Moolenaar, Slegers and Daly, 2012; Tschannen-Moran and Barr, 2004). A growing sense of collective efficacy was reinforced by the depth and range of work being shared by participants. The usefulness of this development for teachers who operate in solitary conditions cannot be overstated and may enhance workplace commitment and teacher retention, two global challenges to the teaching profession (Brown and Wynn, 2008; Malloy and Allen, 2007).

Challenges represent the opportunities through which participants can offer assistance and support to their peers. Openly discussing problems within a group setting without the fear of judgement or criticism, but in a supportive environment, creates space for change. A risk-taking, trust-filled climate is a key feature of PLCs (Bolam et al., 2005; Stoll et al., 2006). Because teachers as professionals daily face workplace problems and develop a range of tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967), the opportunity to offer solutions to others enables the sharing of otherwise self-contained individual expertise. This is suggested in the following statements.

*For me the last session was excellent. I heard my colleagues' problems. At the same time my self-confidence increased because I saw that I could help them to solve their problems.*

(Munir, secondary-level teacher)

*I started thinking about solutions or suggestions for my colleagues' projects from my experience.*

(Huda, manager)

*We can now offer solutions to each other. Like when Ghadeer was talking, I immediately thought of ways that I could help her with.*

(Nawal, mid-level manager)

Participants' tone increasingly became more self-assured and assertive. Newly discovered capacities and knowledge of benefit to colleagues' learning enhanced teachers' self-confidence and led to the development of self-efficacy (Ramahi, 2016b).

An emerging self-efficacy among participants contributes to enhancing human agency. This is key for developing TL, which rests on the capacity to purposefully lead others towards innovation (see Chapter 2). The following excerpts illustrate this emergence.

*Now I sit with Nur and ask her where she's reached with her project; I make suggestions, give advice.*

*Now we can finish each other's sentences. I start a sentence/idea and Munir may say 'Have you thought of doing it this way? Maybe it would be better if you added so and so.'*

(Amal, secondary-level teacher)

When married to contextual realities, self-efficacy and collective efficacy can mobilise individuals to work from within and through communities and organisations to improve workplace and life conditions. One participant reflected on the influence of societal, cultural and educational forces on her thinking, and the related programme impact.

*I wish the entire society could make this shift. Imagine, instead of when meeting asking, 'What did you do, been up to or ate?'... we discuss it [educational innovation] ... these are the programmes that develop humans and enable growth. Here [in the programme] you know that you'll learn and that it will be embedded because you have faith in the*

*idea/project and you entered willingly. So, there is development. My brain, my thinking has not died.*

(Huda, manager)

The revival of the ‘*brain*’ and of ‘*thinking*’ for educational practitioners is key for bottom-up school improvement and educational reconstruction (Ramahi, 2017). Processes that involve dialogue and reflection, and address real workplace problems which result in genuinely useful solutions being proposed can generate hope and purposeful action for individuals and communities (Soler and Flecha, 2014; Freire, 1973). This surpasses mere discussion of problems and difficulties, but leads to practitioners and organisations building useful knowledge. Reema explained:

*We went beyond talking about problems and into how to solve them. So, each person gave me an idea, and inspiration and enthusiasm for my work. Success is contagious and thinking is contagious and achievement is contagious. When you live with people who work, you catch the bug, you start to work and like it... This time, because we started talking about trials and attempts, actual work, hope developed.*

(Reema, primary-level teacher)

Dialogue rooted in moral purpose that encourages groups to engage with issues and concerns that have immediate relevance to their daily lives and workplace generates useful solutions and inspires practical action. Ultimately, *hope*, as Reema said, is born out of “*success... thinking... and achievement...*,” a contagion that is felt and cultivated collectively, and a fundamental feature of emancipatory pedagogy (Freire, 1973). The resultant positive dynamic extends beyond professional learning that can foster school improvement and enhanced student achievement into transformational and emancipatory learning for teachers that leads to action (Ramahi, 2016a). Given the primary role of teachers in education systems (OECD, 2011), such transformation has the potential for system-wide impact. This and other programme-related matters came up during the first cycle review.

### **First cycle review**

I held the first of three cycle reviews with the programme team on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015, just before the school’s winter recess. The aim was to draw on team members’ monitoring and

observations of the programme in order to evaluate development and impact, and offer recommendations for improvement. The meeting consisted of a semi-structured conversation based on a set of topics that I listed on an A4 sheet, which drew on themes that I had identified (see Appendix 9). The co-tutor was out of the country and so joined us through an information technology medium. I audio-recorded the review so that I would be free to engage in conversation with the PT. The meeting lasted just over an hour, which I transcribed and in some parts translated. Several issues stood out during the review, which I examine below.

### ***Power differential***

I began by encouraging team members to state challenges and difficulties that the programme might be creating for participants, themselves and school staff. I suspected that my positional power might be deterring at least some from openly stating emerging problems lest it undermine my initiative (in Research journal, 06.01.2015). So I tried to reduce the effect of my influence by using an invitational tone. I was also aware that like teachers, team members might be viewing the programme with a results-based mentality, leading them to look for and emphasise positive outcomes and disregard seemingly less favourable ones.

Throughout the meeting I was mindful of the Hawthorne effect (see Chapter 3). My concern was that the PT might express viewpoints that corresponded with what they believed to be optimum programme outcomes, and hence what I sought. Thus I assured them that the value of my study lay in its integrity, regardless of the outcomes. My aim was to reinforce the process-led nature of my intervention and approach to professional learning.

Notwithstanding, the issue of my status emerged during the review. The Deputy Director indicated that it continued to impact participants during programme activities.

*I feel that some teachers still worry about the power issue... There is still awe in dealing with you, as in when they enter your office for a supervision.*

(Deputy Director, cycle review 1)

This came as a slight surprise to me as I had envisioned participants becoming more at ease with my leading of the programme, especially following the pivotal third session discussed earlier, which presumably eased some of their apprehensions. I then realised that I had made a mistake when holding supervisions in my office. I was operating in a power-distance

organisational culture (Hofstede, 1984; Obeidat, Shannak, Masa'deh and Al-Jarrah, 2012) and should not have underestimated the entrenched nature of such social mores (see Chapters 1 and 2). His observation alerted me to the fact that my role remained problematic for some participants, if not all.

Conversely, both senior leaders perceived that my positional power had a favourable influence on participant retention in the programme. The Headteacher reported:

*If the programme wasn't being led by you, some of them would have pulled out - to this extent. But there was a feeling of commitment. There were two to three who I think would have pulled out had [the tutor] been someone else.*

(Headteacher, cycle review 1)

*[T]his [my status] may have a positive effect as well because it may reinforce their motivation.*

(Deputy Director, cycle review 1)

Participant commitment observed by the Headteacher and confirmed by the Deputy Director was potentially a positive aspect. Nevertheless, I questioned the extent to which my influence complicated teachers' motivations for remaining in the programme and excelling in their performance.

While I had expected some teachers to want to pull out at the beginning of the programme, by this stage I thought they would have become more self-confident in their ability to complete their projects. The perceived amount of work required of teachers in the programme was signalled by the Headteacher as the main reason for some members' consideration whether to withdraw. Overall, the conversation revealed both the advantages and challenges of my status with respect to programme development, amongst the latter was sustainability.

### ***Sustainability***

Reviewing the influence of my role on programme development underscored the matter of sustainability. If I was perceived as the sole person capable of conducting and securing commitment to the programme at my school, this problematised programme sustainability and my aim of developing and establishing TL at my school. The co-tutor, whom I was preparing to lead future programme cohorts, echoed my concern.

*It makes me wonder if I conduct it next year, will I have the same results because of the power issue... it's an issue that I'm fearful of if I tutor the programme.*

(Co-tutor, cycle review 1)

Her uncertainty and self-doubt threatened to weaken her self-efficacy. This compromised my efforts to build capacity, which is key for programme sustainability and embedding TL, as I discussed in Chapter 3.

Senior leaders might have been of the belief that a school-wide change initiative aimed at transforming professional learning modalities required a person with considerable authority, knowledge and skill to see it through. In this case, my power and influence in the school would be put to good use, a facet that is underscored in arguments supporting moral leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992). Conversely, it revealed the tensions associated with programme sustainability, and by extension, TL development at my school. While the meeting flagged concerns, it similarly revealed interim positive outcomes, such as enhanced teacher self-confidence.

### ***Teacher self-confidence***

Team members were forthcoming in their positive feedback about the programme's development and interim impact. The co-tutor indicated a rise in participants' confidence levels and a shift in their attitudes towards conducting self-led development work. She noted changes in participants' behaviour.

*At the beginning, they wanted me to do things for them, like the initial consultations with teachers... [and] writing the title... Now they take the initiative to do things.*

(Co-tutor, cycle review 1)

Taking the initiative suggests development of agential and self-directed activity. By taking the lead in their projects, they were starting to shift their approach to learning and knowledge-building. This is similar to the experience of teachers in the HertsCam Network (Hill, 2011; Mylles, 2005).

An enhanced sense of agency led to changes in their views of leadership as a top-down activity. The co-tutor explained this development.

*The idea of leadership to them meant that it had to come from above, that you consult someone in a higher position. As the programme progressed this theme changed from asking for ideas on what to do, to telling me what they wanted and planned to do.*

(Co-tutor, cycle review 1)

Her observation that participants were taking ownership of their professional learning suggests a sense of freedom from viewing authority as the source of knowledge and expertise. This is a feature of emancipatory learning (Freire, 1970).

Both the Headteacher and co-tutor observed that the programme's non-obligatory approach was key to its interim success. When professional learning is self-driven, teachers are more likely to invest time and effort in it (Frost, 2014, 2017). The programme's values-led, problem-based approach fosters a sense of ownership that enhances commitment (Ramahi, 2016a and b, 2017). The co-tutor commented on this.

*Choosing their own problem was the most important thing for them in the programme... This, I think, is why they never complained to me about the topic. This enhanced motivation. It's like it's their baby.*

(Co-tutor, cycle review 1)

Ownership enhances motivation, which at least ensures programme completion. More importantly, ownership, as distinct from involvement or participation, contributes to the quality of teacher engagement and learning (Rainer and Matthews, 2002; Martin, Hoyos and Thurber, 2015). The Headteacher contrasted this feature of the programme with previous school-based support, identifying it as pivotal.

*Whenever we proposed an improvement plan they [teachers] always felt that it's top-down and so forced upon them, despite our repeated requests for their feedback on topics that they would like to be educated on.*

*I see that they enjoy the opportunity to choose their own problem and to find a solution for it. This generated among them and their colleagues collaboration... [and] a circle of support concerned with similar topics to discuss better ways of practice. This inevitably leads to development.*

(Headteacher, cycle review 1)

Ownership of their project led participants to create a 'circle of support.' When teachers are personally invested in improvement, they are propelled to find supportive resources. One of the most accessible to them is their peers. Drawing on knowledge beyond the programme group extends the boundary of intellectual and social capital. This underscores the programme's ability to promote school-wide collaboration and capacity-building. The Headteacher said:

*I've noticed that everyone has become involved in the process. Each group of subject teachers are asking each other about better ways of doing things. By not having isolated the twelve from their community of colleagues, you enabled discussion and familiarisation through consultations.*

(Headteacher, cycle review 1)

The Headteacher's observation confirms the emergence of collaboration amongst teachers and the integration of otherwise isolated teachers into a larger, more connected community of practitioners and professional learners.

### ***Collaboration***

Having introduced the programme to the entire school staff earlier in the academic year (see Chapter 5) helped to lay the foundation for subsequent involvement of non-participants with cohort members. In this way, the programme's contributions to the school extended beyond the 12-member group and was felt throughout the year, instead of merely at its culmination. This promoted process-oriented learning in the school, which, in reinforcing the growth of professional and social capital, fosters collaboration.

Collaboration is key to developing TL and effective reform (Frost, 2012). Collaborative school cultures are more likely to lead to improved teaching practices and student achievement (Bolan et al., 2005; Stoll et al., 2006). A strong sense of collaboration amongst teachers, cutting across teaching levels and taught subjects, was changing the co-tutor's view of the school's professional culture.

*Since the start of the programme, I see the development of collaboration because of the similarities in solving problems. Before that the primary [level teachers] were isolated from the secondary.*

(Co-tutor, cycle review 1)

Collaborating with peers and colleagues, the Headteacher noted, enabled teachers to tap into resources available to them at the school. The programme's methodology aided participants in harnessing the necessary resources that lay at their disposal.

*I discovered that most of the solutions that they chose to use in their steps were ones that they'd already used or are familiar with. However, they'd never conducted them in a methodological, sound way, and with intention and perseverance. They would implement them a few times and then stop using them. This time they feel forced in a positive way to reach their goal.*

(Headteacher, cycle review 1)

Her observation illustrates the TLDW methodology's ability to optimise available resources for developing collaborative practices (Frost, 2013). In providing a strategy that draws on local social, professional and intellectual capital, the programme reinforces the school's confidence in its own capacity and resources to lead educational improvement. Accordingly, the programme provides a guiding framework, whilst the school supplies the human and material resources. This underscores the significance of the programme for resource-stretched schools and settings, and releases education systems in underdeveloped countries from the control of foreign sponsorship (see Chapter 1).

Collaboration concludes the key themes discussed in the first periodic review with the PT. The meeting generated issues that fed into my subsequent action cycle, starting with the fourth group session.

#### **Fourth group session**

On the same day of the first programme cycle review, I held the fourth group session. The impact of the previous session in terms of engaging participants, discussed earlier in this chapter, generated eagerness for an extended fourth session. This was made possible by a shortened teaching day due to the end-of-term student examination schedule. Participants' readiness to meet for a longer session, given their heavy workloads and life commitments, indicated sustained engagement with the programme and their willingness to invest time when the activity mattered to them. The programme's regular group meetings and capacity to engage

participants appears to contribute to maintaining momentum and enthusiasm for development work and TL activity.

The session started, like the previous ones, with a brief welcome, a recap of expected progress and the session's agenda. However, this meeting was interesting because it revealed issues to do with networking and its relationship to trust-building, knowledge-sharing and group identity. It also raised moral issues for me as a practitioner. I examine these below.

### ***Networking***

Networking is a fundamental feature of the HertsCam Network, on which my programme is based, and is viewed as vital to knowledge-building and innovation (see Chapters 2). As discussed in Chapter 3, due to contextual limitations, I reduced the number of networking events in my programme from three to one. In planning the event, I consulted with group members about whether or not to invite teachers from other school settings. In addition to reinforcing participatory practices, the discussion generated consideration of interesting conceptual issues.

I suggested the following networking options to the group: holding an in-school event with teachers and support staff from our own school; inviting teachers from other schools, with a choice of private, public or UN-sponsored schools, or a combination; or limiting invitations to teachers from other schools that are currently receiving professional learning support.

This led to an impassioned group discussion on the merits of each option that provided insight into tensions that existed. I observed the following:

*The prospect of networking generated a very lively discussion of the hazards of doing so with non-programme-member teachers. For example, competition from private schools was cited, which was feared might lead some visiting teachers to be overly critical and potentially harsh or judgemental of participants' work. This was feared could lead to discouragement of participants, especially as they won't have completed their projects yet.*

(Participant observation, tutor, session 4)

Participants' concerns reveal several factors at play. Foremost is the lack of trust within the education system, particularly between private school members. Thus trust represented a

visible source of tension associated with the prospect of networking with outsiders. I explore this theme further.

### ***Trust***

Trust is an essential feature of knowledge-sharing and one that helps to deprivatise practice (Crowther, 2009). Supportive relationships amongst teachers and with their headteachers is the connective tissue of teacher networking (Daly, Liou, Tran, Cornelissen and Park, 2014; Katz, Earl and Ben Jaafar, 2009). While such trust might have been the norm at our school, its presence could not be assured amongst educational practitioners from other settings. An absence of trust amongst teachers threatened to undermine TL activity (Mangin, 2005; Mangin and Stoelinga, 2011).

Rivalries between schools for limited human and material resources might have in part fostered such mistrust. The absence of trust within the education sector complicates efforts to build a “culture of public practice” in which the extent to which teachers deprivatise their own practice and make it public can help teachers face their own vulnerabilities and improve practice (Fink and Markholt, 2011: 10).

Participants’ fears of facing criticism from teachers from other settings illustrated a persistent unease about displaying unfinished projects. This linked with a performance orientation towards learning that pervades the local education context (Ramahi, 2016b). Participants’ worries were noticeable, suggesting the continued challenge of shifting mindsets towards a learning orientation, and revealing an affective reaction.

### ***Emotions***

I observed a sense of apprehension stemming from the prospect of attendance by public school teachers. The reason for this is the general reputation in the local education system for the latter’s mediocrity and air of disaffection. I noted the following in my research journal.

*Another point raised was an expected apathy or disinterest by public school teachers whose indifference was feared might demoralise participants and curb their enthusiasm.*

(Participant observation, tutor, session 4)

This suggests participants' self-perceived vulnerability and desire to protect a nascent self-confidence. It may be understandable, given that reconstruction initiatives can strongly affect teachers' emotions for a range of reasons, varying from feelings of insecurity and threat to empowerment and enthusiasm (Darby, 2008; van Veen, Slegers and van de Ven, 2005). By guarding their emotional territory, the cohort was demonstrating its value to their professional growth and leadership activity. This collective concern revealed development of a distinct group identity.

### ***Group identity***

Participants' collective guarding of their professional growth suggests development of a group identity. Communities of practice foster a sense of identity and belonging among their members that is inseparable from learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Participants' newly acquired practices might have created amongst them a sense of belonging to a separate and distinctive class of educators. I reflected on this.

*It's interesting how participants are increasingly referring to themselves as 'we.' They seem to be developing a distinct group identity or at least one that is different from their peers at the school.*

(Participant observation, tutor, session 4)

Group members' newly formed identity might have been fostered by the programme's focus and change-driven discourse, elements that joined together to produce a new consciousness and common purpose. When establishing a teacher networking culture, the absence of focus and a change-oriented language may constrain knowledge-sharing (de Lima, 2010; Katz, Earl and Ben Jaafar, 2009). Networking with teachers who lacked this consciousness and discourse could have been what participants were trying to avoid.

A concrete outcome of this new group identity was their creation of a Facebook page exclusively for programme participants. Despite the benefits of social media for teachers in terms of facilitating pedagogic change (Goodyear, Casey and Kirk, 2014), it suggests the group's growing sense of exclusivity. Strong cohesion and group identity can lead to insularity and isolation (Ingram, Maye, Kirwan, Curry and Kubinakova, 2014) and perpetuate privatisation of practice. This may be a risk for communities of practice and created a moral dilemma for me. At the same time, it may simply reflect their uncertainty about the quality of

their development work and desire to remain discreet until substantive leadership practices emerged. Regardless of the reason or reasons, the matter gave rise to a moral dilemma for me.

### ***Moral dilemma***

The question of whether to network exclusively within the school or to venture out towards other schools raised moral issues for me. On the one hand, I felt great a sense of responsibility and obligation towards my participants to preserve the momentum and enthusiasm that they and I had painstakingly developed. Educational change processes require tremendous work by everyone involved and entail disparate emotional responses (Darby, 2008). Cultivating TL is a fundamental aim of my programme (see Introduction and Chapter 2). Once embedded at my school, I would be in a better position to develop it elsewhere. This would lead to the inclusion of other schools with which mine could network. Educational networks that develop gradually are more likely to succeed, and have impact on their members and schools (Veugelers and Zijlstra, 1996, in de Lima, 2010). I felt that this was necessary if my initiative was to have system-wide impact.

On the other hand, I had access to a self-empowering approach to learning in Palestine (Ramahi, 2016a) that I felt morally responsible to introduce and promote, certainly beyond my school. As I discussed in Chapter 1, educational change is urgently needed in Palestine following centuries-long foreign rule, and continued international intervention and dominance. However, if self-empowerment were to be exclusive to members of my programme, this raised the question of my contribution to the development of emancipatory pedagogy beyond my school (see Rusch, 2005).

Issues of power, control, access and selection are inherent in communities of practice, and liable to manipulation (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Limiting the programme to my school seemed to go against my larger aim that concerned the advancement of educational and socio-political transformation in Palestine. I pondered deeply on this dilemma in my reflective journal.

*This calls into question the contribution that networking makes in promoting devolved teacher leadership practices. If only a few participate, how will that impact those that don't? Does it create an elite out of those who do, in the sense that they become knowledge-builders leading educational reconstruction, while others are excluded or become followers? Will this widen the gap between them and teachers who for whatever reasons or circumstances cannot join networking activities?*

*[T]his flies in the face of democratic, participatory leadership as it sets participants apart from their peers. Does this create a privileged set of teachers who despite practising a non-hierarchical, bottom-up process of change, may nonetheless become the vanguard of what should be and remain a grass-roots movement of collective empowerment and educational change? Or does it first need to be incubated amongst a small group in one school and well established before it can take hold and expand outward?*

(Research journal, 06.01. 2015)

I was deeply conflicted by this issue and had not foreseen its development. Holding an intra-school networking event felt like I would be betraying teachers in other schools in the Ramallah area by depriving them of self-empowering and, arguably, emancipatory professional learning experiences. The moral imperative is about doing what is good for schools and whole systems (Fullan, 2010). I suffered a crisis of values, which is at the heart of moral leadership (Sergiovanni, 2007). Ultimately, democratic leadership practice relieved me of being solely responsible for the final ruling when participants requested postponement of the decision to a later date, to which I gladly agreed.

### **Fifth group session**

The 1st of March was the date on which I held the fifth group session. While preparing it, I sensed through naturalistic observations, casual conversations and monitoring of participants' Facebook page posts that many participants were anxious about the correctness of their action plans, a central component of the programme.

The fact that nearly halfway through the programme the majority of group members remained narrowly focused on technical tasks alarmed me.

*I noticed that participants were a bit stressed and worried about their action plans and results. I felt like they were too focused on the ends and not giving enough attention and value to the means, the 'big picture.'*

(Research journal, 01.03.2015)

In focusing on the *how* and not the *why*, my concern was that participants were adopting a technician approach to the programme and veering away from its focus on values and process. Technician models of teacher education and learning have been failing to cultivate teachers'

confidence, or to nurture inner wisdom and expertise (Dadds, 2014), as well as marginalising issues of social context and inequality (Hill, 2008). By adopting a results-oriented approach educators risk losing sight of their values and ethical self, and replacing cooperation with competition (Ball, 2003). At the same time, teachers in developing countries are generally technically underskilled (Hanusheck, 2013; Westbrook, 2013) and can benefit from acquiring basic know-how. This created for me a tension with respect to learning priorities between technicist models and values-led-approaches.

### *Values*

Recognising and articulating personal values is the cornerstone of promoting impactful, change-driven professional learning (Fullan, 1993) and TL (Frost, 2012). As I argued in Chapter 2, attempts to change teaching practices depend on the extent to which values and feelings are congruent with teachers' own beliefs about what is worthwhile in education (Hargreaves and Preece, 2014; Malm, 2008). Given that the presence of values in teachers' practice and learning depends on such values continuing to feature in discourse (Sunley and Locke, 2010), I decided to dedicate ample time in the fifth group session for participants to revisit their values.

I conducted a reflective exercise in which participants took stock of their initial reasons for joining the programme and the values that prompted their participation, and whether and how those had changed. The co-tutor noted this.

*The first hour of the session was dedicated to reminding [sic] teachers about why they joined the programme in the first place, which allowed the teachers to reflect on what elements of it were interesting and attractive to them. It forced us to stop and think about why we wanted to do this in the first place, which I think increased the momentum of the group.*

(Participant observation, co-tutor, session 5)

In actuality, the segment in question was not dedicated to *reminding* teachers of why they joined the programme rather to *enabling* them to remember. The difference is significant, with the latter suggesting a facilitative role instead of a prescriptive one. This illustrates the co-tutor's limited knowledge of the TLDW-driven discourse and the centrality for the tutor in adopting a more mindfully facilitative approach to professional learning support, a challenge for programme sustainability.

As professional learning contributes to the development of teachers' values and beliefs (Collinson, 2012), I wanted to give participants an opportunity to reflect on the extent to which theirs had been influenced since joining the programme. My overall aim was not didactic, rather it was to facilitate the growth of organic intellectuals who could think independently about significant matters (Hill, 2008). I suspected this would be a significant shift for high-power-distance societies that tend to be more comfortable working with strong leaders and prescriptive communication (Ning, Lee and Lee, 2015), a tendency prevalent in Arab societies (Kabasakal and Dasmalchian, 2001).

I expected group discussion to foster a sense of shared values amongst members. In contrast to arguments supporting the supremacy of expertise over values in developing TL (Fink and Markholt, 2011), I believed that sharing values and beliefs amongst educators could strengthen the sense of community and promote collaboration. In the HertsCam Network, members' shared values are key to building innovative practices, deprivatising knowledge and supporting TL (Frost, 2008b).

Revisiting the role of values through a group discussion encouraged consideration of the "big picture" in education and provoked judgment about matters of significance and purpose in educational practice (Hargreaves and Preece, 2014: 144). This I did by inviting participants to write their initial reasons for joining the programme on a flipchart and to reflect on how those reasons might have shifted. On five flipcharts with headings for the key thematic questions, participants wrote their thoughts (see Appendix 10). The ensuing discussion about participants' initial values and beliefs, assumptions and expectations, and how they changed generated a lively discussion that revolved around their experiences in the programme. This was another instance when the entire group was visibly engaged in sharing and listening to each other, reminiscent of the third group session. Evident was a sense of renewal and revitalisation of their attitudes towards their projects.

Reflection can be a powerful instrument for arousing values and inspiring action (Carr, 2004, 2007; Elliot, 1991). The opportunity to do so enabled teachers to think deeply about changes in their practice and previous assumptions, prompting a retracing of their initial purpose and motives. I wrote the following in my journal.

*Something that really went well was having them reflect on why they joined the programme and the goals of their projects. It was clear that they needed to revisit their initial purpose behind joining in the first place and how that may have changed along the way. So, this activity was instrumental and timely in getting them back on track. They realised that they needed more than to talk about their actions plans – they needed to reconsider their purpose.*

(Participant observation, tutor, session 5)

The voluntary impetus behind programme participation underscored the significance of reconsidering changes in values, purpose and aims. This might have served to guard against development work from turning into a technical exercise. The evidence suggests that about halfway through the programme participants needed to conduct the above exercise.

*Getting teachers to consider all this was a very timely and useful refresher. In fact, I think that reconsidering these issues, which they had done at the beginning of the programme, has a different effect this time around because they are now immersed in their development work and can relate to matters differently. I even think that their viewpoints may even have changed given the experience they've gained.*

(Reflective journal, 01.03.2015)

Facilitating this exercise during the programme and not as a post-evaluation activity allows participants to adjust practice *in situ*. Reflections on the values and motives that led participants to become agents of educational change proved to be a guiding force behind the programme. The mere discussion can contribute to innovation by enhancing teacher commitment and strengthening resilience (Sunley and Locke, 2010). Despite this development, the lack of time for facilitating TL continued to be a challenge, which I now discuss.

### ***Time***

Participant engagement in this activity and the evident deep thinking that was taking place led me to extend this segment by some 30 minutes. This took us well over the designated time and was problematic for participants who lived in the surrounding villages, of whom there were several in our group. As I explained in Chapter 1, continued Israeli military occupation of the West Bank, where Ramallah is situated, makes daily life and transport difficult for Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. One relevant example is that it increases the likelihood that commuters from the villages surrounding Ramallah will encounter delays and harassment by soldiers at military checkpoints. The co-tutor referred to this matter in her observations.

*The session did go a little longer than planned. With the occupation here and people living far away from the school, it does cause some problems. For example, when I went home that night, I drove 20 minutes only to find a checkpoint along the way, so I had to turn back and drive that 20 minutes again in addition to another 20 minutes to get home.*

(Participant observation, co-tutor, session 5)

This leads me to regret allowing the meeting to go over schedule and risking the personal safety of my participants. I was overcome by the activities that I had planned and tools that I thought would be useful for them to have at this stage of the programme, which needed proper explanation and would not have been as effective had I distributed them for individual review at a later time. My decision to do so was born out of a sincere desire to enable teacher empowerment.

Still, in retrospect and for ethical reasons I believe that I made a regrettable error of judgement. It was an instance when I prioritised the programme, and by extension the school's interests, over participants' wellbeing. Equally, my decision can be interpreted as having been aimed at enabling teacher empowerment for socio-political emancipation from oppressive forces and conditions. Both lines of reasoning may have been at play. Regardless, I should have taken all measures to ensure the safety of my participants, a matter for which I apologised during the subsequent programme activity, the third supervision.

### **Third supervision**

During the week of 8<sup>th</sup> March, I met individually with all twelve participants for the third supervision. Two-thirds of the way through the programme, I expected that they would stand to benefit from a conversation about project progress. As with the previous two meetings, the supervisions provided participants with individualised learning opportunities that addressed specific queries and concerns. For me, they facilitated monitoring of the programme, which enabled continued identification of participants' developmental needs, programme evaluation and subsequent adjustments. This time I limited each to approximately 30 minutes.

The supervisions varied according to participants' focus and rate of progress. All were engaged in some aspect of their development work. There was growth at both the professional and personal levels. I reflected on this in my research journal.

*Clearly, participants are much more assured of their work than they were earlier in the programme. They're no longer asking technical questions but are becoming increasingly concerned with more significant matters, such as project trialling, influencing peers, and impacting classroom practice and student performance. This is an improvement from previous supervisions.*

(Research journal, week of 08.03.2015)

The reduction in technical queries suggested two developments: participants had grasped programme concepts and were actively employing them in their practice; and they were beginning to see their larger role in school improvement efforts. The latter was likely to have been reinforced by the values-focused discussion during the previous group session. Despite this development, I maintained an affirming facilitative role in my capacity as programme tutor.

### ***Affirmation***

I was pleased with the progress made by participants and expressed to them the extent of my approval. I was consistently positive, employing superlatives at any sign of advancement in their development work, improvement in practice or leadership activity. The following exchange illustrates one such example.

Hanan: *Excellent. Beautiful.*

Nawal: *It was a slideshow. She knew exactly what I wanted. So, we decided on what we're going to do with students in the classroom. I saw the teachers engaged with the ideas. I now created a list of what we're going to do. Hopefully, this week we'll apply these [shows me] ...*

Hanan: *This is very clever... I'm enjoying hearing about this, tremendously.*

Nawal: *Good, I'm glad.*

Hanan: *You're glad? Why didn't you think I would be? Are you not aware of how knowledgeable you've become and competent about solving this problem? And of your leadership capacity?*

(Nawal, mid-level manager, supervision 3)

Affirmation and accolades represent essential features in renewing teachers' professional identities and lives (Flint, Zisook and Fisher, 2011) and are particularly needed during change initiatives that involve self-guided learning (Schmidt and Datnow, 2005). My superlative

remarks encouraged participants to elaborate on their achievements. This, in turn, enhanced awareness of the extent of their learning and growth since joining the programme.

Despite Nawal's leadership activity and collaboration with peers, her words still conveyed a sense of uncertainty. Fluctuating teacher emotions are not uncommon during reform initiatives (Darby, 2008; Van Veen, Slegers and Van de Ven, 2005). Generally, I strove to raise morale when teachers showed signs of doubt about their progress.

Hanan: ... *I hope this discussion was helpful.*

Nur: *Very much, if for raising my morale. You're the spiritual guide.*

Hanan: *You don't realise how much you're achieving*

(Nur, secondary-level teacher)

Well into the third supervision, I continued to provide emotional support to participants. As with the third group session (see Chapter 5), I employed affect-enhancing language to reinforce their self-confidence. During times of educational reconstruction teachers can benefit greatly from emotional support (Blazer, 2010; Schmidt and Datnow, 2005). The evidence illustrates consistently the significant role of emotions in enhancing agency and enabling TL at my school. This has implications for teachers' identity development.

### ***Teacher identity***

Teachers' emotional experiences of school reform can influence identity (re)formation (Hargreaves, 1998; Reio, 2005). When core beliefs and assumptions are at stake, teachers become vulnerable and uncertain about their role and competencies (Kelchtermans, 2005; Mitchell, Riley and Loughran, 2010). Feelings of self-doubt can reduce teachers' self-confidence, and lower risk-taking and initiative (Reio, 2005), features that are essential to TL (see Chapter 2). These and other challenges to participants' self-perceptions of their leadership role can threaten to undermine their willingness to innovate and contribute to large-scale educational change.

For these reasons and at this stage in the programme, I had two interrelated concerns: the extent to which changes in practice were affecting participants' views of their teaching role; and the ways in which these changes might have influenced their self-perception as agents of change.

Essentially, I became interested in the interplay between teacher professional identity and enhanced agency, as the following excerpt illustrates.

Najwa: *I don't know why it is where we feel like we're not doing anything. But when someone tells you you've done this and you've done this. You listen... [and say] 'Oh, OK.'*

Hanan: *You know why? Cause it's a new way of doing.*

Najwa: *Maybe. One expects change is always going to be really difficult so we feel like we should be doing something more than we are. And then someone tells you, 'You are; you've done things.'*

Hanan: *People think change has to be difficult and they think it needs a lot of effort. But the best kind of change is the gradual type.*

(Najwa, mid-level manager, supervision 3)

This conversation highlighted participants' uncertainty about their professional identity and leadership roles. It may have been an effect of the programme's self-led, process-oriented approach to learning, which was new and doubt-inducing for some participants. Whatever the reason, it underscores the usefulness of highlighting and affirming achievements as a way to combat teacher frustration during educational change (Blazer, 2010). Teachers learn better when they are encouraged rather than judged (Hargreaves and Preece, 2014). This is especially the case when one is changing deeply held beliefs, a long-drawn-out and challenging process (Saunders, 2014). Hence, emphasising the gradual pace of participants' impact on teaching and learning may offer teachers psycho-social support and reinforce process-led professional learning, key facilitators of TL.

### **Chapter summary and emergent insights**

This chapter has examined the programme stage during which participants engaged with activities that led to TL practice. Below I catalogue insights that I gleaned during the *'the heart of the matter'* for TL development at my school, when thinking and action began to change for teachers. The depth and range of data that I obtained using my methodology of regular monitoring and observation, and evaluation, and with the help of the PT, enabled me to make constant adjustments to my programme and to improve TL development. As with previous chapters, insights are listed under the relevant programme feature.

The shift from top-down to self-directed teacher professional learning can lead to:

- Uncertainties, insecurities and self-doubt;
- Confusion about teacher role and identity;
- Increased need for assistance and guidance;
- Increased need for emotional support;
- Need for continued presence of values as a driver of commitment to programme and TL.

Attention to teacher affect is important, and through praise and affirmation:

- Restores individual self-confidence;
- Raises individual and group morale;
- Facilitates deeper reflection on development work;
- Underscores reliance on programme tutor.

Structured group dialogue aimed at sharing experiences and challenges:

- Stimulates reflection and self-reflection;
- Breaks down teacher barriers;
- Encourages development of critical friendships;
- Builds social capital;
- Facilitates development of a PLC and community of practice.

Participant and group exercises and activities help to:

- Increase self-confidence;
- Develop self-efficacy;
- Enhance agency;
- Promote collaboration;
- Foster collective efficacy.

Interim challenges and limitations include:

- The influence of the tutor's school status on participants' and programme team's perceptions and decision-making;
- The role of the tutor's school status in influencing programme sustainability;
- The absence of other schools conducting the programme with which to hold networking events;
- The need for additional time for programme activities.

My study approach of simultaneous data collection and *in situ* analysis enabled me to draw on the above issues and insights when planning for the final stage of my programme. This entailed

bringing the intervention and programme to an end and planning for its sustainability, which I discuss in the next chapter.

## Chapter 7

### Concluding and sustaining the programme

In this fourth and final chapter I focus on three facets of my intervention: bringing the programme to a close; planning for its sustainability; and seeing that TL practices, as featured in my programme, are embedded in the school as part of everyday activity. The first two comprise programme operations and the fit with organisational structures. The third involves assessing the extent to which TL practices have been adopted at the school and established as a cultural and professional norm.

I examine the following programme activities and artifacts: networking event; sixth and seventh group sessions; portfolios of evidence; school presentations; and second and third periodic reviews. As with previous chapters, this account draws on data obtained through routine observation, monitoring, periodic review and *in situ* analysis of activities and artifacts, which took place between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015 and 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2015. Copious evidence generated additional insights pertaining to changes in teacher practices and development of TL. I start with the networking event.

#### Networking event

Participants' concerns about the potential impact of a networking event that is open to teachers unfamiliar with the programme and TL practices (see Chapter 6) led us to conduct it exclusively amongst programme members and at the school. The option was favoured by programme participants, which reinforced participatory leadership and resolved my moral dilemma. We concluded that the programme's approach to school improvement would be better served in a setting that afforded me control over activities in order to ensure fidelity with its principles.

Not involving members of different settings in knowledge sharing-opportunities meant that our chosen arrangement no longer constituted a networking event. However, context can sometimes override globalised standards where educational reconstruction may need to adapt change processes to local realities (Ramahi, 2013). Notable among this is resource availability

(Ramahi, 2016a and b), in this case the human resource of participants from other schools. By adapting to the local setting, I exercised a pragmatic leadership style that caters to contextual realities (Ruwhiu and Cone, 2013).

Networking in HertsCam involves knowledge-building, which Frost (2013) distinguishes from knowledge-sharing (see Chapter 2). The latter is a uni-directional activity of diffusion, whereas knowledge-building invites active engagement with peers to arrive at new understandings. I believed that this would be served better in an intra-school group setting. My participants displayed several features that promote impactful networking: a specified purpose, a common discourse and a trust-filled ethos, features discussed earlier in the section on networking (pp. 147-151). These and other more practical considerations encouraged me to hold a modified ‘knowledge-building’ event that suited contextual realities and programme aims.

### ***‘Knowledge-building’ event***

We held the event on 1<sup>st</sup> April during student spring recess when participants were free of teaching duties. All 12 cohort members presented slideshows of their development work to the entire group. Presentations consisted of project achievements to date, and plans for completion and leadership activity. Each had 15-20 minutes to present and 10 minutes for group discussion. I facilitated the day’s event, which lasted from 8 am to 1 pm, after which the group and I went out for a celebratory lunch.

Despite its limitations, the event was successful in many ways. This could be seen at the personal, professional and group levels. The co-tutor’s account illustrates the extent of impact.

*The atmosphere of the networking [sic] session was one of trust and confidence. Every participant was anxious to present and show his or her progress thus far. Great ideas were brought up about how to improve each other’s projects and how to maximize the impact of the project. The evaluations and feedback given by teachers were positive and were shared in a professional manner. No one felt judged by others; it was more of a family of teachers giving advice to one another about how to improve their projects and their presentation skills. The positive responses from Hanan put the group at ease. Their efforts were validated and it felt like the momentum on their projects increased after their presentations.*

(Participant observation, co-tutor, networking event)

The event showcased the development of a PLC. At the personal level, participants displayed self-confidence, empowerment and enhanced agency. Professionally, there was increased self-efficacy, innovation and leadership activity. As a group, members exhibited a genuine sense of trust, support and reciprocity, culminating in increased social capital and collective efficacy. Such events build capacity and extend teacher professionalism (Frost, 2012), and this particular one illustrates several of my programme aims. Teachers telling their development stories was instrumental in this regard.

### *Teacher narratives*

Having participants present and explain their development work to their peers required that they make sense of it. Given that teachers' professional knowledge is socially negotiated and continuously reconstructed within the classroom and schools where they work, sense-making was best served by a medium that embraces the complexities and ambiguities of lived experiences (Conle, 2000), of 'knowing-in-action' (Schön, 1983). Narrative constituted a legitimate and powerful way of doing so.

Participant presentations recounted activities and achievements in the programme so far. The re-storying process gave significance to *how* as well as to *what* teachers had come to know (Johnson and Golombek, 2002), prompting a learning- instead of a performance-oriented approach to knowledge production (Watkins, 2010). The following statement made by one of the participants to the co-tutor illustrates the power that collating one's experiences into a story can have for professional learning.

*I didn't know I had done so many tasks in my project until I put together my presentation.*

(Participant observation, teacher, networking event)

Shaping a sense of unity out of their teaching practices and role (Latta and Kim, 2009) enabled teachers not only to make sense of their professional worlds, but also to recognise the extent of change that was happening in their work and thinking (Clandinin and Connelly, 1996, 2000). This process encourages teachers to continue making significant and worthwhile change within themselves and their teaching practices (Johnson and Golombek, 2002).

The act of narrating to one's peers requires accounting for one's claims. Such accounts carry the possibility of being stories of empowerment and transformation (Connelly and Clandinin,

1990), particularly when they highlight the impact made in the classrooms, on peers and beyond. I noticed that this event helped to enhance teacher agency, in addition to their self-understanding of their role as innovators.

*Teachers are starting to see that they are agents of change... Their personal ownership of their projects through design, application and impact is changing their views of their own power in the workplace... The empowerment that comes from feeling that there's a solution to everything within reach through one's own agency is evident... the following statement by one member sums it up: 'We no longer talk about problems; we talk about solutions.'*

(Participant observation, tutor, networking event)

The shift in teachers' discourse from a deficit model to one more generative is highly significant for increasing leadership capacity. For this reason, narrative becomes vital, both as a process and product (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) in which stories about TL are not *about* professional learning but *are* professional learning. This reinforced the value of process-oriented learning, which teachers reflected on during the subsequent group session.

### **Sixth group session**

The sixth group session was held soon after the 'knowledge-building' event and illustrated members' keenness to discuss their recent experience and reflect on its impact on their thinking and future practice. However, the source of their criticism was different from that of previous discussions: this time I did not need to take a leading role. The programme was changing teachers' thinking and attitudes in empowering ways (Ramahi, 2016a, 2017).

At the same time and in tandem with increased self-confidence, participants remained eager to receive feedback from me on their performance in the event. Several stated that due to the limited time for discussion between presentations, they felt that they had missed out on valuable comments that I might have offered. Their request suggested a continuing need for appraisal and affirmation, a vestige of a performance-led, top-down learning mentality. This may correspond with the presence of high-power-distance norms that leads to valuing and seeking the opinion of authority figures. Conversely, given participants' positive response to

dialogic learning (pp. 115-117, 139-140), it could simply be a sincere desire to engage in dialogue with the programme tutor.

Whichever the reason or reasons, I considered this to be an opportunity to reinforce the shift in participants' thinking towards a learning orientation, this time through reflection on evidence of change in their practice. Hence I resisted giving feedback, as I had resisted earlier (p. 115), and strove to remain within my role as facilitator, with my responsibility centred on creating the conditions for TL development. As I argued in Chapters 2 and 3, developing reflection in the workplace is among the objectives of my intervention. Group session three (pp. 127-133) illustrated the positive impact of group dialogue and reflection. Thus, in order to promote further reflection, I informed participants that if anyone wished to receive individualised written feedback from me about their presentation that she or he would firstly need to give me a self-evaluation of their performance. My offer raised socio-cultural issues that I had not anticipated, to which I now turn.

### ***Teacher self-evaluation***

Teacher self-evaluation can be both a school-wide and an individual tool for improving teaching and learning (MacBeath, 1999, 2005a). During the school self-audit (see Chapter 4), I illustrated how I utilised its capacity to facilitate self-reflection at the school level in order to establish the conditions for my programme. At the individual level, it can be a source of professional and personal empowerment as it enables teachers to contribute to their self-improvement (MacBeath, 2005a; Towndrow and Tan, 2009). Although globally teachers are wary of being evaluated, when equipped with, and confident in, the use of self-evaluation tools, they can be more welcoming of the "external critical eye" (MacBeath, 2003: 768).

In and of itself, however, teacher self-evaluation is no guarantee of improved practice (Towndrow and Tan, 2009) and can merely result in additional data for policy-makers (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). Without a professional culture conducive to the development of self-awareness and reflexivity, impactful self-evaluation is unlikely to happen (Elliot, 1991). Ultimately, giving teachers the 'power' to act is useful to the extent that it is accompanied by knowledge of how this power can be employed to bring about increased understanding and change in one's professional practice (Towndrow and Tan, 2009).

The literature on teacher self-evaluation generally focuses on changes to classroom practice (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008; Schildkamp and Visscher, 2009). My interests extended to its relation to TL development and capacity-building. Evidence presented throughout the critical narrative of the development of a critical and self-reflective discourse amongst my programme participants encouraged me to invite group members to self-evaluate on a voluntary basis.

I presented the exercise as a means of identifying one's strengths and areas for self-improvement. Nevertheless, the invitation to self-evaluate essentially was asking teachers to acknowledge and declare, in addition to their strengths, their limitations. While I assured participants there would be full confidentiality, the idea of admitting and documenting one's professional weaknesses to a senior leader proved challenging. This is understandable given my positional power and possibility of such information influencing my view and potentially the Headteacher's, and impacting on annual teacher evaluations.

The notion of self-evaluation also generated a discussion that revealed a host of socio-cultural and religious considerations from within the Palestinian context. How it stood to impact the development of TL was my concern.

*This discussion was very insightful and significant because teacher leadership presupposes agency and a sense of empowerment. Palestinian/Arab society rarely fosters such norms or practices. So, we talked about why that is and if that had over the years hindered development of individuals' self-confidence, self-efficacy and/or agency.*

(Participant observation, tutor, session 6)

Facilitating a discussion on socio-cultural and religious values and practices is a complicated and nuanced task. Having operated at the intersectionality of my tiered Palestinian/Arab-American, insider-outsider identities had sensitised me during my 20 years of work at the school as to the role of societal culture in influencing self-reflection. For example, repeated observations during staff recruitment interviews revealed that when directly asked, Palestinians are much less likely, if at all, to self-identify areas in which they may need professional improvement. One reason for this may be conflating the need for self-improvement as a sign or admission of deficiency or incompetence. In contrast, Westerners are much more willing to self-identify professional learning needs; this includes Palestinians and Arabs reared or educated in Western countries. This illustrates an instance when my insider and practitioner

knowledge was useful in enabling me to understand a deeply complex socio-cultural phenomenon in my study, which I now explore.

### ***Islam and self-representation***

Delving more deeply into the nuances of values, beliefs and norms revealed inhibitions fostered by local societal culture and religion in relation to self-evaluation. In addition to unease with self-detecting professional improvement needs, most participants conversely expressed a sense of discomfort in self-identifying areas of strength. Some deemed the latter as boastful and self-important, and therefore un-Islamic and objectionable. I noted this in my research journal.

*We discussed whether claiming one's strength is a source of arrogance or conceit. Concern was stated whether it goes against Islam's call for modesty and humility. A very lively discussion ensued regarding the role of religion in fostering one's role as an agent of improvement in society.*

(Participant observation, tutor, session 6)

Islam is averse to displays of haughtiness and pride, invoking humility and modesty in every aspect of human life. This value is embodied in the Muslim view of leadership, which considers that the position, or in this case role, should be entrusted or bequeathed by one's followers or supporters rather than sought by the individual him or herself (Beekun and Badawi, 1999). This contrasts with the self-driven approach to TL that my programme was championing. For practising Muslim participants this was a source of disquiet. For those who could not identify the origins of their discomfort, the feeling was generally similar. Islamic values deeply permeate Middle-Eastern and Arab societies (Obeidat, Shannak, Masa'deh and Al-Jarrah, 2012; Sidani and Thornberry, 2009) and may account for their overriding influence on group members' beliefs and behaviours.

Normatively induced discrepancies in participants' perceptions between self-recognition and self-importance are further magnified by the influences of a traditional education system and conventional pedagogy that fail to provide agency-enhancing experiences. I reflected further.

*This generated a critical discussion of societal views of self-worth and self-appreciation. Members explored the difficulties in local society of self-recognition and the absence of individual empowerment. Teachers talked about how they seldom received opportunities at school or university to speak in front of others and to identify their strengths and needs for self-improvement.*

(Participant observation, tutor, session 6)

By identifying institutional practices and structural forces that inhibit human agency in the Palestinian context, participants were becoming more critically reflective practitioners and individuals (Ramahi, 2016a and b, 2017). Critical awareness of the roles of these forces can be transformational and emancipatory (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1989). The programme's capacity to conscientise participants with regard to the role of structural forces that lead to their disempowerment may prompt attempts at socio-political change in Palestine. I remained mindful of teachers' views of self-valuing going into the second cycle review.

### **Second periodic review**

The programme team met on 12<sup>th</sup> April for the second cycle review, during which I presented recent programme developments in thematic form, as previously. This time, I distributed an A4 sheet listing a set of insights generated by *in situ* analysis designed to prompt discussion. The meeting was useful for evaluating programme progress and providing suggestions for improvements. Particularly instrumental was the team's ability to extend my understanding of teachers' insecurities in the face of self-evaluation.

The Headteacher verified that teachers are generally uncomfortable when requested to identify professional areas needing improvement. She pointed out some of the challenges of doing so during periodic teacher evaluations that she administers, giving examples. Similarly, she confirmed their eagerness to receive praise and positive feedback. The co-tutor confirmed the latter through her observations that revealed that most participants wished to hear about their strengths from me, as programme leader. My positional power and its implications for participants' job security, pay and privileges might have been a motive.

The conversation led the team to explore further why teachers are uncomfortable with self-evaluation instead of seizing it as an opportunity for self-improvement. The Headteacher's

language revealed a significant discrepancy between the concept of (self-)evaluation that I was espousing and the kind that the she, and presumably others in the Palestinian education setting, were employing. The brief excerpt below from the Headteacher was revealing.

*When I give them [teachers] their evaluations, it's really difficult for me to convince them of their shortcomings.*

(Headteacher, cycle review 2)

Her statement revealed two significant issues concerning the way teacher evaluation was being conceptualised and deployed that may uncover additional underlying reasons for teachers' discomfort with its usage as an instrument for professional growth. Firstly, evaluation is being associated with individual shortcomings. This underscores teachers' unease with the idea of identifying and disclosing their need for self-improvement to SLT members. The notion of having professional weaknesses personalises educational problems and lays the blame on teachers for their presence.

Conversely, my interests lay in educational problems that are outcomes of larger institutional and structural forces. Thus, when inviting teachers to self-evaluate, I purposely explained the exercise in terms of identifying professional limitations that are consequences of the broader educational context, whether pedagogic, organisational, systemic or socio-cultural. The distinction was essential for encouraging teachers to willingly self-identify spaces for change, and for enhancing self-awareness and reflexivity. At the same time, I did not want my request to be taken as an opportunity for teachers to absolve themselves of the responsibility to improve educational processes and outcomes.

Secondly, the Headteacher's need to 'convince' instead of discuss with teachers their 'shortcomings' reinforces authority lines and undermines shared leadership practices. This puts into question the nature of the school's egalitarian culture, which has a direct impact on TL development. Such tensions underscore the claim that the inherently hierarchical architecture of school organisations and accountability channels inhibit authentic distributed leadership (Corrigan, 2013; Hatcher, 2005). It also presupposes senior leaders' uncontested knowledge of what constitutes good practice in contrast to the increasingly accepted view that teachers are the most knowledgeable when it comes to what happens in the classroom (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Pine, 2008).

The conversation increased senior leaders' readiness to attend to teachers' professional learning needs at an individual level. Such an approach was believed to provide a safe environment that would facilitate teacher self-identification of improvement needs without the risk of judgment or comparison. This part of the meeting was concluded by the Deputy Director who called for an organisational shift in the nature and structure of professional learning support at our school towards an individualised approach in place of the ubiquitous one-size-fits-all model.

*It's very important that we transition from the general to the specific. We need workshops that are individualised. Individual development is very important because it addresses specific needs or weaknesses. This reduces pressure on the institution. It's hard for a person to say that they're weak in some area... I may not want to announce it to everyone.*

(Deputy Director, cycle review 2)

Senior leaders' call to individualise teacher learning suggests their increased awareness of the utility and advantages of partnering with teachers for optimum provision. As previously argued in Chapter 2, individualised learning has been shown to be more impactful with respect to teacher learning (OECD, 2009b). SLT's shifting views held promise for TL development and sustainability, as I was about to prepare for the final group session.

### **Seventh group session**

The seventh and final group session was held on 27<sup>th</sup> May during a period of reduced work schedules for teachers due to students' final examinations. The meeting focused on compiling the portfolio of evidence of participants' development work that is required for the end-of-programme certification. In preparing for this last session, I was mindful of the need to attend to as many participant queries and concerns as possible before teachers were to take their summer holiday in about 10 days' time, when access to group discussion would cease. As a group, we had agreed to designate early August as the portfolio submission date, which would allow sufficient time for completion. Therefore I remained flexible and kept a provisional session schedule.

### *Portfolio of evidence*

Compiling the portfolio represented the programme's final stage in facilitating changes to participants' professional practice (see Chapter 3). This was due to the non-prescriptive nature of the portfolio, and its varied usage as a professional assessment, development and promotional tool. Its manifold forms and structure are underpinned by a process approach to learning that takes into account accumulative and progressive dimensions of development and learning, with the final mark being open to negotiation and co-validation between the compiler and appraiser.

This contrasted starkly with the performance results orientation towards learning that has characterised participants' educational experiences, whether as practitioners or learners, wherein examination has been the predominant method of assessment. As a general trend in Arab countries (Arab Knowledge Report, 2011; Eldakak, 2010), it may explain why the portfolio is rarely employed as an assessment and learning tool, and on which little has been written (Bahous, 2008; Bataineh, Al-Karasneh, Al-Barakat and Bataineh, 2007). Largely for this reason, compiling a portfolio of evidence understandably posed a challenge for group members. I made the following observation.

*As I expected, teachers are worried about compiling the portfolio. I don't blame them. I would be, too. The shift in the view of assessment needed of participants is truly massive. It requires of them to make so many changes in their thinking. Foremost, their concept of knowledge and what constitutes it must necessarily be readjusted, if not reformulated. Second, traditional views of assessment, which dictate its features, are dismantled. Third, agency in educational matters is given new meaning, and extends into new understandings of self-efficacy and self-representation, and a host of other implications.*

(Research journal, 27.05.2015)

A closer analysis of participants' attitude to compiling the portfolio revealed a much deeper and complex phenomenon for teachers and educators in Palestine and, potentially, similar settings.

The self-assessing nature of the portfolio provides a tangible instrument for authority figures to employ when practising devolved leadership. However, as shown during the discussion of self-evaluation and self-representation earlier in this chapter, doing so is problematised by institutional practices and structural realities. Failure has been indicated in some instances

when the portfolio has been used as an assessment tool to promote reflection during leadership development in developing countries and emergent education systems (Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi, 2011). There may be several reasons for this. Firstly, the portfolio requires that the person compiling it has competence in certain language technologies, such as self-reflective writing (Milne, 2009). While participants had enhanced their capacity for self-reflection, as I have shown in Chapters 5 and 6, the extent to which they are capable of textually articulating and documenting their internal thinking remained uncertain. Arabs are traditionally oral societies (Ayish, 2003) and thus may not find it easy to shift to written modes of expression. This is compounded by their characterisation as a high-context culture, wherein emphasis on meaning production is consigned to place and situation instead of written code (Zaharna, 1995). The requirement of a portfolio for programme certification was cited earlier during participant selection as one of the deterrents to joining the programme (p. 107). Thus, at the communication level, the portfolio posed practical difficulties.

Secondly, the self-evaluatory nature of the portfolio (Morin, 1995) posed normative challenges for participants, as discussed above. Most found it problematic to verbalise their strengths due to the socio-culturally perceived risk of self-eulogy and thus un-Islamic practice, yet the portfolio was requiring that they do so in concrete and permanent form. Despite this, however, the medium equally provided an opportunity for teachers to develop new means of self-awareness and self-representation. As a form of sense-making and means of authorship, the portfolio provided a way for participants to formalise their voice and individuality (Taras, 2008) and, in the process, substantiate their contributions to knowledge-building.

Thirdly, the portfolio is a confessional device that reveals the thinking mechanisms of its author. This may lead some participants to be reluctant to reveal their self-improvement needs (Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi, 2011). As an assessment tool, it transfers more power and authority to supervisory and institutional monitoring and scrutiny, increasing the risk of discipline and control (Tan, 2004). Given my power position in the school, this raised serious ethical considerations. One way to counter this effect was firstly to have participants understand the way power is exercised over them in the portfolio (Tan, 2004). However, doing so in a power-distance society may be problematic. In revealing the internal contradictions of the portfolio as a self-assessment tool, I risked undermining its legitimacy as a programme assessment device and its role in certificate awarding. This posed an operational challenge for me as programme tutor and complicated my ethical practice.

Fourthly, the aims of my intervention underpinned my evaluation method. While I adopted the HertsCam Network assessment criteria (see Chapter 2), the manner and extent of its deployment was subject to my perception of its relation to contextual factors. The programme's fundamental aim to develop TL was primarily underpinned by facilitating enhanced agency. As a key programme feature, the mere compiling of the portfolio served this purpose. However, I recognised the risk of teachers conflating enhanced agency with individual autonomy, with the latter not necessarily leading to educational improvement either at the professional or organisational levels (Tan, 2004, 2009). The portfolios provided me with evidence with which to explore these and other issues, to which I now turn.

### **Portfolio submission**

The programme officially concluded with participants submitting the portfolios of evidence. Although we had jointly agreed on an early August deadline, the cohort and I subsequently extended the date till the middle of the month. This was due to participants postponing completion of the portfolio till the very end instead of compiling it progressively, a tendency that leads to loss of the portfolio's potential to cultivate reflective practice (Donaldson, 2009). Nevertheless, I was flexible, given the challenges created by the assignment and participants' continued apprehensions. Project titles illustrate the diversity of their development work and range of focus (see Appendix 11). I include three vignettes from three portfolios (see Appendix 12), which can serve as tools with future cohorts or with other TLDW-based programmes. The portfolios provided a wealth of evidence for my investigation. The style, structure and content were as varied and unique as the projects themselves. However, the scope of this study leads me to limit my discussion to a few themes generated by the portfolios.

In order to systematise my examination, I focus my analysis on participants' end-of-portfolio summative reflections. This portfolio section represented participants' assessments of the programme, which entailed reflections on its impact on them professionally and personally. As such, it provided an in-depth participant self-evaluation of their development work and leadership activity, and represented an evaluation of the programme. As a self-confessional device and given my organisational power, I tried to maintain a heightened reflexivity throughout the assessment process. I now discuss some of the insights gained.

### *Validation of emergent themes*

Overall, participants' summative reflections supported the emergence of themes discussed throughout my critical narrative. These included the development and influence of the following programme features on participants' practice: consultation, documentation, reflection, group dialogue, collaboration and enhanced agency. As regards challenges, there was convergence on the limited amount of time available to conduct their development work to their satisfaction. However, the chronological structure of my critical narrative analysis precluded me from drawing on this evidence to support emerging themes discussed throughout as it was obtained at the end of the programme. Still, its appearance at this stage strengthens the validity of my analysis and reinforces an audit trail (Rodgers and Cowles, 1993; Shenton, 2004).

Noticeably absent from participants' summative reflections was the development of TL. This links back to my earlier discussion about group members' insufficient understanding and limited articulation of TL (pp. 122-123). There could be several reasons for this. Still, failure to mention TL did not detract from reference to enhanced agency, development of self-efficacy and actual emergence of leadership activity, primary features of TL. Therefore participants' neglecting to specify TL development in their summative reflections may merely illustrate an issue of conceptual understanding and linguistic representation rather than absence of TL development. Frost's recent clarification of the notional usage of the phrase non-positional TL to denote an agential, morally purposeful activity aimed at educational innovation and knowledge building is useful (MacBeath, Dempster, Frost, Johnson and Swaffield, 2018 forthcoming).

Finally, the discussion above pertaining to the revelatory nature of the portfolio was complicated by several participants' choice of presentation medium. Some decided to produce webpages as an incentive to increase their knowledge of electronic media of communication. The five who chose to produce unrestricted web-based electronic copies exposed their projects and the school to public scrutiny. In retrospect, this was unethical given the confessional nature of the portfolio. Without knowing the aims and mechanism of the programme, outsiders viewing the e-portfolios could misinterpret participants' criticality of their professional practice, and the school's structures and culture as illustrations of weakness or deficiency. Positioning themselves and the school in a vulnerable light amongst competing schools, and from the viewpoint of prospective teachers and student applicants, parents and guardians, and

in terms of general standing in the community and within the education system might have serious consequences for the school and programme adoption in Palestine. Consequently, web-based e-portfolios will no longer be offered as an option to programme participants.

One theme that stood out in several participants' summative reflections was the programme's facilitation of enhanced agency, the topic of my next discussion.

### ***Enhanced agency***

Several reflective summaries illustrated participants' enhanced agency. As I argued earlier, narrative writing allows expression of deeply moving life events. This enables reflection on complex workplace and daily experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995, 2000). Participant accounts revealed a new-found capacity to solve workplace problems.

*I learned that I am capable of solving the problem regardless of its magnitude, if I am equipped with the necessary tools. From now on no academic issue will pose a challenge for me.*

(Amal, secondary-level teacher)

*I learned that the key is in your hands regardless of the problem and not to wait for anyone to find the solution. Start yourself and you'll find the solution and become an innovator.*

(Naim, primary-level teacher)

A resounding sense of empowerment and self-efficacy permeated participants' statements. Problems were no longer viewed as obstacles but as challenges to be overcome and opportunities for growth. This was emancipatory for a group of educational practitioners who were accustomed to top-down, prescriptive teaching and learning (Ramahi, 2016a). Thus, the significance of Naim's freedom from reliance on others was a break from authority and the need for external expertise, and was highly emancipatory. The following reflection by Munir corroborated this sense of liberation.

*How do I solve my academic or [student] behavioural problem without the presence of experts?... In this programme I reached the conclusion that no one will solve my problem but myself...*

(Munir, secondary-level teacher)

Agential activity and empowerment in the workplace may be extending into other aspects of participants' lives. Munir continued:

*I wish I saw this clarity earlier, I would have approached so many things in my life in a way that would have improved my reality... from now on there is a solution to every problem in my life, if I will it.*

(Munir, secondary-level teacher)

The reclaiming of one's will illustrates the personal transformation that can emerge from practicing non-positional TL. Emancipatory learning has been shown to have transformative effects on adults and youth in Palestine (Ramahi, 2016a, 2017). Activating an emancipatory mindset in daily life, as illustrated in teachers' accounts, has implications for personal and societal change.

Teachers' conscientisation of their conditions and realities, and ways to act on them in order to change them are key features of emancipatory education and contribute to lifelong growth (Freire, 1970; Thompson, 2000). Reema articulated the propelling nature of her new thinking.

*The end of my project represents a new beginning for me in my career and my vision, and understanding of the concept of leadership, influence and learning.*

(Reema, primary-level teacher)

Participant recognition of learning as a lifelong endeavour is crucial for breaking traditionally prescribed boundaries of learning and domains of knowledge production. Reema's words illustrate the capacity for agency-enhancing learning to activate lifelong growth and lead to social transformation. Participants had an opportunity to demonstrate their changed attitudes towards their learning and role in innovating practice when they presented their projects to the entire school staff, my next section.

### **Participants' presentations to the school staff**

Schools that aim to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the information age and knowledge economy must be knowledge-creating (Hargreaves, 1999). This involves the

effective management and dissemination of locally sourced knowledge for the purpose of organisational improvement. To do so, senior leaders and managers need to articulate a new vision that views knowledge production as a spiral, dualistically driven process between structures and agents (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka and Toyama, 2003) instead of achieving it through external and prescriptive measures. This builds on Lave and Wenger's (1991) view of the socially constructed, relational model of learning found in communities of practice and has implications for TL development.

In such a model, knowledge is created through a synthesis of contradictions that exist between organisational resources and environmental factors, and not a balancing of them (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka and Toyama, 2003). The contextual, site-based nature of the knowledge created renders it unique to the organisation, or "sticky," and consequently best disseminated at the locus of production (Von Hippel, 1994: 429), the school. The guiding role of senior leaders and managers thus becomes crucial and involves enabling the necessary conditions for knowledge dissemination to take place (Hargreaves, 1999; Pan and Scarbrough, 1999).

One of the challenges of spreading such knowledge lies in its tacit and Mode 2 nature, and the appropriate means of diffusion. Tacit knowledge, or knowledge created in the workplace (Polanyi, 1967), needs to be made explicit for organisational learning to occur (Lam, 2000). With Mode 2 knowledge, which is carried out in a context of application as opposed to discipline-bound theoretical knowledge (Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2003), a trap to fall into would be to embody and disseminate this knowledge using only the approaches that have been successful for spreading scientific knowledge (McAdam and McCreedy, 2000). Rather, people with leadership and managerial positions need to find ways that enable such knowledge to cohere and make sense to its relevant users within the organisation (Brown and Duguid, 1998), ensuring a horizontal knowledge transfer (Walczak, 2005) that promotes structural power symmetry. Otherwise, without proper planning, schools may merely become information rich but knowledge poor (Gamble and Blackwell, 2001).

Conversely, it is argued that knowledge management is not really about managing knowledge but managing and creating an organisational culture that facilitates and encourages knowledge creation, appropriate utilisation and sharing (Walczak, 2005). Whilst trust is a vital feature of the knowledge-creating and sharing-organisation culture (Ipe, 2004), it does not explain the

driving motivator for taking part in such a culture. Hence, in promoting the knowledge-entrepreneurial culture, an equally significant challenge for managers becomes how to develop a knowledge-focused reward system that can effectively replace the traditional, commission-based remuneration mechanism (Pan and Scarbrough, 1999).

The literature is inconsistent about the role of tangible rewards as a means to enhance knowledge-sharing in organisations (Ipe, 2004). Nevertheless, the willingness of individuals to share what they know with others, despite empirical evidence supporting knowledge-hoarding and the need for monetary rewards, indicates that the process is far more complex and nuanced than it is generally thought to be. Feeling valued and appreciated for one's contribution to an organisation is cited as a non-material incentive (Ipe, 2004), as are the benefits derived from morally driven leadership (Frost, 2008a; Frost and Roberts, 2013). This corresponds to the values-driven model of inducements that is key to the HertsCam Network and my programme.

In order to promote horizontal knowledge diffusion (Walczak, 2005) at my school, the programme team invited all 12 group members to present their projects to the school's teachers, support staff and senior leaders. There were several reasons for the decision. Firstly, it was hoped the presentations would extend audience members' practical knowledge of innovations that could be employed to improve teaching and learning. Secondly, for participants who did not have ample opportunities to exercise leadership, presenting to a captive audience of their peers and colleagues afforded such an occasion. Thirdly, showcasing the school's changed approach to professional learning underscored senior leaders' participatory, teacher-led vision of school improvement. These comprised the main aims.

As knowledge was to be shared rather than reported, the process equally needed to be voluntary and not mandatory (Ipe, 2004). Accordingly, participants were encouraged to present, with all agreeing to do so. At this point I was mindful of the weight my invitation carried. However, confidence in the benefits of their presenting their work reinforced my belief in the use of power as a tool for the general good (see Chapter 2). Correspondingly, I was relying on the self-confidence and self-efficacy that participants had developed during the knowledge-building event discussed in Chapter 6. Thus I was not troubled by ethical issues.

The activity took place over a period of four days, when three participants presented each day between the hours of noon and 2 pm. Each gave a 20 to 25-minute slideshow to the entire school staff, followed by 15-20 minutes of questions and answers. Presentations were part of the first instalment of the school-assigned annual teacher learning provision. Accordingly, they were held at the usual time during the first week of teachers' return from the summer holiday, around mid-August, and thus did not infringe on teachers' work schedules. I now examine their impact.

### ***Impact of presentations***

The presentations had a significant impact on the school staff. The overwhelming majority were highly impressed by participants' projects and by several of the presentations. Colleagues were finally able to see what the group had been working on throughout the academic year. I wrote the following.

*Teachers and support staff were very impressed and taken by the presenters' work. One teacher said, 'I'm amazed at the work that has been done. They have left me speechless.' Another said, 'In my work of 18 years at this school someone finally came to solve a problem that I've been facing all this time.' Many other teachers gave very favourable feedback. The atmosphere was extremely positive.*

(Participant observation, tutor)

The quality of the work was regarded highly by all. This seemed to justify the hard work and long hours invested by participants in the programme. Projects assumed a pragmatic validity (Kvale, 1995; Kvale and Brinckmann, 2009) by demonstrating the extent to which workplace problems and challenges were solved. For anyone who remained doubtful of teachers' ability to innovate practice and becoming agents of educational improvement, the presentations marked a turning point. While legitimising teachers as knowledge builders (Frost, 2008b, 2012), participants' presentations equally reinforced the programme's credibility.

For senior leaders, the presentations were significant for several reasons. Firstly, they represented an impactful approach to bottom-up school improvement. This was significant given any doubts or concerns that their lack of direct involvement in the programme might have given rise to. While the Headteacher's leadership approach was a key factor in fostering the conditions for the programme, it was the participants who developed 12 school-based,

problem-focused strategies for innovating teaching and learning at the school. I made the following observation.

*The Headteacher noted that the projects were very valuable and had potential for impact on the school... She was very pleased with the outcomes, and the new strategies and methods that participants arrived at.*

(Participant observation, tutor)

The presentations were vital for illustrating to her the leadership potential that lies within teachers in the drive towards school improvement (Fink and Markholt, 2011; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 1996). Her affirming response to the projects illustrated her willingness to learn from school staff who held no authority over her. This underscored her egalitarian leadership practice and presence of a participatory, democratic culture that values members for their contributions regardless of status (Woods, 2005). Validating teachers' contributions equally reinforced non-monetary organisational rewards (Ipe, 2004).

Similarly, senior leaders' recognition of the programme's capacity to transform not only teachers' practices, but also their mindsets from critical bystanders into active change agents in the school improvement endeavor, was important.

*The Headteacher noted how Munir and Nawal had conducted projects that led them to improve practices and thus attitudes about things in the school that they were previously complaining about but not doing anything to change. The Deputy Director concurred.*

(Participant observation, tutor)

The programme's capacity not only to generate solutions to school-based problems, but to transform unconstructive mindsets into positive, agential ones is significant for several reasons. Most importantly, in the eyes of senior leaders TL was now viewed as a vehicle for effective school-wide change, leading them to bolster provision of school opportunities aimed at enhancing agency and facilitating leadership activity. I now examine the culmination of the week of presentations.

### ***Celebrating teacher leadership***

The event marked participants' school-wide leadership debut. The opportunity to present school improvement strategies to the entire school staff, including senior leaders, was visibly a crowning achievement for the cohort and generated a great sense of fulfilment in an otherwise self-led, individual development journey. This was followed by a small certificate-awarding ceremony to which participants responded very favourably. I reflected on this.

*Programme participants really deserved to be celebrated amongst their colleagues and peers, and in an atmosphere of praise and admiration. They earned their moment of commendation and reward. It was so magnificent.*

(Research journal)

*This was an amazing moment; each participant was so, so proud. They were like children, so happy to receive their award.*

(Participant observation, tutor)

In this instance, I optimised usage of my status in the school to highlight participants' achievements. By utilising my organisational power to advance the collective interests of the school (Sergiovanni, 2007; Starratt, 2012), I underscored teachers' capacity to build knowledge and lead educational innovation. In addition to validating their enhanced professionalism and significant contributions, I felt that participants needed this sense of completion in order to feel gratified. Feelings of achievement can reinforce self-efficacy in the face of future learning challenges (Bandura, 1989, 2001) and leadership activity (Bangs and Frost, 2012). Certificate-awarding symbolised the school's valuing of participants' contributions towards innovation and reinforced non-monetary reward incentives.

At the same time, I was careful not to present the completion of the programme as an end to either participants' professional learning or leadership activity, but a commencement. This may signify an inherent tension in the structure of certificate-bearing professional learning provision. Programme completion needs to be understood as a winding-down of a formal apprenticeship built on relational and experiential learning, in line with the view of proximal learning (Lave and Wenger; 1991; Rogoff, 1990) and its informal continuation. Participants were duly aware of this matter and recognised their projects as works in progress, as evinced in some portfolios (see Reema's reflection, p. 176).

The momentum to carry projects forward into future practice underpinned participants' attitudes as expressed in their presentations. Despite the anticipation that had built up amongst the school staff about project outcomes and extent of impact, participants seemed generally unperturbed about sharing their innovations and improvement strategies, and about judgements made thereof. I reflected on this.

*I'm impressed by their [participants'] composure and calm as they presented to their peers and colleagues. Although I expected them to be more nervous, presenting to each other earlier in the programme must have helped in easing potential apprehensions. I'm inclined to believe that participants are confident about their projects and all the work they'd done throughout the year.*

(Research journal)

My impression suggests that participants were pleased with their contribution to the improvement of teaching and learning. While a sense of ownership might have driven this feeling (Rainer and Matthews, 2002), the less commercial sense of authorship might equally have underlain the activity, which underscores the process of exploration and articulation of meaning (Fielding, 1999). Either way, what mattered was that their attitude had shifted towards a more self-guided and process-oriented view of learning in which the actual activities undertaken throughout the programme gained a value comparable to tangible outcomes. The week's presentations left their mark on the school's professional culture.

### ***School culture***

The week's activities highlighted existing features and fostered new ones in the school culture. Audience members' genuine engagement with, and appreciation of, presenters' development work and leadership activity reinforced an egalitarian, supportive ethos already present in the school. I reflected on the event.

*You could see that all the teachers and support staff were happy for the participants' achievements... Noteworthy, is the good feeling that was amongst all. There was no apparent sense of envy, rivalry or bitterness. Everyone had witnessed throughout the year how hard the participants had worked and many engaged passionately with them about their projects during the presentations.*

(Participant observation, tutor)

By showcasing participants' educational innovations and enhanced agency, the week's activities provided a platform for the school to join together as a community to support TL activity in the drive towards improved educational practices. This established the school's change-driven culture and leadership approach, and illustrated the programme's ability to enable TL development and build professional capacity.

Additionally, I strongly believed that the four-day event truly elevated the organisational and professional culture of the school to a previously unprecedented level. It takes visionary and courageous leaders to build new cultures based on trusting relationships that foster inquiry and action (Fullan, 2003). Participants' projects and several of the presentations were of a quality that I had never seen given at the school by a staff member or external expert. I reflected on the school and my role in it.

*Since the founding of my school some twenty years ago, I have never been more proud of being a part of it as I did this week. The whole experience was magnificent and very inspiring. The school's professional staff, and namely teachers, exhibited the most sophisticated and genuinely innovative projects I have seen. The discussions that emerged were state of the art despite teachers' limited knowledge of recent advances in pedagogy and school-related topics. In a nutshell, I have never been so proud of the school and my role in it as I was this week.*

(Research journal)

While the event clearly represented a number of personal and professional achievements for me, it had a significant and concrete impact on the school's professional culture and organisational structures. Teachers' increased sense of professionalism and innovative solutions to school-based problems encouraged the Headteacher to propose policy changes, which I discuss in an upcoming section examining the third cycle review. Before doing so, I consider the role of the school staff in supporting programme development and enabling TL.

### ***Role of school staff in the programme***

Noteworthy during my facilitation of the four-day event, however, was my conscious attempt to highlight the contributions of non-participants to the development of group members' projects. In organisational settings, individuals draw on collective knowledge, which they employ, link and contribute to a set of intertwined activities rather than applying it in discrete linear steps (Littlejohn, Milligan and Margaryan, 2012). Underlining the communal locus of

the knowledge created by participants was necessary in order to emphasise the collective effort and school entitlement to the newly built knowledge. Doing so also served to help reduce any ill feeling or resentment on the part of peers and colleagues who might have felt that their contributions to participants' development work were not acknowledged during the presentations. I wrote about this in my journal.

*I linked them [projects] to efforts already made by other teachers to solve the same or similar problems using the same or similar methods. This was important given that some non-participating teachers started saying how they had already tried some of the presenters' methods. So, I needed to refer to the notion that programme participants are not reinventing the wheel, merely using a strategy to organise and systematise work that builds on collective knowledge. I also made sure to thank those who helped teachers in their projects.*

(Participant observation, tutor)

Equally, I made sure to credit senior leaders.

*I thanked the Headteacher for providing the conditions and cultivating the kind of culture that enabled the programme to flourish, for her support and facilitation, for her guidance of each participant, for not being threatened by the program, for supporting teachers to trial new methods and approaches. This was very affirming for her.*

(Participant observation, tutor, 19.08.2015)

Highlighting the collective knowledge and community of practice on which the participants drew was strategic with regard to including school members in TL activity and by extension to school improvement. I hoped this would avoid the development of a rift between programme participants and school staff who had not had a similar opportunity to self-improve (see Rusch, 2005). As with the networking situation (pp. 147-151), this illustrated another instance when the absence of a school-wide change-driven discourse threatened to inhibit professional interaction (Luehmann and Tinelli, 2008) and weaken social capital.

The positive impact of the programme on the school staff, as viewed through participants' projects, reinforced the SLT's and my growing conviction of the need to conduct the programme the following year. Our decision was equally prompted by the need to sustain the impact generated by participants' improved practices and leadership activity. Therefore the third cycle review addressed both programme ending and resumption.

### **Third cycle review**

The third and final cycle review represented the culminating activity of my intervention. As with the first two meetings, it was conducted by the PT. This time, however, it took place after the second programme cohort had already started. Accordingly, foremost in the team's mind was identifying programme optimisation that centred on policy-level decision-making. Key to the discussion was ensuring programme sustainability while maintaining the integrity of its values-driven, voluntary nature. The matter raised issues pertaining to best practices for promoting purposeful engagement and genuine collaboration among teachers, the themes of my next two sections.

#### ***Structural changes***

Following the successful presentations of participants' projects, the Headteacher's commitment to the programme increased noticeably. One of the ways this was manifested was in the structural changes she made to facilitate programme impact. An example was the rearranging of the teaching timetable of the new cohort in a manner that made participation in after-school activities easier, which she did by freeing the new participants from their last teaching class on the day of group sessions. This enabled them to start and end meetings 45 minutes earlier than the previous group had done. Commenting on this during the review, I said the following:

*Hanan: The strength of what [the participants] presented led [the Headteacher] to facilitate the group sessions... I'm so pleased... it's so great when you feel that... the Headteacher enables the programme to succeed... if she didn't have the willingness and enthusiasm, she wouldn't have suggested it.*

*I never asked, and I know I can. And I know that it has added work and burdens.*

(Periodic cycle review 3)

This excerpt refers to several matters. The Headteacher made structural adjustments to teachers' schedules to optimise participants' time utilisation in order to reduce additional time pressures. As discussed in Chapter 2, such changes by headteachers are necessary in order to provide the conditions that promote TL and underscore the Headteacher's role in its facilitation. It also illustrates her concern for teachers' wellbeing, further reflecting her caring leadership, and its role in TL support.

Equally significant is the fact that the Headteacher's decision was unsolicited by me, despite my ability to do so. Even though the positive programme impact on students, teachers and the school would have justified any requests that I might have made for programme continuance, I elected not to guide her decision in order to preserve her professional autonomy, underscoring the call for supporting democratic school leadership practices and culture (Woods, 2005). By not trying to influence her thinking, her decision has gained authenticity and has enhanced her ownership. So, despite her limited involvement in programme activities, her decision illustrates her commitment to TL development and support for the programme.

### ***Programme sustainability***

The positive impact of the programme on the school led the PT to explore ways to sustain the programme at our school. However, deliberating on the most effective ways to do so revealed ethical tensions. Problems emanated from the two fundamental programme features underpinning participation: voluntarism and moral purpose. The first, voluntarism, is essentially intended to ensure participants' genuine commitment to improving teaching and learning (see Chapters 2 and 3). However, when a few members of a school invest valuable professional and personal resources into improving school-wide practices, while others elect not to, it becomes unfair to those doing all the work. I alerted team members to this.

*I see something happening that's unfair to participants, which is that they're making the effort to improve the school while others aren't. They really are contributing in their own time.*

(Periodic cycle review 3)

My concern was born out of a need to be fair when drawing on teacher resources, particularly their time. I was troubled by the idea that the school would capitalise on the goodwill and hard work of a few well-meaning, morally inspired individuals. I was concerned lest this lead some to become disillusioned by the school and its leaders, and undermine the egalitarian ethos of the school culture, which I had been cultivating so diligently since its founding 20 years earlier.

The ideal solution was for the entire staff to voluntarily participate in the programme at some point during their employment at the school. This seemed reasonable given that it would ensure an equal distribution of labour across all school members. However, inducing participation clearly contradicted the notion of voluntarism and collaboration (Lam, Yim and Lam, 2002),

as the following shows.

Hanan: *We can't make teachers join the programme because it's voluntary... In the end, we can ask [the Headteacher] to promote the programme; she could have everyone join. Rather, I prefer more fair ways.*

...

Headteacher: *You want to at first make it inconspicuous or they'll start feeling that everything we claimed is untrue.*

(Periodic cycle review 3)

The Headteacher and I struggled with the inherent contradictions of managerially inducing future voluntary participation in the programme. Conscientious, ethical leadership is requisite when promoting values-driven change initiatives. Team members could not see themselves imposing participation, rather they preferred a supporting role in leading improvement. This entailed entering into a “developmental partnership” with teachers to promote growth instead of an “implementation partnership” that would enforce compliance (Biott, 1992; Lam, Yim and Lam, 2002: 15).

Accordingly, we explored ways to encourage voluntarily teacher participation.

Headteacher: *It's about us encouraging them to solve a problem and their seeing their colleagues in the programme; they'll develop the motivation not to be less than those who joined the programme.*

...

Headteacher: *We can ask everyone at the beginning of the year to identify a problem that they want to solve. If they want to solve it they'll start asking people/colleagues, 'How did you solve your problem;' in the end they'll start saying, 'If I'm doing it anyhow, I might as well obtain a certificate.'*

(Periodic cycle review 3)

Though senior leaders may not have control over teachers' values and beliefs, they can heavily influence the school environment. Hence, the PT suggested adjusting school policies in ways that would encourage participation, as propounded by Grimmett and Crehan (1992). While such tactics entailed a sacrifice of administrative efficiency, it was a sound method when undertaking the slow process of cultivating shared values, change-driven attitudes and improved practices amongst teachers (Lam, Yim and Lam, 2002).

## Chapter summary and generated insights

Chapter 7 concludes the second part of this dissertation, comprising the critical narrative of my programme and intervention. The chapter consists of activities and events aimed at ending the programme and embedding TL activity at my school. I have included an examination of programme sustainability planning, which involved a transitioning process that joined the entire school staff and highlighted senior leaders' role in the process. Below I list the insights gained from this fourth chapter and final stage of my intervention as they relate to programme activities and features.

Presenting projects to colleagues and peers during the 'knowledge-building' event and as part of the school's annual professional learning programme:

- Provides participants with an opportunity for a school-wide leadership activity;
- Showcases participants' achievements, contributions and leadership activity;
- Encourages the spread of TL amongst school staff;
- Enables storytelling about development work and leadership activity;
- Engages peers in knowledge building;
- Elevates sense of teacher professionalism;
- Enhances participants' self-efficacy;
- Facilitates improved teaching practices;
- Is a form of organisational knowledge-sharing.

Programme impact on school culture:

- Improves teaching practices;
- Fosters collegiality;
- Enhances teacher professionalism;
- Builds social capital;
- Promotes change-driven ethos and discourse.

Participant self-evaluation as a form of self-reflection, and means to self-understanding and self-improvement is curtailed by:

- A religious and socio-cultural view of self-recognition and self-commendation as ego-centric and immodest;
- A traditional educational system that is short on opportunities for agency-enhancing activity;
- Headteacher's fault-finding language during teacher evaluation.

The portfolio is a source of tension for participants:

- Due to their limited experience in expository and reflective writing;
- As a self-confessional device that exposes teacher thinking and limitations to authority figures and institutional monitoring;
- When its compilation is left till the end of the programme.

Programme sustainability:

- Is problematised by voluntary participation;
- Is underpinned by a morally purposeful culture;
- Requires prompting by senior leaders.

## **Part C**

### **Key lessons learned**

In this third and final part of my dissertation, I discuss what has been learned from my study and derive implications for theory, methodology, practice and policy. Initially and as stated in my Introduction, my aim was to investigate a way to activate the vast potential of teachers to lead educational innovation in my school in Ramallah, with implications for the Palestinian education context and the wider MENA region. To accomplish this, I adopted the non-positional approach to teacher leadership, the guiding principle behind the TLDW framework on which I based my programme Teachers Leading the Way (see Chapters 2 and 3). For the investigation, I employed a purposely designed critical participatory, action-based methodology that emphasised practitioner reflexivity and dialogue with a focus on context to underscore the educational and socio-political transformation that I aimed to promote (see Chapter 3). The congruence between the principles and practices guiding my intervention aims, and my epistemological approach enabled me to research programme development throughout my study, in contrast to conducting *post hoc* evaluation. Using an overarching set of themes and subthemes in place of research questions to guide my data collection expanded and enriched the scope of evidence that I drew upon for my analysis. This enabled me to configure a narrative out of an extended, action-led episode of development and learning from which to produce knowledge.

The range and depth of insights generated through critical narrative, though appealing in a communicative sense and analytically valuable, can problematise attempts at theory formation. This is because the act of thematic selection and issues to focus on when ascertaining the implications becomes a highly political and moral decision. While this claim can be made of every stage of the study, particularly one espousing a critical agenda, as I have acknowledged in the Introduction and Chapter 3, still, I had more control over conceptual, methodological and certain contextual choices than empirically driven, emergent outcomes. I emphasise the relativity of the process as I equally recognise the intersubjectivity of thematic and issues selectivity throughout the analysis stage. In my defence, I rely on a pertinent and pointed evidentiary trail permeating the narrative, supported by triangulation and infused with reflexivity to support my choices.

In identifying the most significant contributions of my study I relate it back to one of its primary features: the context. Palestine is a place of extreme and oppressive conditions. In Chapter 1, I examined the way in which various forces historically have impacted and continue to shape the education system and its current policy agenda. The ensuing development of an authoritarian culture suffused with a submissive individual and collective mindset was reinforced by top-down, transmission modes of pedagogy and learning. To this effect, TL emerges as a means of countering authoritarian norms and practices in schools and potentially beyond. It does this by creating and seizing upon agential opportunities to lead professional learning and innovation, and its dissemination. Hence, my programme's capacity to enable teachers to become self-empowered practitioners and lead educational improvement in Palestine distinguishes the contributions of the intervention and my investigation.

This view supports my decision to focus on the changes that took place within the individual teacher that fostered the development of TL. This is not to discount or undermine other key outcomes that underscore the significance of TL development in the Palestine setting that I could have chosen to highlight, such as teacher self-efficacy, inclusion, voice, innovation and collaboration, alongside the development of social capital, collective efficacy, community of practice and PLC (see Appendix 13B). Instead, I highlight the nature and extent of the shift in teachers' thinking that led to the adoption of TL practices for its role in enabling these outcomes and its significance to an educational and socio-cultural context that is inhibitive of agential activity. This entails emphasising teacher experiences in the programme that facilitated changes in thinking and behaviour. Transformational learning theory (Mezirow, 1978, 1991) offers a useful set of concepts for understanding and discussing these changes, and the process by which they are fostered. To this end, the extent of generated insights offers an opportunity to theorise on both the actual changes in teacher thinking and practice, and the role of attendant features, particularly the facilitation of the transformative learning experienced by teachers in the programme.

I present the key outcomes of my study in three chapters. In Chapter 8 I discuss the transformation experienced by participants, the significance of its development and the mechanism by which it was fostered. In Chapter 9 I theorise on the meaning of my study for the educational and socio-political setting of Palestine and the MENA region by considering implications, offering recommendations and presenting contributions to knowledge. In Chapter 10, the last in this dissertation, I reflect on my doctoral experience and suggest future research

directions. I start by discussing the link between transformational learning theory and studying the development of TL.

## Chapter 8

### Teacher leadership and transformational learning

The non-positional approach to teacher leadership rests on the principle and practice of agency as a goal and a means (Frost, 2012). The teacher-led development work model provides a context-friendly strategy for enhancing agency by enabling the development of teachers' capacity to build professional knowledge and disseminate innovative practices in schools (Frost and Durrant, 2003). Literature on the HertsCam Network and ITL project illustrates its effectiveness in facilitating TL, and enhancing school culture for school improvement (see Chapter 2). A key feature of TLDW is its capacity to promote change in teachers' beliefs and assumptions about educational matters and practices in the workplace that leads to TL activity. The practical process of change demands a shift in support from a prescriptive, top-down model to a self-guided, process-oriented learning approach that rests on reflection, dialogue and collaboration.

In part two of my dissertation (Chapters 4 to 7), I narrated critically the enactment and development of my TLDW-based programme, Teachers Leading the Way, whereby a group of 12 teachers and educators were enabled to practise TL in one school in Ramallah, Palestine. In order to draw lessons and insights from the analysis, I focus on two study outcomes: the kind of learning that fostered TL within individual participants and the process that brought this about. In other words, the *what* and *how* of programme impact on participants that led to organisational and cultural improvement.

We know that change in adults does not occur easily (Kegan, 1982, 2009; Mezirow, 1978, 1991). Much has been written about how to effectively change teacher practice (Fullan, 1993, 2007; Crowther, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Frost and Durrant, 2003; Katzenmeyer and Moller, 1996; Lieberman, 2011; Murphy, Louis and Smylie, 2017). Professional learning initiatives that aim to achieve substantive and sustainable impact on teachers' lifeworld, including values, beliefs, assumptions, experiences, knowledge, practices and future outlook, to which my programme aspired, require knowledge of adult capabilities (Choy, 2009; Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano, 2014). This is because adults are distinctly capable of abstract thinking, construction of values and ideals, introspection, subordination of short-term interests

to the welfare of a relationship, and orientation to, and identification with, the expectations of groups and individual relationships of which they wish to feel a part (Kegan, 1982, 2000). These features distinguish adult learning from learning in childhood and have significant implications for effective facilitation.

Hence, adult development and learning theories offer a set of useful tools for in-depth understanding of cognitive and behavioural changes in adulthood. In addition to the psychological, adult learning theory draws on social, linguistic and pedagogic mechanisms involved in the process of adult development to advance understanding of, and explanations for, the learning that leads to cognitive and behavioural changes. Hence it becomes indispensable for advancing theory on the type of learning that took place amongst my participants in their context, and the mechanism that facilitated change in their assumptions, beliefs and practices, leading them to adopt TL practices.

Despite the usefulness of adult learning theory to explain and inform changes in teacher thinking and action, discussion of it remains fairly absent from most of the literature produced about professional learning in the workplace (Choy, 2009), which focuses on leadership development (Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano, 2014). This includes studies on the HertsCam Network and ITL initiative, which in choosing not to incorporate adult development and learning theory for facilitating TLDW may have delayed substantive theory formation and practical insights which could improve TL development, particularly in contexts beyond the UK.

In the field of adult learning, Mezirow's transformative, or transformational, learning theory offers a cogent and coherent explanation of a deep and profound kind of learning that happens in adulthood. Basically, transformative learning is claimed to produce fundamental and irreversible change in adult thinking that leads to action. Mezirow (2009) defines it as:

[T]he process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumption and expectation – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change. Such frames are better because they are more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (p. 92)

Fundamental to the theory is its capacity to explain change in individuals' meaning-making schemes, or frames of reference, that alter decision-making and action, and the process of how that occurs. This contribution has led the theory to become the most prominent and widely used in the adult learning field and literature since the early 1980s (Taylor, 2007). Despite challenges to transformational learning theory which regard it as being just good learning (Newman, 2012) and no more than a conceptual metaphor (Howie and Bagnall, 2013) that has limited application beyond the classroom (Murray, 2013), its conceptual tools were extremely useful in assisting me in the following: identifying the perspective change that took place within my study participants and led to TL activity; explaining the stages involved in the transformation process as delineated through the programme; and illustrating the facilitation needed to ensure smooth and effective transformation.

The lure, however, of the theory to explain change in adulthood has led the term 'transformation' to be used to explain any change in adult thinking and practice, and organisational behaviour (Kegan, 2000). Hence, Mezirow cautions that although all learning may be change, not all change is transformational. As a trope, the theory risks loss of meaning and reification (Brookfield, 2000). For this reason and in light of the continuous development and expansion of the theory, it has become more useful to view transformative learning theory as a metatheory within which operate a collection of useful theories and conceptual frameworks that explain features of transformational learning in adults (Hoggan, 2016; Mälkki and Green, 2014).

Accordingly, in discussing the significance of my study, I employ Mezirow's (1991) theory of perspective transformation in adulthood for its focus on change in meaning-making that informs decision-making and leads to action. Meaning perspectives are composed of two dimensions: habits of mind or assumptions and resulting points of view. Changing meaning perspective in adults is done through the two key elements of critical reflection and self-reflection, and critical dialogue. During the first, adults critically assess the sources, nature and consequences of habits of mind. This involves three types of reflection: content, process and premise. The second key element, critical dialogue, is participating fully and freely in dialectical discourse to validate a best reflective judgment. These features of perspective transformation theory are highly useful for examining the lessons to be learned from my change-driven, action-based study.

In this chapter, I draw on the above conceptual tools to explain the emergence of TL through my programme and in my school context. There are two sections. In the first, I identify the particular perspective transformation that occurred amongst teachers as a means and outcome of the programme, and resultant action taken by teachers. In the second, I illustrate the programme-led process that facilitated the perspective transformation and examine the stages experienced by participants. I begin with a discussion of the shift in participants' meaning-making perspective.

### **Perspective transformation**

For transformative learning to have taken place there needs to be evidence of some form of perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991). The critical narrative (see Chapters 4-7) provides evidence that illustrates a significant shift in the frames of reference that guided teachers' thinking and practice, and led to TL activity. The key transformation in participants' perspective was a sense of enhanced agency in the workplace. A key aspect that transformed is the belief that professional knowledge for improving teaching and learning is not the sole repository of authority figures nor is it spread exclusively through hierarchical rank. Instead, participants discovered that they themselves can be the vision behind improving practice, the source of the relevant knowledge and the means of its dissemination (Daoud and Ramahi, 2017; Ramahi, 2017). This epistemic change was foundational to the process that led teachers to adopt and exercise non-positional TL.

In the context of a structured programme aimed at developing TL practice for educational improvement, the shift in participants' meaning-making schemes led them to achieve certain programme outcomes. I identify a set of key action-driven outcomes that I show to be particularly relevant to my study context. These are: knowledge-building, authorship and non-positional TL activity. The significance of these outcomes lies in the extent of impact on the participants themselves, school staff, organisational structures and school culture. I now draw on parts of my analysis to illustrate transformation in participants' perspective towards enhanced agency and the resultant action generated as a key outcome and means of my programme, drawing primarily on participant accounts to bolster the strength and legitimacy of my claim.

### ***Enhanced agency***

The key transformation of perspective that occurred amongst teachers was the awareness of their role, or agency, in leading the improvement of their practice and student learning, and in disseminating innovation. This discovery appeared early on in the programme and continued to evolve and inform participants' actions up to the programme's conclusion and presumably beyond. The integral and progressive nature of this development reinforces enhanced agency as a credible programme feature and outcome (Frost, 2012, 2017a). I now examine this development by discussing thematically its central and ensuing features. The themes are linearly conceived as: change in thinking, self-empowerment and embeddedness. The first represents the beginnings of enhanced agency; the second, its manifestation; and the third its permanency.

### ***Change in thinking***

Relatively early on in the programme during the first individual supervisions teachers began to indicate a profound change in their thinking (pp, 118-123). That some participants expressly identified such a change at this stage suggests that it was the source and beginning of enhanced agency. Munir's response to being asked what had changed for him since joining the programme exemplifies the burgeoning of an agential mindset.

*In all honesty, a major change in the way of thinking. The idea now has to emanate from me and not be ready-made from elsewhere. This for me is the biggest thing. I am the source of the idea and information. After I've collected the information properly, then I will come up with something correct.*

*... I'm the owner of the idea and the solution...*

(Munir, secondary-level teacher, supervision 1)

"A major change in the way of thinking" is a profound event in one's life. As humans are distinctly and inherently meaning-making beings (Kegan, 2000), a reforming of one's meaning-forming scheme is an epistemic change with potentially ontological consequences (Lange, 2004; Mälkki and Green, 2014). Realising its emergence and identifying it as a key development early on in the programme illustrates the magnitude of its significance for participants and the extent of their self-reflection on it. This suggests a readiness for, and receptivity by, teachers in Palestine for such change and an indication of the ineffectiveness of

previous professional learning approaches to substantively and deeply impact thinking and practice.

Change in one's view of the world has implications for how and what one thinks, and the actions one believes one is capable of performing and willing to take (Kegan, 2009). This can affect the way one views one's role in the world and purpose in it, an ontological consideration that can alter one's theory of living and have significant impact (Kegan, 2000). In a professional setting, intellectual change of this nature and scope has implications for professional identity and practice (Drago-Severson, 2012a). In the context of teachers' professional learning, it can lead to TL (Frost, 2014, 2017a). For teachers, schools and, conceivably, the education system in Palestine, the potential for impact may extend beyond education and lead to socio-political action and mobilisation (Ramahi, 2017).

### ***Self-empowerment***

Enabling the empowerment of teachers as agents of change through non-positional TL is a key guiding principle behind the TLDW framework (Frost, 2017a). In adult education, developing "a sense of self-empowerment" is the "cardinal goal" and emerges through perspective transformation (Mezirow, 2000: 26). Munir depicts the change in his thinking as a shift in the source of knowledge from one that is externally driven to one that is internally led. We know that knowledge is power; sourcing, building and authoring it fosters a sense of empowerment amongst teachers (Frost, 2017a; Ramahi, 2016a). Given the potential impact on professional decisions and practices, Munir signifies the enormity of the epistemic change when describing it as "the biggest thing."

The change in perspective may have implications for Munir's personal, social and political life. This is because internal sourcing of ideas and knowledge-building is guided by personal values and beliefs; reflecting on and articulating them is a primary principle guiding non-positional TL (Frost, 2012) and represents a feature of the epistemic shift experienced by participants. Fostering awareness of education as a values-based enterprise as opposed to a set of self-evident truths enhances criticality of the sources and philosophies underpinning orthodox knowledge and education systems, and, by extension, socio-political institutions and structures. This viewpoint may lead teachers and educators to ponder the provisional nature of knowledge production and education systems, and thus the capacity to change it. At the least, it reflects teachers' frustration with professional learning provision that falls short of deeply impacting

teacher thinking and practices, a common viewpoint held by teachers (Guskey, 2003; Guskey and Yoon, 2009; Villegas-Reimers, 2003), and their desire for change-driven approaches. In the context of Palestine, teachers' positive response reinforces the programme's timeliness and teacher readiness for agency-enhancing initiatives.

The epistemic shift to a self-led approach to knowledge production and the capacity to "come up with something correct," namely valid strategies to improve practice, to some degree frees teachers from authority and hierarchy. The insistence that "the idea now has to emanate from me and not be ready-made from elsewhere" suggests a declaration of independence and liberation from institutional dicta and structural norms. Through self-guided, sound educational improvement methods, teachers can take ownership of the means of knowledge production and cultivate an emboldening sense of authorship; hence the significance of Munir being "the owner of the idea and the solution." Ownership in this sense need not indicate a commercial enterprise but one of authorship that underscores the process of exploration and articulation of meaning (Fielding, 1999). Similarly, it reinforces a shared sense of responsibility on the part of the school community towards those whom the knowledge is meant to impact, the teachers and ultimately the learners.

The sense of responsibility through authorship suggests an organic development of individual accountability for improving teaching and learning, of moral purpose. This underpins the awareness of working systematically, as Munir says, "After I've collected the information properly, then I will come up with something correct." In highlighting the methodological approach of TLDW (Frost, 2013), Munir lays to rest potential accusations of the randomness of knowledge built by teachers. The significance of the programme's methodology was indicated by participants (pp. 119-121), lending a pragmatic validity (Kvale and Brinckmann, 2009) to their project outcomes. This reinforces the legitimacy and thus authority of the knowledge built and disseminated by teachers.

### ***Autonomous thinking***

Within self-empowerment as an outcome and indicator of enhanced agency operates a constellation of co-constitutive features through which transformative learning is fostered and which can be grouped under autonomous thinking. In the context of professional learning in Palestine these include, but are not restricted to, a sense of liberation, independence and

freedom from restrictive norms and practices, and development of self-efficacy, self-confidence, ownership, authorship and voice. Autonomous thinking is not to be mistaken for autonomous work, which as an organisational feature of teaching in schools has been blamed for driving teachers into solitary work lives (Mangin and Stoelinga, 2011). Rather it is to be understood in relation to transformative learning that is an outcome of critical dialogic engagement, occurs in collaboration with others and thrives in PLCs and communities of practice (McComish and Parsons, 2013).

Autonomous thinking thus comes to represent the act of individuation or the process of breaking away at some level from the group or community when the adult gains independence from group and collective thinking and develops a more distinct, self-guiding and self-determining view of the self and its role in society (Boyd, 1991, in Mezirow, 2009; Cranton, 1994). This is the stage during which adults transform what they are subject to into an object that allows them some level of control and influence (Kegan, 2009). As an expression of self-empowerment, the significance of autonomous thinking in relation to professional learning and TL development in Palestine and similar settings is in its capacity to enable teachers to break free from traditional and institutionalised norms and behaviours.

The development of autonomous thinking amongst participants was highlighted as a main programme feature and outcome in participants' summative statements in their portfolios of evidence, in which they reflected on conducting development work and practising TL. The excerpts below are to be understood in the context of the programme's facilitation of a project aimed at solving a workplace problem or concern as a means of innovation and leadership activity. Naim's account supports the emergence of autonomous thinking and action.

*I learned that the key is in your hands regardless of the problem and not to wait for anyone to find the solution. Start yourself and you'll find the solution and become an innovator.*

(Naim, primary-level teacher, supervision 1)

The sense of self-empowerment and agency resulting from taking charge of solving one's work-related problems reveals a transformation in perspective. Feeling free of the need to receive help to solve workplace problems exemplifies a liberation from authority figures and

external experts, that leads to increased self-confidence and enhanced self-efficacy in the face of workplace challenges. This view is echoed by another participant.

*How do I solve my academic or behavioural problem without the presence of experts?... In this programme I reached the conclusion that no one will solve my problem but myself...*

(Munir, secondary-level teacher, supervision 1)

In addition to confirming a new-found freedom from traditional holders of knowledge, this new mindset suggests that teachers are starting to believe that they can exceed authority figures and become experts themselves in their own right. This can lead teachers to realise their professional potential and foster a sense of moral authority for leading improved practices. In so doing, my programme will have responded to the resounding call to unleash teachers' potential in school improvement efforts (Fink and Markholt, 2011; Katzenmeyer, and Moller, 1996). Additionally, it signals an indictment of the type of previous professional learning support for not only having been ineffective in releasing teachers' creativity, but also ostensibly having delayed its emergence. This may be behind teachers' general dissatisfaction with conventional modes of professional learning programmes. This is not to undervalue support that offers skills-building, particularly in developing contexts where it continues to be needed (Hanusheck, 2013; Westbrook, 2013), rather it is to underscore the need for programmes that provide opportunities for deep and substantive change.

At the school level, and given the presence of supportive conditions, the programme offers a strategy and set of tools for enabling teacher self-empowerment that leads to TL. Participants were highly aware of the programme's assistance in this process. Corroborating Munir's earlier statement, which highlights the legitimacy of his innovation, Amal links it to provision of the right tools.

*I learned that I am capable of solving the problem regardless of its magnitude, if I am equipped with the necessary tools. From now on no academic issue will pose a challenge for me.*

(Amal, secondary-level teacher, supervision 1)

Amal's statement attributes her resounding self-confidence and self-efficacy to the presence of the "necessary tools" in a causal relationship. While at first glance this may indicate the

creation of a dependence on the programme, it can alternatively illustrate interdependence on effective professional learning support and guidance. Supportive organisational structures and effective professional learning programmes can enhance wellbeing and improve teacher retention, two challenges facing teachers on an international scale (Brown and Wynn, 2008; McCreight, 2000). Hence programmes that set out to do so help to improve teacher quality and raise student outcomes in arguably any context. In underdeveloped and oppressive settings undergoing democratisation, its significance and potential for impact cannot be overstated.

Prevalent in such contexts and throughout the countries of the MENA is transmission and rote-style pedagogy, and adherence to results-driven assessment standards (see Chapter 1). The programme's self-guided and process-oriented approach to learning, which I examine further in the next section, challenges the pillars which support such educational systems. Despite the challenges created for most participants by the approach, it was key in facilitating teachers' perspective shift. Naim powerfully conveys the impact of TLDW on his thinking and practice.

*It's like someone who was shackled and this programme removed these constraints, and opened the door for me to work freely and not be afraid about the outcomes of my work.*

(Naim, primary-level teacher, supervision 1)

This statement exposes the terrors and dread experienced by teachers educated and operating in a predominantly results-based educational system. Such anxiety is likely to have originated from within an education system wherein standards of success and failure have created and reinforced a sense of intellectual paralysis, leading to professional restriction and confinement. Naim's apprehensions are not unique but were first signalled by prospective participants during programme recruitment when several teachers referred to the potential for their projects to fail as a deterrent to their joining the programme (p. 107). This exemplifies an extreme end of the spectrum of the current global performativity culture that afflicts Western and industrialised education systems, and undermines teachers' creative potential (Ball, 2003; Biesta, 2009). It was not until Naim comprehended that learning would take place throughout the programme and that assessment would be based on the quality of development work and extent of leadership activity that he experienced a sense of freedom that unleashed his professional potential and creativity.

Hence, through facilitation of a prospective transformation towards enhanced agency and autonomous thinking the programme enables the peeling off of layers of self-confinement brought on by years of restrictive institutional practices and systemic inequalities. In realising the values-driven basis of knowledge and education, and capacity to build and disseminate innovation, teachers begin to question the usefulness of results-based and transmission modes of pedagogy and learning. Despite the continuing need for instrumental and technical knowledge transfer that may necessitate performance-led assessment methods, learning in adulthood that changes thinking and leads to action is most effective through a transformation of perspective.

In realising their potential role to lead the production and dissemination of educational knowledge for school improvement, teachers discover the extent of their previous confinement and the role of educational structures and practices, and socio-political and cultural norms in contributing to their disenfranchisement and marginalisation. Ultimately, an enhanced sense of agency becomes the force through which teachers can confront the restrictions that are perpetuated through non-coercive disempowering measures, when the right conditions are provided. In other words, self-empowerment leads to an awareness of teacher confinement and the benefits of changing the structures and norms that perpetuate it. The programme's facilitation of non-positional TL provides a vehicle for accomplishing this pivotal transition through an enduring transformation in teachers' meaning-making perspective. I now discuss the permanency of such change and its significance as a feature of its transformative capacity.

### ***Embeddedness***

An epistemic change of the significance that enhances agency is an irreversible experience for adults, and teachers no less. The embeddedness constitutes its transformative character (Hoggan, 2016; Mezirow, 1991) and contrasts starkly with instrumental support that keeps teachers locked into a hypothetical-deductive mindset and focused on relatively short-term goals. Therein lies its capacity to inform and impact future thinking and activity, and represents the starting point for continuous, self-directed professional learning that sustains change in teacher practice (Cranton and King, 2003) and TL activity. Its permanency addresses the sustainability challenge of change-driven educational and school improvement initiatives (Byrne-Jiménez and Orr, 2012; Stoll, 2009).

In her summative statement, Reema illustrates the embeddedness of her changed thinking vis-a-vis its influential role on her future practice.

*The end of my project represents a new beginning for me in my career and my vision, and understanding of the concept of leadership, influence and learning.*

(Reema, primary-level teacher, supervision 1)

Her new understanding of “leadership, influence and learning” in relation to her career and vision underscores the extent and impact of the transformation in perspective, and felt agency in directing her professional trajectory. The programme’s capacity to continue impacting teachers’ thinking and practice, both conceptually and practically, beyond its completion underpins the permanency of the perspective transformation as a means of capacity-building and sustainability of change-driven school improvement initiatives. Capacity-building is an essential feature of sustainability (Byrne-Jiménez and Orr, 2012) and is supported by leadership development (Dinham and Crowther, 2011) of a transformational nature (Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano, 2014).

As stated earlier, perspective transformation in adulthood invariably leads to some form of action. The key action-based impact of teachers’ enhanced agency in the programme was, and not in order of significance or development: knowledge-building, authorship and leadership activity. I now examine each as a tangible programme outcome fostered by teachers’ transformation in perspective.

### ***Knowledge-building***

Upon experiencing a sense of enhanced agency, teachers and educators became more active in leading their projects. While this took place throughout the programme, a key concrete outcome of their participation culminated in the building of professional knowledge. The significance of this as an outcome of their transformed perspectives rests on two matters: its contrast to transmission, top-down forms of knowledge that participants were accustomed to; and the quality and scope of its impact on themselves, peers and the school.

Teachers’ end-of-programme presentations of their projects to school staff and senior leaders as part of the school’s professional learning programme provided an occasion for showcasing the nature and quality of knowledge built, and an opportunity to practise TL (pp. 176-182).

Given that teachers are the primary and ultimate consumers of teaching innovations and hence arguably the best judges of its potential impact in the classroom, the resoundingly positive response from peers and colleagues was a strong indicator of the usefulness of knowledge built by teachers (pp. 170-180). Teachers who judged some project outcomes as breakthroughs in approaches to solving work-related problems reinforced the earlier suggestion that participants were becoming experts in their own field.

Such feedback represents social and dialogic validation of participants' capacity for leadership. Similarly, the pragmatic validation of their project outcomes (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) underscores the event as having effectively demonstrated to the audience teachers' professional potential and untapped creativity. Thus, Mode 2 knowledge was carried out in a context of application as opposed to discipline-bound theoretical knowledge (Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons, 2003) through an approach to knowledge creation as a dynamic process between structures and agents (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka and Toyama, 2003). This might have prompted the beginnings of a shift in perspective for senior leaders and school staff with regard to the locus of practice-based knowledge-building from being the responsibility of authority figures and external experts to that of teachers themselves.

The Headteacher corroborated the value and usefulness of the knowledge generated by several project outcomes (pp. 179-180), which she later adopted as school policy (Daoud and Ramahi, 2017). Her observation of the role of knowledge-building in changing teachers' attitudes in the face of workplace challenges from one of dissatisfaction and passivity towards a more proactive and deliberate mindset illustrates the extent of impact that participants' knowledge production had on senior leaders (pp. 179-180). This underscores the shift in teacher perspective to one capable of resolving previously intractable problems. Thus knowledge-building comes to represent the action and outcome that emerges from teachers' enhanced agency. My exuberant, pride-filled reflection on the day further underscores the quality and sophistication of teachers' innovations and extent of professional growth (pp. 182-183).

Teachers narrated the knowledge-building process and their leadership activity in the programme's portfolio of evidence. Compiling the portfolios for certification was an act of authorship that contrasted with the numbers-generated model of assessment used to and practised by teachers. As such it represents another key outcome of the programme-fostered perspective transformation, to which I now turn.

### *Authorship*

A significant result of participants' transformation in perspective towards enhanced agency was the act of authorship. This was demonstrated in the portfolio of evidence that teachers compiled at the culmination of the programme in which they narrated the story of their development work and leadership activity, and for which they were awarded certification. Authorship represents an advanced stage of human communication and representation (pp. 75-77), and thus its demonstration illustrates a major programme outcome in any context. In relation to the shift in teachers' meaning-making schemes, narrative reasoning enabled them to assemble an explanation of the change in their thinking and practice, and, in the process, to realise the extent of its impact (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Latta and Kim, 2009). Thus authorship, wherein they reflected on and conveyed their thoughts and actions, illustrated an advanced stage in their development (Kegan, 1982) with implications for professional identity formation. The epistemic shift from institutional and authoritative narratives to bottom-up, teacher authorship underpins development of self-empowerment and an agential mindset.

Teachers voiced their concern about the requirement to compile a portfolio as a key deterrent to joining the programme during recruitment (see Chapter 5). This is understandable given that the portfolio requires that the person compiling it should have competence in certain language technologies, such as self-reflective writing (Milne, 2009). In numbers-driven educational assessment systems, prevalent in Middle-Eastern and Arab countries (Arab Knowledge Report, 2011; Eldakak, 2010), such skills may be lacking and are likely to pose challenges for teachers that inevitably lead to insecurities and anxieties. This may be a reason that the portfolio as a leadership development assessment tool has been shown to fail when used to promote reflection in education systems of developing countries (Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi, 2011).

Equally, the portfolio represents a means to formalise the author's voice and individuality (Taras, 2008). In authority-led and hierarchy-based educational and socio-political settings that offer limited educational or professional opportunities for agential activity and self-representation, such as Palestine, the capacity to self-author may be limited and require substantial time and practice before it can be justifiably employed in an assessed document. This may explain why the portfolio is seldom employed in Arab countries as an assessment and learning tool (Bahous, 2008; Bataineh et al., 2007). In addition, participants' ability to freely self-evaluate the impact of their contributions on peers and the school may be

compounded by socio-cultural and religious mores that discourage such practice for being self-eulogy and thus immodest (see Chapter 7).

These challenges underpin the significance of participants' ability successfully to compile the programme's portfolio in Palestine and underscore authorship as a key outcome of the transformation in perspective towards enhanced agency. Hence it comes to represent participants' increased capacity to think autonomously, and voice and formalise their individuality in the process of substantiating their contributions to knowledge-building and TL. I conclude this section by examining TL as a fundamental programme outcome and means.

### ***Leadership***

The third key activity to emerge from participants' changed frames of reference towards an agential mindset is the practice of TL, a fundamental programme aim. Enhanced agency is both a means and an end of TL (Frost, 2012). Thus its development is crucial for enabling teachers to lead educational innovation. In my programme this was demonstrated in two ways. Firstly, participants' portfolios (pp. 171-176) showcased their capacity for TL in addition to development work for which they received the award of certification at the culmination of the programme. Secondly, participants' end-of-programme presentations to the school staff and senior leaders displayed teachers' capacity to build knowledge to support improved teaching and learning (pp. 176-179).

Despite the prevalence of TL throughout the programme, teachers were rarely prone to designate their leadership activity as such. The *concept* of non-positionality does not appear to have taken root amongst participants. There may be several reasons accounting for this. Firstly, leadership as influence may not have broken through the local power-distant culture, pervasive in MENA countries (Hofstede, 2001). In Palestine, a turbulent political climate of long standing that has focused on a singular charismatic leader may underline the challenge of shifting the concept of leadership to one of activity and influence. While throughout the programme I employed Arabic terms that signify leadership as a form of entrepreneurship, which denotes innovation, it does not appear to have gained resonance, at least not yet.

Accordingly, in such contexts and in the interim it may be more useful to conceptualise non-positional TL as a form of self-empowerment for educational improvement and socio-political transformation. In settings with a history of political disempowerment that are undergoing

democratisation, in which tribal and collective socio-cultural norms and customs overpower individual freedoms and restrain agency, as in Palestine (see Chapter 1), emphasising my programme as a means of reappropriating the means of knowledge production and the license to disseminate might prove more effective and enduring as an approach to TL development. Thus, at this stage, enhanced agency as a key underlying outcome of my programme may outweigh others at the conceptual level. Teachers may first need themselves to experience a transformation in perspective of an epistemic nature before they can develop and embed the capacity and moral imperative to lead others towards changing educational and socio-political conditions. This view corresponds with Mezirow's (1991) belief that before change can happen at the group or societal levels, it needs to start at the individual one.

There may be additional reasons for participants' hesitancy and timidity to emphasise their development as practitioners of leadership. Non-participating teachers in the school might not have had sufficient confidence in teacher-built professional knowledge. A feature of the enabling conditions for practising TL is a school culture that is conducive to teacher knowledge-building. While senior leaders were supportive of programme development and activity, there is no way of knowing if the school staff was as supportive or genuinely accepting of the idea of TL during programme enactment. Equally, participants' invitations for school staff involvement in TL activities might have represented an additional burden for an already overworked teaching staff. Yet another reason might simply have been the personal rivalries and micro-politics created by an inherently competitive system with limited financial resources and positional status. Nevertheless, the positive reception for the end-of-programme presentations might have encouraged non-participating teachers to reconsider such views, as their positive reactions would seem to indicate (p. 179). This would reinforce the significance of formal social validation opportunities for promoting non-positional TL at the organisational and cultural levels.

In sum, the extent of change in perspective and impact of outcomes was predicated on the transformational process. This was underpinned by the approach and effectiveness of facilitation, which I now examine.

## Supporting perspective transformation

Adult learning that leads to transformation in perspective is a process-led experience (Mezirow, 1978, 1991). The previous section illustrated participants' transformed perspective regarding an agential mindset as a means and outcome of the programme and TL. Perspective transformation occurs through a ten-stage process, either linearly or recursively (Mezirow, 1991: 168-169). The steps are:

- A disorienting dilemma;
- Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame;
- A critical assessment of assumptions;
- Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared;
- Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and action;
- Planning a course of action;
- Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans;
- Provisional trying out of new roles;
- Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;
- A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective.

The process is prompted by a single or series of disorienting dilemmas in which one's meaning-making scheme becomes incompatible with new knowledge or a task. My critical narrative chronicled the programme-led process that participants went through and stages that fostered the change in their meaning-making schemes. Given that the process is interactive, inter-relational and interdependent, and subject to contextual realities and conditions, its primacy with regard to the transformation in perspective underscores the significance of the setting to my study.

That said, context and the role it plays in shaping transformative learning has been identified as having been historically overlooked in Mezirow's conception of transformative learning theory (Taylor, 1998, 2007). Recent studies conducted in African and Middle-Eastern countries expose the dominance of Western values and norms in transformational learning theory (Merriam and Ntseane, 2008; Ntseane, 2011) and emphasise the importance of contextual sensitivity and considerations to the process of transformational learning (Cox and John, 2016; Madsen, 2009, 2010; Ntseane, 2011). In underdeveloped, democratising settings pervaded by power-distant norms and kinship values, such as Palestine, attention to socio-cultural realities

and educational conditions underpins the facilitative process of teachers' transformation in perspective.

Accordingly, effective facilitation of TLDW becomes key to supporting and guiding participants through the stages of perspective change in settings that diverge from that of the UK, the framework's place of origin. In fact, while supportive conditions are essential to this approach, as conceptualised in Chapter 2, quality facilitation becomes vital for teacher professional learning (Poekert, 2010). The evidence in my study indicates that in Palestine this may be a key enabling condition that requires of the facilitator deep and thorough understanding of three dimensions: the values and principles that underpin non-positional TL; the strategies, techniques and tools of the TLDW framework; and the prevalent local educational conditions and practices, and socio-cultural beliefs, norms and customs. This knowledge is critical for enhancing the facilitator's ability to support participants as they navigate an epistemological and potentially ontological experience. In-depth examination of the programme process and stages that enabled the shift in teachers' thinking through the lens of perspective transformation theory assists in generating valuable insights for improving strategies that support the development of TL in places like Palestine, the MENA region and similar settings.

I now discuss the main programme features that fostered teachers' changed frames of reference, with attention being paid to the kind of facilitation that guided the process. I start with participants' experiences of the disorienting dilemmas that catalysed transformation in their perspective and move on to examine my facilitation of key stages in supporting participants through the programme, this time drawing on a wider range of evidence sources.

### ***Disrupting educational assumptions***

Professional learning that adopts a transformational approach simulates the perspective transformation process by disrupting assumptions about educational matters. This starts with a catalyst, the nature of which is underpinned by contextual factors (Cox and John, 2016). In my study setting, the following three key programme features prompted a disorienting dilemma for participants: self-guided knowledge-building, process-led learning and non-positional TL. This started during the first group session. The expectation of participants with regard to conducting self-guided knowledge-building, the first feature, was represented in the writing of an action plan. The idea of teachers being able to build knowledge independently, despite

provision of support, was alarming for all participants due to years of receiving top-down, transmission modes of pedagogy and learning. The second comprised the process-led approach to learning in which one learns from activities that entail reflection and dialogue, and culminate in a portfolio of evidence to be assessed using non-numerical criteria. The contrast to the results-based model of learning that teachers had been so accustomed to led to confusion about the mechanism of assessment and fostered self-doubt as to participants' ability to succeed. Conducting leadership activity in the school without an official title or status was the third. Limited agency-enhancing educational and professional opportunities underpinned teachers' uncertainties about their capacity to lead others and created anxiety and insecurity.

### ***Promoting critical reflection, self-reflection and dialogue***

The above programme requirements generated reflection amongst participants on their effectiveness as modes of learning and professional practice. Critical dialogue fostered realisation of the advantages of creating problem-based, context-relevant knowledge for improving teaching practices, and the benefits of sharing and receiving teaching innovations (pp. 129-132). This was prompted by the teacher vignette on learning from one's mistakes (see Appendix 6), which fostered deep reflection on the usefulness of self-guided, process-led learning and the futility of exclusive usage of pre-set assignments and results-based assessment. Using negative examples in reflective tasks has been found useful in fostering transformational learning in leadership development (Donaldson, 2009). Dialogue about learning from one's mistakes in the workplace as a form of process-led professional learning led teachers to consider different approaches to learning and provoked reflection on long-held assumptions about legitimate and effective means of pedagogy and learning.

These three catalysts instigated teachers' premise reflection on the assumptions guiding their views of what constitutes teaching and learning. Premise reflection, unlike content or process reflection, occurs when teachers ask themselves critical questions about the nature of things if meaningful change is the aim (Cranton, 1994). This is when objective reformulation of the assumptions that have been guiding teaching and learning, and envisioning of alternatives, take place. However, while this form of reflection is important for teachers' professional development (Taylor, 2007), without critically discussing the underlying causes of these assumptions, teachers' reflections may not have implications for deep and potentially structural change.

The evidence is illustrative of the ensuing lively and engaging discussion amongst participants and myself about the reasons for teachers' unease about the above key programme features (pp.110-113). This represented participants' subjective reformulation of the forces and conditions that fostered an education system that led them to feel incompetent in the face of programme requirements. Critical discussion enabled teachers to recognise the absence of agency-enhancing opportunities in their educational experiences as a contributing factor (pp. 118-122). Emergence of a shared discontent about the role of the education system in fostering their feelings of inadequacy provided social validation of individual critical reflections.

During critical dialogue, participants expressed appreciation of the school's professional culture for being conducive to teacher innovation and leadership activity, which they contrasted with the situation in most other schools (p. 113). Teachers' identification of the cultural conditions needed to support programme activities exhibits an awareness of the interconnectedness of TL practice. This helps them to value and reinforce supportive school and professional cultural features that promote TL, such as trust, risk-taking and non-judgmentalism. Characterised as PLCs, through collaboration these school features promote transformational learning (McComish and Parsons, 2013).

Critically reflective dialogue was thus key to raising teachers' awareness of the prevalence of assumptions in their views of teaching and learning that may not be favourable to educational innovation and school improvement. Teacher sensitisation to long-held habits of mind on educational issues might prompt successive critical reflection in the workplace that can be a starting point for continuing, self-directed learning to support future change (Cranton and King, 2003) and leadership activity. This is the process of conscientisation (Freire, 1970), wherein teachers begin to apprehend the oppressive educational, socio-political and cultural forces, in this case as a result of top-down, transmission styles of pedagogy and learning, and results-driven assessment models that have disempowered individuals and communities. Transformation in perspective thus becomes a form of praxis (Mezirow, 1991).

In this light, the first group session was critical for catalysing the perspective transformation process in which participants' disorientation brought on by the programme's main features must be viewed as an opportunity for critical reflection and dialogue regarding assumptions about education, knowledge, learning, teaching and schooling. The extent of permission given to teachers to be critical of socio-political, cultural, educational and school-related matters

leads participants to realise that their feelings of ineptitude in light of programme requirements is not their fault but the outcome of institutional norms and practices that have systematically led to their disempowerment and inhibited their agency. In this way, they develop the capacity to identify disempowering practices and inconsequential knowledge (Postman and Weingartner, 1971). This realisation can affect participants' decision to remain in the programme and practise TL. Equally, it underscores the issue of power held by facilitators and schools, a factor that proves central to shaping the transformative experience (Collard and Law, 1989; Taylor, 2007).

### *Acknowledging feelings*

Following the excitement of joining the programme and engaging in critical reflection and dialogue during the first group session, participants had ample time to consider the programme's requirements. This led to self-examination and intense negative feelings, a fundamental feature of educational change that has been all too often neglected (Hargreaves, 1994, 2005). Evidence from the second group session illustrates that participants appeared confused and anxious about the required development work and leadership activity (pp. 114-116). Change initiatives can strongly affect teachers' emotions (Darby, 2008). When core beliefs and assumptions are at stake, teachers become vulnerable and uncertain about their role and competencies (Kelchtermans, 2005; Mitchell, Riley and Loughran, 2010). This threatened their continued participation in the programme and needed addressing.

Change initiatives that allow space for teachers to construct their own agendas and plans may need additional guidance and emotional support (Schmidt and Datnow, 2005). Therefore, instead of viewing teachers' reactions as a setback and becoming discouraged, or glossing over their apprehensions and pretending that everything was fine, in a group discussion I acknowledged their worries and encouraged expression of feelings and thoughts. Inviting teachers to convey their worries and concerns, and share them with peers dialogically enabled social and discursive validation of teachers' affective and cognitive states. This contrasts with trying to convince teachers that they are capable of conducting the programme regardless of perceived challenges.

The knowledge that teachers were not alone in their confusion seemed to bring relief to group members. Sharing fears and uncertainties in a group setting enhanced trust amongst participants and generated a sense of camaraderie that fostered group cohesion and identity.

This was a precursor to the development of collaboration, collective efficacy and social capital amongst the programme cohort (pp. 134-140), features of a PLC that are conducive to transformational learning (McComish and Parsons, 2013) and to unleashing TL (Katzenmeyer and Moller, 1996). In light of my positional power, had I disregarded teachers' anxious state and pretended that everything was progressing well, participants might have repressed their feelings, which might have compromised their wellbeing.

The discussion proved vital for supporting perspective transformation, as teachers might have otherwise believed that what was being asked of them was beyond the pale in terms of both their mandate and expertise (Mälkki and Green, 2014). Research indicates that such thoughts can prompt ontological crises for adults during transformational learning experiences (Morrice, 2013; Lange, 2004). For participants, this risked development of self-doubt about their professional identity in the workplace and would have been damaging to their professional performance at school. Thus care must be taken when putting adults through transformational learning experiences (Kegan, 2000, 2009) and calls for the creation of "holding environments" (Kegan, 1982: 115) or contexts that support adults during times of change that leads to growth.

Simulating a process that leads to such emotional upheaval and professional vulnerability raises ethical considerations with regards to facilitating transformational learning (Hoggan, Mälkki and Finnegan, 2017; Mälkki and Green, 2014). Does the tutor or school have the right to catalyse a disorienting dilemma (Baumgartner, 2001)? Are teachers made aware that they will be undergoing such an experience? Is the tutor qualified to guide the participants safely through the process? These questions gain urgency when considering the short- and long-term effects of transformational experiences on teachers in the workplace. One US study focusing on developing leadership through transformational learning revealed that six of the nine participants left their posts after the programme (Miranda, 2012). This is further compounded by power issues inherent in facilitation that serves certain agendas. Inevitably, the risks to teachers' professional longevity in Palestine, a developing and under-resourced setting, raises serious concerns about the ethics of conducting transformational professional learning in the workplace.

### ***Providing agency-enhancing activities***

Far from being a cathartic group session, I quickly moved the meeting on to exercises that demonstrated to participants their capacity to conduct development work and the progress that

they had made since the first meeting. By this point, which was two weeks since the first session, participants had begun work on their projects. This meant that they had material that I could refer to when illustrating the learning that they had already done. Shireen's example of a perceived wasted consultation represented an opportunity for critical reflection and dialogue. Such "pedagogic entry points" (Taylor, 2007: 118) are extremely useful for helping learners to find the "edge of [their] meaning" (Berger, 2004; 339), the place where new meaning begins to form. Shireen's "negative consultation" (p. 116) became a participant-based example that underscored the process-led approach to learning espoused by the programme. Evidence suggesting the advantages of context-based learning (Strand, 2013) supports the use of relevant, programme-related cases as a means of shifting perspective. During the first group session, my claim regarding teachers' capacity to lead educational innovation was theoretical and abstract. Once participants had examples from their own development work that they could relate to, I was able to refer to these examples in order to shift their views of that which constituted learning, their role in its production and the nature of learning attained.

Navigating the second group session, as with the first, required thorough knowledge of the principles and practices guiding non-positional TL and TLDW, along with deep familiarity with the educational conditions and socio-cultural realities of teachers in Palestine. At this stage, facilitation needs to be sensitive to interpersonal group dynamics. Otherwise, tutors might mistake teachers' initial disorientation for a false start or an indication of the tutor's limited facilitation skills. Rather, tutors are encouraged to view teachers' strong response as an indication of the timeliness of the programme for the local setting, and a welcome opportunity for fostering critical reflection and dialogue that pushed the boundaries of thinking and practice. This represented a valuable context-relevant occasion for facilitating the change of deeply held assumptions that might otherwise have taken a lifetime to alter, if at all.

Once participants began questioning their views of teaching and learning, or at least accepting that there were alternatives, inviting the group to establish the cohort's ethical guidelines was strategic for enabling members to regain their self-confidence. The exercise was valuable at several levels. Firstly, it gave the participants the power and permission to establish the most fundamental and important feature of the programme, the ethics. Professional learning that holds teachers to a higher standard and encourages them to take responsibility and ownership of their own learning and practice enhances a sense of agency (Martin et al., 2015), in this

instance through authorship (Conle, 2000; Huber et al., 2013). The exercise deeply impacted teachers by honouring their voice and role in setting the programme's ethical criteria.

In this capacity, the permission to determine what is acceptable practice and what is not is a highly self-empowering act. For a nation that continues to be denied political self-determination, the permission to narrate symbolises a collective aspiration (Said, 1984). In an education system pervaded by hierarchical and authoritarian norms and practices, setting the ethical guidelines of the programme illustrated teachers' capacity to influence policy-making, when given the chance. Concurrently, the exercise fostered critical reflection and dialogue on ethical practices in schools. Huda's suggestion that the cohort should set guidelines that go beyond societal mores illustrates participants' willingness to shift perspective on significant educational and professional matters, revealing the extent of objective and subjective reformation that teachers are willing to make. However, care must be taken when facilitating adjustments in normative practices that they correspond to local realities and needs and do not replicate foreign programme outcomes.

### ***Individualising support***

While the second group session offered participants an opportunity to share and work with their feelings, and for which critical dialogue provided a means of social validation, it could not take the place of individual meetings to help teachers make sense of their emotional reactions and practical difficulties. Aspects of an individual's biographical history shape the nature of transformative learning (Segers and De Greef, 2011; Taylor, 1998), hence the first supervisions provided a welcome opportunity for participants to receive personalised guidance and tailored support for their concerns and needs. The meetings were also a useful occasion for me to identify areas for programme development and further teacher support. Action-based research that focuses on process and leads to change, as my study does, lends itself to transformational learning (Marsick and Maltbia, 2009; Merriam and Kim, 2012).

The private and personalised nature of the meetings gave participants the liberty to talk more freely than they did in group settings about concerns and challenges that included critical reflection on epistemic, socio-cultural and psychic assumptions. While I encouraged teachers to share their views of the programme and ways to improve on it, I was duly aware that my positional power limited the extent to which teachers felt free to be critical of school policy. Once again, power dynamics were proving central to shaping the transformative experience

(Collard and Law, 1989; Taylor, 2007), a recurrent issue in my study on which I remained reflexive and created mechanisms for regulating (see Introduction and Chapter 3). Reduction of power asymmetry between the facilitator and learners in professional transformational learning in the workplace takes time to develop (Choy, 2009).

Conversely, power differentials were less prohibitive when it came to addressing teachers' technical and procedural queries. These included best consultation practices, methods of evidence collection and how to write an action plan; there was neither enough time to deal with these during group sessions nor adequate knowledge on the part of the co-tutor to fully attend to them between meetings. Therefore the supervisions enabled me to answer questions from all three domains of learning: instrumental, practical and epistemic. All can be necessary during transformational learning (Mezirow, 1991), particularly in my setting where technical issues remained significant in terms of professional learning support. Obtaining answers to such queries eased teacher apprehensions and began relieving feelings of incapability.

On an equally practical level, the meetings enabled me to guide teachers in how to write their action plans, a feature that embodied the programme's self-guided knowledge-building approach, a key catalyst for perspective transforming. Directing their own plans for learning and development work called on teachers to think and act for themselves. Such agential activity was a paradigmatic disruption of the way teachers have always known teaching and learning to be. Change initiatives that involve teachers' deeply held beliefs and practices take time and require constant revisiting (Saunders, 2014; Schmidt and Datnow, 2005). For this reason, I retained modest expectations of the first draft of the action plans as participants would not have fully grasped the principles behind TLDW, or developed sufficient self-efficacy and self-confidence to act agentially.

Furthermore, the supervisions enabled me to share with teachers similar experiences of a transformative nature that I was concurrently having during my PhD programme (Mountford, 2005; Stevens-Long, Schapiro and McClintock, 2012). I had referred to the shared methodology of the programme with that of doctoral study when I introduced the programme to the school staff (see Chapter 4). Doing so enabled teachers to realise that their felt frustrations and uncertainties, so integral to the transformative journey, were shared by me and for which I negotiated similar changes in my thinking (pp. 98-106). In power-distant societies, such as those of the Middle East, authority figures are held in high regard (Obeidat, Shannak,

Masa'deh and Al-Jarrah, 2012), thus as school Director, my capacity to explicitly relate to participants' epistemic experiences might have helped restore their self-confidence, and served to mitigate emotional and professional challenges during the transformative learning experience.

Overall, the supervisions enabled me to identify key insights that could be used in improving programme facilitation. This proved highly useful in relation to both my researcher and practitioner roles. Understandably, the degree to which teachers freely shared their views of the programme was largely influenced by my status. The tendency for transformative learning to prioritise agency to the detriment of pre-existing power structures (Murray, 2013) needs to be problematised in relation to contextual factors. Nevertheless, despite the inability to escape the effects of power differentials, these occasions assisted me in reinforcing trusting relations with participants, a matter that takes time (Choy, 2009).

### ***Offering emotional support***

One way to enable teachers to respond to transformational learning challenges is to provide affirmation, praise and morale-raising support. Between the first supervision and the subsequent third group session, participants began carrying out their action plans while exploring options for their new leadership role, relationships and activities. This stage inaugurated teachers' planned attempts at self-guided, process-led learning. Significant learning is threatening, emotionally charged and extremely difficult (Mezirow, 1991), as is educational change (Hargreaves, 2005). Thus I expected teachers' experiences to involve intensifying anxieties and self-doubt. Facilitating shifts in teachers' deeply held beliefs is a long drawn-out process that requires emotional guidance and support for teachers (Saunders, 2014).

Sensing participants' difficulties and vulnerabilities, the third group session needed to highlight the extent of teachers' development work and affirm their achievements in light of their challenges (pp. 127-129). The first supervisions had revealed to me the substantial efforts that participants were putting into their projects. Despite that, most failed to acknowledge the learning that was happening. Teachers are prone to self-criticism and insecurities when core beliefs and assumptions are at stake (Kelchtermans, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2010). These intense emotions appear when adults are forced out of their comfort zone or when at the edges of it, when they experience challenges to long-held assumptions (Gravett and Petersen, 2009;

Mälkki and Green, 2014). Emphasising and praising the extent of work conducted by teachers is key to combating frustrations at such times and helps to raise morale (Blazer, 2010; Schmidt and Datnow, 2005). Otherwise, there is a risk that teachers will retreat into their old habits of mind and even withdraw (Gravett and Petersen, 2009). Thus affirmation is an essential feature for renewing teachers' professional identities and lives (Flint, Zisook and Fisher, 2011), particularly when undergoing epistemological and ontological change. Teachers simply learn better when they are encouraged rather than judged (Hargreaves and Preece, 2014).

Not surprisingly, teachers were invigorated by my praise of their development work, as was confirmed by the co-tutor (p. 128). However, while restoring participants' self-confidence was key to facilitating deep learning experiences (Strand, 2013), verbal praise alone was unlikely to sustain their reclaimed self-confidence. In order to embed improved affect, participants benefited greatly from an experiential learning exercise that, as in the second group session, drew on their ongoing development work. The group exercise in the third group session in which participants presented their work to their peers in three minutes, and their ensuing "engagement, excitement [and] enablement" (p. 131) illustrates the value of employing practical activities to buttress verbal praise (pp. 129-132). Narrating their progress enabled teachers to realise the extent of work that they had done (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990), which helped enhance a sense of agency (Conle, 2000) and created "counter-stories" to institutional meta-narratives (Huber et al., 2013: 229). The exercise encouraged risk-taking, which is integral to substantive change processes and alters perceptions of uncertainty (Reio, 2005). Essentially, transformational learning is most effective when challenge is balanced with feelings of safety and comfort (Gravett and Petersen, 2009).

Narrating their development stories to peers enabled teachers to discover the range of accessible resources available to them in a resource-limited context. This reinforced feelings of connectedness (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1995) and promoted collaboration, collective efficacy and development of a community of practice, features that increase social capital (pp. 132-140). In addition to professional support, the emergence of critical friendships increased teachers' opportunities for critical dialogue that validated critical assessment of practice. During the first cycle review meeting, the Headteacher confirmed that she had observed enhanced self-confidence and collaboration amongst programme participants (pp. 143-146).

The second supervision enabled deeper exploration of what had been the most effective group session. In-depth understanding of transformation in perspective may be gained by focusing closely on certain aspects or micro-processes of transformative learning, instead of trying to consider the theory in its entirety (Mälkki and Green, 2014; Taylor, 2007). Participants were unanimous in their positive assessment of the third group session, with resounding enthusiasm for its impact on their self-perception and development work (pp. 134-140). The majority spoke with an increasingly self-assured and assertive tone. In an environment of trust, sharing programme challenges enhanced a sense of connectedness that led to bonding, while presenting innovative strategies to each other enhanced mutual appreciation and regard, and spread innovative practices and ideas. The importance of trusting and meaningful relations for transformational professional learning cannot be overstated (Beavers, 2009; Miranda, 2012).

Change is more impactful when pursued by a team of workers, which, in forming a critical mass, becomes more powerful than individual effort in helping to transform organisational perspectives (Alcantara, Hayes and York, 2009; Choy, 2009). Teachers' discovery of the wealth of knowledge amongst their peers might have helped to develop collective efficacy (Tschannen-Moran and Barr, 2004) and increased collaboration. At the same time, realising the extent of their own tacit knowledge and its value to others promoted the development of self-efficacy and encouraged leadership activity. Thus the session assisted in breaking down teacher isolation from which the majority of teachers suffer (Conley and Cooper, 2013; Drago-Severson and Pinto, 2006). Newly discovered capacities and the potential for reciprocity in a professional learning context enhanced teachers' self-confidence and helped develop self-efficacy (Ramahi, 2016b).

Evidently, providing emotional support along with contextualised group exercises that affirmed teachers' progress came at a strategic time in the programme when teachers were feeling particularly vulnerable and unsure. This strengthened participants' resolve and commitment to the programme despite needing substantive technical assistance. That explains why Huda described the session as "the heart of the matter" after which nothing remained unclear, when meaningful learning and growth could begin (p. 134). Teachers elsewhere have demonstrated an improved response to authentic professional learning opportunities that draw on contextual realities and problems (Strand, 2013), and include dialogue (Webster-Wright, 2009). Along with affective support, affirmative practical exercises at this stage may be highly

effective in settings in which the programme prompts similar epistemic disruption and ontological dislocation.

In the course of Rema's transformation in perspective, the group presentations generated "contagious" and hope-inducing feelings of success (p. 140). Such socially validating experiences at this stage of the programme helped build capacity and enhanced feelings of competence in teachers' new leadership roles and relationships, which are key to reinforcing commitment to TL. Hope is an essential feature of adult learning that can lead to empowerment and emancipation (Freire, 1973). Perhaps this explains participants' request to increase such sessions, despite their busy work schedules and lives. Effectively, the third group session can be characterised as the "the divide" (p. 134) after which participants overcame the initial disorientation brought about by having to build self-guided knowledge through process-led learning, whilst conducting non-positional TL. From here onwards, participants became more inspired to conduct development work and willing to activate their leadership potential.

### ***Navigating liminality***

Liminality is the state of transitioning from one perspective to another, when one has yet to formulate a new frame of reference on which to base decisions and actions (Mälkki and Green, 2014). This is when adults experience a loss of orientation and theory of learning, signifying the loosening of the hold of socio-cultural injunctions. In the programme, this was when teachers came to recognise and began to accept the futility of transmission and results-based learning while not yet having fully experienced or perceived the benefits of the programme's alternative learning approaches. This coincided with participants' active engagement with their projects, starting about a third of the way into the programme, before seeing the impact of their innovative practices. For some, this felt like being stuck between two learning approaches (Field and Lynch, 2015). Changing meaning-making schemes in adulthood is a long-drawn-out process and can take up to six to nine months (Kegan and Lahey, 2009), which the programme assigns ample time for.

Participants' state of liminality was evident during the subsequent two group sessions, the fourth and fifth. During the former when the prospect of networking with teachers from other schools was raised, participants preferred not to do so because of the risk of being discouraged and demoralised by teachers who were not familiar with TLDW and its change-driven discourse (pp. 147-151). Teachers' preference suggests fragility in their new leadership role

and uncertainty about the impact of their projects, illustrating a continued vulnerability in the face of non-participating teachers who might have cast doubt on teachers' ability to build knowledge and innovate. Change initiatives that target teachers' beliefs and values can lead to emotional fluctuation that vary from feelings of empowerment and enthusiasm to feelings of insecurity and threat (Darby, 2008; Van Veen et al., 2005).

Participants' preference for conducting an intra-participant knowledge-building event revealed the development of a group identity and its role in supporting the transformation of their perspective and enhanced agency. The tendency for transformational learning to thrive in groups and PLCs (Choy, 2009; McComish and Parsons, 2013) underscores participants' efforts to preserve the ethos and identity of their group. This is understandable given the key and elemental role that critical dialogue has during transformational learning and group functioning in the social validation process. When promoting a teacher networking culture, the absence of focus and a change-oriented language may constrain knowledge sharing (de Lima, 2010; Katz et al., 2009) and disrupt the supportive dynamics established in the cohort, features that foster change in perspective and lead to TL.

Alternatively, a group's strong bond could foster envy and resentment amongst non-cohort members of the power and impact generated by the new knowledge, ideas and proposals for change (Choy, 2009). To avoid this risk, facilitators need to prevent the occurrence of group insularity and isolation from other teachers (Ingram et al., 2014). When this happens, teachers may merely be protecting the climate that is reinforced by the group. Effectively, while participants are actively pursuing their projects, they are going through a transitional stage that may be characterised by a pervasive angst for which facilitators are advised to address strategically using agency-enhancing exercises and activities along with provision of substantive emotional support.

Liminality may explain participants' continued apprehensions about their action plans as expressed in the fifth group session (pp. 151-155). During this time and despite teachers' serious efforts in the programme, their persistent sense of uncertainty and self-doubt might have been caused by an inability to recognise the extent and impact of their development work, and leadership activity. Two-thirds of the way through the programme, when participants no longer seemed to be needing technical assistance from me or the co-tutor, teachers benefitted from a reminder of the reasons that they joined the programme.

The non-positional approach to TL rests on individual values and their articulation (Frost, 2012). The presence of values in teachers' practice and learning depends on its continuing to feature in discourse, in which mere discussion of such values can contribute to innovation by enhancing teacher commitment and strengthening resilience (Sunley and Locke, 2010). Inviting teachers to revisit the values that led them to join the programme proved helpful in regaining focus on the purpose behind their initial decision and an effective means of reinvigorating commitment to the principles of TL (pp. 152-154). In reviewing the big picture in education, teachers reflect about matters of significance and purpose in their practice (Hargreaves and Preece, 2014). During such exercises, tutors must veer away from being didactic and aim to facilitate the growth of organic intellectuals that could think independently about significant matters (Hill, 2008).

By the third and final supervision and despite becoming increasingly confident in conducting development work, participants remained uncertain of their project impact and leadership activity (pp. 155-158). Teachers' emotional experiences of school reform can influence identity (re)formation (Hargreaves, 1998; Reio, 2005). When core beliefs and assumptions are at stake, teachers become vulnerable and uncertain about their role and competencies (Kelchtermans, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2010). Transitioning between perspectives seems to affect teachers' identity and reinforce self-doubt. The persistence of liminality may be understood as an indication of the extent of epistemic and ontological change being experienced by teachers in the local context. This underscores the ethical implications of having adults undergo such a disruption in thinking (Ettling, 2012; Hoggan et al., 2017) particularly in the workplace where they are expected to perform organisational duties that may contradict their new ways of thinking and practice. Equally, it emphasises the pivotal role of the facilitator in supporting teachers safely through this stage.

The upheaval of thoughts in the context of transformational learning signals a challenge to emotions (Mälkki and Green, 2014). This underscores the need to provide affective, technical and procedural support till the point when teachers have sufficiently demonstrated their capacity to innovate and lead educational improvement, and self-identify as practitioners of TL, despite outward appearances to the contrary. In my study, the evidence illustrated this to have receded visibly following the knowledge-building event.

### ***Creating formal opportunities for validating teacher leadership***

The critical narrative revealed that the intra-group networking, or knowledge-building, event was a turning point in improving participants' self-perceptions of their knowledge-building capacity and leadership practice (pp. 161-164). Networking enhances teacher self-confidence (de Lima, 2010) and supports emergence of leadership (Earl and Katz, 2007; Chiriac, 2014). Hence, despite the absence of teachers from other settings, the event still had a highly positive role in raising participants' self-efficacy and reinforcing trust and risk-taking, features of a PLC. In narrating their projects in presentation form and engaging with peers in reflection and dialogue, the event marked the first formal occasion for teachers to trial the outcomes of their enhanced agency and to socially validate their transformed perspectives. This happens when teachers build and share knowledge with groups of like-minded practitioners with a common purpose and a shared language (Hofman and Dijkstra, 2010; Katz et al., 2009). On this occasion, confidence in leadership as an activity of influence gained credibility for participants because they experienced and witnessed for themselves the vast potential that lay within teachers for innovation and change. The event underscored the value of networking to the programme in extending the range of opportunities that support TL activity and in providing social authentication of teachers' transformation in perspective. The knowledge-building event marked participants' trialling and building of competence in their new leadership role and relationships.

### **Chapter summary**

I have argued in this chapter that perspective transformation theory provides a set of useful concepts for examining the development of non-positional TL. This is due to the theory's ability to explain deep and permanent change in thinking and action that happens through a multi-stage process entailing critical reflection, self-reflection and dialogue, key features of my TLDW-based programme. Given that TL rests on enhanced agency and thrives in settings espousing democratic practices, and in contexts where agential and participatory activities are challenged, such as Palestine, paying attention to the process that fosters TL activity becomes key. Drawing on transformational learning theory enabled me to illustrate the programme's capacity to facilitate transformation in teachers' perspective on the nature of knowledge and learning, and approach to pedagogy, leading to enhanced agency for educational innovation and school improvement through TL.

The TLDW methodology, procedures and tools enabled programme participants to relocate the locus and purveyance of knowledge production from authority figures and external experts to the school and teachers themselves. This began with a change in teachers' thinking towards the means of self-improvement and growth, that took them through a journey of self-empowerment and autonomous thinking, and ultimately to enhanced agency as a means and end of TL. Leading educational improvement and its dissemination fostered substantive and enduring impact on teachers' thinking and practices. Key outcomes of teachers' enhanced agency and TL activity were the capacity to build knowledge, author strategies of educational improvement and lead others towards innovation. The significance of these developments is underpinned by an educational and societal culture that is pervaded by top-down, transmission modes of teaching and learning, and a results-based assessment mindset that reinforce a submissive individual and collective mentality towards authority and hierarchy regarding all things related to knowledge, education, schooling, learning and pedagogy.

The process-led development of non-positional TL underpins the significance of facilitation, particularly in contexts outside the UK, the origin of the TLDW model on which my programme is based. Effective facilitation of the programme rested on the extent to which I was able to support teachers through the stages leading up to TL adoption and practice. This required thorough knowledge of the principles of the non-positional approach, the mechanism of TLDW, and local educational and socio-cultural conditions. Guiding participants through the shift in perspective towards self-guided, process-oriented learning and non-positional TL entailed navigating the multi-staged transformational learning process, starting with the context-sensitive catalysts. Critical reflection and dialogue fostered awareness of the forces that led to difficulties facing teachers in the programme. The change in teachers' meaning-making schemes prompted epistemological and ontological challenges that led to confusion and self-doubt. Providing emotional affirmation, individual support and agency-enhancing individual and group activities reinforced commitment to TL and the programme. The transition between perspectives kept teachers in a state of professional uncertainty and vulnerability that was relieved through formal social validation by peers of their projects and leadership activity.

Based on the above discussion, I conclude my dissertation in the next chapter by drawing implications, making recommendations and presenting contributions to knowledge.

## Chapter 9

### Implications, recommendations and contributions to knowledge

The impetus behind this study was to find a way to enable teachers to lead educational improvement in my school in Ramallah, Palestine, with implications for system-wide change in the Palestine context. The normative nature of schooling and education, coupled with the significance of the teaching workforce in education systems in terms of size and influence on quality learning, extended the potential impact to the socio-political climate of Palestine and neighbouring countries; a matter that gains urgency given recent developments towards democratisation in the MENA region. My vision for teacher involvement centred on an empowered and leadership role in substantive school change processes aimed at shifting teachers' values, beliefs and norms towards participatory practices in schooling, education and beyond. This was deemed essential for an underdeveloped nation with a history of dispossession and disenfranchisement that continues to struggle as a result of Israeli military occupation, and external intervention and control of resources. These conditions have contributed to authoritarianism and reinforced tribal affiliation, and manifest in a submissive individual and collective mindset in relation to all things political, socio-cultural and educational.

In this dissertation, I have illustrated how developing non-positional TL amongst a group of teachers in my school in Ramallah activated a bottom-up, action-led school change process that culminated in context-relevant, problem-driven knowledge and strategies that impacted colleagues' practices, organisational structures and professional culture. The TLDW-based Teachers Leading the Way programme was the vehicle which supported teachers in cultivating a sense of enhanced agency and professional identity by means of a series of activities and events that facilitated critical reflection and critical dialogue, collaboration and dissemination of innovation.

My inquiry has generated valuable knowledge which will contribute to theorising about the role of TL in school improvement efforts and to education reconstruction in Palestine and similar settings. In doing so, I focus on the primary themes that informed my investigation and the key ones that emerged. These are:

- The role of non-positional TL in improving teaching and learning, and promoting school-wide change;
- The TLDW model as a means to developing non-positional TL;
- The change in teachers' thinking that fosters non-positional TL;
- The learning process that leads teachers to change their thinking and adopt TL practices;
- Facilitation of the learning process that enables teachers to change their thinking and adopt TL;
- The synergistic relationship between non-positional TL and school senior leadership, organisational structures and professional culture.

These themes underscore the main study outcomes that I present below under the headings of implications, recommendations and contributions to knowledge.

## **Implications**

This study has two key implications for educational stakeholders in Palestine and the MENA region. The first centres on the role of teachers in leading school improvement and educational reconstruction. The second consists of the role of the Teachers Leading the Way programme as a means to developing non-positional TL. I discuss each below and refer to a tool developed for advocacy.

### ***Teachers***

Teachers in Palestine are capable of spearheading school improvement efforts and educational reconstruction initiatives. They are capable of developing strategies and innovative practices that improve student learning and experiences, and enhance wellbeing. They are capable of building problem-based, locally driven and sourced knowledge to inform context-relevant policy for authentic, bottom-up organisational and system-wide change. They are capable of transforming from authority-led thinkers and practitioners to self-empowered, agential professionals that through improved pedagogic practices and modelling can provide agency-enhancing opportunities for students. In the process, they are capable of inspiring, supporting and learning from each other, thus creating a critical mass that can lead an organic, participatory education movement to address local needs, promote effective professional learning and sustain growth. Non-positional leadership enables teachers to activate this vast potential when the means are provided. (See Appendix 13A for advocacy tool.)

### ***The Teachers Leading the Way programme***

The Teachers Leading the Way programme is an effective means of enabling non-positional TL in Palestine and similar settings. The school-based, year-long programme offers professional learning support that emphasises reflection and dialogue, and develops teacher self-efficacy, collaboration and social capital. It does this by using a strategy and a set of instruments and tools that can be adapted to diverse organisational and socio-educational contexts. Teachers are guided to innovate and disseminate improved educational practices through development work on a project that entails self-led, process-oriented learning. The experience transforms teachers' values, beliefs and norms into an agential mindset that embeds TL in the school professional culture, impacts organisational structures and leads to capacity-building and sustainable change. Programme adoption and impact is contingent upon the will and support of key educational stakeholders. (See Appendix 13B for advocacy tool.)

### **Recommendations**

In order to adopt the view in Palestine that teachers can lead school improvement and education reconstruction, and in order to deploy the Teachers Leading the Way programme as a means to developing non-positional TL, the support of two key educational stakeholders is needed: policy-makers, and school headteachers and senior leaders. I present each below and refer to a tool developed for discussion.

#### ***Policy-makers***

Education policy-makers need to support the creation of an authentic Palestinian vision and agenda for education reconstruction in order to help transform post-Accord Palestine into a self-governing and viable nation state capable of developing and contributing to the global community. At the educational level, this requires independence from foreign aid and external intervention, and adoption of locally sourced, context-driven education change processes. This entails generating a national conversation with Palestinian stakeholders that includes teachers as key participants. Teachers are the largest workforce in the education system and from within the education system have the most influence on the quality of student learning and experiences. This study has illustrated that teachers in Palestine are capable of improving teaching and learning, building locally relevant knowledge, and influencing organisational structures and professional culture. Developing teachers' professional and leadership

capacities can lead to sustainable system-wide change and must become a strategic national policy in which human and material resources are invested. (See Appendix 14A for discussion tool.)

### ***Headteachers and senior leaders***

School headteachers and senior leaders are in a position to contribute to national self-determination and socio-political transformation in Palestine. By converting schools from information delivery hubs to knowledge-building communities, they can help in the transition to a learning nation that is capable of creating an authentic Palestinian narrative. This entails sharing leadership, encouraging teacher participation, and cultivating trust-filled, risk-taking PLCs. Teachers are in a strategic position to act as partners in the school improvement endeavour in which their dormant potential to improve teaching and learning, and disseminate innovative practices can be activated to enhance organisational and senior leaders' performance. This necessitates providing professional learning support and opportunities that mobilise teachers' leadership capacity. My study has illustrated that the Teachers Leading the Way programme is a vehicle for developing non-positional TL, and impacting school structures and professional culture in Palestine. (See Appendix 14B for discussion tool.)

### **Contributions to knowledge**

This inquiry has generated theoretical, practical and methodological contributions to knowledge on the development and study of non-positional TL in Palestine, similar settings and more broadly. I present each below, and provide a tool in the appendices that itemises applied knowledge for practitioners.

### ***Theory***

Palestine and the countries of the MENA region need to undergo socio-political transformation that leads to authentic democratisation. Education and schooling have the capacity to enable shifts in socio-cultural values, beliefs and norms that foster participatory practices and social mobilisation. This starts with individual change that can be cultivated in schools through agency-enhancing, collaborative learning processes. Teachers are in a position to sow the seeds for this transition. However, democracy rests on values and beliefs that firstly need to be

embodied by teachers themselves. The majority of the teaching force in Palestine is unprepared for this role due to a host of historical, socio-cultural and political forces and conditions. Therefore teachers will need to undergo a cognitive and behavioural transformation of their own before they can contribute to building national movements.

Change in teachers' work and role requires extended interventions that provide substantive opportunities for critical reflection and self-reflection, and critical dialogue on the roots of educational, socio-cultural and political conditions and problems. This needs to be done at a grass-roots level, and reinforced by structured support and activities that enable teachers to take on leadership roles. Under the proper conditions, the non-positional approach to TL fosters teacher self-empowerment and collaboration, and builds social capital within and between schools, leading to improved teaching practices, and student learning and experiences. These developments are fostered through a transformation in perspective amongst teachers towards the sources of knowledge production, means of learning validation, legitimacy of narration and authority of dissemination, features that reinforce democratisation processes. The permanency of teachers' changed thinking and behaviours ensures the embeddedness of change and its sustainability for future generations.

### ***Practice***

A key outcome of this study is that developing non-positional TL in settings that lack a history of democratic and participatory practices entails a shift in teachers' perspectives. Deploying TLDW-based programmes to support teachers through the process of transformation of perspective underscores the role of facilitation. The context-responsive nature of the TLDW methodology necessitates that facilitators have thorough understanding of the local forces and conditions, including educational, historical, political, socio-cultural and economic ones. This knowledge enables facilitators to navigate the locally specific programme-generated catalysts that disrupt participants' thinking and self-perception, and prompt the transformational learning process. To do so, facilitators must honour teachers' affective responses and create supportive environments that enable smooth and steady transitioning between perspectives. This entails promoting critical reflection, self-reflection and dialogue on disorienting issues and matters that threaten teachers' self-confidence. It also involves providing opportunities for agency-enhancing activities and formal events that foster social validation of teachers' changed thinking and practices. Underpinning the whole process is attentive, individualised support that addresses all three learning domains. Overall, this dissertation illustrates that the nature and

effectiveness of programme facilitation is significant in terms of its contributions to successful development of non-positional TL, particularly in challenging contexts, such as Palestine. Hence quality facilitation should be established as an enabling condition that is comparable to headteacher leadership, organisational structures and professional culture. (See Appendix 15 for tool.)

### ***Methodology***

Critical research that aims to initiate a substantive school change process should be highly ethical given the moral nature of education. When teachers' values, beliefs and practices are transformed, epistemological and ontological issues arise for teachers and, potentially, learners. Thus methodology must be guided by ethical considerations that have teacher and learner wellbeing in mind. The following features are essential for ensuring sound and ethical investigation of action-led school change processes.

- ***An overarching research concern or question*** allows unforeseen themes and developmental needs to be addressed and developed.
- ***Action*** creates experience(s) that can foster the kind of learning needed to transform people's thinking and behaviour.
- ***Participation*** promotes a collective approach to change that fosters dialogue and engagement, promotes collaboration, cultivates shared values, and draws on local needs and realities; this embeds change and enhances the study soundness.
- ***Reflexivity*** reveals the researcher's role and enables monitoring of his or her ethical practice.
- ***Context*** is key to change initiatives because of the role of local factors and conditions, and helps to determine the extent of outcome transferability.
- ***Opportunistic data collection*** provides for a wider range of evidence collection opportunities when investigating change in human thinking and behaviour, which is difficult to predict.
- ***In situ analysis*** ensures constant monitoring, evaluating and adjusting of the change process for ethical and developmental reasons.
- ***Critical narrative*** allows capture of the change story in its entirety, which helps reveal the researcher's thinking mechanism, increases the study's coherence and, by engaging the reader, enhances resonance.
- ***The facilitator's school status*** impacts the nature of participants' and senior leaders' involvement, and benefits from incorporating mechanisms that reduce power differentials.
- ***Transformation in thinking and practices*** can have epistemological and ontological consequences for participants in their professional and personal lives, and must be approached with care, diligence and high ethical standards.

- *The increased cost of the approach* must be factored in as part of the ethical responsibilities given the potential impact on teachers' professional and personal lives, and precludes the risks associated with less robust methods.

## **Chapter summary**

In this chapter I have distilled the implications, recommendations and contributions to knowledge produced by my intervention-based study. I end my dissertation with personal reflections and future research directions.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Reflections and future directions**

My doctoral study has been the most transformative and life-enhancing experience of my adult life. Nothing could have prepared me for the depth and breadth of changes that I have undergone and continue to experience since embarking on what has been a journey of self-discovery and recreation. This may explain the sparse instruction given to candidates upon programme entry as the subjective and interrelational process of meaning-making is wisely left to individual exploration and industry. At one level, the insights and self-awareness gained redeem epistemological and ontological challenges faced throughout the process. At another, the benefits made to the study participants and my school, and potentially beyond, justify the struggles and costs endured.

Noteworthy, is the congruence of my study aims with its impact on my person. From the start, I set out to initiate a process of change. What I did not expect to happen was that the process that both my participants and I experienced would lead to similar outcomes, albeit on different scales. I specifically refer to the transformational learning that led to changes in perspective. I, too, experienced a series of disorienting dilemmas that through critical reflection and self-reflection, deep conversations with scholars and peers, and academic publications and conference presentations that provided opportunities for social validation enabled me to reform myself and act thereafter for the benefit of organisational and educational practices, and student attainment at my school. Effectively, the similarities between my own and my participants' experiences enabled me to relate to their challenges and needs, and, as programme leader, respond more promptly and effectively. Equally, it enhanced my understanding of the processes that I was investigating, which improved the quality of the study and increased its contributions.

Professionally, I have always had a critical and analytical view of most things, never being satisfied with what is generally practised. However, it was a mindset that sometimes left me more frustrated than efficacious. Becoming a researcher has equipped me with philosophical and epistemological concepts and tools that now enable me to formulate, articulate and act on matters to improve my school and practice. My thinking skills have been polished and my

vision given a sharper lens through which to view and reflect on my practice, and constantly hone it. Hence I see my doctoral research to have been an apprenticeship more than a knowledge-acquiring activity. This is liberating given the generative potential of practical knowledge in contrast to the received canon.

Intellectually, I have become fiercely vigilant of the values and assumptions that guide my thinking. I now operate in a state of hyper-reflexivity on the interests and agenda that drive my speech and actions. This has elevated my ethical practice in everyday dealings and not just when conducting research or when under observation. I feel more accountable. Another key development is that although I have always had an insatiable desire for knowing things, now I am more confident in leading my own learning. This has shaped me into a self-led life-learner, who is capable of critically sifting through the myriad of available knowledge, an indispensable skill in the information age and the highly moral enterprise of education and schooling. A range of life and professional experiences, I am sure, has also enriched the quality of my doctoral experience and study.

More personally, I have always been prone to deeply empathise with others. Now, I find myself much, much more appreciative of the nuances that shape a human being. I am more capable of recognising the forces and conditions that influence a person's worldview and life choices. I can relate to a greater extent and more deeply. And so I now have the utmost reverence for each and every person for simply surviving life. This view has drastically reduced my readiness to judge others. For this I am forever grateful to my PhD. Concurrently, a strong moral compass guards me from descending into the abyss of moral relativism.

As for the issue of power in my study, at no point did I lose sight of the ethical implications of the differential in my favour and its potential to influence the intervention and study outcomes. Throughout my dissertation I have tried to illuminate my reflexivity and the mechanisms that I created to offset the imbalance. Any inappropriate use of my school status would have weakened my study aims. Hence I am the person most keen to limit my organisational power. Conversely, I look upon my status as a useful and probably necessary resource for introducing the substantial kind of change that I envision for Palestine. Thus power was harnessed for the overall good.

Finally, I reiterate that investigating a school initiative aimed at facilitating change in human values, thinking and practices is a complex endeavour that requires patience and time. Accordingly, and given the parameters of a doctorate programme, this study merely introduced the development of non-positional TL as a means of school improvement in one school in Ramallah, Palestine. Future research is needed in Palestine and the MENA region to advance this agenda for which I propose the following:

- A longitudinal study at my school focusing on the impact of non-positional TL on student outcomes, organisational structures and professional culture;
- A longitudinal study at my school looking at programme sustainability;
- Investigating at my school the change in teacher identity as leadership practitioners;
- Investigating the development of non-positional TL elsewhere in Palestine;
- Exploring the means and structures for developing effective facilitation;
- Examining the development of TL school networks within Palestine and across MENA countries.

These research directions will further assist in generating knowledge on effective means to developing non-positional TL in Palestine and across MENA for the purposes of school improvement and system-wide change. They would also help to lay the ground for educational and socio-political change, a key long-range aim guiding my intervention.



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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

The HertsCam Network programme sessions, which are usually divided in the following way:

- *Session 1* usually helps teachers to clarify their professional concerns and consider how their project might make a difference, how they might consult colleagues, write an action plan and keep a portfolio.
- *Session 2* usually helps teachers to review their action plan and consider the activities that will help to take their development project forward.
- *Session 3* usually helps teachers to review progress with their development work and adjust their plans in light of challenges that have arisen.
- *Session 4* usually helps teachers to reflect on what they are learning about learning and about leadership from their experience of leading development work, and how they might begin to share the story with others.
- *Session 5* usually helps teachers to review the impact of their development project and how this can be extended, and helps them to take stock of their portfolio of evidence.
- *Session 6* usually helps teachers to reflect on what has been achieved through their development project.

## Appendix 2

The key study themes and sub-themes

- 1) Teachers
  - a) Leadership:
    - i) The question of role or position;
    - ii) Strategies for influence;
    - iii) Effectiveness of project design;
    - iv) Changes in practice.
  - b) Professionalism:
    - i) Dimensions of growth;
    - ii) The question of moral purpose;
    - iii) Changes in beliefs about professional identity;
    - iv) Enhanced agency and self-efficacy;
    - v) Attitude towards collaboration.
  - c) Learning:
    - i) Attitude towards learning;
    - ii) Relation of learning to practice;
    - iii) Role in knowledge building.
  
- 2) Enabling conditions
  - a) Role of headteacher:
    - i) Leadership practice;
    - ii) Commitment to non-positional TL.
  - b) Organisational structures:
    - i) Time allotment;
    - ii) Designated spaces;
    - iii) Opportunities for engagement.
  - c) Professional culture:
    - i) Awareness of the role of professional culture;
    - ii) Influence of professional culture on non-positional TL;
    - iii) Influence of non-positional TL on professional culture.
  - d) Programme strategies, techniques and tools:
    - i) Effectiveness;
    - ii) Relevance.
  
- 3) Contextual factors
  - a) Understanding of non-positional TL practices:
    - i) Self-guided knowledge building;
    - ii) Process-led professional learning;
    - iii) Enhanced agency;
    - iv) Moral purpose;
    - v) Critical friendships;
    - vi) Reflection;
    - vii) Dialogue;
    - viii) Collective efficacy.

- b) Socio-cultural values and norms:
  - i) Influence of authoritarianism on enabling non-positional TL;
  - ii) Influence of tribalism on enabling non-positional TL;
  - iii) Influence of Islamic values on enabling non-positional TL.
- c) Political history and current climate:
  - i) Influence of historic oppression and marginalisation by foreign rule and continued Israeli occupation on enabling non-positional TL;
  - ii) Influence of absence of democratic and participatory practices on enabling non-positional TL.

## Appendix 3

### A. Self-audit of the school's professional culture (English version)

#### Towards a portrait of the school as a learning community

From one extreme...	1	2	3	4	5	to the other...
The Principal decides everything and holds all the power.						Everyone (including teachers, students, parents, support staff etc.) has equal influence.
Teachers mistrust each other and have very poor relationships with each other.						Teachers are part of a family – totally supportive of each other.
Teachers work in isolation in the privacy of their own classrooms.						Teachers work in groups, collaborating with teaching, planning, professional learning, school self-evaluation.
There is no sense of shared vision in the school.						Everyone (including teachers, students, parents, support staff etc.) has the same vision about what the school's priorities are and how we should be addressing them.
The Principal is accountable for students' learning outcomes.						Responsibility for the school's performance is completely shared by everyone (including teachers, students, parents, support staff etc.)
Teachers do not engage in any professional learning either formal or informal.						Teachers are engaged in professional learning, both as individuals and in groups.

The school maintains its standard of performance but is not developing.						The school is developing new practices and improving the quality of processes all the time.
There is no evidence-based self-evaluation going on at all.						Teachers and senior leaders are engaged in reflective enquiry-based self-evaluation all the time.
Our main goal is to achieve the best results in external tests – everything we do has to contribute to this goal.						We want children to be happy above all else so the focus of learning has to follow their interests. Learning outcomes are unpredictable.
Teachers decide what students must learn and expect students to be able to recall it when tested.						Students are full partners in the learning process, having a say in what is learnt, how it is learnt, where and when it is learnt.
Most people in this school believe that the role of the teacher is to know her subject and to transmit this to her students.						Most people in this school believe that the role of the teacher is being an agent of change, both within and beyond the school.
Students are often apathetic and in some cases very reluctant to learn.						Students feel positive and sometimes excited about learning.
Students come to school because they have to and because they want to be able to get a job or get into college afterwards.						Students love coming to school. They are proud of the school and identify with it.
Teachers know how to teach but they do not know how to exercise leadership.						Teachers are skilled at supporting and influencing their colleagues.

B. Self-audit of the school's professional culture (Arabic version)

نحو تصور المدرسة كمجتمع تعليمي

الحد الأدنى	1	2	3	4	5	الحد الأقصى
مدير الشئون الأكاديمية يأخذ كل القرارات ويمتلك كل السلطة						الكل (بما فيه المعلمون والطلبة وأولياء الأمور والموظفين) لهم تأثير متماثل.
المعلمون لا يتقنون ببعضهم البعض وعلاقتهم ببعض ضعيفة.						المعلمون جزء من عائلة متعاونون ويدعمون بعضهم البعض.
يعملون المعلمون بعزلة وبمفردهم وبخصوصية تامة داخل الغرف التعليمية (الصفوف).						يعملون المعلمون بمجموعات، يتعاونون في التعليم والتخطيط والتعلم المهني. والتقييم الذاتي
لا يوجد حس لرؤية مشتركة في المدرسة.						الكل بما فيه (المعلمون والطلبة وأولياء الأمور والموظفين) يشتركون برؤية موحدة حول أولويات المدرسة وكيفية معالجتها.
مدير الشئون الأكاديمية مسؤول عن نتائج تعلم الطلبة.						مسؤولية أداء وعطاء المدرسة مشتركة بين الجميع (المعلمين والطلبة وأولياء الأمور والموظفين).
لا يشترك المعلمون في أي نوع من التعلم والتطوير المهني ان كان بشكل رسمي أو غير رسمي.						يشترك المعلمون في التعلم والتطوير المهني كأفراد ومجموعات.
تحافظ المدرسة على أداؤها ولكنها لا تقوم بعمليات التطوير.						المدرسة تطور أساليب جديدة وتحسن جودة العمليات التربوية والتعليمية والإدارية على الدوام.
لا يوجد دليل على أي تقييم ذاتي على الاطلاق.						يشترك المعلمون والقيادة الإدارية في استفسارات مهنية مبنية على التأمل والتفكير.

هدفنا الاساسي هو حصول الطلبة على أفضل نتائج في الامتحانات التقييمية، ولذا كل عملنا يجب أن يصب في هذا الاتجاه.						راحة وسعادة الطالب فوق كل شيء، لذا يتطلب منا التركيز على اهتماماتهم التعليمية. لذلك لا نستطيع التنبؤ بنتائج التعلم.
يقرر المعلمون محتوى التعلم، ويتوقعون من الطلبة التذكر والاجابة الحرفية على كل ما تعلمه.						الطلبة شركاء في العملية التعليمية ولديهم قرار فيها من حيث ماذا وكيف وأين ومتى يعلم.
معظم العاملين في المدرسة يعتقدون أن دور المعلم هو اعطاء المبحث ونقل المعلومة للطلبة.						معظم العاملين في المدرسة يعتقدون أن دور المعلم هو أن يكون عنصر تغيير في داخل وخارج المدرسة.
الطلبة غالبا لا مبالين، وأحيانا لا يرغبون بالتعلم.						يشعر الطلبة بايجابية نحو التعلم وأحيانا بالحماس.
يشعر الطلبة بالقدوم للمدرسة اضطرارا ولحاجته للإلتحاق بالجامعة والحصول على الوظيفة.						يحب الطلبة القدوم للمدرسة ويشعرون بالفخر والانتماء.
يجيد المعلمون مهارة التعليم ولكن لا يجيدون مهارة الدعم والتأثير عليهم.						يمتلك المعلمون المهارات لدعم زملائهم والتأثير عليهم.

## Appendix 4

Teachers' group evaluation of the school's professional learning programme

Benefits:

- Improvement and development of classroom teaching methods and learning;
- Improvement and development in effective lesson planning;
- Acquiring new ways of dealing with special needs students;
- Improving assessment and examination writing methods;
- Understanding the role of the teacher in a clearer and deeper way;
- Development in computer usage and skills;
- Giving teachers the opportunity to share work experience;
- Consideration of, and reflection on, teaching profession and impact on teachers' view of it.

Limitations:

- Too much focus on theory and not enough on practice;
- Combining all subject teachers in the same workshops and courses;
- Too much idealism; not grounded in Palestinian reality;
- Time, with some topics needing more time than that given;
- Teachers interest in topics varies widely;
- The significance of trainers' personality and language usage.

Recommendations:

- Increase practical component and activities in workshop to maintain interest;
- Divide workshops in accordance with teacher subject and student level;
- Teacher practical application of development topics and follow-up;
- Provide practical and applied approaches relevant to the Palestinian context for solving problems faced by teachers in the classroom;
- Provide workshops focused on developing student character;
- Provide better prepared trainers and lecturers;
- Have school-based teachers with the skills and capacities to conduct workshops;
- Attendance should be voluntary and not mandatory, with teachers selecting the courses/workshops they want to attend;
- Teachers design their own development plan by selecting workshops/courses from within or outside the school to be taken within a specified time period, with the possibility of school coverage of fees for outside workshops/courses.

## Appendix 5

Teachers Leading the Way programme application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*1. What problem would you like to solve in your work place?*

*2. Why is it important for you to solve this problem?*

*3. Who will benefit from your solving this problem?*

*4. How do you expect to benefit from participating in the programme?*

## Appendix 6

### Tool 1

#### Vignette of Sami's development work (annotated)

Sami taught mathematics and had only been teaching for two years. He was concerned that some students were obviously not engaged in Maths lessons. He wanted to find ways to liven up his teaching approach in the hope of capturing the attention of these students.

His concern

A false start

He had considered using a survey sheet to ask the students for their views about the activities they enjoyed best, but then decided against this on the grounds that, if the students had a negative attitude to mathematics, their views would be limited to what they had experienced so far.

Drawing colleagues in

Initiating knowledge sharing

At a department meeting he explained his problem to his colleagues and gave them a proforma which asked them to list the three most effective teaching techniques or activities they had used. Dipak collated these into a list and then went to see individual colleagues to get more detailed guidance where it was needed.

Experimenting with practice

Sami then systematically tried out each of the strategies on the list. He used them in his teaching and evaluated each one by keeping notes of his own observations, asking students to fill in a feedback sheet and occasionally asking colleagues to observe when they had a few spare moments.

Gathering data for evaluation

Impact on the team

A few months later, Sami was able to give his colleagues feedback on the strategies he had evaluated in action. This was very informative for colleagues who had never tried some of the things on his list. The discussion about teaching and learning was very rich and enthusiastic, thus contributing to building capacity in the team and developing everybody's teaching repertoires.

Knowledge building again

Extending impact

Following this, Dipak started to approach colleagues in other subject departments asking for their three best teaching techniques. He found that many of these ideas could be adapted for mathematics lessons and it also stimulated discussion about teaching repertoires in a number of departments.

Impact on own and colleagues' practice

## Appendix 7

A. HertsCam Network tool (original)

Record of participation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Venue: \_\_\_\_\_

*Session content / activities*

*What did I learn about learning?*

*What did I learn about leadership?*

*What are the implications for my own practice?*

*What do I need to do next?*

B. Teachers Leading the Way programme tool (revised)

Record of participation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session: \_\_\_\_\_

*Session content / activities*

*In what new ways am I learning?*

*How can I influence others to follow in my lead and benefit from my project?*

*How will this affect my own teaching practice?*

*What are my next steps?*

*How can this session be improved?*

## Appendix 8

HertsCam Network tool (original)

‘The challenge of leading projects: tell us about your project’

*What was your concern?*

What did you want to make a difference to? What kind of impact did you plan for?

*What were the key elements in the design of the project?*

What did your action plan include? Who is involved? What stages did you envisage?

*What has happened so far?*

Which parts of the action plan have you done?

*What is turning out to be problematic?*

Are your collaborators collaborating? What seems to be harder than you thought it would be?

*What will be your next steps?*

Do you need to adjust the plan or change direction? What needs to be evaluated?

## Appendix 9

First Cycle Review discussion themes

Date: 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Attendance: programme team (Director, Deputy Director, Headteacher)

Absences: co-tutor

Format: theme-led extended conversation

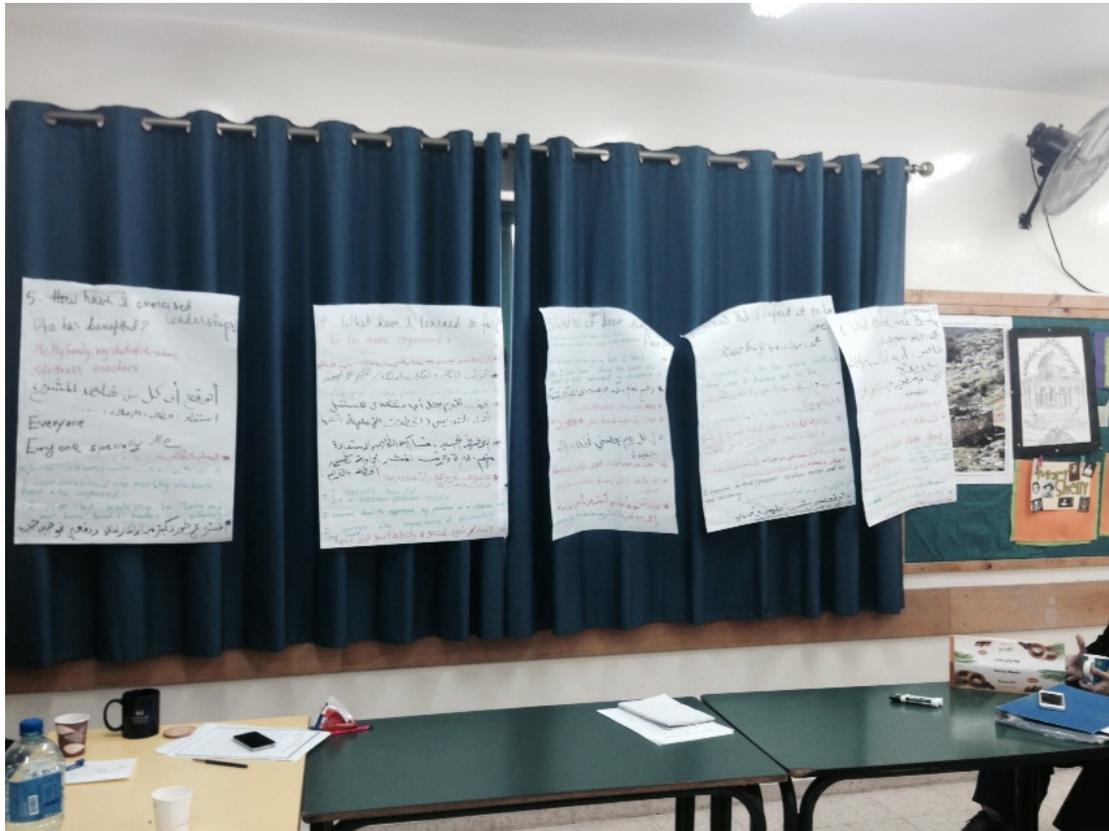
Documentation: audio-recording

The following represent the list I used to prompt discussion:

1. Structure
  - a. Scheduling;
  - b. Conflicts with teaching practice.
2. Impact
  - a. Teacher changes:
    - i. Teaching practice;
    - ii. Teaching profession;
    - iii. Attitude;
    - iv. Solving problems;
    - v. Self-development;
    - vi. Learning;
    - vii. Leadership.
  - b. Colleagues' perceptions of:
    - i. Programme;
    - ii. Group members;
    - iii. Non-positional TL.
3. Analysis themes
  - a. Values-guided, problem-based;
  - b. Strategy and structure;
  - c. Usefulness of critical friendships;
  - d. Sense of mutual support;
  - e. Impact:
    - i. Enhanced agency;
    - ii. Changes in teaching practice;
    - iii. Emergent understandings of non-positional leadership.
  - f. Challenges:
    - i. Time;
    - ii. Conceptualising development.

## Appendix 10

Photo of flipcharts



## Appendix 11

Teachers Leading the Way programme participant names (pseudonyms) and project titles

*Amal*

Developing strategies to enhance chemistry learning in years nine and ten.

*Ghadeer*

Developing strategies to enhance critical and analytical skills for years four and five second language English learners.

*Huda*

Creating strategies for reducing academic pressure in the kindergarten curriculum.

*Manal*

Developing ways to enhance primary students' listening skills and reduce classroom disorder.

*Munir*

Developing strategies to motivate computer learning at the secondary level.

*Naim*

Developing a strategy to enhance Islamic values in the Islamic studies curriculum for year three.

*Najwa*

Developing strategies to enable student-centred instruction in English language for years six and seven.

*Nawal*

Developing strategies for unifying teachers' methods of reducing violence amongst year one students.

*Nur*

Developing strategies for utilising information technology in year eight mathematics.

*Rawan*

Developing a strategy to improve student attitudes towards reading in English foreign language learning in year four.

*Reema*

Creating a strategy to enhance self-discipline for improving student relations in year four.

*Shireen*

Developing amusing and enjoyable methods to teach social studies in year one.

## Appendix 12

Self-written teacher vignettes illustrating abridged versions of development work

### A. Rawan's story: enhancing student relations in year four

I am a mid-career, primary-level IT teacher in a school in Palestine. When I was assigned pastoral duties to year four, I faced new challenges in my teaching practice. I noticed that students were unhappy – acting in aggressive ways that adversely affected student relations and disrupted classroom learning. Although I suspected that the Israeli military occupation was fostering aggression amongst Palestinians, I strongly believed in the primacy of student wellbeing and thus set out to find ways to improve student relations.

I started by consulting others who could help me identify the problem, including year four teachers in my school with similar responsibilities, the counsellor and a year four student from another country, in addition to having conversations with colleagues. This led me to create a tool that enabled me to understand what my students thought was behind the problem. I identified the absence of social skills as the main reason for student aggression and misconduct. However, my understanding remained limited. Over winter recess, I had time to explore the literature and reflect on how best to approach this socio-cultural problem; this enhanced my action plan. I trialled a student blog for facilitating communication between my students and me, but it was ineffective because many students had access difficulties. I turned to parents for their input, but those of targeted students were the least responsive. Ultimately, four tools proved most effective: an observation table of student behaviour that enabled me to gauge the nature and extent of the problem; a reflection form that students needed to complete after being involved in an aggressive act; a voice-level chart to remind students of acceptable voice levels; and a video bank performed by my students illustrating a spectrum of acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours.

After obtaining the headteacher's approval for my plan, I started leading others into adopting my new strategy. I held several individual meetings with teachers who taught my students to discuss different approaches. However, once they started employing them, problems began to

appear. Refusing to be discouraged, I followed up with additional meetings to resolve the issues. Teachers agreed on three matters: to explain more explicitly to students the effects and consequences of aggressive behaviour; to unify the way teachers applied my methods; and to ensure consistency of application by individual teachers. This led me to prepare a teacher's guide to assist teachers in managing aggressive student behaviour. Equally important, teachers met periodically to modify the guide as needed, setting in motion a collaborative practice among primary-level teachers. The positive impact of my project led senior leaders to adopt my strategy as school policy and to entrust me with the task of developing a school behavioural management programme for the primary section in collaboration with the school counsellor for which I was given the title of Primary Student Behaviour Support Coordinator.

#### B. Munir's story: improving IT learning in years five to 12

I have been teaching IT to years five to 12 in a school in Ramallah, Palestine, for seven years now. IT is an applied subject that prepares students for future careers. Increasingly, student interest had been waning in my classroom and led them to neglect homework assignments and projects. My teaching approach had been based on lectures and assessment focused on exams, assignments and projects. Their apathy led me to search the Internet specifically for IT teaching methods but I did not find any.

Upon joining the programme, I realised that the solution lay in my hands. So I began searching for the source of the problem. I consulted experienced colleagues who taught subjects similar to mine, like the sciences and mathematics, peers in the programme and senior leaders. I also asked my students what they needed and wanted from IT lessons.

After collecting the evidence, I discovered that the problem involved the curriculum, my teaching style, assessment mode and the lack of interaction between my subject and other taught subjects. That is when my journey began and led me to fundamentally restructure my lesson plan and to rely on work done in class, which I based my assessment on. I completely rejected the idea of written exams, replacing them with individually and group-led applied projects. I had my students envision the knowledge and skills they would need and could acquire by the end of the school year, and set out to realise it. At the same time, I encouraged my students to participate in local IT student tournaments, but the school's North American-

based curriculum precluded students from joining contests that were based on local state-run curriculum.

In order to embed my improved teaching practice and students' enhanced learning, I created a tool that listed student IT skills and the corresponding school level and distributed it to colleagues. This enabled teachers to coordinate their students' IT skills with assignments and projects required for their taught subjects.

Now, after two years of applying and building on my improved teaching strategy, I strive to introduce appealing and enjoyable learning opportunities that are challenging and applied. My colleagues have reacted positively and adopted some of my strategies, which has enabled my students to apply their IT skills in other classes and engage with other subjects, leading them to realise the range of the skills they have acquired. The practical knowledge I created and skills I acquired from the programme made solving my workplace problems possible. It enabled me to reach outcomes I never expected. This all goes back to the tools I acquired in the programme, which assist me in continuously improving my practice.

### C. Ghadeer's story: transforming English language learning in years four and five

I teach English language to years four and five in a school in Ramallah, Palestine. In my first year in the school I noticed that students were using memorisation as a way to ensure they would receive high marks. I that noticed my students were unable to answer questions that were altered, even in the slightest way. This troubled me because it meant that students were not developing the necessary language skills. So I set out to find teaching methods and techniques that would enhance my students' critical thinking skills, increase their motivation and help them feel empowered.

I started by consulting English and Arabic language teachers in my school. Meeting with the Arabic teachers was quite valuable because they provided me with insight on the way my students were learning their native language. I then asked other English language teachers to observe my classroom. At this time, I created a tool that asked my students to tell me if they were in the habit of memorising, the difficulties they faced learning English and how they

preferred to learn. After gathering the evidence, I consulted the online literature and wrote an action plan.

One of the most effective methods I used was supporting students to reach their own understanding. I did this by using visual and other teaching aids, and encouraging peer learning. I also encouraged them to create their own questions and direct them to their classmates, relying on debates and discussions to reinforce the shift. This enabled me to switch to critical thinking in comprehension tests. By the end of the year, less than 40 per cent of my students preferred memorisation to my new approach. Most students were feeling more self-confident in using the English language.

The positive impact of my project led other English teachers to adopt the same or similar strategies in their teaching practice. Acquiring critical thinking skills, however, is about changing one's habits and so can take a really long time. Therefore I feel that this is an ongoing process both for the students and my practice. That's why I still look for ways to improve my teaching methods. Practice brings progress and progress makes things easier to achieve.

## Appendix 13

A. Tool offering empirically based claims for advocating non-positional TL in Palestine and the MENA region

Teachers in Palestine:

- Are capable of leading school improvement;
- Are capable of improving teaching and learning;
- Are capable of building context-relevant knowledge;
- Are capable of leading professional learning;
- Are capable of learning from other teachers;
- Are capable of supporting other teachers;
- Are capable of inspiring other teachers;
- Are thus key to the national conversation on education reform and to formulating an authentic Palestinian vision and agenda for education change;
- Are thus capable of leading participatory socio-political movements.

B. Tool offering list of outcomes and benefits of adopting the Teachers Leading the Way programme as a means of developing non-positional TL in Palestine and the MENA region

The Teachers Leading the Way programme leads to:

- Critical reflection and self-reflection;
- Critical dialogue;
- Perspective transformation;
- Values (re)articulation;
- Self-empowerment;
- Enhanced agency;
- Self-efficacy;
- Autonomous thinking;
- Enhanced voice;
- Self-guided learning;
- Process-led learning;
- Knowledge-building;
- Innovation;
- Dialogic learning;
- Collaboration;
- Authorship;
- Leadership;
- Critical friendship;
- Social capital;
- Collective efficacy;
- Capacity building;
- Sustainability.

## Appendix 14

### A. Recommendations for education policy in Palestine and the MENA region:

- Need to form an authentic Palestinian vision and agenda for education reconstruction:
  - This entails resource, intellectual and programmatic independence from foreign governments and international agencies;
  - This requires practice and evaluation policies that are informed by problem-driven, context-based knowledge;
  - This involves setting into motion educational change initiatives that focus on processes and capacity-building.
- Need to mobilise teachers in the drive to improve teaching and learning;
- Need to activate non-positional TL as a means to system-wide capacity building for school improvement and system-level change;
- Need to adopt the Teachers Leading the Way programme as a context-friendly, resource-efficient and sustainable means for developing non-positional TL and professional capacity;
- Need to encourage headteachers to adopt and support non-positional TL in their schools;
- Need to direct national resources towards developing non-positional TL.

## B. Recommendations for school headteachers and senior leaders in Palestine:

- Need to view the role of schools as facilitators of learning for all school members and to reshape them into PLCs;
- Need to practice participatory and devolved forms of leadership;
- Need to view teachers as partners in the educational endeavour and not subordinates;
- Need to recognise and tap into the vast potential of teachers for school improvement;
- Need to mobilise TL as a means to improved teaching and learning;
- Need to create authentic professional learning opportunities for teachers;
- Need to adopt Teachers Leading the Way programme as a vehicle to developing non-positional TL, which entails:
  - Fostering a risk-taking, trust-filled culture;
  - Creating supportive organisational structures.
- Need to view non-positional TL as a way to enhance organisational and headteacher performance;
- Need to manage school-based educational knowledge built by teachers.

## Appendix 15

Criteria and guidelines for facilitating the Teachers Leading the Way programme and other TLDW-based programmes

### Facilitators

- Must have knowledge of local historical, political, socio-cultural, economic and educational forces and conditions;
- Must attend to the context-relevant disrupting dilemmas that catalyse transformation of teachers' perspectives;
- Must acknowledge and honour teachers' affective responses and provide the necessary support;
- Must create a supportive environment for teachers when transitioning between perspectives;
- Must promote critical reflection, critical self-reflection and critical dialogue;
- Must provide agency-enhancing activities and opportunities;
- Must provide formal and informal socially validating activities and opportunities;
- Must provide individualised support that entails all three learning domains.



