October 2014

The "Fifth Business" of Department Heads: Examining the perceptions of department heads about their role

Nikola Paranosic
The University of Western Ontario

Supervisor
Dr. Augusto Riveros
The University of Western Ontario

Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Education

The "Fifth Business" of Department Heads: Examining the perceptions of department heads about their role

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Nikola Paranosic

Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Western University of Canada
London, Ontario, Canada

Abstract

Using an exploratory case study methodology, the study records the perceptions of thirteen secondary school department heads in an Ontario school board. After analysing the interviews with these department heads, this study uses the metaphor of Fifth Business to demonstrate how the role is perceived. This research demonstrates that department heads occupy a role that is vital but undervalued and not well-understood. Lacking supports and guidance to help them understand their role, department heads use metaphors – "advocate", "clerk", "liaison", "filter," "model" and "coordinator" – to describe how they perceive how they act in fulfilling the obligations of their role. The study recommends, that by building on these perceptions, more can be done to help clarify the role and offer support for the practitioners who are currently working in that role.

Key words: department heads, Fifth Business, role, metaphors, exploratory case study, subject area, leadership, leaders, education, educational organization

Epigraph

That when his task is accomplished, his work done,

Throughout the country everyone says “It happened of its own accord.”

(Lao Tzu, 1977, p. 17)

Fifth Business… Definition

Those roles which, being neither those of Hero nor Heroine, Confidante or Villain, but which were nonetheless essential to bring about the Recognition or the dénouement, were called the Fifth Business in drama and opera companies organized according to the old style; the player who acted these parts was often referred to as Fifth Business.

(Davies, 1970, p. 1)

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank, first and foremost my thesis advisor, Dr. Augusto Riveros. His good humour, support and guidance were essential and made both the process and final product of this project better. Thank you immensely for all your time and effort.

As well, thank you to Dr. Katina Pollock especially for her guidance in the early stages of this thesis and for her insights on the project. Dr. Pamela Bishop also deserves thanks for her keen critiques and help along the way.

Many thanks go to the participants of this study for volunteering their time and helping make this study a reality.

J'aimerais remercier ma femme et mes quatre enfants qui m'ont soutenu tout au long de cette thèse. Sans vous, je n'aurais plus jamais terminer.
Maintenant, papa aura plus de temps pour jouer avec vous.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction and Identification of the Problem

Introduction

There are many reasons why the Canadian novel *Fifth Business* by Roberston Davies (1970) is considered a classic. The book is a well-written, funny and tragic examination of the role that myth plays in people's lives, Jungian ideas of synchronicity (Jung, 1971) and a compelling story of the developing self. The book represents the perceptions of a Canadian who is trying to see the "bigger picture" and his role in it. Yet it is not often considered to be a metaphor for how a particular position within an educational organization is perceived and experienced -- that, however, is exactly how it will be considered here.

Within the book *Fifth Business*, Robertson Davies (1970) examines the role of Dustan Ramsay who, paradoxically, is the main character in the novel, and is also the most undervalued person in the book. Ramsay's role in the book is to move the plot forward, but he does this without authority or power. Dunstan Ramsay has a deep and abiding interest in the mythical elements that connect people together, which is motivated by the belief that people fulfill functions even if they do no properly understand what they are doing. At its heart, Davies portrays a character who despite being vital to the story, remains ever in the background, fulfilling a thankless role that is ignored and undervalued; that of Fifth Business. This study will show that within the Ontario education system, there are many Dustan Ramsays who occupy the role of Fifth Business: they are called department heads.

The study has a very simple focus: to look at the perceptions that secondary school department heads in one school board in Ontario have of their own role. Conventionally, the

position known as department head in Ontario –but also referred to as a middle manager, middle leader, division leader or subject leader in other districts– is an on-going hired position which is given to someone who takes on additional formal responsibilities (Clarke, 2009). Recognized as leaders in the school, department heads are often placed in charge of a subject specific department (e.g. head of the English department) –although department heads can be recognized for other positions that support students, staff and administration (e.g. head of guidance, student success teacher) – and are expected to carry out curricular and administrative tasks such as the implementation of new Ministry of Education initiatives, interpreting evaluation policies, dealing with plagiarism issues and buying resources for their department. Yet, despite a long history in the education system, there has been little research done to understand the work of department heads or their perceptions about their role (Weller, 2001).

Within this study, I demonstrate that the role of department heads within an Ontario context is not very well-understood or defined even by those who currently occupy the role. I do this by looking at pertinent literature and policy on the subject. Secondly, I demonstrate that there is ambiguity and conflict around and within the role, which causes department heads to believe that they have the potential to do more for a school if given the opportunity by administrators. I do this by looking at several theories which relate to how the role can be perceived in order to demonstrate that department heads suffer from role ambiguity and conflict. This is done by showing that, according to the literature and policy, department heads do not understand where or how their role fits within an educational organization. A situation that is only exacerbated by the fact that there is no formal training or guidance or support

offered to them (Clarke, 2009; Schmidt, 2000). Hence, chapter 2 explores the ways that department heads can come to doubt the authenticity of their actions. Following this, the study looks at how department heads are conceptualized, if at all, in the literature of leadership. It examines the leadership practices with which department heads could be or have been associated such as distributive leadership, teacher leadership, charismatic leadership, transformational leadership, and instructional leadership. The leadership of department heads is considered within the context of their subject expertise and the influence that subject area has on their roles (Siskin, 1991).

In chapter 3, I explain the methodological approach used for this exploratory case study (Streb, 2010; Yin, 2003). It is explained why an exploratory case study was used and how this allowed for the department heads to engage in conversations regarding their role (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). It is argued in this section that an exploratory case study provided the latitude to create the necessary metaphors, conceptualizations and frameworks to examine how department heads perceive their role. Especially since, as will be explained, this study is best viewed as an opening for what I hope will be future research into the role of department heads in Ontario.

In addition, chapter 3 outlines out how an interpretivist framework was used to provide the means for the department heads to not be compared to any standard and rather let them "speak for themselves." An interpretivist framework allows for the exploration of the meaning that the department heads perceive to have of their role. As well, it is detailed how the department heads, who are working in a same role, in the same school board, are considered a case that needs to be more fully explored.

Using an interpretivist approach in chapter 4, I present my findings and analysis of the perceptions of department heads, based on a case study of 13 semi-structured interviews of department heads who work within the same school board which has been given the pseudonym of the Culvert School Board. For reasons of confidentiality, all the names of the participants, the exact location of the schools and the school board were given fictional names. Lastly, the analysis discusses the perceptions of department heads on their role and relates them to a series of metaphors, used by the department heads to explain their role. As I demonstrate it is better not to talk about the role of the department head but rather the roles that a department head must adopt due to the numerous changing roles they have to fulfil in order to do their jobs; often without understanding or support. In this study, I demonstrate that department heads do not perceive their role exclusively as a list of responsibilities, a place in the hierarchy or a position of authority, but rather as a series of roles or attitudes that a person must adopt for the betterment of their students, their own subject and their staff.

Given these findings I conclude that department heads are the Fifth Business of schools, vital to the enterprise, little examined and understood, but always adapting and changing to meet the needs of the school. Most importantly, this multifaceted role of Fifth Business leads them to facilitate the roles of others within the educational organization. As such, lacking the necessary guidance and support to understand their role, department heads use metaphors to describe what they do and the roles they are adopting in order to facilitate the workings of the school. These metaphors: “advocate”, “clerk”, “healer”, “liaison”, “filter” and “model”, provide insight into how the department heads perceive their role.

It is one of the intentions and hopes of this research that it will be transferable to other contexts, if only to help to fill in the research gap that exists around department heads in Ontario. By transferring this research to other context, it is my hope that department heads, who are dealing with similar issues and problems, can use the insights of this study to provide greater support for them in their role. As will be shown below, considering how integral department heads are to the implementation of initiatives and educational culture of a school, a greater understanding of the role can, in my opinion, only help to strengthen the education systems and help students achieve better outcomes.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I make several recommendations on how that role could, and should, be better clarified and supported. Included in these recommendations are initiatives that could be pursued over the long-term, such as qualifications to be created for becoming a department head in Ontario, and more support and training for department heads. Other recommendations should be pursued immediately to help those in the role. These include a greater respect for the influence that subject area has in the role of the department and a call for principals to both appreciate the influence of department heads and empower them. Finally, I make a recommendation that further research is needed on this topic.

Rationale for Studying Department Heads

It could be interpreted that the position of department head is undervalued (Turner, 1996; Weller, 2001). As Harris, Busher and Wise (2001) and Weller (2001) indicate, despite this position often being seen as a training ground for principals and other administrations positions, the multifaceted job itself has not been even described, much less defined in most areas. And this is especially true in Ontario, where little has been done to look at the role

(Clarke, 2009; Hannay & Ross, 1999; Schmidt, 2000). Secondary school department heads in Ontario have remained mostly silent, with very little done to give them a voice and let them explain their own point of view. As explained above, this study wants to do that. By doing this, steps will be taken to merge theoretical concepts of the role with the realities of those who are current performing the role. When practitioners, such as myself, lead the research, this can be an effective means to improve both teacher and student performance (Kincheloe, 2012). As such, their perceptions should form the basis for our understanding of what actually is happening in Ontario schools; especially since that picture is currently so murky.

Seemingly, the position of department head in a secondary school organization is a role that should require leadership, management skills, and expertise and those who perform that role should be trained for those duties (Clarke, 2009; Harris, Busher & Wise, 2001; Turner, 1996; 2003a; Weller, 2001). The literature certainly argues this to be case, though department heads, it is argued, are not often recognized as leaders or given the opportunity to demonstrate leadership within their subject or within the school (Kelly, 2010; Turner, 2003a; Weller, 2001). Instead their roles are largely confined to responsibilities that aid administrators such as timetabling and ordering resources (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002; Clarke, 2009; Fitzgerald & Gunther, 2008; Friedman, 2011). Talk of getting department heads more involved in the organization structure of the school seems to be, in most organizational structures, just rhetoric (Brown, Rutherford and Boyle, 2000). Yet some evidence demonstrates that investing in department heads can be a means to improve school performance (Harris, Busher & Wise, 2001; Glover, Miller, Gambling, Gough & Johnson, 1999; Turner, 2003a).

According to Harris, Busher and Wise (2001) and Busher (2005), when department heads are more informed of the purpose of initiatives and trained in their implementation, they are more likely to "buy in" to their usefulness and, thus, better able to get their departments to buy into these concepts and make sure that these ideas are reaching students. While administrators are encouraged to keep in mind system goals (Leithwood, 2012), department heads often have a smaller and more direct focus on their school or their department (Bennett, Woods, Wise & Newton, 2007). Being "in the trenches" means that department heads are better able to provide a check on things that are being done and are better at finding a way, by working with their departments, to fit ideas into the context of their classes (Bennett et al., 2007; Weller, 2001). This speaks to the unique role of department heads as influencers and interpreters of ideas and initiatives (Busher, 2005; Glover et al, 1999). Department heads can provide support for their departments to pursue ideas that can improve student performance (Busher, 2005).

Yet, equally it has been demonstrated that if the heads are unfamiliar with their new role and do not perceive an initiative as maintaining the traditional relationships within their department, they are likely to try to maintain the status quo since that is to their benefit (Bennett et al., 2007). Bennett et al. (2007) argue that there is an essential tension that department heads have to manage between the dynamics of their department and the implementation of whole-school initiatives. Without clear direction of how or why to implement ideas, department heads are often confused as to where their loyalties should lie and, as such, are often inclined to do little (Busher, 2005). Further, it can be concluded (Bennett et al., 2007; Busher, 2005; Glover et al, 1999) that department heads are often more

concerned with the social tensions that exist within their departments and they have to be convinced that initiatives are truly going to be helpful in order to pursue them. It should be noted that despite having perceived authority and power, both official and unofficial, department heads in Ontario have no means to discipline, evaluate or enforce their decisions. Although, at the same time, as Ball (2003) argues, teachers, and department heads by extension, are caught up in a world where they have become accountable for the implementation of policies – often based on performance goals that might be at odds with what the heads believe to be worthwhile towards pedagogy and students. It could be claimed then, that it is crucial that we understand department head's perceptions of their role if school improvement initiatives are to be successfully implemented.

Kruskamp (2003) has argued that the department head is expected to play a crucial role in aiding teachers meet curriculum expectations – both the "visible" curriculum of expectations and skills and the "hidden" curriculum of values and attitudes that a school tries to teach students. In both regards, it is the department head who helps to influence what skills, content and values should be taught within a secondary school subject area (Clarke, 2009; Turner, 2003b; Siskin, 1991; 1994). As Brown, Rutherford and Boyle (2000) and Kruskamp (2003) found, the reality of the role and its responsibilities are often very different from the department head's expectations and this can lead to role confusion and resentment. Echoing this, Schmidt (2000) shows the role of department head to be emotionally charged and one that can cause the person in the position mental and emotional stress.

While some researchers (Clarke, 2009; Turner, 2003; Weller, 2001; Worner & Brown, 1993) have realized the importance of department heads as instructional leaders or teacher

leaders; this research has largely been undertaken as an argument for the need to empower department heads without exploring how department heads, themselves, conceptualize and contextualize their role. The research, as well, has often viewed department heads within a particular lens; pigeon-holing department heads as one particular type of leader or evaluating if that particular type of leadership description is accurate (Busher, 2005; Clarke, 2009). Rosenfeld (2008) asked department heads how they perceived they role had changed and he found that – within the context of educational changes in Australia – the role was in the midst of an evolution; which makes its study even more crucial. All of this research, however, has done little to clarify how department heads, themselves, perceive their role.

Even extensive research on departments by those such as Leithwood and McLean (1987) or Ontario's Royal Commission on Education: Love of Learning (1995) recognized the ambiguity of the role as well as its potential for positive change but little had been done to clarify it, despite the significant labour and educational reforms, as will be detailed below, in Ontario. Clarke (2009) and Siksin (1991) have identified the power of department heads to lead change and instruction. While in the last 20 years, schools in the United Kingdom have taken steps to create national training programs and identify responsibilities for their middle leaders – a position similar, though not completely analogous (since middle leaders are, for example, given different powers to monitor and hold their fellow teachers to account) to that of Ontario's department head (Brown, Boyle & Boyle, 2000; National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (NPQML), 2014). No such standardization, qualification or support program exists in Ontario, nor does it seems to be on the radar.

Rather than attempt to label department heads, this study shows how department heads view themselves and construct their role – using their own language. It is important that we allow those who are in the role to help us define the role of department head and see how it is being practiced. By doing this, this study seeks to allow department heads to explain where they perceive their role fits in the social organization of a school.

Problem Statement

The role of a department head occupies a unique role in the education system. Straddling the lines between administrators and classroom teachers, department heads are of two worlds or educational realities, yet belong to neither (Busher, 2005). Despite existing since the inception of the education system in Ontario, and being a ubiquitous part of secondary education, the role of the department head has not been properly understood, analyzed or contextualized (Clarke, 2009; Kelly, 2010; Turner; 2003; Rosenfeld, 2008; Weller, 2001). How department heads exercise their power, both officially and unofficially, has also not been fully explored (Schmidt, 2000). Even more astonishingly, considering the importance and utility of the role, there has been little research done that has attempted to summarize the responsibilities of the role in an official, practical or even academic capacity (Turner, 2003; Weller, 2001).

Often research that has been done have looked at the potential for the role (for example as a teacher-leader (Clarke, 2009)), or the emotional stress that the role has on the people in the position (Schmidt, 2000), but with little attempt to contemplate how a department head perceives their role. Indeed, most research that has been done on the role of the department head has remarked that it is ill-defined, vague and ambiguous (Clark, 2009;

Leithwood & McLean, 1987; Schmidt, 2000; Siskin, 1994). Further complicating the matter, department heads are also given little guidance as there are not currently any associations or programs in Ontario that are specifically designed to help department heads become better prepared (Clark, 2009; Leithwood & McLean, 1987). In many ways, the role of department head changes not only from school board to school board, but more fundamentally from school to school, and most accurately from the expectations of one principal to another (Clarke, 2009; Friedman, 2011; Weller, 2001). As such, research needs to be done to greater clarify the role and in this study, I argue that this can be accomplished by looking at how department heads, themselves, view their role.

Research Questions

During the interviews that were conducted, the responses of the participants helped me to refine the questions in order to explore specific themes and topics. A semi-structured interview gave me the flexibility to ask follow-up questions and allowed for the interview to develop organically (Streb, 2010). Efforts were taken to not lead the department heads interviewed into any categorization, such as “teacher leaders” but rather allow them to define themselves. As will be detailed below, lacking terminology, the department heads chose metaphors to describe what they perceive to be their actions.

The main question that this research deals with is: How do department heads perceive their role? By examining this question, it was hoped that department heads, in their own terms, could describe what they do within a school. As indicated above, there has been little attempt to answer this question or even to allow department heads the opportunity to answer

it. This question forms the basis for a better understanding of how those in the role see their actions and interactions with others.

In order to focus the main questions, sub-questions were developed that focused on specific areas of actions and interactions that department heads have within an educational organization. These sub-questions also made it easier, later on, for coding and identification of common themes and metaphors related to the main question. The following sub-questions were used to guide my research and the analysis:

- What do department heads perceive they do?
- How does their role affect how they view or interact with their fellow teachers?
- How does the department head's relationship with their subject affect the perceptions of their role?

By investigating these questions, it is hoped that a clearer picture of the role or roles of department heads emerged in relationship to how they perceived their role.

Personal Investment in the Topic:

It should be noted that, in my current job, I am a department head of history at a secondary school. Like many department heads, I was an internal hire; hired by my principal largely because hiring from outside of the school would have resulted in more difficult timetabling and administrative decisions. Upon becoming a department head, I was not given any indication of what my role was: there was no handbook, there was no succession planning[1], there were no courses, other than generalized "leadership" courses designed for

[1] In my case the department head at the time, who was retiring, gave me the timetabling to do as soon as I became department head because: "You might as well do it, since I am not going to be here next year." He gave me no indication of what a balanced and fair timetable would look like.

those who wish greater administrative glories, to be taken that specifically catered to the role of the department head.

Having interviewed for other department head positions as well, I have, personally, seen the job often go to internal candidates (largely for the same reason I got hired) or be hired based on the expectations of the principal conducting the interview. In my experience no two interviews are the same because, lacking any specific formulation for the expectations of the job, they are largely based on how the principal conceives the role; while some principals want collaborators and conciliators, others want instructional leaders and curriculum experts.

Even more surprisingly, despite department heads being hired in specific subject areas, very rarely has the actual issue of content knowledge or being an advocate for their subject area, in my case, history, been mentioned. In one interview, I was told that I was a great teacher, who demonstrated an excellent understanding of curriculum and my subject, but that was not as important as speaking about the conversations I would have with my department members. This might be a valid criticism but it is also based on the principal's conception of the role. As such, I have perceived a push towards the lessening of subject-specific content in favour of the notion of teaching all subject areas as different variations of the same skill set. In short, in my personal experience in working for a board in an Ontario school, there is no established procedure to prepare for the role of department head and the hiring of department heads is capricious and often based on timetabling issues.

Yet it would be a mistake to classify this research as being inspired by sour grapes or personal frustrations, just the opposite, actually. I firmly believe that more practitioners need to be involved in the research and theory of education. As Kincheloe (2012) argues teachers

have an active role in understanding their roles and are not just do what they are told. He elaborates that in the modern world, teachers, as professionals, need to actively take part in research in order to better understand their actions and to better help their students because: "When teacher researchers know their students, become experts in subject matter and are adept knowledge workers, they are beginning to put together the skills that will help them become great teachers who motivate and inspire their students" (Kincheloe, 2012, p. 21). Along with me, the department heads who were interviewed are doing just that. By getting the voices of department heads, this research is meant to meld the practical and theoretical so that we have a better understanding of the attitudes and perceptions that department heads have of the role. By doing this, it is hoped that common themes will emerge through my research that can serve to inform future department head practice and future research into department heads. But most importantly, it is my hope that this research will inform our understanding of the role of department heads. As a department head, myself, I have a passion for my job and want to learn more about the role.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The Policy Context

It is worth noting that a secondary school department head is still an active teacher in the classroom who has been given added responsibilities. As Weller (2001) shows, department heads are uniquely situated to best understand what is going on in the school; since department heads are actively implementing curriculum and dealing with students on a daily basis, they are expected to be much more aware of the goings on the school. Indeed, as Busher (2005) and Schmidt (2000) report most department heads still identify most strongly with their identity as a teacher. By virtue of their role, however, department heads are granted the opportunity to greatly affect the tone and culture of a school (Busher & Harris, 1999). For example, in the school board that I used for my study, most department heads are in charge of course selections and have a strong influence on timetabling. These are significant powers that shape the culture, identity and programming of a school.

While it may seem obvious to recognize department heads as leaders, that role has not been formally established in Ontario; it has only assumed or, more accurately, surmised from the actions of department heads and not from any legal framework (Clarke, 2009; Weller, 2001). The Education Act of Ontario (1990), allows principals to create the position of the department head, but the responsibilities and authority of the department head is completely derived from the principal. According to the Education Act (1990), the department head is simply a co-ordinator and supervisor of program units that the principal has identified.

Similarly, within the Ontario College of Teachers Act (1996a) which established the professional association that oversees teachers in Ontario and which also, in a separate but

related document, outlined the necessary qualifications (Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996b) that are needed for a teacher to attain their specialist or for a teacher to become an administrator, the words "department head" do not appear. There are no qualifications or restrictions– not in terms of education or experience – necessary to be a department head in Ontario.

This seems to be a huge oversight and speaks to the undervaluing of the department head role and the lack of research into the role. This was similarly the case in the United Kingdom but, after recognizing that this research gap existed, schools, districts and systems have tried to address this issue (Brown, Boyle & Boyle, 2000; Brown, Rutherford and Boyle, 2000; Busher, 2005; Glover et al., 1999; Harris, Busher & Wise, 2001). Yet, even with these measures, there are still doubts as to whether the role has been, or can be within the current system, properly understood or identified (Bennett et al, 2007; Brown, Boyle & Boyle, 2000; Busher, 2005; Turner, 2003a; 2003b). And while there are certain similarities there is no comparative analysis to demonstrate if this research compliments the experience of Ontario department heads.

Department Heads Relationship to the Labour Movement

For the purposes of labour relations, and unlike other educational leadership roles, such as vice-principals, department heads are simply considered as teachers in Ontario. Going to the union of which department heads are members, however, reveals little. If one goes to the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers' Federation website (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, 2006), the only department head information is a page that lists academic resources on department heads. In her study Clarke (2009) mentions that, despite repeated

calls to the Ontario Secondary School Teacher Federation for clarification of the role of department head, she could not find any. I, similarly, could not get any response from union representatives except to be directed to the collective bargaining agreement.

Overall, the best guideline to the responsibilities of the department head can be found in collective bargaining agreements. These agreements are often confidential and usually only accessible to school board employees and representatives. The fact that the only document which provides some guidance to the duties of the department head is confidential speaks to the critical situation of the department head role. To speak in general terms, in these agreements, the basic job is laid out with duties ranging from supporting teachers to assisting with the budget. Crucially, a lot of time in the collective agreements is spent spelling out how many lines are needed to constitute a department that would need a department head and the monetary compensation that is dependent on that size. As far as roles, however, it is only explained that the department head merely reports and advises the principal in a wide range of tasks.

In many ways, the legal position of department head in Ontario is left-over from a previous arrangement in education. Before Mike Harris' Progressive Conservative government (1995-2002), made changes to education in 1997 with the Education Quality Improvement Act (popularly called Bill 160), all teaching roles within secondary schools were part of the same union (Bedard & Lawion, 2000). But Bill 160 was very controversial and in defiance to the bill, thousands of teachers held an "illegal" strike. While the merits of this strike is a matter of historical controversy, it is widely interpreted that principals were removed from the union in its aftermath as a means to help control labour unrest in the future (Bedard & Lawion, 2000).

Lost in the shuffle were department heads who were now truly stranded between administration and teaching.

The removal of administrators from the union made a clear division between those who are colleagues and those who are supervisors or, more crudely, between "workers" and "bosses." It is, for example, now requested that principals and vice-principals leave the room when teachers are discussing union business. Like other teachers, department heads are not supposed to perform evaluations of their fellow union members, act as supervisors, or discipline their fellow members (OSSTF, 2014). In the board in which I situated my study, however, it was not uncommon for department heads to be asked to participate in job interviews – something that is in line with collective bargaining duties of advising the principal, but is, potentially, in violation of the official position of the union (OSSTF, 2014)

Department heads are in a "grey zone." They are still expected co-ordinate department initiatives, but lack the recognition of having supervisory powers to enforce any actions. What that means seems to be different in every school board in Ontario with even some variation existing, as in the case of this study, existing from school to school. Ostensibly, department heads are teachers with added responsibilities but this begs the question of why the position needs to be recognized within a formal hierarchy. Couldn't each principal just as easily create a "cabinet" of advisors that could fulfill the same role? The answer is found by examining the unique position of the department head in schools.

Department Heads within Ontario's Leadership Framework

Within Leithwood's (2012) explanation of the research foundations and focus of the *Ontario Leadership Framework* (*OLF*) – the guidelines for leadership development within

Ontario – the term "department head" is mentioned exactly once (p. 8). They are only referenced in connection with how principals should work with them. Referring to the position as "middle managers" (p. 8), Leithwood (2012) mentions that the department heads provide secondary school principals an opportunity to distribute leadership by giving-up their role as instructional leaders to those who are more qualified, knowledgeable or motivated. As such, there is no attempt in the *OLF* to categorize department heads as a specialized position or approach them outside of their relationship to administration.

Ministry of Education documents such as the *OLF* (2012) stress the need to recognize and develop leadership in its various forms. Friedman (2011) and Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008) have both argued that similar plans in other districts have only translated into more work for teachers and, by extension, department heads. Brown, Rutherford and Boyle (2000) found that principals' rhetoric about changing power structures often did not match the reality of how power operated in schools. Whether or not department heads, however, are suited for that change in structure or require additional power, is still a matter that has not been decided. Bennett et al. (2007) reported that many middle leaders felt uncomfortable taking on a supervisory role and did not feel they had the authority, or wanted the authority, to enforce administrative decisions and manage teachers.

This again echoes Busher's (2005) findings that when forced to identify with one side or another, middle leaders most often choose to be see themselves as teachers first and part of the school or administrative leadership second. James and Aubrey-Hopkins (2003) demonstrate that department heads identify primarily as teachers because they feel the need to legitimize their leadership role and demonstrate that they are still part of the group. This is

in keeping with Hannay and Ross (1999) who found that teachers, in general, identify themselves with a particular department and tend to view themselves as specialists. James and Aubrey-Hopkins (2003) also noted that fighting for their department was the easiest way that heads could legitimize their leadership. A department head that was more successful in winning resources and competing with other departments was viewed as a better leader than those who encouraged or facilitated larger school goals.

Subject Expertise and Professional Practice

As Rosenfeld (2008) notes in his Australian study, there is a need to reconceptualise the role of department heads, since, he suggests, there seems to be some disparity between how the role is viewed by administrators and department heads themselves. It might be time to question why department heads, which have these administrative responsibilities, are grouped into subject areas and yet that subject distinction or perspective is then not often acknowledged. The role, however, that subject-based departments play in shaping the identity of secondary school department heads should not be ignored. Busher and Harris (1999) identified departments, with their unique cultures centred on different subject areas, "represent the enacted views, values and beliefs about what it means to teach students in particular subject areas" (p. 311). Busher and Harris (1999), Hannay and Ross (1999) and Siskin (1994) all identified subject-based departments as a reference point for teachers and one of the ways that they form personal identities and communities.

If the department is crucial in the personal and collective identity of teachers, then it follows logically that the department head has a tremendous amount of influence within the school and can greatly affect the well-being and confidence of teachers. In a study of

elementary school structure, Spillane and Hopkins (2013) also show that having subject specific leaders were crucial to the organizational structure of a school. They demonstrated that people in formal roles and responsible for specific subjects or areas (such as literacy), influenced the amount of networking, interactions and collaboration between teachers. In areas where these positions were not as prevalent, the amount of collaboration decreased and teachers were less likely to ask specific questions about instruction related to these specific areas.

Many department cultures are built around the conception that their subject area has unique skills and ideas that allow them to understand issues distinctively i.e. there is an "English" way to approach a problem (Grossman & Sodolsky, 1995; Siskin, 1994; Turner, 2003b). Grossman and Sodolsky (1995) believe that these subject subcultures are so entrenched that they can create barriers to school reforms. As Poultney (2007) illustrates, departments also experience intense competition for students when students choose their courses, and department heads are expected to be firm advocates and campaigners for their subject areas. As such, they will interpret directives from the lens of what is "best" for their department or subject area.

If department heads are a link between administration and teachers there should be some understanding how they interpret or "spin" administrative directives and messages (Busher, 2005). Department heads are in a constant state of decoding ideas, conceptions and expectations of the role and making that into, albeit informal, policy. As Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012) observe, there needs to be an understanding of how practitioners "do" policy. As there is little policy context by which to judge department heads, it might be important here to see them, as Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012) saw other educational practitioners as being in the

process of defining or enacting the policy through their practice. This not only includes what department heads do in their role or how they perceive their role, but also, and as crucially important, what they choose not to do. Lacking any formal mentorship or training program, department heads must learn to understand their role based on the experience of "doing" the role, through informal communications they have made with others or through the observation of how they were treated when they were a member of a department. If we were to use Malcolm Gladwell's (2008) popular idea of mastery of expertise, based on the work of the psychologists Ericcson, Prietula and Cokely (2007), department heads would fail to meet the 10,000 hour benchmark.

In his book *Outliers*, Gladwell (2008) used famous examples, such as The Beatles and Bill Gates, to argue that success does not come without training, singular dedication and, most importantly, the opportunity to practice before being required to perform at a high level. It is useful, therefore, to relate this idea to the training currently given to department heads. After all, do department heads get the opportunities necessary to become "experts" at their role before they are expected to be proficient? As Bennett et al. (2007) state: "Simply to demand a new role for middle leaders is not going to bring it into existence" (p. 467). This becomes important when the department head is viewed in a leadership role, especially in connection to how the department continues (or attempts to change) their particular school's culture (Busher & Harris, 1999)

Department Heads in the Literature

Department heads, therefore, exist in a nebulous realm whereby they have leadership responsibilities and are often expected to pursue instructional initiatives, yet have very little

recognition, power or authority to enforce compliance, reward good work or ensure co-operation (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002; Clarke, 2009; Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006; Poultney, 2007; Weller, 2001;). Within the literature, department heads are sometimes presented as the perfect example of teacher leaders: non-administrators who are empowered to co-ordinate programme and implement school and system goals (Busher, 2005; Clarke, 2009; Muijs & Harris, 2003). Though, in practice, this recognition and downloading of further responsibilities and duties upon them is not met with a commensurate increase in their power or authority (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008; Friedman, 2011).

Department heads are often responsible for the performance of their department. They shoulder the problems of that department and are brought to task when things go wrong (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002). If heads are to be considered experts or exemplars, they also must be expected to be on the forefront of pedagogy and ensure that learning reforms are established and implemented (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006). In this role, department heads are often seen as allies in the change process as well as agents of change. Since, they have a substantive role in easing conflict and solving disputes (Weller, 2001). In a sense, it is department heads that must be "won over" if administration wants to make substantive changes, since it is, arguably, department heads that have the most influence on what is taught in the classroom, outside of the teachers themselves (Hannay & Ross, 1999; Kelly, 2010).

Considering, their important role, it becomes even more surprisingly, therefore, that the leadership strategies that department heads use have not been widely researched. As Hannay and Ross (1999) argue, the department head is a "black box" of assumptions that has not undergone much scrutiny or clarification. As has already been mentioned, the vast majority

of research that does exist is from the United Kingdom (Aubrey-Hopkins & James, 2002; Bennett et al., 2007; Harris, Busher & Wise, 2001; James & Aubrey-Hopkins, 2003; Turner, 1996; 2003a; Weller, 2001). In a North American context, the most current comprehensive treatments of the role of department heads has been the work of graduate students (Clarke, 2009; Kruskamp, 2003) or have become dated (Leithwood & McLean, 1987). Rather, than seeking to understand how department heads view their role, in order to better support them, most studies have focused mainly on showing the ambiguity that surrounds the role of department head, how that role can be better utilized in-tune with new initiatives or why new initiatives are failing to take hold amongst department heads (Bennett et al., 2007; Clarke, 2009; Harris, Busher & Wise, 2001; Leithwood & McLean, 1987).

Similarly to this study, Clarke's (2009) thesis also examined the perceptions of department heads in the Ontario context. Indeed, some of the findings discussed in the analysis section of this thesis are complimentary to Clarke's study – especially in regards to the ambiguity of the role and the lack of support for the role. But her study was more narrowly focused on only viewing department heads as teacher leaders. I believe, however, considering the complexity and multiple aspects of the role, the metaphor of Fifth Business is a better way to describe their actions. For, as will be demonstrated in the analysis, department heads are often in the process of recreating the role of department head and adjusting their leadership to the context of the situation.

In keeping with this notion, department heads, must constantly adjust and change their role in response to the directives of those above them in the hierarchy. As Friedman (2011) has shown this often means department heads taking on more administrative duties. While

Rosenfeld (2008) argues that changes to education systems are causing the workload of department heads to expand and become more diverse (p. 203). The works of Kruskamp (2003) and Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008), argue that administrators are simply looking for ways to share their own burden and hence download initiatives onto teachers and department heads. Rosenfeld (2008) also argued that the broadening of the department head role had created "a picture of individuals both struggling to understand systemic policy and processes that were influencing their role" (p. 203). The overwhelming conclusion of all this research has been that department heads are being overworked with educational policy and initiatives that department heads do not see as important (Kruskamp, 2003; Friedman, 2011).

So what, then, do department heads think they should be doing? While Poultney (2007) demonstrates that department heads want to feel like they are a greater part of the school leadership and vision, Rosenfeld (2008) and Schmidt (2000) shows that department heads are often confused about their role within a school system. These studies seem to indicate that this ambiguity stems from a lack of professional association or legal framework to use as the basis for the role and thus, the actual duties of the position, not only the role itself, are often interpreted in different ways (Clarke, 2009; Kruskamp, 2003; Rosenfeld, 2008). The mistake here could be in viewing department heads as a position, rather than seeing it as an attitude or fluid role. Department heads seem to exist in an existential dilemma where they constantly have to define and redefine themselves.

Theoretical Perspectives

Authenticity and the role of department head. In *Being and Nothingness*, Jean Paul Sartre (1957) wrote about his experiences observing a waiter working his way through a

restaurant. As the waiter flittered from table to table, Sartre started to notice how he was behaving. Sartre believed that the waiter was quite plainly "playing" the role of the waiter – he had adopted the affectations, demeanor and personality expected of a waiter. Sartre further believed that the waiter was doing this because it was the only way that his actions made sense to him. Despite, as the existentialist argued, having the choice to act more "authentically" available, the waiter exhibited "*mauvais foi" (*bad faith) and simply acted the way that waiters were expected to behave. Since waiters were expected to speak with a particular diction, make exaggerated movements and have a particular set of mannerism that was what he was doing. To Sartre the waiter had ceased being a person and become an automaton. He had ceased acting in a manner consistent with himself and had, instead, adopted a "role." The importance here is that the waiter knew the choice but rather chose to conform to a role and ignore the inherent restrictions and oppressions that came with adopting that role. While Sartre acknowledged that this might cause resentment with the waiter – dissatisfaction with his role and an antagonism towards others he blamed for making him play that role – the choice to give up his free agency meant was largely based on his inability to understand himself in that role without acting in that manner. The waiter was consciously deceiving himself in order to make his life or job more acceptable or pleasing, especially to others. He was, overall, conflicted as to how he thought he was supposed to act and how he wanted to act.

While Sartre's (1957) philosophical observations lead to conversations about the nature of free will or the concept of an "authentic identity" they also can be used to help to illustrate the power of roles. Roles can be very powerful conveyers of social identity – even when people are simply role-playing based on their own perceived stereotypes. Yet the key to the above

observations by Sartre are both predicated on roles that are clearly defined. The waiter knows what a waiter is supposed to do but what happens if that role is not clearly defined?

In a purely philosophical sense, how does the role of department head cause people to act and behave? Department head, not unlike teacher, or principal, or, even, student is a created role. That role, therefore, comes with assumptions as to how the person is supposed to behave. However, the role of department head is not defined which leaves it up to individual perceptions, ideas and experiences. Thus, the department head, lacking any real guidelines, must rely on their own experiences to enact the role of department head. In doing this, they are making a choice between playing the role as demanded by external impositions and trying to find a way to be "authentic" in that role. The choice is essential because it implies ownership of the role and being active creators of their own reality. Merged into this idea, is the concept of responsibility. How much responsibility do department heads feel they must take for the decisions and actions within the school? Especially when, as Fifth Business, they perceive themselves to only be responding themselves to needs of others; how could they be deemed responsible for their actions if their actions are not "authentic."

As Sartre (1957) states it is only our experiences, and taking ownership of those experiences, that provide us with meaning. Ball (2003) provides further insights when he argues that teachers – and by extension department heads – are forced to engage in initiatives they do not believe in; they start to feel inauthentic. Department heads, like other practitioners, are searching for authenticity in their role and are active participants in the creation of that role (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012). The key here is to focus on the experiences and perceptions of the department head as a basis for understanding how department heads

are in a constant state of role creation: “Some people invent ideas that give shape and meaning to their experience; others borrow ideas to understand themselves” (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993, p. 83). For without a clear definition of the role, or clear ownership of the role, everyone in the school has a part in defining it and, arguably, department heads feel little responsibility or ownership for the decisions made within the role. This can lead to role ambiguity, confusion and even conflict.

Role theory and the department head. In considering this topic, the sociological and organizational management concept of role theory has been influential. Using a theatrical metaphor, similar to this research’s literary metaphor of Fifth Business, role theory holds that people within formal or social organizations perceive that they have particular jobs or roles to play (Owens & Valesky, 2011). While each "actor" interprets his or her role, their perceptions of their role are influenced by what they bring to their role (Owens & Valeskey, 2011). Yet when his or her perception of the role differs from the expectations of others, or is not clearly defined or explained to them, this can lead to role conflict or role ambiguity. Role theory provides a useful theoretical framework for the study because much of the study is based on how department heads perceive themselves, their role and their influence. Since the department head holds a relative position of power and influence, yet does not receive the authority or autonomy that he or she feels is necessary, this might cause role ambiguity. Kruskamp (2003) found that department heads often did not understand their role, while Schmidt (2000) found that this role conflict and ambiguity, which seems inherent to the position, caused emotional distress.

Within role theory, itself, there is much disagreement as what the term role means or which framework most accurately describes how people interact with each other (Biddle, 1986). As Biddle (1986) states, most versions of role theory "presume that expectations [of a role] are the major generators of role, that expectations are learned through experience, and that persons are aware of the expectations they hold. This means that role theory presumes a thoughtful, socially aware human actor."(p. 69). Therefore, the idea of role is the confluence between social constructions and how the person in that role perceives and acts (and reacts) to those constructions (Schmidt, 2000). In looking at department heads and asking for their perceptions, this study was mindful of the need to reconcile the idea of how the role was perceived by department heads and what department heads perceived should be their role.

In doing this, this study takes lessons from the social interactionist school of role theory which holds that roles are constantly being worked out and defined (Biddle, 1986). Yet, at the same time, since department heads work with in a school structure, it would unwise to ignore the ideas within organizational role theory. Organizational role theory laid the foundations for the concept of role conflict (Biddle, 1986). While organizational role theory can be criticized for not acknowledging the evolution of roles or the changing nature of roles (Biddle, 1986), the idea that a person can be conflicted in their role and that conflict can cause them to underperform in their in role (Owens & Valesky, 2011) is informative when looking at how roles are perceived. In occupying a role that requires them to both have administrative and teaching responsibilities, at the same time, department heads are often conflicted as to what role to occupy (Schmidt, 2000).

Despite a wave of centralization that has occurred in Ontario in the past 20 years (Levin, 2010), schools are organic, messy and often highly decentralized places that rely on the, sometimes unpredictable, decision-making of individual teachers (Ball, Maguire & Braun, 2012). While a department head might be expected to conform to a series of behaviours, from a social interactionist point of view, supported by the works of George Mead (1934), the role of department head would be constantly adjusting according to the situation. From this perspective, the role is constructed through the social interactions of the department head (Pollard, 1985; Schmidt, 2000). As such, a department head, or any role, is really a construction that is based, not just a strict set of guidelines, but on what the person in the role thinks of their role and what the person in that role believes others expect of their role (Pollard, 1985). Department heads, therefore, would shift how they operate in their role depending on their conceptions of how the person who they are interacting with views their role, and yet, simultaneously try to merge that with their own personal conception of their role and the goals they are trying to achieve.

It is these instances, ones where the department head must choose their own course, where we can see how the role is constituted in practice: at some points the department head needs to be a teacher, at other times, he or she needs to be an assistant to the administration. While frankly, and of equal if not more importance, there are other times where the department head needs to adjust his or her role and be the confidant, friend and emotional support for the members of his or her department. If the department head does not know what course of action is best, is unable to decide, or does not want to choose, this will cause role ambiguity and conflict. It also causes the department head to lack faith in the relevance of

the role and view "their leadership as stemming from their teaching role rather than from a formal title (i.e. department head)" (Schmidt, 2000, p. 840). Role ambiguity and role conflict, meanwhile, is also a high predictor of a lack of job satisfaction and could relate to why people leave the role (Schmidt, 2000).

The status of department heads. The works of Ralph Linton (1936) are also informative here in relating the ideas of role theory to the position of department head. A major theorist in the history of role theory, the American anthropologist looked at the concept of status and how status is achieved. Linton made a distinction between status and role. He argued that people are conferred a status and the associated behaviours that they perform should be considered their role. For Linton, therefore, a role is simply what someone does (how they act) as opposed to how that person is viewed or the position that a person holds. A department head simply might be, from Linton's perspective, a set of duties and can be treated as such. Schmidt (2000) demonstrates that principals often "deprive department heads of social approval, positive social evaluation and any sense of status in their position" by offering "little support and beneficial acknowledgement . . . and none of the prestige, respect, esteem and admiration that is customarily awarded those with status" (p. 836). As such, department heads must often find their own meanings for their role.

When Linton's (1936) and Schmidt's (2000) works are looked at in concert with Bourdieu (1984), a picture of how department heads might try to gain legitimacy in their position can be formulated. Bourdieu believed that through the uses of various kinds of "capital" (e.g. social capital) a person can create a distinction for themselves as having better taste and be viewed as someone who should be listened to and respected. Viewed through the

work of Bourdieu, department heads must have, or cultivate, the "taste" of a department head and cannot be seen to be just like a regular teacher. In other words, a department must be careful to define the distinctiveness of the role, if they want to be effective in that role. As well, viewed through Bourdieu's lens, there might be the suspicion that those who take the title of department head are not as concerned with being helpful or taking on a leadership role but rather taking on the position as a means to gain greater distinction and personal glory. As Heath and Potter (2003) illustrate, cultivating a particular job or viewpoint or having access to not widely known information could be considered a "positional good." In this case, it would be a means whereby department heads set themselves apart from the rest of the school, are viewed differently in the social organization of the school and create a particular status for themselves.

Thus, the motives of many teachers (especially if they are younger) who accept leadership positions, such as a department headship, are often viewed with suspicion (Nolan & Palazzo, 2011). A department head, therefore, has to deal with the perception and distinction that he or she is not "one of us." Department heads must, therefore, look for ways to gain credibility and legitimacy (James & Aubrey-Hopkins, 2003). Department heads are also very protective of the social and collegial relationships within their department (Bennett et al. 2007; James & Aubrey-Hopkins, 2003). Yet this feeling of not being the same as the rest of their colleagues can greatly affect the department head's view of their own self-worth and suggests that department heads need more emotional support in their role (Schmidt, 2000).

Weber, the department head and organizational structures. The social role and influence of the department head, however, should not be underestimated within the structure

of a school. Here, therefore, we move from beyond the individual department heads, and we must also take into consideration theories that look at how organizations are structured and managed. When dealing with any organizational structure, especially ones that rely upon set hierarchical bureaucratic roles, it is also useful to refer to the works of the German theorist Max Weber (1968). Weber's initial description and skepticism towards bureaucracy remains prescient and important. Weber argued that there is a natural tendency in all bureaucratic organizations towards rationalization – the seeking of efficiencies and standardizations. He also detailed the process by which all organizations eventual gravitate towards credentialing and empowering leaders who fit within that organization – thereby enforcing an ideological conformity. Contingent to the above, Weber believed that this process of rationalization was dehumanizing:

> Rational calculation . . . reduces every worker to a cog in this bureaucratic machine and, seeing himself in this light, he will merely ask how to transform himself into a somewhat bigger cog . . . The passion for bureaucratization drives us to despair (Weber, 1968, p. IV).

Weber worried that we would gain efficiency at the cost of our humanity, creativity and liberty (Johnson, 1991). Most frighteningly, we might not even notice: “Weber’s fear was not only that we would become ruled by bureaucrats but that we would become bureaucrats” (Samier, 2002, p. 41). While there were great benefits to bureaucratization, specifically security and stability, Weber (1968) saw that it also limited freedoms even in democratic societies. Weber likened this to being trapped in an "Iron Cage" (Weber, 1930). Weber’s Iron Cage would see society disenchanted, disengaged and dehumanized. As Weber saw the traditional "magical" world being

replaced by a secularized world of rational goals; he mourned the loss (Mommsen, 1989).

In a Weberian analysis, therefore, the position of department head is problematic because it has not been fully rationalized, though Kruskamp (2003), Friedman (2011) and Weller (2001) have made note of the increased bureaucratization of the role. While Levin (2010) notes that the temptation to "fix education" through initiatives, and, thereby, create a more rational education system, at the expense of teacher autonomy, has been impossible for governments to resist. The job of resisting this "intiative-itis" has traditionally fallen to individual educational leaders, such as department heads, to act as "gate-keepers." Yet, they too, have seen their powers limited as educational leadership positions have become increasingly bureaucratized (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008). Here, again, lies the confusion of the role of department head from a theoretical perspective: where in an organization system do department heads "fit"?

Yet maybe they do not "fit" anywhere. It may be a mistake to make analogies towards business structures and compare those to the structures of education. As Milley (2006) notes, education leaders often use aesthetic metaphors and experiences to understand and describe their experiences. Hence do department heads need to be made to fit a prescribed set role or, as this study suggests, can they define themselves? The question is informative, firstly, because it allows for an understanding of the factors (such as bureaucratic realities) that influence the responsibilities that department heads are given within a school structure. Secondly, and more tellingly, it allows for a consideration of the hiring process for department heads. Since this hiring is usually done by people outside the subject area (or even the profession for that

matter), it means that the role of department head might simply be someone who better fits the model of leadership within an educational structure, echoing Weber's (1968) ideas of rationalization, rather than someone who has a deep and meaningful understanding of the needs of their subject area or values of the school.

The work of Thomas Greenfield and Peter Ribbins (1993) is helpful to sort this out. Greenfield, who was influenced by Weber, rejected the positivist concept of organizations in favour of a subjectivist approach. He believed that organizations were not independent entities – an organization had no existence outside of the people who make it up. The essential starting point of this study, therefore, is that department heads (and others who work in a school) are not necessarily a separate part of an organizational structure but, essential, they are the organizational structure. As per Greenfield and Ribbins (1993), their views and interpretations (and those of others) establish their role within any organizational arrangement. As such, in viewing the role of department head, we must recognize the role that department heads have in creating that organizational reality. Especially, when we consider the culture of each school and even each department can be radically different (Siskin, 1991).

Department heads as "Fifth Business." As has been demonstrated, despite the broad and nuanced set of approaches under which the department head could be analyzed and examined, the role has been overlooked. And yet, seemingly, that might be one of the defining elements of the nature of the role. The unifying metaphor of Fifth Business was chosen for this research because, after examining this topic and after conducting interviews with department heads, it quickly became illustrative and has provided metaphorical resonance.

In Robertson Davies (1970) novel, *Fifth Business*, the main character and narrator, Dunstan Ramsay, relates the events of his life using the convention of writing a letter to the headmaster of the school at which he is employed. It should also be noted that he spends most of his time at the working at his school as the Dean of History; a position analogous to that of a department head.

In relating his story, the reader becomes aware very quickly of three roles that that Ramsay plays in the story: Firstly, Ramsay, as narrator, and interpreter of his life story, keenly demonstrates that connections which happen can seem casually unrelated but can be connected through meaning. Davies allows his narrator to observe that he has led an interesting and worthwhile, yet unconventional, life – one that has largely not centered on his own actions but those of others. In other words, the narrator, Ramsey, is in the constant state of seeking to make sense of his role and how it relates to the overall "big picture."

Secondly, Ramsay is often called on by others to be a confidant, friend and collaborator. This is best seen by his relationship with "Boy" Staunton, his childhood friend, who uses and abuses Ramsay for support, help and guidance. Without his support, the other characters in the novel would not have been able to lead their lives as successfully, or just as importantly, Ramsay is often there to cause other characters to reflect on their practices and actions.

Lastly, and most importantly, the reader quickly becomes aware that Ramsay is around during many pivotal moments in many people's lives – indeed sometimes he is even the catalyst for big decisions and events. But while he might facilitate the moment, he is never the main participant in that event. For example, a pivotal moment of the novel occurs when a rock-infused snowball is thrown at a young woman, Mrs. Dempster, causing her a severe injury.

Ramsay is there to witness the event and eventually help the victim and the perpetrator. He is active, only in the sense that he facilitates, collaborates and helps the participants to fulfill their roles. As will be shown in the analysis, this, like all of the above roles, is very similar to how department heads perceive their role. Just as the work of department heads often goes unnoticed, as does the work of Davies' main character.

But more than department heads just being similar to a character in the novel, it is how Davies frames that character's role in the novel. For we learn that Dunstan Ramsay he has been cast in the "vital but never glorious role of Fifth Business" (Davies, 1970, p. 7). It is this idea of Fifth Business that is informative here as a way to view department heads. As explained in the novel, the job of Fifth Business is one that is in the background, it is never the focus but it is essential for the workings of the plot or the action. Robertson Davies invented the term and, in the explanation given to the character Ramsay, related it to the opera:

> [Y]ou cannot make a plot work without another man, and he is usually a baritone, and he is called in the profession Fifth Business, because he is the odd man out, the person who has no opposite of the other sex. And you must have Fifth Business because he is the one who knows the secret of the hero's birth, or comes to the assistance of the heroine when she thinks all is lost, or keeps the hermitess in her cell, or may even be the cause of somebody's death if that is part of the plot. The prima donna and the tenor, the contralto and the basso, get all the best music and do all the spectacular things, but you cannot manage the plot without Fifth Business! It is not spectacular, but it is a good line of work, I can tell you, and those who play it sometimes have a career that outlasts the golden voices. (Davies, 1970, p. 214)

As has been shown, department heads operate in the backgrounds of schools, they have no counterparts and their role is not one that particularly wins much glory; but it seemingly is necessary to the function of a secondary school. Just as Ramsay does with his life, department heads are only able to comprehend their role and find its meaning through its relation to others; such as the teachers in their departments. As such, this research will be using the framework of Fifth Business as a way to help explain how department heads perceive their role.

Finally, it should be noted that Davies eventually has Dunstan Ramsay realize that he is Fifth Business and this is a crucial recognition. For up until that point he has lived a very empty life, one that was lived for others and one that has been devoid of personal meaning. Only after understanding his role, does he appreciate what he has done and the world, as mystically interconnected as he perceives it is, makes sense to him. Again, this is much like the ambiguous role of the department head in schools who occupy a role that is in flux and not well defined. It is time that their role made sense to them as well.

Department heads, learning communities and communities of practice. At times, it seems that department heads simply exist as a means to an end – whether that is getting teachers resources, helping to timetable the school or implementing an initiative. Yet how much freedom are they given to do this? Researchers such as Weller (2001) and Aubrey-Hopkins and James (2002) have argued that the department head is an underutilized position within a school. Leithwood and McLean (1987) demonstrated that department heads wanted more influence in school affairs but also had little training and support to learn how to develop that influence .

As Ontario, and other districts become increasingly focused on creating "professional learning communities," as evidenced in the *Ontario Leadership Framework* (Leithwood, 2012, p.21), this would seem to relate directly to the department head role. As Riveros, Newton and Burgess (2012) outline collaborative teaching approaches are not new and professional learning communities can be well situated within these traditions. So while this concept has not been properly defined (Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace & Thomas, 2006), in general terms, a learning community is designed with the assumption in mind that isolated teachers can no longer meet the individual needs of students and more collaborative approaches are needed to maximum student learning and performance (Stoll et al., 2006). This means schools are to be set up in ways that allow teachers to share best practices, evaluate efforts that are not working well and create effective and collaborative solutions to problems within a school (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Leithwood, 2012). If professional learning communities are recognized as being situated within a particular organizational, political climate, or social context (Riveros, Newton & Burgess, 2012), then it can be assumed that department heads would have a unique role to play in the creation of these communities, since, unlike administrators, they are actively engaged in the practice of teaching and are given the opportunity to create collaboration.

In establishing professional learning communities, however, administrators have come under attack for not sharing power and steering these communities towards goals that are not in keeping with the spirit of collaborative improvement (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Talbert, 2010). Talbert (2010) even goes so far as to say that administrators are a hindrance to the creation of professional learning communities. It is argued, therefore, that the way to create these communities is usually through a framework that uses distributed leadership as a tool

(Harris & Spillane, 2008). When looking at distributed leadership, it is useful to remember Spillane's concept of "Leader Plus" (2006).

In Spillane's conceptualization, distributive leadership is not just sharing power but rather "the collective interactions among leaders, followers, and their situation that is paramount. The situation of leadership isn't just the context within which leadership practice unfolds; it is the defining element of leadership."(p. 4). Hence, under Spillane's model, leadership as a distributed phenomenon needs two or more people and is a collaborative effort that is directly related to practice. As will be shown in the analysis below, department heads perceive themselves to have the connections and relationships needed to create these collaborative communities and, thus, can be viewed as distributive leaders. To understand why, Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of communities of practice is useful to consider.

A community of practice is a shared association of practitioners who come together, either organically or through a structured arrangement, to share experiences, work together, improve their craft and grow both professionally and personally. Lave & Wenger (1991) state that in order to form a community of practice, and to distinguish it from a community of interest, the people involved must be practitioners – which can be interpreted as actually doing the job. In the eyes of teachers, do principals or other administrative roles, therefore, qualify as practitioners? Whereas, seemingly, by being involved in the job, department heads can still be considered a member of the community of practice.

Further, membership in this community is predicated on expertise and experience, whereby through a process of legitimate peripheral participation, namely, developing an understanding of the tasks, vocabulary and organizational structures, a practitioner gains

membership into that community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the case of education, this certainly could be based on an expertise of pedagogy. Given, however, the structure of schools to establish subject-specific departments, the desired expertise could also be subject-based and, therefore, put a greater emphasis on the role of department head in order to foster that community. Again, by looking through the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984), it can be seen that department heads are through their actions, in the process of creating social capital.

This social capital is essential for them to be able to drive effective instruction and networks among their department members. Since department heads, as will be detailed in the analysis, are put into a role where they will be able to find resources and make social, administrative or curricular connections beyond those of a classroom teacher, the expectation on them by their department members is to use this social capital to the benefit of the department. Poultney (2007) outlines how department heads' ability to raise the status of their subject area is seen favourably by teachers as a sign of good leadership and something that will, hopefully, drive students to the department.

Putnam (2000) makes the distinction within social capital between bonding capital, or the ability to get along and interact with people that are similar to you, and bridging capital, or the ability to interact and work with people that are not like you. Putnam argues that while bridging capital is in the decline, it is essential for any society or community to work effectively and be engaged. Department heads would seemingly be required to have both of these kinds of capital and are judged on how effectively they are able to employ them.

As such, the role of department heads seems to be a key component in the analysis of concept of learning communities, distributed leadership and communities of practice which has

often been overlooked. Since as Kelly (2010) states, department heads play a crucial and practical role in the implementations of these policies and ideas. As well, there is the vital role that department heads can often play as voices for their departments and students. Department heads are uniquely situated to be change agents because of their ability, if only through department heads meetings, to be able to give counsel to administration (Weller, 2001).

While it might seem a good fit, researchers that advocate for distributed leadership leap right over the position of department head and focus on empowering individual teachers (Harris, 2003). Despite the real possibility that many department heads are actively creating learning communities and communities of practice. Simply put, department heads are being ignored and perhaps this is because there is little understanding as to what department heads are doing or could do. After all, department heads lack a clearly defined role and that can become a constraint on their work. The work of Weller (2001), Kruskamp (2003) and Friedman (2011) have shown that department heads, despite supposedly being "middle managers", are often frustrated by their lack of ability to do the things they feel would benefit the teachers in their department.

Conceptualizations of leadership related to being a department head. Hannay and Ross (1999) and Busher and Harris (1999) found that the "middle manager" position that department heads occupied was crucial to any meaningful structural or cultural change within a school. Yet, as Siskin (1991; 1994) and Poultney (2007) illustrate, many department heads are content to have influence over their own department and subject area and seem resistant to taking on roles that have larger significance to the school or the system. Even more poignantly,

Gunter and Ribbins (2003) point out that the concept of subject division has become such an unquestioned self-evident idea within most schools that most people cannot even conceptualize schools without them. This compartmentalization can be the source of many disagreements as educational departments can become protective of their own domains (Grossman & Stodolsky, 1995). As Hannay and Ross (1999) state, this division into subjects can cause discord and impede communication between teachers – especially those in different departments.

While department heads are leaders in a school, they have not been studied as much as other educational leaders such as principals (Weller, 2001). This could be because, as Heck and Hallinger (2005) illustrate, there is often a disconnection in leadership studies between theory and practice. In the case of department heads, there is little understanding of their leadership in schools and how, in practice, they are often the ones expected to implement educational policy (Kruskamp, 2003). In their mapping of leadership studies, Gunter and Ribbins (2003) argue that academic researchers need to consider the practical implications of their theories and the different ways that leadership can be viewed or operate within education. This becomes more problematic when it is considered that leadership studies, itself, is a complicated field that cannot even agree a common definition of leadership (Harris, 2005).

As such, when considering leadership, and the role of department heads within it, this study is going to use a definition influenced by Ryan (2005): leadership is the means, will or power to influence people. By this definition, department heads have the potential for leadership within a school and are active leaders in the school. They are granted a measure of power and authority, especially when timetabling is considered; their advice and council is

sought by others to provide direction for the school and, largely, they have the responsibility to shape their department and provide it with a vision. Yet, while this might be agreed upon, it is not clear what type of leadership best fits department heads. According to Clarke (2009), in many cases, department heads lack the training to conceptualize leadership, and as Schmidt (2000) mentions, many department heads do not see their leadership as a separate aspect from their role as a teacher.

As has already been mentioned, department head can be considered distributive leaders since they participate in informal enactments of distributive leadership. Further, based on the literature that has been used to assess the leadership of department heads there are other types of leadership that have been associated with department heads. Because of their ability to influence and create change, within a structure that has not been rationalized, it is useful to consider department heads as charismatic leaders (Weber, 1930). In addition, because of the necessity of the job to work collectively with other teachers on larger goals (Harris, 2005), department heads can be considered as transformational leaders. Finally, because of how they are linked to subject areas and curricular initiatives, department heads have also often been considered instructional leaders (Kruskamp, 2003; Rosenfeld, 2008). As such, these types of leadership will be used as the basis to consider how department heads perceive their leadership role.

First of all, therefore, in keeping with the influence of Weber (1930), the influence of a leader who has the personal charisma to sway people and influence change should not be disregarded. Many department heads run their departments through the sheer force of their personalities, often getting teachers to follow initiatives based on their sheer likeability and

personal presence. As will be demonstrated below, some department heads have a talismanic relationship with their department whereby they come to represent both the subject and their department. Weber (1968) argues that bureaucratization largely comes about as an attempt to fill the voids left after charismatic leaders disappear or leave. This is not, so much a leadership strategy, therefore, as much as an acknowledgement of an individual's ability to master and control their role. Charismatic teachers are not the norm and what is considered a charismatic leader is variable (Crawford, 2002). In many ways, however, the story of a heroic teacher, principal or department head who "gets things done" through the sheer force of their personality is still the dominant image and expectation for leadership (Spillane, 2006). As Crawford (2002) demonstrates, this is the type of leader who, while largely a mythological construct, is the type of leader that is most demanded for by staff and parents alike. Both Crawford (2002) and Spillane (2006) point out, the concept of the heroic leader is problematic and an often unreal paradigm given the managerial realities and practices of an educational organization. Though these leaders do exist, and certainly should not be ignored.

Department heads can also be considered transformational leaders because of their ability to build consensus and work with other individuals. Following Harris (2005) a transformational leader is one who tries to enact change by working with or through people, rather than attempting to control them. Department heads must build relationships, organize, set directions and are expected to develop their staff – all of these functions are in keeping with the perspectives of a transformational leader (Harris, 2005). Departments must co-ordinate and try to make sure that others work to their best potential and develop professionally. Further, seeing as how department heads are given the lion's share of initiatives to implement

by administrators (Rosenfeld, 2008), and are expected to be the mouthpiece of the administration in each department (Bennett et al., 1999), it is often the job of the department head to made sure that the department works together.

Lastly, the department head could be considered an instructional leader (Worner & Brown, 1993). Since many department heads see themselves as teachers first and foremost (Busher, 2005) they are interested in the practical, tangible, goals of helping students. In fact, they can feel frustrated when they are expected to deal with system goals over instructional goals (Rosenfeld, 2008). Further, the role of the instructional leader is largely dependent on administration or others who are higher in the hierarchy providing the resources to allow the instructional leader to operate (Kelly, 2010). As will be supported below, many department heads, who unlike principals, have not been removed from the classroom perceive that they have an intuitive sense of what will or will not work within a classroom. Department heads, therefore, when given the opportunity, or conversely when directed to do so, are well-situated to drive learning through the sharing of practices and ideas within their departments and create communities of practice (Kelly, 2010; Weller, 2001).

Conclusions from the Review of the Literature

If I have been successful in my goals to this point, I have shown you how the department head has been an undervalued part of schools; the Fifth Business of schools. The department head, therefore, is a position that, despite being ubiquitous, is not well-understood or researched. It is a position that has the potential for leadership, but often not given the chance to lead. It is position that causes immense stress and difficulties for the people in the role, but is given little support or acknowledgement. The department head can offer support and

facilitate change but how and why, is a matter for debate. This all, however, leads to one basic question that I have yet to ask or answer: "Why do department heads need to exist in their current form?" And the simple answer is that no one is sure because there is no real conception or concrete understanding of the business of department heads.

As, I have shown, the presence of department heads is assumed in most Ontario secondary schools – along with the convention that they will be responsible for a particular subject division. How those divisions are constructed is not well understood and varies from school to school. For example, some schools will have a geography head, while other schools will combine the social sciences into one position. This is sometimes based on numbers, other times this is based on common affiliations. While there does not seem to exist any comparative research, this subject affiliation could be an explanation for why there is no "like for like" equivalent in Ontario elementary schools for department heads (though some elementary schools do have a position called "division leader" which shares the facilitation function of department heads but not the organizational or subject focus). Hence, many elementary schools in Ontario have not seen the need to make use of the role of department head – even when some research argues that they can be useful in promoting learning in an elementary context (Spillane & Hopkins, 2013). Still, the leadership role of department heads can be questioned or challenged since they have no authority or official recognition in the policy to enforce their plans. Yet, none of the literature that has been reviewed here would question the role. It is time, therefore, to find how department heads themselves perceive their role.

Chapter 3: Methodological Approach and Conceptual Framework

Rationale for Qualitative Approach

Since one of the goals of this research is to investigate the perceptions, experiences and beliefs of department heads in order to see what they understand as their role, this study adopts a qualitative approach. According to Cresswell (1998), qualitative research is: "an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds complex, holistic pictures, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducted the study in natural setting" (p. 15). As such, this research, in keeping with its focus, questions and goals, certainly meets the characteristics of a qualitative study. This study examines the participants' perceptions of their social role within a larger educational organization in a particular context and natural setting. The study includes interviews with department heads in order to analyze their responses and create a holistic picture of their perceptions – their interconnected realities that allow us to glimpse a greater whole. This approach, therefore, was chosen for both philosophical and practical reasons.

Philosophically, the goals of qualitative research better suited the goals of the study. Qualitative researchers believe that humans are active agents in the construction of meaning and the social context from which they arise must be appreciated and understood (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). As such, the perspectives of participants must be interpreted holistically. The goal of this research was to understand the realities that department heads perceive by giving them a voice and putting them at the central core of the analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Further, I entered the interviews without a predisposed hypothesis, a feature of

qualitative research, and let the data lead me to my interpretations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). In the case of this research, the primary focus of the analysis is how the department heads related their perceptions of their role. This, therefore, leads into the second and more practical reason why a qualitative approach was chosen: since one of the goals of the research was to draw attention to the department heads' voice, qualitative interviews seemed an appropriate means to do this.

Embedded in qualitative research is "the idea that who a person is and where that person is located within a group is important, unlike other forms of research where people are viewed as essentially interchangeable" (Pays, 2008, p. 697). Within the research questions that were created, there was nothing to be measured or no hypothesis to be verified. The department heads were not being held to an objective standard as in a quantitative research but rather, the research sought to explore a phenomenon within its context (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This study used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions designed to be broad and generate multiple, equally valid responses. This also would allow for the issue to be explored through multiple lenses and interpretations, rather than having a narrow focus (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The intention of the study was not to generate any numerical, measurable or generalizable response. The qualitative approach was chosen to allow myself, in keeping with qualitative research and, as will be explained below, influenced by an interpretivist paradigm, the opportunity to analyse the subjective meaning behind what the department heads were saying. I was the sole researcher and interviewer; I gathered, transcribed and interpreted the data – under the guidance of my thesis advisor. Similarly, a mixed-methods approach was considered but giving the limitations of time and resources for the study, it did not seem a

practical option to include different methods and, further, the research questions did not seem to warrant them.

Interpretivist framework. This study used an interpretivist – also called antipositivist -- paradigm to analyse the research. This paradigm was chosen because it was best in-line with the research aims of describing the perceptions of department heads. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) suggest, interpretivist research is usually small-scale, puts the researcher at the forefront and focuses on actions – especially those that take place within a particular context and situation. As the name suggests, antipostivism came out of dissatisfaction with positivist techniques that were seen as dehumanizing and enforcing objective standards upon subject experiences. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Markedly, my case study takes inspiration from the Weberian interpretivist paradigm (1968) and the works of Greenfield and Ribbins (1993) in being reflective of the idea that organizational realities are created by the participants In looking at how department heads create their subjective reality, this study is attempting to "retain the integrity of the phenomena being investigated [and so] efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 17). Accordingly, within the analysis, the terms, and metaphors, that were used by department heads to describe their own experiences were highlighted and investigated. Further, influenced by antipositivist perspectives that focus on the qualitative and aesthetic interpretations of the evidence (Greenfield & Ribbins, 1993; Milley, 2006), participants were allowed to construct their own reality and express that perspective during the interview.

When creating themes and conclusions, the making of metaphors was crucial. Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) call metaphors "data-condensing devices", "pattern-making devices" and ways to "connect findings to theory" (p. 281). This was certainly the case in this study for not only did the metaphors provide a good means of clustering information but also allowed for a greater analysis of the richness and complexity of the ideas being discusses (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014).

The Justification for the Use of an Exploratory Case Study

Because of its flexible, ambiguous nature and perceived lack of rigour, case study methodology is sometimes viewed with suspicion and low regard by researchers (Gerring, 2004). This stems partly become of the "fuzziness" of the definitions surrounding this type of research and misunderstandings of its goals (Gerring, 2004). For the purposes of this study, I will borrow Creswell's (1998) definition of a case study "as an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p. 61) The case being considered here was department heads in Ontario who were interviewed and the data analysis from those interviews was informed by the relevant literature on the subject. Both Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) hold that a case study methodology seeks to illuminate a little explored topic, in this case department heads in Ontario, and examine it in the hopes of gaining an understanding that is transferable; that is the results of the research "can be transferred to other contexts and situations beyond the scope of the study context" (Jensen, 2008, p. 897).

An exploratory case study "investigates distinct phenomena characterized by a lack of detailed preliminary research, especially formulated hypotheses that can be tested, and/or by a

specific research environment that limits the choice of methodology" (Streb, 2010, p. 3). Using this as a guide, an exploratory case study is appropriate to this research for three reasons: First, as has been demonstrated above, the study was entered into without a hypothesis but rather the goal of understanding the perceptions of a very distinct group. Second, as working department head and teacher, there was a limitation on time and resources in order to complete this research or to pursue other methods of research. Lastly, to build off the first two points, considering the nature of the role of the department head, a different qualitative methodology, such as ethnography would not have been feasible. Giving the ambiguity of the role and the time involved, an ethnographic methodology would have been beyond the scope of this research. Indeed, this methodology would provide valuable insights into the role of department heads, and it is my hope that this will be done by researchers in the future. As well, because of the above detailed lack of definition of the role, qualifications for the role or expectations for the duties of the role, there remains no way to even complete a document study of materials that were pertinent to the role – since in most cases those documents do not exist. For example, while many of the department heads interviewed, for example, said they held meetings (sometimes very informally), there was no expectation that they keep minutes or write down initiatives.

Further, an exploratory case study provides research opportunities that are more appropriate to the research questions of this study and the ability to analyze data in ways that other methodologies would not allow. As Yin (2003) points out a case study should be used when there is significant blurring between the phenomena being studied and the context in which it is studied. In this study, the perceptions of department heads within this particular

Ontario school board could not be analyzed by separating them away from their experiences, time, place and context. Further, as noted in Baxter and Jack (2008) an exploratory case study and case studies in general, have their philosophical roots in interpretivist perspectives – in allowing the participants to build their own realities.

As will be detailed below, this case study represents a single-unit and holistic analysis. While Merriam (1998) reminds us that "there is no standard format for reporting case study research" (p. 193), in writing this study, because it was in-line with my research goal of giving department heads a voice, I have borrowed from Cresswell (1998) and used what he calls "the most standard form": the linear-analytic approach (p.238). Within this structure, a researcher discusses the problems, the methods, the findings and conclusions that are encountered in the case.

Unit of Analysis

As elaborated above, the choice of a case study "provides a unique example of real people in real situations" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 289) and fits with the more practical approach. Hence, the perceptions of the department heads, the unit of analysis, constitute and merit being a "case" because of the very specific context in which they exist: 13 department heads, in Ontario, all working in one particular school board. Further, these perceptions had not, to my knowledge, ever been analyzed or recorded. As Gerring (2004) argues, case study research provides an opportunity for the group to understand their own practices and to examine if their situation has commonalities, and is comparable, with other similar groups; in this case department heads, middle leaders and subject leaders.

Lastly, while allowance for the uniqueness of subject differences must be made and acknowledged (Rosenfeld, 2008; Siskin, 1991), and was a crucial distinction for most of the department heads interviewed, this case study approached department heads as a single holistic case study. By looking at department heads as a whole, rather than one subject area, it allowed for the research to be broader, ask greater thematic questions and see thematic connections that exist between departments and, equally importantly, the differences that exist (Poultney, 2007). Further, while department heads, which are organized into subject divisions, have a passion and expertise in their subject area (Poultney, 2007; Siskin, 1991), little research has been to parse out the different perspectives that exist between subject heads. This is an area of research that, while beyond the scope of this study, should be studied in the future.

Participants and Participation

This research engaged in purposive sampling; meaning that participants were chosen because they met particular characteristics and criteria (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This type of sampling was selected in the hopes of increasing the representativeness and transferability of the findings of the study. As Pays (2008) notes: "Research participants are not always created equal – one well-placed articulate informant will often advance your research far better than any randomly chosen sample of fifty – and the way we sample needs to take that into account" (p. 697). Selecting department heads that are currently in the job seemed the best means to advance the understanding of the role of department heads. Participants

were selected from one school board: The Culvert School Board[2] in Ontario. Culvert is a large school board, with several large city centres, that has both urban and rural schools. As a working teacher and department head, it was largely selected for purposes of convenience and time management. As has been already mentioned, I work and live within the geographic borders of the board in which the interviews were conducted. Because of limitations of time and resources, this made data collection more manageable.

Ontario is in the unique situation of having four boards of education that receive public funding. I did not feel comfortable enough with the language to conduct my research in French. I, therefore, did not seek participants from either of the French boards in Ontario. Secondly, as stated above, because of my roots and connections within the local public school board I felt more comfortable dealing with people who have had similar teaching experiences to me. As well, by looking for secondary school department heads within my own school board, I already had a familiarity with the professional development that many heads receive and the hiring process. This made me aware of the current practices and policies that might be influencing department head decision-making. This allowed for the interviews to have more depth; as we were starting "on the same page." To give a quick example of this, having a familiarity with the “edu-speak” or professional jargon that was particular to this board and that they were using to communicate their feelings aided in the analysis, since I understood the terms, and made the participants feel more comfortable.

I also feel that they perceived me as an insider, as more than one participant commented on how “I knew what they were talking about” or “How our buildings had similar

[2] As previously mentioned, all names of places and people were changed for the purposes of this study in order to protect confidentiality.

issues." Further, I wanted to do research that I could relate to and was easily accessible. Because of my awareness of contextual conditions and familiarity with programs, I believe it also allowed for better findings; since, as an "insider" in the community, I had already developed a position of understanding, trust and credibility (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Not only did I have the role of researcher in this study, therefore, but also that of a colleague. While it is a philosophical discussion to argue the merits of having shared experiences, I believe my insider status helped my credibility. I was not perceived by the participants as an "Ivory Tower" academic dispassionately examining phenomena, but rather as somebody who was in the job and could relate to and understand what department heads were going through. As such, I perceived that, with the promise of anonymity intact, there were no significant trust issues, and I was never viewed suspiciously. I would describe their manner towards me as encouraging and helpful. In fact, as will be evidenced in the analysis, the department heads that were interviewed all expressed interest in the work and expressed their solidarity with the concept that the position of department head is not well-understood, and that it was an issue that needed to be addressed.

In order to attain participants, after my study was approved by the Culvert School Board ethics committee, I contacted the Learning Co-ordinator and Subject Councils to see if they would be able to help solicit participants. E-mails were sent out asking for participants. I also, personally, went to subject council meetings, presented my research ideas and asked for participants in my study. Finally, being an employee in the board, I was able to make contact with several colleagues who knew about my research and were willing to volunteer their time

for the study. From these efforts, contacts were made with people both face to face and by e-mail to arrange interviews.

The study was very successful in getting department heads from different areas in the board that represented a wide range of subject areas. It included both male and female department heads that had been in the role for two years or more (no distinction was made between people who had had experience as acting headships prior to gain the role permanently since the there is no distinction in the role other than the title). The restriction of two or more years was imposed to allow for participants who have had time to adjust and reflect on their role as department head. In order to encourage diversity of experiences, and also see commonalities, department heads from both rural and urban schools were interviewed. There were no attempts to specifically sample according to a particular gender. I was, however, mindful that gender imbalances may limit my findings. As such, I made efforts to achieve a gender balance in my sample. This balance was achieved with an almost 50/50 split (7 women, 6 men). As well, educational level or age, were not specifically sampled. For reference, a chart is provided in Appendix 1 (page 147) which lists the pseudonyms, gender, what they identified as their areas of subject expertise, their years of experience as teachers, theirs years of experience as department head and subject area of their department, is included.

All of the above measures helped to provide a broad picture of the public board, while still limiting the data collection to a manageable size. Given the constraints of time and resources, I was still able to involve as many department heads as were willing to volunteer to be involved in the study. As will be explained below, it also became readily apparent that after

thirteen interviews the sample had come saturated (Saumure & Given, 2008), as the ideas presented in the interviews had started to repeat themselves and no new concepts or themes had been made apparent that were going to influence the theory construction (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Data Collection

Interview conceptualization and methods. As mentioned above, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants to provide me the ability to get further in-depth responses and explanations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Based off the ideas of Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011), a semi-structured approach was selected to allow the participants the chance to flesh out their narratives and to prompt the department heads for further explanations and understands. I believe these interviews were very conversational and that this "informality" allowed the department heads to answer more honestly. Since, they did not feel the need to give the "right answers" and felt that they could speak freely. Very soon within most interviews, the department heads "loosened up" and, in my perception, they became much more candid and "giving" as the interviews continued.

Procedures. Once the participants had agreed to be interviewed, times and locations for the interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the participants. Meeting in an area where the department head felt comfortable, safe and protected was vital for the participants to be open and honest (Cohen, Manion& Morrison, 2011). Participants signed agreements to take part in the study and also agreements that outlined the confidentiality of the study (see Appendix 4 and 5). Participants were not compensated for their efforts nor did any volunteer complain about the any significant problems that the interviews caused them. Many

participants expressed their gratitude that they would remain anonymous during the process because, as they stated, they were being very candid and honest. Although the impact of their statements, they conceded, would have more personal and social ramifications than professional ones.

In order to ensure confidentiality, the participants were given pseudonyms within the study. Their identity was protected and only known to me. During the interview process, participants were reminded to not include any details that might compromise their confidentiality. Several of them, often in moments of passionate explanations, did share sensitive information. In the event that this occurred, these details were erased during the transcription process. All information was secured and only accessible to me; existing on a separate encrypted, protected flash drive. The interviews consisted of 9 questions with follow-ups, 16 questions in total (see Appendix 2); while, as already stated, the semi-structured interviews allowed for themes to be followed organically and additional questions were posed as the themes and ideas that the department heads wanted to discuss developed.

The interviews aimed to achieve ontological authenticity, which can be defined as the point in which the participant's view of world became more informed and gain a greater understanding of their role (Mertens, 2005). This was monitored through member checks and confirming questions during the interviews, as the participants were given the opportunity to reflect on their ideas and perceptions. As Gerring (2004) points out, issues and arguments of ontology are irresolvable. Case studies are, as well, prone to arguments over ontology because they rest in a vague middle ground, which sees individual cases as unique and yet also sees their findings as comparable to other similar units of study. For the purposes of this study,

however, it is important to consider that this study rests on the perceptions of how department heads view their world and how an educational organization functions. As such, many of the participants came to reflect on their own practices and commented that they finished the interview with a greater understanding of how they perceived their role. It should be stated as well, that many of the participants were interested in seeing this study as a means to confirm their own ideas and compare them to their colleagues.

As well, a goal of the study was to achieve internal validity, namely, seeking to "demonstrate that the explanation of a particular event, issue or set of data which a piece of research provides can actually be sustained by the data" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 183). Consequently, the participants were allowed to deviate from the questions but efforts were made to guide the participants through the interview in exactly the same manner so as to provide enough similar data to support theory construction. As such, the wording of the 16 questions was the same for all participants and helped to determine internal validity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Interviews were continued until a point of data saturation had been reached, that is, "the point when no new or relevant information" emerged from the interviews (Saumure & Given, 2008, p. 196).

Techniques of data collection. Interviews were audio recorded by a digital recorder for transcription and analysis at a later date. As the interviewer, I also made notes during the interview process. Note-taking allowed for me to keep track of non-verbal cues and tone of voice; as well to highlight, via my first impressions, the major ideas (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This also allowed me to compare data in the analysis stage of the research – as I compared my notes and my impressions to the transcriptions as a means of coding major ideas

and themes. The timeline of the interviews was flexible and largely dependent on the responses given by the participants. In general, they ranged in length from 30 to 60 minutes. This length of time allowed for proper explanations while not allowing the interview to be come tedious or tiring or repetitive. The participants were informed that, if they were willing, they could be contacted again for a future follow-up interview. Follow-ups and clarifications were done with several of the participants on a face-to-face basis and over a secure e-mail address. After the interviews were completed, I transcribed each of the interviews taking note of important ideas during the process. After transcription, member checks were made available and revisions were made, where the participants felt necessary.

Data Analysis: Procedures and Techniques

Once all the data was collected, a five-step process, outlined by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003), was undertaken for analysis and interpretation of the research. As mentioned above, the data was analyzed as an exploratory case study, with the intent to "draw together common findings . . . and also indicate the exclusive features of each [interview]" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 552). The data to be considered for analysis consisted of the transcribed interviews conducted with the 13 department heads and the notes that I had made during the interview process. First, I familiarized myself with the data by reading, transcribing and listening to the interviews. Indeed, the data analysis began after the first interview in order to start identifying major themes and ideas (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). This provided me with the opportunity to recognize gaps and pursue follow-up interviews on particular ideas that emerged. Care was taken during and after the interviews to record and note non-verbal aspects or changes in tone as well. This enriched the data set by helping to provide a greater

understanding of the context in which some department heads made their comments. In keeping with the influence of interpretivism, the focus was on letting the department heads words speak for themselves (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The first impressions created by doing this began the process of sorting the information to identify the major themes that will be listed below.

Focus of the Analysis: Department Head's Perceptions.

The second stage was to 1) focus my analysis on finding answers to the research questions and the larger issue of department head perceptions and 2) identify and confirm the unit of analysis based on the research questions. As mentioned above, the unit of analysis was the department heads who work in this school board and their perceptions of their role. Interpretation of data, however, is only made meaningful through the analytical classification or categorization of that data (Dey, 1993). As such, by reviewing the data, various themes and ideas became prevalent that were categorized and classified.

Categories, themes and patterns. In the third step of analysis (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003), I categorized the information by identifying the most prevalent themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews. Very quickly within the interview process I noticed that several metaphors, such as filter, liaison and advocate began to emerge. The department heads were, themselves, using these notions to describe how they perceived their role. I made note of these during the interview process and started recognize them as part of *early coding*. As per Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014), during this initial phase of the coding process I made note of these themes but took caution to make sure that they would not bias the process – since I wanted the department heads to speak from their own voice. Once the interview process was

completed, I went through the transcriptions and put these themes into major areas of commonalities, with the hope of seeing similar threads and ideas present in all the interviews. Again, those initial metaphors began to appear as patterns based on the similar ideas, phrases and terms that kept reappearing during the coding process. During the *second phase of coding*, these ideas became more prevalent and clearer and they were expanded into broader themes. Just as importantly, during this phase, plausibility was tested by looking at the evidence that was being presented towards the developing theories. Counterintuitive thinking, that is analyzing evidence against what would "naturally" seem right, was used to find ideas that were not plausible and in order to test conclusions (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). As I went through the transcripts, I placed information that identified with the department head metaphors into great clusters and categories. This categorization was assisted by computer software to help with the organization and facilitate the process. Because of ease of access and its format I used NVivo: this software sped up the process and also confirmed the coding, by identifying the same terms that I had done manually and noticed during the interviews. Hence, "particulars were subsumed into general ideas", also known as using the "constant comparative method" (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p. 285). This process of going back and forth between data continued until the data was saturated i.e. "new data [did] not add to the meaning of the general category" (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p. 286). Based on this, I concluded that no more interviews were needed to complete my analysis.

Connections between themes. Next, after the categories and major themes were identified, the fourth step was to see the connections between the categories. The key here was identifying the larger relationships that exist within my focus, but also to look at the

relative importance of each category according to the interviews themselves. As well, because of the subjective nature of both the interviews and the analysis, I was wary of looking at false correlations that may be prevalent. Having done this, I began to write my analysis.

Validity, Transferability, Ethics and Limitations

It should be noted, that as a department head researching other department heads in a qualitative study, I was subject to researcher bias. Further, my role as a colleague for my interview subjects might also have influenced the results. I acknowledge that this could be a limitation for my research since, as a working teacher and department head; I came into the study with many preconceived notions about the role of a department head. The fact, as well, that I have a personal stake in the result of this study – in the sense that it may help me inform and reflect on my practice – should be factored into the analysis. While I accept that my bias exists, measures, therefore, like member checks, were introduced to minimize it.

For reasons already elaborated, such as time and resources, methodological triangulation (the use of different methodologies to corroborate the evidence) or the use of multiple cases was not an option for this study. As a compensation for this, I used data triangulation as I actively tried to interview a greater number of department heads, and department heads that were in different subject areas, so that the sample would be representative. These interviews were then crosschecked with my notes, member checks and pertinent documents, such as the Education Act (1990), in order to triangulate the themes. This study is meant to contribute to the bulk of knowledge of department heads and is also meant to be transferable to the situation of department heads in other contexts (Jensen, 2008). An exploratory case study can certainly contribute valuable information to the phenomena being

researched, even if that information is predicated only on the viewpoints of its participants (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Finally, the focus of the study, after all, is not to create a definition of the role, but rather to see how department heads, themselves, perceive their role. Overall, my study of department heads considers the why and what of their actions, by getting the department heads themselves to explain their own viewpoints (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

CHAPTER 4: Analysis

Introduction to Analysis

The participants were asked as series of questions (see Appendix 2) during the interviews. These interviews were designed to see how department heads perceived their job, what they did in their job and how they interacted with other teachers and administration. In giving their responses, the department heads often clarified their ideas through the use of metaphors. As has been explained above, these metaphors have become the basis for the analysis and the creation of themes. Thanks to my old English teachers for suggesting that I read it, I connected these ideas with the role of Fifth Business – the facilitation of others by adopting different roles and developed the over-arching metaphor or construct of the study. Since, after all, this construct succeeds in tying the metaphorical ideas together, stands up to plausibility, and casts a shadow upon the larger issues that affect department heads.

Using the above as context, the analysis will follow four phases. First, I will profile the participants of the study to provide a background to who they were and the questions that they were asked. Secondly, I will examine how those who participated became department heads and reasons why they became department heads. Third, I will connect the perceptions of department heads into the unifying metaphor of Fifth Business and explain how it applies. Lastly, I will examine each of the individual metaphors, “liaison,” “model,” coordinator,” “clerk,” “advocate” and “filter,” and explain how they connect to the role of the department head and existing theories and literature on the role.

The Department Head: A Lack of Differences

When I began this study, I hoped, perhaps naively, that by interviewing department heads a profile of a department head would emerge. Specifically in regards to professional background, experiences and qualifications that were necessary to become a department head. Appendix 1 (page 148) gives a quick glimpse of the department heads and where they feel they had their expertise. A Culvert School Board department head was, in principle, as likely to be any age, any race, any ethnicity and any gender. Although, anecdotally, there did not seem to be a great diversity in the sample in regards to race and ethnicity, it must be noted that given the focus of this study, namely the department heads' perception of their role, the reasons for this lack of diversity were not explored. As previously mentioned, the nature of the role of the department head is an area of research that needs further exploration. The perceived lack of diversity, while concerning and worth studying was beyond the scope of this study.

While all participants lived in the school board area, many did not live in the same city in which they taught; mostly preferring to live in the larger city centres and commute to smaller city centres. Most would identify as career teachers with only two mentioning they had other work experiences before entering education. All of the department heads who were interviewed were university educated with Bachelors of Education. These degrees were from various universities in the province, with the preponderance being from the large university closest to the school board. Five of the participants had, or were in the process of completing, Masters' degrees. Two of them had those degrees before they pursued a career in education. The three remaining had, or were pursuing, Masters' degrees in Education. Three of the department heads had administrative experience or were actively pursuing careers in

administration. While not a focus of the interviews, many of the participants believed they were actively involved in the extra-curricular activities of the school as coaches, committee members, and club supervisors. Some, like Bill, believed this was, and should be, the most important aspect of his job.

I had hoped that department heads would have perceived a level of experience or method of development needed in order to take on the role. Considering the ambiguity surrounding the role, it would be incredibly useful to be able to isolate common qualifications, even informally, which, even within the limitations of a case study, could have aided the conversation surrounding the role. For example, to be a principal in Culvert District School Board, one must take a principal's qualification course, go through an interview process that is similar for every candidate – conducted and standardized at the board level – and be put into a pool where you await placement to a school by a centralized bureaucracy. In essence, and echoing Weber (1968), the process of choosing administration has been rationalized and aims to a succession that is systemized in a sequential process. Yet, if anything, this study only confirmed that these processes are lacking for department heads. My hopes of creating a "profile" for the department heads that I interviewed – or, at least, an understanding of how a person would become a department head within the Culvert District School Board – were quickly dashed.

Yet, as has been a slogan for computer programmers, it soon became apparent that this was "not a bug but a feature." As evidenced in Appendix 1, the wide-ranging experiences of department heads only strengthens the notion that the role of department head is not a list of responsibilities or a place in the hierarchy, but rather an ever-changing set of roles and

attitudes that the person who accepts the job must accept. In fact, the fluidity of the role is its greatest strength. As will become evident below, the fact that it defies easy classification makes it a perfect role for facilitation within the messy and chaotic worlds of educational administration and teaching. This is why the department head is viewed as best viewed as Fifth Business: the person who adapts his or her role in order to facilitate the needs of the school.

The Barrier: Age and Experience

There was no common age or years of experience that those interviewed became department head. Some of those interviewed, such as Tracey, Emily and Trent, sought the role early in their careers. While others, such as Bill, Mackenzie and Lionel all came to it later. The number of years teaching, therefore, did not seem to be a significant factor in influencing when people wanted to become department heads. Within the issue of age and experience, however, there was significant difference as to what the department heads perceived was necessary to take on the role of a department head – and some department heads perceived these to be impediments to them doing their jobs.

Not surprisingly, considering there is no direction from the policy, there existed amongst those who were interviewed no accepted or common idea of how many years of experience should be necessary to be a department head. Tellingly, those who believed they had acquired the job at a younger age, or with fewer years of teaching experience, perceived this to be the cause of some difficulties when they first came into the role. While they expressed no regret in taking the job, they did feel that there was the perception from their colleagues that they were not ready for the role – even when they had confidence in their own abilities. When asked whether she felt she was ready at a younger age for the role of department head, Emily, who

actually became a department head in her first year of teaching thanks to a series of unusual events, reflected:

> Yes, I did [feel I was ready for the role], because I was so cocky. When you are younger, you think you can handle anything and I felt fully comfortable. I think my principal at the time, he was uncomfortable that I was at the table, because I think he thought I was too young to be there and I hadn't earned my stripes.

As will be detailed below, these department heads felt that they had to work hard to obtain legitimacy and not be dismissed, as Grace put it, as some "young hot shot teacher" who was hired to change things. In essence, by getting the job at a young age, there was the thought that they had skipped the queue: "When I [became] the department head I was quite young and I had department members who were more experienced and I think that caused conflict because there are people who believe that experience is what determines who should get a position" (Marie). This echoes Nolan and Palazzo's (2011) suspicions that less experienced leaders were viewed negatively.

James further elaborates that, when he first became a department head, he perceived his age to be a factor in how his ideas were received even by fellow department heads: "Being such a young head at the time, being only 5 years in, I noticed that at department meetings a lot of my words were devalued by my colleagues because these were heads that had been in the position for 10 or 20 years." Buck stated that, when he was a young department head, creating a working dynamic with a more senior member of his department was "one of the most difficult" issues he had to deal with because of the awkwardness of being responsible for someone who was more experienced as a teacher.

Ladder-climbers. Some department heads responded that, by taking the role, they were viewed suspiciously:

> I think for someone who wants to take on a department head role, which has very limited monetary reward, and you are doing more work for very limited extra pay: Why does one do that? So the perception and assumption out there is that you would do that because it is a stepping stone to administration. Are there many department heads where that is not their goal? Yes (Marie).

Hence, department heads are also sometimes viewed as "ladder-climbers" – people who have taken the role only because they are interested in climbing up the hierarchical structure. As above, this usually targets younger department heads. They have to prove their intentions, specifically the idea that they will not abandon their departments for greater administrative power, as Grace elaborates:

> I don't think that all department heads are perceived as ladder climbers. But in this building, certainly ones that are younger are. Once . . . the most senior member in the department came to me and said "How long are you going to be here?" I said, "What do you mean?" [He then explained:] "Well the last three have only been no more than two years and now they are in the VP [vice-principal] pool or the board office or wherever. So how long are you going to be here because we've stuck it out and all these people have left?"

When asked whether being viewed as a ladder-climber put her in an odd place, Tracey responded that it caused trust issues within her department and also caused department members to doubt her authenticity: "I knew they would never be on board with what I was doing in this department if they think I was just doing it to put a feather in my cap." Here we

see role conflict, as department heads do not exactly know how to manage their role (Schmidt, 2000). James commented that by becoming a department head, many people immediately start to see you as a branch of the administration, and this can cause tension: "I would notice that when I was out socially with my staff, talking outside the school, and I noticed that there were people who were resentful of me and making assumption of my intentions and my goals -- simply by becoming a department head."

So the department head must be careful to not be viewed as a "sell-out". Like rappers who have to prove how many times they have been arrested or shot to build the proper "street-cred", department heads must also build credibility. As per Siskin (1994), this is usually done through a relationship with the subject area. As Marie explains when a department head knows their subject area or curriculum: "I think it makes a leader more credible and it's relevant. [Being] passionate about our subjects . . . I think it is part of being credible and having that experience and letting people know that you are in it for the right reasons. That you are in it for the students and the subject." This idea that a department head must be doing the job for the "right reasons" – to help the students and the department but not for personal advancement or system goals – was seen in the works of Bennett et al. (2007) and James and Aubrey-Hopkins (2003). Both teams of researchers found that this tension existed between department heads, administrative goals and their departments – often with the department head having to prove themselves worthy of being followed.

Learning the Ropes: Perceptions on How to Become a Department Head

What experience is necessary? While younger teachers might be unfairly targeted as ladder climbers or not having enough experience to be a department head, the perception that

a department head must have experience was even prevalent amongst other department heads that were interviewed; even those who were younger when they accepted the job. As Kara explains: "I don't think you need tonnes and tonnes [of experience], but by the same token, I think you need at least a few years under your belt to understand what's what and how things work." She later further elaborated the benefits of experience, when asked what she thought would make someone an effective department head: "Experience is number one. I have changed 100% in the 16 years that I've been teaching. The hills that I climb are not the hills that I used to climb. It's changed for me." Mackenzie echoed these sentiments when she identified what would be a necessary kind of expertise to be able to work in the role: "Teaching experience. Experience working on some variety of committee so that you know how to work with people and deal with people and share roles. I think there is curricular experience. I think it is important knowing how curriculum is done, either at the ministry level or the board office." By having more experience, the perception is that department heads have a greater understanding of how schools work and, more importantly, have the wisdom to be able to evaluate those decisions. Therefore, it could be claimed that inexperience represents a disadvantage for a younger department head.

This confusion, as to how much experience is necessary to take on the role of department head, is caused partly because there is no accepted standard of experience needed. Principals (and by extension vice-principals) must have five years of teaching experience and additional courses in order to take on the role (Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996b). But in Ontario there is not any equivalent standard for department heads (Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996b). Despite, again, evidence that demonstrates that schools that

invest in the development of their department heads sees better school improvement (Brown, Rutherford & Boyle, 2000). Accordingly, the argument over experience for department heads tends to focus on "how much" experience is necessary so that their departments will not dismiss their ideas and an accepted standard could help to address this issue.

No formal training. Within the novel Fifth Business, the main character Dunstan Ramsay is convinced that Fate guided him in his role (Davies, 1970). While this is a far-fetched notion within an academic analysis, it is just as valid a reason for how department heads chose – or just as accurately were chosen – to become department heads. During the interviews with the department heads, it soon became apparent that there was no particular process or preparation that the department heads followed in order to obtain their position. With one exception, Trent, who went through an unusually vetted process:

> During the time of [board] amalgamation, we weren't sure how headships were going to work and I was actually appointed to be the head of English at a high school. Those appointments were grieved through our professional federation, so the appointment was rescinded. I then had an interview with the old school board which involved superintendents, written and defended answers and I became a head at the high school and I've been a department head since then.

Yet, Trent's unusual experience still has the same hallmarks, though somewhat more elaborate, of becoming a department head in the Culvert School Board: sending in an application to be considered, having an interview and being appointed to the job. Crucially, with this board, it is administrative teams who hire department heads. There is no centralized hiring of the position.

The department heads, who were interviewed, such as Lionel or Abigail, often applied for the job when they felt they were ready for the job, not because they had worked to meet any criteria or qualification. Lionel states: "There weren't many people in our department and I thought I'd do a good job, so when the job came open I applied for it." Others, as will be detailed below, were approached about the possibility of taking the job – often by the administration responsible for hiring into that position. Most importantly, therefore, unlike a formal apprenticeship or mentorship program there seemed to be no explicit experience barriers to becoming a department head. As James commented with some regret:

> To be honest, there is no text book; there is really no list of responsibilities. I'm sure you could probably find some document but it is not shared and it is not common knowledge. So there really isn't. And I brought this concern to senior executives at my board level because I felt that it needed clarity. And I believe there was a lot of dialogue but nothing came to light.

But perhaps, most importantly, because none of the formalization that exists for principals exists at the department head level, this creates huge leeway for the administrators who hire for the position.

The internal candidate. I was unable to find any relevant literature on the succession planning of department heads; the process is not described in any way. This seems a large research gap, especially considering the below findings. Since, when looking at the perceptions of department heads in the Culvert School Board, it soon became clear that department heads are not created or trained; they are groomed or chosen. The interview process usually confirms candidates that already are given an advantage by being at the school. Recalling Lave and

Wenger (1991) learning to become a department head is an unofficial, unsanctioned mentorship that varies from school to school and is heavily dependent on the administration. Further, there seems to be a correlation between getting the job of department head and already being at the school. Indeed, of the 13 department head interviewed, only one was not an internal hire for their current role. Seemingly, therefore, according to the responses of the department heads interviewed, one of the crucial qualifications to becoming a department head is simply being at the school when the job opens up.

Many of the department heads that were interviewed explained that rather than seeking the role or going through courses to meet qualifications, they were simply chosen by the administrators and told to interview, with the implicit understanding that they would be "a good candidate" for the job. As Kara elucidates, she was directly recruited: "A department head was being removed from the school so the position came available, I was approached by the principal at the time and he asked me if I would like to apply; so I applied." This process was echoed by other department heads, such as James, Marie and Mackenzie.

In fairness, having previous department headship or leadership experience did seem to matter when administrators were recruiting. Some participants, such as Mackenzie and Bill, were coaxed by their administrations into becoming heads once more despite previously having resigned acting headships. Bill, who has done this multiple times, bluntly stated that he only went for the permanent headship "to save jobs for younger guys in our department;" since hiring an internal candidate would mean a new person would not come to school and, potentially, bump others out of their spots. As such, he decided to pursue the role not because he felt he was uniquely qualified for a leadership position, but rather as a sense of loyalty to the

department: "I was acting head a couple of times because the previous head had health issues. He packed it in and they suggested that I go for it. Between the two of us [in the department who applied for the job] we both hoped that the other would get it."

No qualifications needed. All of the department heads interviewed had their subject specialist qualification – something that can only be earned after two years of experience as a teacher (Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996b). There is not enough evidence to suggest that heads getting their specialist qualifications was something that was undertaken because they wanted to take on a leadership position – as in the requirement that principals must have a Masters' degrees (Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996b). These qualifications are taken by many teachers as they usually represent an increase on the salary grid. Of all the interviews done, only one department head, Emily, could think of a course that she had been required to take:

> I do remember that there were small, little, very incidental things at the board office, that, after I received the position, they required us to take. But do I think it had a big impact on how I handled things? No. When I was new to the job, I relied a lot on people in the school that were older than [me] that I had a lot of respect for. So if I didn't know how to handle something, I would go to them.

Others, such as Buck, resented the idea of "proper qualifications": "I think, my personal opinion, is that you can't take a course on leadership. I'm personally offended by things like mentorship courses, that you can take an afternoon course to become a leader."

Yet what Buck seems to be arguing here is not the merit of having a course or a workshop that supports the role, but rather a checklist or a rubber stamp that would suddenly give you

leadership qualities. He believed that the informal system of mentorships that exist at schools was the "responsibility of senior teachers." In echoes of Weber (1968), the process of choosing department heads has resisted credentialization and, in Buck's opinion, this has actually helped to select the people who would want to be a department head:

> I think the people that –I certainly hope – that my experience has been that people who step into leadership roles within the school are people that have interest in leading by example, setting the tone, have confidence not just within their area but confidence that will work through not just the good times, but the bad times; [through] the struggles that you can have within a school (Buck).

So while it would be inaccurate to say there are any common qualifications for the role of the department head, the interviews did seem to confirm that were common personalities, experiences and viewpoints seemingly required to the role which will be elaborated on below.

The Necessity of "Fifth Business"

As has been alluded to, despite aspects of the role being a hodgepodge that could seemingly be outsourced to various other positions of various names (i.e. coordinators, learning coaches, student success teams) and despite there not being any formal training or certification or definition of the role, the need for department heads is not questioned in most secondary schools. This could just rest on the notion that department heads are so staunchly part of the tradition that there continued presence is just assumed – just as high schools need bells, they need department heads. Why? All of the department heads that were interviewed, perhaps not surprisingly, believed that their positions were necessary, even if, as Trent stated "their responsibilities and what has been proscribed for department heads have not been clearly

defined." But what do department heads offer to a school that means this ambiguous role -- which no one has taken the time to clarify -- needs to be maintained? What is the effective use of the role?

My answer is Fifth Business. I fully admit it is not an elegant metaphor that is neat and tidy. But neither is the role of department head. A jack of all trades, who does not fully belong as a teacher or as an administrator; the department head is often in the background of the schools. Buck likened his role to that of a good official in any sport: "You don't even know they were there when the game is done." The department head, like Fifth Business, is needed when "the plot" calls for it; he or she is needed to facilitate whatever the school needs and is, unfortunately, ignored when there are not any significant issues.

For example, when an initiative is to put forward, according to the perceptions of those interviewed, it often falls to the department head. When an administration needs to know what is going on in their school, the department heads are sought out. When a teacher is having problems with a course or a student or even with personal problems, it is the department head who deals with the issue. In other words, the people who are in the role are willing to step-up and take on the conflicted role of department head – despite not knowing what the role entails or receiving any official training or support in that role – because they believe in its utility. So how does a department head go about being Fifth Business at a school? Well, according to the perceptions of the department heads, it usually involved creating collaborative relationships, adjusting to new realities and switching between multiple roles.

While surely not a revolutionary concept that a role has multiple "hats" to wear, the below classification of these "hats" should help to better showcase how the role is perceived by

department heads. As such, this analysis demonstrates that the role comprises a particular group of skills, ideas, personalities and leadership which all serve a facilitatory function within a school. The multiple ways that the department heads act as Fifth Business, therefore, will be outlined below. In order to do this, this study uses the metaphors that the department heads, themselves, used to describe their role. These inter-connected and inter-related roles are: liaison, model, coordinator, clerk, advocate and filter.

The Roles of the Department Head: The Liaison

The pulse of the building. Since the powers of the department head, according to Ontario's Education Act (1990), all derive, much like the vice-principal, from the principal. One interpretation of the role is that department heads are there to take on responsibilities that are granted to them by the principal and also to provide advice on school matters. This would allow for department heads to act as instructional leaders (Kruskamp, 2003; Worner & Brown, 1999) and teacher leaders (Clarke, 2009). Many of the participants, such as James, Bill and Mackenzie, expressed that it was necessary that they take on this role because of the size of secondary schools. As such, it is often interpreted that department heads are there to help administration: "You have to have someone you can bounce things off, who can direct and be a point person to the administration. At a big school when there are 120 teachers then they are really necessary because there's far more people to deal with and disseminate information to" (Lionel).

As such, the administration needs to find someone who is the go-between. Grace, along with many other department heads identified her position as this liaison. The liaison role compromised, from the perspective of the department heads, a large part of their

responsibilities and was a springboard from which they talked about other roles and issues. An administration needs this role for, as Charles outlines, very practical reasons: "I don't think, off the top of my head, that admin has the depth of knowledge of the teachers or the issues. They can't. It's not a fault or failing. They can't, there are [too many people] in this building." That means someone is needed to push through initiatives, hear concerns, settle minor issues and bring pressing matters to the administration – in many schools this naturally falls to the department head.

The reason, according the perception of the department heads why this seems to be a natural fit, has to deal with the unique position of the department head – and the very thing that causes their role to be conflicting and not defined. They can be, in Emily's phrasing, the "eyes and ears of the administration" but they are still teachers in the classroom. Many department heads, like Marie, identified that "being in the trenches" was a huge advantage for department heads because they knew what was going on in the building. In essence, department heads are the perfect liaison because it gives the administration, without being accused of the favouritism of picking out only certain teachers to talk to, regularly scheduled meetings with members of the school who are uniquely positioned to raise and listen to concerns. As Grace outlines, the department heads are an asset to the school because of the collegiality that is inherent in the role:

> In my experience having had department heads, I feel I was much more comfortable going to them with an issue, and concerns, whether it is instructional, or about a student or about the administration, then I would be going directly to an administrator. And that's the colleague

> part. We work together. We see each other every day. We have conversations in our hall every day.

Department heads, therefore, have "the pulse of the building", as Buck explains:

> I think that in most cases, the leaders [the administration] lean on department heads to help, not just in dissemination of information but to get a pulse on the building. And I think good leaders will go to department heads just to get a feel for the staff, to find out about the tone of the school, the strengths and weaknesses of the building. I think its way beyond just your curricular leadership within one department.

Since, department heads have this inside track of knowing what is going on in the classroom, the department heads believed that administrations should listen to them, empower them and allow them to help run the school. The seeming reluctance of administrations to change power structures and rely on department heads, recalls Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) criticisms of principals not being willing to make changes to organizational structures.

Sharing information. Marie pointed out that in a secondary school that there is a very practical aspect to the role of liaison: as a way for administration to communicate information. James believed that this is the real reason for why the department heads position is around in its current form:

> I think the reason the role exist is because of the sheer magnitude of the schools today and the need to channel information. If we didn't have mass numbers of students, they wouldn't be needed. Now that is a cynical response but it is a realistic response. An idealistic response would be that department heads are needed to move learning forward. They can be curriculum leaders and they can support staff. But it has to be a strong, competent

> person and they have to have the inner strength to understand people. Idealistically they are needed to help move learning forward. But realistically, I think they only need them because with the size of our schools we need them to channel information.

Yet, most of the department heads interviewed, do not take James' cynical view and saw more value in the role. Most department heads, like Kara, saw being a liaison as a way to open the channels of communication with her department. Not only by giving information from administration, but she also sees the role as means to share with her department professional development opportunities and new pedagogical strategies. This, she believes, encourages them to improve and reflect on their practices. Though, in Emily's perspective, one that was shared with Kara and Mackenzie, the ability of heads to open these channels is often constrained. Department members have to believe that the heads have unique information. Yet, for Emily, heads' meetings often become pointless exercises because department heads are not given information at these meetings that is significantly different from regular staff meetings. Emily saw this as stemming from administrative trust issues: "Oh, it's terrible. To me those heads meeting are unnecessary. . . . Maybe they [the administration] don't have faith that we [the department heads] will get the info out effectively. And since it is their responsibility that is what happens."

As a result, the liaison role is shaped by administration and often puts department heads in a conflicting role: where department heads are not sure if they are sharing information or they are simply there to enforce the administration's wishes. Tracey found her role to be a "weird conduit between administration and teachers" that fosters collegiality and collaboration. Here we see echoes of Schmidt (2000) in the sense that department heads do

not really know where they fit and this can cause them to suffer from stress and role conflict. As being a "weird conduit" can mean department heads are responsible to implement ideas and not just share them.

The escape valve. Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008) were critical of teacher leadership initiatives because they perceived it to be just a rationale to offload responsibilities. The department heads who were interviewed seemed to echo these thoughts. They perceived that, because of their background in instructional strategies within a department, they were sometimes used, in Tracey's words, as "a short cut" for the implementation of new initiatives that the administration wanted to see represented in the school. This conjures up Talbert's (2010) idea that system goals actually hinder the creation of authentic learning communities.

Most of the heads, however, did not express frustration with this – indeed the department heads, as per Worner and Brown (1999), often spoke as if they were instructional leaders. The department heads seemed to like implementing instructional and curriculum initiatives and saw it as a very useful part of their role. Although some heads, like Charles, believed that they often had to deal with initiatives and policies because they were "messy" situations that the administration did not want to deal with:

> In my view the head is the first go to person for admin if there is some sort of problem that admin doesn't want to handle . . . An example of that might be school wide policy, like the hats policy or cellphones. What is going to be the school policy and admin wants to hear from the heads, because apparently we represent the views of our teachers; which is bullshit. I couldn't get my department to agree on a hat policy. So the admin asks about it and that makes the heads' meeting go from 1 ½ to 2 hours or 2 ½ hours with no resolution.

> So the admin makes up its own mind on the policy. But we were consulted. So there's a consultation process where I've heard the opinion of 16 teachers, rather than 65, because trying to raise it at a staff meeting would be suicide.

Charles believed, this allows the administration to use the heads "as an out." Although in keeping with this idea, all of the department heads believed, or at least hoped, that they made the life of the administration easier. When asked if heads make the life of the administration easier, Tracey outlined a valuable role that department heads can play for the administration:

> I feel like it's up to the department head to clarify the message a lot of times, so it's like: "Here's the theory; here's the initiative, blah blah blah. I [as administration] am just going to leave it with you guys and I'm just going to plow into it at the staff meeting" or whatever and people definitely look to the department heads to clarify: What is this all about? Why are we doing this?

Yet, if the heads are expected to be this implementer of new initiatives and ideas, then how do they prepare for it? – what supports are they given? – Especially considering the lack of courses or training for department heads. The answer to this, as will be detailed below, seems to be that the people who sought the role of department head were interested in taking more involvement in the school. They wanted to be able to give input.

Issues with authority. When the issue of authority, however, is introduced then the liaison role of department head can become murkier. Being able to talk to the administration and raise concerns, did not mean that department heads felt they were able to enact real decisions. Many department heads, such as Lionel, did perceive themselves to not have a lot of

authority in order to enforce their decisions or to disagree with administration but conceived the influence of department as different:

> I think as we're all professionals, it's more like the *primus inter pare* – first among equals – where really you don't have any authority but you are someone who is going to provide information to the group, get some consensus and often make decisions – maybe you have to make a tough decision once in a while on class numbers or sizes or what is going to run – but mostly you are talking to the group and disseminating information and getting consensus as far as direction . . . We don't have authority to hire or fire. We have authority to spend money and we have authority to a certain extent to make decisions for class numbers and teachers teaching things, but often times in a small department, like mine, it just works out and people are going to be teaching what they teach because it's the same thing every year.

Overall, therefore, a department head, as liaison, might have, as Buck says, "the ear of administration" but that does not translate into real authority. Their powers derive from "scraps" thrown from the principal's table. Emily observed, being a liaison did mean she had any authority to actually make changes.

On the whole, this perceived lack of authority or power causes department heads to be conflicted as to view their role as support for the teachers or simply to be the voice of the administration within their departments. Department heads receive initiatives and then implement them for their department because:

> Administration expects department heads to tow the party line. I think that we are expected, and I think reasonably, to pass on what admin has decided; sometimes there is room for interpretation and sometimes is it starkly clear what is expected. And of that which

> we pass on … I think administration expects us to keep our finger on the pulse of our department members, so that we can be the ones who bring a cool and rational message to admin if they are questions and concerns amongst staff (Trent).

As such, the department head is not really an independent agent and this might force some department heads to feel their role is conflicted – to force them to choose sides; because, as Trent concedes, the role "hasn't been defined clearly enough and it deserves to have a little bit more direction."

Clearly, being a liaison represents a large part of the department head role – and an essential component of Fifth Business. Undoubtedly, much of the reason why department heads become liaisons has to deal with the organizational structure of the school, but as Greenfield and Ribbins (1993) reminds us, the participants in any organization are essential in creating that structure – not just reacting to it. Hence, the reason why department heads can be viewed as liaisons stems from another one of the roles they adopt. In many ways, department heads act as liaison because, as first among equals, they felt they represented what a teacher should be doing.

The Roles of the Department Head: The Model

> Question: When you say "modeling" is there an expectation on the department head to be a better teacher than the people in their department or a master teacher?
>
> Answer: You know what, if I'm being honest, yes. I think that just like when you go learn from someone – you go get a personal trainer – you want your trainer to look good because that's what you're trying to be; be healthy, be fit. So a department heads definitely needs to have some great classroom strategies and the passion for the

> discipline because that is what you're asking your other colleagues to do and it's much easier to get them on board (Marie).

"Master teachers." Department heads who participated in the study were asked whether or not they felt a department head needed to be a master teacher. Perhaps motivated by humility, modesty or concepts of professionalism, many department heads echoed Mackenzie by rejecting the notion and believing that a good department head and teacher was "constantly striving for mastery." Yet, even if most like Mackenzie rejected the notion that being a master teacher was possible, the idea of the "master teacher" (perhaps echoing the leadership abilities of the heroic teacher (Spillane, 2006)) was appealing to many department heads. It was seen as something that they hoped a department head would be and thought their departments would want.

For the department heads being perceived as "good teachers" was useful and, in turn, most of them considered themselves to be modelling the qualities of good classroom teachers. For James, this notion of modelling meant that good teachers, master teachers, can and should teach all levels; something that, according to the perceptions of those interviewed, is often resisted at schools based on the idea that more senior teachers should get the "better courses." James rejected this idea: "I taught the most challenging students in the building. I taught workplace students and I also taught academic students. So I practiced what I preached."

As Buck clarifies, being viewed as a good teacher or an expert teacher helps department heads win the confidence of their departments: "Now, my experience has only been limited to this building, and it may be hearsay, but within this building, anybody that

I've come in contact with that has been a department head has been solid in the classroom. And I think that is a great starting point." This idea of being solid in the classroom was perceived by department heads as being necessary because it afforded them the credibility and authority to be followed as leaders: "I think [being a good teacher] just gives people something to aspire to or look at it. . . . Hopefully my department would look at [me] and say: OK she's doing that; we should be towing the line too" (Kara). Lionel reflected that the department head before him was not respected because that department head was not viewed as a good teacher. Consequently, in looking at who should become a department head, a person's ability in the classroom is very important and, is a perceived as a sign of that person's ability to lead. Department heads, such as Kara, felt the need to be someone who can be looked up to and can model best practices.

As Tracey mentions, the department head needs to be person, who tries things in the classroom, and can model and know about the latest techniques, strategies and initiatives: "Yeah I think it's important [to be a model teacher], especially because we are supposed to be seen as the people what are leaders in the building and maybe if we're not necessarily doing everything we should, at least, be comfortable grappling with it." Trent was a little more skeptical of the notion that department heads necessarily represented better teachers: "I don't think that being a department head makes you a master teacher. I think it makes you somebody who is willing to do a little bit of extra work and who is capable of working with their colleagues the way we expect teachers to work with their students." This speaks to the personal relationships that department heads are expected to build and which they also find extremely important (James & Aubrey-Hopkins, 2003; Schmidt, 2000).

Getting involved and demonstrating leadership. Heath and Potter (2003) argued that people seek status and title as a means of distinction from others. In essence, if viewed from this lens, department heads would seek the title because it provides a positional good – a means to differentiate themselves from others. And certainly department heads are put into a different role:

> As department heads we are put into a weird leader–of-colleagues-but-not-administration-role, I feel. Mostly we are looked to because we have the information and we are always referred to as "The People That Have That Information;" always. The admin drops [an initiative] and says "the Department heads have already seen this" or "We talked about this at the head's meeting" or "The department heads will be digging deeper into this" (Tracey).

Yet, from the perceptions of the department heads, becoming "the person with the information" does not seem to have been a reason why they took the job. Attaining status, as Schmidt (2000) proves, is not a major factor in the actions of department heads. Rather, as Tracey and Buck outlined the importance and value of being a department head is not the formal title, but the ability to affect change within a school. Indeed, Tracey, echoing Schmidt (2000), felt awkward, conflicted and burdened by the extra attention and pressure that she received as a department head. There is no glory, after all, in Fifth Business. For the department heads it is not the status that is important, many of the people interviewed were simply attracted to the role because they wanted to get more involved in the school. And by virtue of getting involved, this allowed department heads the opportunity to lead.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, department heads fit the model for distributive leadership (Spillane, 2006) and their actions within the role can characterize them as

charismatic (Crawford, 2008), instructional (Coldren & Spillane, 2007; Kelly, 2010) and transformational leaders (Harris, 2005). The department heads interviewed echoed these ideas. While some, such as Charles questioned the ability of department heads to lead, because of a lack of power, many of the department heads considered themselves to be leaders in the school. This seems to be in keeping with the desires of charismatic leaders who believe they are best suited to lead (Weber, 1930), but also the motivations of transformational leaders (Harris, 2005) who see leadership as an opportunity to create cultures, get people to work together and solve substantive issues. Grace believed that a department head, as perceived leaders in the school, need to be actively engaged: "I think leadership is the same thing that we say to our students, it's modeling the behavior that we want to see. It's being willing to put yourself out there and being engaged and involved." This view of leadership was intimately connected with acting in the way that they believed all teachers should act; Marie defined leadership as: "Someone who can create a positive impact by being a mentor; by setting goals."

Seeing the department headship as a leadership position was, for many department heads, a Catch-22: leaders become department heads because department heads need to be leaders. Kara explains why she believed she was approached to take the position of department head: "I think because I had taken a lot of leadership roles in the school and I had also done the position of Athletic Director prior to that which was a major leadership role here." In essence, the department heads perceived themselves as not only being models of what a teacher should do in classroom, but also modeling how a teacher should get involved. And this was all part of leadership:

> I guess I define leadership as taking the initiative to do a lot of things myself including professional development whether it's taking it or whether its delivering it, suggesting that other people try and do the same types of things; showing them the kinds of things that I do that maybe would be beneficial to them or they would like to try, I provide them with resources that they would need to try new things or do the things that they already do. I help them work as a team. I'm a good communicator (Kara)

In the views of many department heads, such as Grace, Emily, Abigail, and Marie, they were leaders because they were the ones, through their personality, to be able to get things done and get people working together. While this echoes Spillane's (2006) "Leaders Plus", there are also indications of Weber's (1930) charismatic leader. That department heads believe this is also not surprising considering that there is no formalized process to become a department head. Hence, it often means that strong, and noticeable, personalities are ones who are able to win the position (Weber, 1930). These strong personalities then try to "carve out their empires" and, as will be developed below, groom their successors. While this can be a disruptive process (Spillane, 2006), this is not a criticism. Rather it is an observation that while principals must go through a process, steered by documents like the Ontario Leadership Framework (Leithwood, 2012), that are designed to train and find suitable candidates (a process Bill referred to as creating "cookie cutter" principals); department headships are left to those who "get noticed." As such, it is not surprising that many of the department heads believed that the heads represented stronger personalities than their principals.

Most department heads, however, believed they would be doing the same things regardless of their position – even if they were not department heads. They perceived their

actions as being good teaching (Schmidt, 2000) and they believe their role simply affords them more opportunities to do things that they would do naturally. In this way, department heads are "teacher leaders" (Clarke, 2009). Further, being a department head encouraged them to take on more responsibilities and leadership practices. As many of the department heads, such as James, Marie, Mackenzie and Abigail, all cited the numerous professional development initiatives that they took on both before and during their tenure as department heads. This might also be because department heads are afforded more opportunities to be model teachers, leaders and develop professionally: "Principals often bring professional development [PD] opportunities to department heads and the department heads put them to department members to see if they wish to go; and people are swamped in their classrooms and don't want to go do PD, so the department head, I think, often does it because no one is volunteering (Trent). Hence, department heads see the value in PD because they are the ones who are most likely to go to PD sessions. This seems tautological.

Still, the perception was that people who wanted the headship were always going to be seeking professional development and leadership opportunities. Abigail explains the desire for leadership positions: "I guess in all of my jobs that I've ever had, I've always moved to the next level. " Yet, Abigail mentions, and as will be detailed below, she, like many department heads was attracted to the position because it made it easier to bring "everyone together, decide where we want to go and then run in that direction." She also sees the facilitation of that collaboration as being the true responsibilities of being a leader. Here Abigail is also explaining the process of being a transformational leader – of working with people and not trying to control them (Hallinger, 2003). She is also making an argument that department heads, by

their nature, are better suited to lead initiatives or at very least will be more willing to take on initiatives. This theme of having the desire to do the job because it allowed heads to work with others and to collaboratively solve problems – and being the ones that were best able to do that – ran throughout the interviews.

Lionel believed that he could do a better job than the previous department head, and that motivated him to take the job:

> The department head we had previously would spend the budget and not tell anybody. Not tell us what we had, she would choose classes without asking. She wouldn't talk about numbers with anybody; she wouldn't discuss resources and would complain about us behind our backs. . . . A better job needed to be done.

Mackenzie bluntly stated that "there are maybe 2 or 3 others within the department that I would say, with confidence, that I am a better teacher;" some of whom she competed against to become department head. Department heads, therefore, do not lack faith in their abilities as teachers and, lacking authority, believe that being a good teacher is a strategy to get their departments to pay attention to them. In fact, department heads need to model these behaviours, actions and strategies because of a limitation of their role: "[Department heads] should be [leaders]. But, I'm a sports guy. So you can have Mark Messier and if you have a bunch of donkeys that don't want to be led, then Messier can't lead them. Nowadays it's different; there is more individualism than in the past" (Bill).

It can be concluded, therefore, that department heads believe that they need to take on initiatives and model best practices. Again, this becomes a "chicken and egg" argument: Do "model teachers" become department heads or does the role of department heads make them

"model" teachers? Most of the department heads seemed to believe the former rather than the latter. More importantly, it seems that being a model teacher provides the department heads with the credibility to be listened to by their departments. As Bill's above comment alludes to, the real worry of department head leadership is that, despite all your good work, you will be ignored by the "donkeys" that can still shut their classroom door. This becomes a real issue for department heads when their next role, coordinator, is considered because it is often the responsibility of department heads to get everyone to work together.

The Roles of the Department Head: The Coordinator

Building relationships and people skills. As Marie explains, being a department head was an opportunity to do valuable things for a school: "For me I was ready to take on more of a leadership role to really build that collaborative culture in a department, to improve student learning and improve consistency amongst my department members." This echoed the sentiments of many of the department heads, such as Abigail, who felt their role was to build collaborative relationship in order to get people to, collectively, work on problems. The department heads, therefore, often took on the role of coordinator: the person who had to gather and organize people to work together to solve professional, practical and personal issues.

Recall that Putnam (2000) observed that social capital was comprised of both bridging and bonding capital. Echoing this, most department heads saw the ability to work with people who were similar and different to them personally as a key aspect of their role. Charles, amongst others, identified "people skills" as the expertise needed most by department heads. Bill more plainly stated that "Education by its nature is a still a people job. I think being able to

work with people is the most important thing. I think if you can do that, then you can work things out when you have disagreements." Moreover, the prevalent thought amongst department heads was that dealing with personal and professional problems was their responsibility. They felt that they should deal with issues, as opposed to the administration, because not being able to do this, represents a failure of the position:

> I wouldn't go to admin [with a conflict] because it would be a sign of my failing as a department head. I think that goes with the turf: Can't you solve little problems within your department? . . . There are other departments in this building where the teachers won't talk to each other. And the department head will not talk to a teacher unless OSSTF is in the room. How does that happen? I can't believe that. It's beyond my imagination.

Hence, Lionel felt that being "open, honest and fair" were essential qualities to being a department head. Especially since the liaison role does not function if the department head isn't viewed as being welcoming or able to effective create a strategy of success:

> I think you need to be a good communicator and you have to have good interpersonal skills. People need to feel that they can talk to you if something isn't going right. If they have a class with a particular group of students who are giving them a hard time, they need to feel that they are not isolated and they need to come to talk to you (Abigail).

This component of building relationships, especially in times of conflict, was seen as vital for department heads. Mackenzie detailed one incident of conflict where, she as department head had to heal the wound of a long time squabble which, she felt, administration did not want to handle. In common with other department heads, such as Trent and Kara, the source of Mackenzie's complaint and conflict was over timetabling and courses. In her story, Mackenzie

had a department member who complained that “his course” was being removed and felt that he was being targeted. His perception was founded on “years of bad blood between this one individual and three others; before I even came to the building.” As department head, Mackenzie felt that she had to solve this issue; perhaps, as Bourdieu (1984) and Putnam (2000) would argue, because she felt she had the social capital or bridging capital to work out the relationship. More practically, she perceived the role of the department head was to make sure the department could work together: “It was ugly, but I think it had to happen. And since that happened, our relationships are better. This person is now participating [where] they weren’t doing that before” (Mackenzie). Here we see, therefore, that as part of their role, department heads take on the responsibility for the functionality of the department. And following Pollard (1985), from a social interactionist perspective, the department head, Mackenzie, adjusted her role to the better accommodate for the context of the situation.

Understanding the big picture. At many times in the book, *Fifth Business* (Davies, 1970), Dunstan Ramsay tries to council people to work together and look inward onto what they are doing; as in the final confrontation near the end of the book, where Mrs. Dempster’s son is helped by Ramsay to realize that Boy Staunton hit her with the snowball. After Staunton refuses to take responsibility for the incident, Ramsay scolds him: “It’s time you tried to be a human being. Then maybe something bigger than yourself will come up on the horizon” (Davies, 1970, p. 250). One of the jobs of Fifth Business is to aid the process of self-discovery and recognition of purpose and, more importantly, provide the opportunities for those discoveries take place.

Department heads, as well, must keep the "big picture" in mind because it gives them a better perspective on what their department must accomplish or achieve. By being a welcoming voice to their department members it also allows them to have conversations in a collegial manner about what is going on in the schools, their learning strategies or their courses. As a department head, who is seen as a model, there is the expectation that they will be able to have conversations about different courses, and for Kara this is a conversation "I'm very comfortable having, because I have pretty high expectations of myself. So if I can encourage them to have high expectations as well, then maybe things will go a little better [in their courses]."

What seemed to help a lot of department heads conceptualize the big picture was being actively involved in the planning, creation and implementation of initiatives. Grace, for example, believed that volunteering to work on board initiatives had helped her prepare for her role and be effective in her role. For Marie, being a department head and having the "big picture" was important to understand the responsibilities of the role:

> When one takes on the department head role, you need to be prepared to be part of the bigger picture and to represent the interests of your department and your teachers. But to work with administration to align with the school goals and that is going to be aligned with the board's improvement plan as well. So are there some expectations for going along with administration? Yes, there is. If you are somebody that never agrees with administration, to me, you should not be a department head. Are you allowed to question? For sure.

Abigail believed that knowing the big picture allowed her to focus her efforts and interpret things for the benefit of everyone: "I want to make sure I have the big picture. That's one of

things I want to do if someone comes in with me with something that have happened, I'll want to go and find the big picture . . . and decide what is that goal we want to do and how it is going to meet our student's needs." Consequently, when department heads were allowed to get greater understanding of what was going on or what was necessary for the school, they perceived they were more effective in their role and, perhaps, better prepared for the role.

Tracey mentioned that she had felt better prepared for the job after working on initiatives at the board level, but she also admitted that these courses put her in a better position to win the job in the first place, and that was one of the reasons why she participated in them:

> I'm going to speak pretty candidly here. [I knew] that our administration looks very favourably upon that kind of thing [working on board initiatives] – and I knew that the former department head would probably be, at some point, looking to move on or for a change. And it's also something that I like doing: I like being on the writing teams, I like being on a task force . . . [So] I was pretty careful to take every opportunity that I could in the event that the job came open or another headship in the board came open. I would say it was a few years in the making and that I was looking forward.

Marie echoes these ideas by saying that working with the board made her, as the internal candidate, the candidate of choice for both the acting headship and then later the permanent position; to the point where no one else applied for the position because after doing all these initiatives "people know who you are." As such, working on board level initiatives certainly helped some department heads prepare for the job but, by their own admission, these initiatives also made them better candidates for the job. These initiatives were in-line with

what their particular administration wanted to see in their department heads and created connections for them. This also, they perceived, allowed them to better coordinate their departments towards initiatives and move their departments in the directions of school and system goals.

Creating consistency. When given direction, and in keeping with Fifth Business, the department heads tended to see it as their role to make sure the department was not stagnant but moving forward. This especially could be seen when they were handed – or downloaded – responsibilities and trusted to deal with them. In describing how they coordinated initiatives in their department, Grace and Kara, outlined a process that involved modeling and describing expected practices to their departments and then working collaboratively with them to meet these specific standards and goals. Importantly, all this was done while still taking the time to appreciate each department member individually. Department heads are, therefore, in the truest sense, "Leaders Plus" (Harris & Spillane, 2008). Yet this aspect of the role for a department heads is not described, or detailed anywhere.

Grace, took over a department where "they didn't believe KTCA [An evaluation framework in Ontario] was going to last, even though it had been around for a decade." With this as the background, and after the Culvert School Board asked for common course overviews, she worked to achieve consistency: "Because I knew, we all are very different, and we all have our pet projects or pet assignments that we really like to do – and the kids get a lot out of [them] that is where we sat down and we through things out there, I then lumped them together into skill sets and say okay, if we are going to work on this skill set in this first unit, then anyone of these assignments will work for it." As evidenced here, acting as an

instructional and transformational leader (Hallinger, 2003), Grace had to bring her department together, look at the bigger picture and work collaboratively towards a system goal.

As Grace mentions, it took a long time and a lot of "baby steps" in order to collectively create something that would be beneficial to students. Tracey adds, "it's the department head job to encourage sharing, and encourage the co-planning and encouraged the communication between department members." If, as she comments, department heads do not "steer the ship," teachers would simply be tempted to isolate themselves and "do their own thing." At the heart of this, therefore, is the creation of practical and tangible results that would be useful to students and teachers alike. Many department heads, like Kara, are even happy with a smaller footprint from their efforts, as long as it aids students: "If I can help a teacher get to the point where they can be a better teacher and maybe deliver better lessons so a student learns better or likes their class better then I think that I've sort of served my purpose."

The formality of the position. The above, however, raises an obvious question: "Why does this coordinator have to be a department head?" Why could not individual teachers take it upon themselves to organize and implement these initiatives? Further, why did those interviewed feel they had to accept a position in order to be a leader? Why would they have not been able to do these initiatives as a teacher? The answer, according to those interviewed, seems to be that department heads, as a link between the administration and teachers, have the credibility to be trusted. The formality of a hierarchical structure helps the department head become recognized in this role since as Abigail mentioned that: "If you just had everyone being a leader in the department then I don't think things would get done."

When asked about whether or not a teacher leader could do the same things, James, who was familiar with the concept of "teacher leadership" responded:

> It can be done, but what I was able to do – so teacher leaders can bring people together and do many things of a department head – but I had the luxury that I had meetings once a month and people felt it was required to be able to attend. As a teacher leader people can dismiss that meeting, or come extremely late, or send their regards thereafter. When it's a department meeting it puts a formality on it, where people think they have to be at this meeting – like a staff meeting.

Department heads are able, therefore, to co-ordinate initiatives, get people to work collaboratively and act as liaisons – to work as transformational leaders and distributive leaders – because they have the stamp of authority. As Marie pointed out, however, this can cause friction. As department heads are held responsible for the performance of their department and have "to wear the decisions." She also mentions that this tension creates a "me vs. them" environment which hurts collegiality and does not foster collaboration. Department heads, like Grace and Emily, feel a sense of ownership for their department and the people within it. But increasing, and echoing the findings of Friedman (2011) and Talbert (2010) the department heads felt that, because of administrative directives, their efforts to build the collegial relationships and partnerships necessary to solve problems were being hampered. As Weber (1968) outlined, increased bureaucratization can create dehumanization. When department heads are forced into a particular role, which while suitable to administrative desires, ignores the necessary fluidity and contextual necessities of

being a department head, department heads become trapped in Weber's Iron Cage. The result is not more effective or efficient departments, but increased tensions.

Bringing horses to water. Despite the best efforts of many department heads, they perceive that they are sometimes ignored. Being the coordinator, the tour director who creates the day's activities, is often a thankless task. Many department heads reported that they felt they were expected, by the staff, to be model teachers and to be knowledgeable. But they also perceived that as long as the department heads are those things, the rest of the staff often felt they did not have to be. As Kara outlines: "I can give [department members] this great idea to help them implement this part of the curriculum, but you can lead a horse to water but you can't make them drink; [that] is my best analogy of the situation. So I can give them everything that I think they might need and they still might say: "Naw, I'm not interested in doing that.'" Lionel, used the same analogy, and when asked whether this was his responsibility to lead "the horse" he stated:

> I think it is, but you don't have the stick. We don't have a stick… what stick am I going to use. And I think it's always that game of maintaining the collegiality and being able to communicate with them still or just cutting them off. Because really, in the end, if you just cut them off there's no communication and you've lost them entirely and they're just going to do whatever they want anyways. So I'd rather have some influence then no influence.

To understand why Lionel "does not have the stick" we have to delve into union regulations in Ontario.

Union rules. As has been detailed in Chapter 2, before the Mike Harris Progressive Conservative government changed the structure of union memberships, all members of a

school were part of the same union. According to Bedard and Lawion (2000) this move reduced the collegiality of schools and created a dichotomy. Caught the middle of this development was department heads:

> The role of a department head is somewhat in flux ever since the Federation excluded or ever since principals and vice-principals left the Federation, it meant the department heads are in a sort of grey zone between the classroom teacher and the admin: with no real opportunity to say anything evaluative about the department members that we work with and not really getting the confidence of administrators. (Trent)

As a result, within the OSSTF, department heads, like all members who are considered teachers, are not allowed to formally critique or evaluate the performance of another teacher (OSSTF, 2014, p. 9). Nor are they allowed to say anything that could be construed as being reflective of a fellow member's performance. While this is the policy, it does not match the reality of most schools. As James explains, by talking to students, staff and being around their classrooms, "everyone sees" who is or is not properly doing their jobs, but no one, and especially not department heads, is allowed to say anything, even an offer of support, because of the "unionized climate."

Department heads are granted a measure of supervisory powers and are expected by administration teams to be responsible for implementing curricular or administrative decisions but, have no authority or sanction by their union to be able to do that. Trent believes that this often causes teachers to be confused by the role of department head. Believing that as "a limb of the administration" (Trent), they should be able to defend teachers from harassment or be responsible for improving teacher performance. While many department heads do take this as

their role, it has never been clearly defined as such and can cause issues since “it is a very grey line because you get into what is supervision and support and what is evaluation” (James).

All, except one, of the department heads who were interviewed would not want to give up their union memberships for a more departmental power or a greater supervisory role. Most acknowledge that, as Lionel said, “in the current climate” the union offers protections that they would not want to lose. Yet, they still acknowledged the awkwardness that this creates for the role of the department head. As Marie notes, union rules can put the department head in a very difficult spot:

> Let's face it; we are all in the same union. But you are a leader; you are a “boss.” Do I think that there is a perceived amount of power that doesn’t truly exist because we're in the same union? Yes. Would the department head’s role be different if we were not in a unionized environment? Yes. So I can create partnerships with my teachers, I can make suggestions but I cannot evaluate them. That will get me into a sticky situation, so it can create conflict because ultimately were in the same group but I'm given some type of boss roll. . . And it's that whole union mentality that a teacher can step foot into the building with. That I can work to change, to know that I am working together. In that we are always changing and reflecting to better that student learning experience. But when you are asking a teacher to change his or her practice, it's hard for them to realize that it's for students and it’s not an evaluation of their work.

Grace disagreed with the basic premise of this statement arguing that “I’m not the boss of these people; we are colleagues. We are all colleagues and that is a very different relationship

then when you have a manager . . . I don't feel like I manage them. We collaborate and I facilitate that collaboration."

As Kara mentioned, however, the lack of authority often hampered her ability to take initiatives to the next step. For while the department head, because being in the classroom, might be the perfect person to take the message or expectation to the department, the union regulations limit how far they can go with it:

> When you have a union involved I think that changes things; right? So, might they [department members] hear it better from me, or take it better from me, I don't know, it could go both directions. It could be a catastrophe because I'm on the same playing field as they are in, so they don't view me in that role so "stick it" basically. Whereas a principal, that's their "boss" as far as I'm concerned . . . but then again it might not be taken that well because what does a principal necessarily know about history, or about phys. ed or English (Kara).

Here we see the importance of the department head having credibility, especially in relationship to their subject expertise. Still, because of these limitations, most department heads feel the role has been diminished.

As we saw in Chapter 1, this partly stems from the changes that were made following Bill 160 which removed some "supervisors" but left department heads behind. While the administration was redefined and professional associations were established for most, department heads were ignored by both union officials and policy-makers alike; left-out to figure out a role that seems to function more on variable conventions and traditions then any concrete framework. For example, while some department heads bemoaned not being

included in hiring interviews, others reported that they were often asked to be involved, and expected to be involved because, traditionally, they always have been. After all, the logic follows for many of the department heads interviewed that if department heads are expected to be responsible for the teachers in their department then, despite union policy, they should get a say in who is in the department. As has been repeatedly shown, this level of inconsistency only creates greater confusion around the role and should be cleared up.

The Roles of the Department Head: The Clerk

While we have talked so far about the loftier aspects of the role of the department head, there are, of course, more mundane tasks that department heads have to deal with. The department heads are given budgets and must order supplies and resources from their departments. This means, they have to keep track of things and put things in order. In *Fifth Business*, Dunstan Ramsay keeps the stone (which was inside the snowball) that was hurled at Mrs. Dempster just in case it was ever needed (Davies, 1970). Heroines get to go fight dragons; Fifth Business gets to give her the map. These are not grand collaborations, and it might not be very exciting, but it is perhaps no less crucially important to be a "clerk". As Charles describes:

> Right now in 2014, the role of department head is to be a clerk. Two forms of being a clerk: Electronic and paper. And that's it. Being a clerk and I'm not trying to sound negative. The decisions are made by administration or by the Kremlin [the board office] usually without any rhyme or reason. And I'm not trying to sound cynical. But it is a large corporation.

So while this is not glamorous, it is necessary and it does take a great deal of organization – especially within larger departments. Every department head that was interviewed mentioned "ordering supplies" or "getting stuff" or "providing consumables" as part of their job. It was

also cited as the number one thing that department members asked the heads to do for them. Not surprisingly, the literature on this as being a part of the department heads role is virtually non-existent; other than to be addressed as a complaint and a waste of time (Kruskamp, 2003; Friedman, 2011). In all likelihood, however, department members are more likely to talk to a head for staples or to sign a field trip from than to raise a concern or talk about a curricular issue. Emily actually cited this as one of the main reasons, allowing with being a liaison, of why department heads are needed because "you need someone to co-ordinate for the incidental things like stock or textbooks." This is the less glorious aspect of the coordinator role, but being a clerk is essential to the daily business of a school.

While the department heads did seem to talk about this part of the role it was quickly glossed over – it was not exciting and in fact, many resented it. Mackenzie called it "administrivia" and James believed that having department heads do these tasks was "trivial in the sense that they should be someone else's job. I really believe you have people in the building who can order those supplies; like support staff." And while this raises issues about the managerial nature of the role – since Lionel mentioned cutting off supplies as a strategy to get compliance – the clerk function seemed to be more about making sure someone was able to keep everything organized: "At the end of the day, I'm the mum. And I'm going to make sure that everything gets done: taking care of orders for supplies; taking care of the budget" (Mackenzie). More practically, this function seemed essential to the workings of the school, even though the heads perceived it as a waste of their time:

> If a battery dies in a stopwatch, somehow it becomes my role to ensure that a battery is purchased and set battery makes it into the stopwatch, so that they can use it in their lesson

> the next day. Or if a net is broken, it is the expectation that I will come and I will somehow make it so that net is repaired (Kara).

In a follow-up, Kara was asked what would happen if she, as department head did not deal with the issue, she responded: "It would either lay there broken [laughter] or they would ask for a new one."

These clerical tasks, therefore, might be mundane but that makes them no less essential. Teachers need resources to properly do their job. So why has this not been studied? The clerk role can be identified as a large gap in the literature that needs to be corrected. The literature on leadership, let alone department heads, has been silent about these performances. If anything, the role of clerk best exemplifies the Fifth Business that department heads perform. While largely invisible or unnoticed, in the literature, the clerk role underpins the basic functioning of every department and being a clerk is essential to how the role of the department head has been configured. While it might be more exciting to speak of department heads as instructional leaders or teacher leaders, the clerk role seems to the most important way that heads can make their department members happy and seems to be viewed, by those members, as being essential to the well-being of a department. Yet this begs the question: why are department heads called on to be clerks? It might be simply because they are paid to be.

"Makin' the big bucks". During the interviews, the participants often gave their perceptions on the type of person who was best suited for the role and the characteristics they believed people who took the role possessed. In hearing these comments, one thing became immediately clear: those that sought the position were not doing it for the financial incentive.

Clearly, department Heads receive extra compensation for the position, based on the size of their department. For most department heads, this was not a meaningful incentive to take the job, as Charles explains: "Monthly I get the paycheque. I get the big bucks. I think I can buy a 12 pack if I save up each month assiduously." When the follow-up question asked if he felt he was properly compensated for his work, Charles responded: "It is a running joke amongst the heads. What is the proper compensation for what I'm doing; which is clerical work? It's not an imposition or a hardship."

At the same time, that extra compensation is often seen as a justification for added responsibilities, like that of clerk, and also provides a perceived limit on their authority. Tracey said she would be cautious about taking on additional powers because she felt that would ruin the collegial dynamics of her department, so she would not want more departmental power "unless they paid me more money." Kara, however, mentioned that her department often asked her to do things because, they felt she was being paid for it: "The expectation is that I am to do more. And that is, to quote, 'why I get paid the big bucks.'" While Emily, who has a combined department of three different subject areas, also believed that the extra pay did not correspond to doing a better job as the department head, but rather she believed the subject expertise was more important, because "if you have a person who doesn't understand their curriculum, then you are just a figurehead and you are just getting money and you are making someone else do all the work."

Controlling the money. Nor did the clerical aspect of having control over a budget and being able to spend departmental money seem to be a big factor in why department heads took on the role – as no one mentioned it as something that that attracted them to the job.

Yet, practically, it remains one the most important, for which, again, there is no training, since as Lionel said: "You have to understand how to do a spreadsheet and money -- you have to understand that." Abigail mentioned that part of her role was "to look at the big picture; look at the budget and look at what is doable and what is practical." The budget, therefore, was simply a means to facilitate the work of others and the department, and perhaps most importantly it was an easy way to achieve tangible results. When Grace was asked what she does as a department head, her first response was: "I order supplies [laughter] because that is what keeps them happy. [Laughter] It's not funny [that] I was the first department head that actually ordered supplies; so I was pretty proud of myself, it was like Christmas multiple times."

If anything, this monetary control seemed mostly an afterthought to most of the heads, not something to be prized, but something to be used for the department, as Lionel, who mentioned the budget the most, but perhaps not coincidentally also teaches business, stated:

> It's their budget, it's not my budget; it's our budget. We sit down here on the computer and order items together. I am never afraid to go over budget, I'll just order it; I don't care. They [the administration] will just call me and I'll say "OK, take it off next year and we'll do what we have to do." But they never do anything; they just give me my budget next year.

Overall, therefore, the monetary compensation that department heads receive, or the opportunity to control a pot of money, was not a big incentive nor a big deterrent from taking the role to take on the role as Buck explains:

> I don't know over 20 years, if you looked monetarily, if you looked at the pepperettes I've bought from kids, and the donations to other things, the odd staff pizza or whatever, what's the monetary value? Have I accumulated a nest egg that will allow me to retire to the Virgin

> Islands? No. So it if it not monetary, then what is the value of [being a department head]? Well the value is the liaison; the input. When you have upper admin that says here is the direction that we are going, we need people to help with that, we need people who are confident, people that have the support of their staff, people that have their finger on the pulse.

Though, while this might not be a big part of the role, departments did perceive the need to have resources and fight for resources. If they were to be clerks, they were going to have things to distribute and as Lionel mentioned, he saw his job as being able to get resources and advocate for resources. Hence, departments do view their role as fighting for what they think their department needs in order to be successful, effective and, perhaps, most importantly, competitive.

The Roles of the Department Head: The Advocate

From the perceptions of the department heads, it was often their role to make sure their department members get what they believed they needed to be effective in the classroom. As can be seen, the Fifth Business of department heads sometimes means taking a collaborative approach to assessment or planning, sometimes it means making sure they have the necessary information, sometimes it means modeling new strategies in their classrooms and often it just means making sure they have enough pens. In order to have the time do these things or the courses to plan for or the money to spend, a department head must take on the role of advocate. Of all the roles that have been discussed, so far, this seemed to be one that came most naturally to department heads because, as Bill simply stated: “The main thing I have to do is I have to fight for the department.” A department head, therefore, must be

advocate in two ways for their department: First, for their staff (colleagues) in the department, and second, for their subject.

Being a voice. Many of the department heads have commented that being a liaison does not mean that you do not stand up or "speak truth to power" (Mackenzie). Bill, who has been teaching for 32 years, believed that this did not happen enough at his school and that heads needed to speak up more often; even if it meant becoming the "pain in the ass guy" to administration. This ability to hold administration accountable is seen by department heads as a crucial element of the role. While some people counselled the need to be a broker, diplomat or ambassador, others were blunter in their approach as Mackenzie commented: "I call shit when I smell it. And I raise a lot of important questions that other people will not say out loud. So it looks like I am a shit disturber but then everyone comes to find me afterwards, puts a card in my mailbox, to thank me for saying what they are not courageous enough."

On the whole, the department members saw this as crucial to the role because the department head role is the people who have the opportunity and the responsibility to be a voice for the staff:

> Let's face it, there are a number of staff who are extremely competent and extremely confident, but do not want positions of leadership. They want to be here, they want to be cogs in the machine, they do not want to talk to the principals, they do not want to talk to the VP, it's not because they are afraid to be found out that they are not doing their jobs. . . . They just want to be one of the masses. . . We do all this anonymous reporting cycles for students and we really don't do any for staff. So you would certainly hope that they would feel comfortable talking to their own department head or at least some other department

> head who might be a friend of theirs, to get their point across; because we have great people who have great ideas that we seldom hear from. . . . So, as a department head, you have a role in your subject matter but there might be other people who seek you out, just because they believe they can bend your ear. (Buck)

As such, more than being a liaison that shares information and concerns, the department head must be ready to be an activist for issues, they must be willing to take on the issues that affect their staff and might be detrimental to the staff and bring them forward: "Going to heads meetings and seeing that as an opportunity for the leaders in the building to have conversations about what the staff is feeling. And being able to bring that voice together, I think is important; being able to speak for your department, and not with your own best interest in mind, but the best interests of the department" (Grace). Abigail supported this notion by stating that this was the role that made department heads necessary: "I think it is important to have one person who is the voice of the department; going to the heads meetings and voicing the concerns of the department; a person who is going to build their department and be the voice for their department." Many of the department heads tied this into the role of leadership. Here, again, you can see aspects of Weber's (1930) charismatic leaders and the criticisms of that leadership (Crawford, 2002): the image of the department head as someone who, heroically, must stand up for what is right and speak out when no one else will. Although, in doing this, department heads are, again, being responsive to and adjusting to the situation (i.e. knowing when to speak up or when to "toe the line"), collaborating and listening to their department members. These are also all hallmarks of distributive leadership (Harris & Spillane,

2008) and serve to demonstrate the fluidity of the department head role. Department heads are not speaking their voice, here, but rather are speaking as the voice of many.

Subject expertise. "I had a principal tell me once, with all due respect, [Bill], I can put anyone in a history classroom. And that pisses me off." With that statement, Bill summarizes the feelings of many of the department heads. The department heads were very amenable to the notion that they were best suited to be advocates for their department members and the students who take their courses because of their subject expertise. Both Marie and Charles used a well-known joke to explain this perception: "Elementary teachers love their students; secondary teachers love their subjects; and university professors love themselves." While meant to be tongue in cheek, the saying does hint at how important subject area is to secondary teachers – and the expectation is that department heads will know about the subject area:

> Yes, in terms of being the department head, if you want [the department] to buy into you being the department head, definitely you do have to have content knowledge and you have to be comfortable with it. Yes, you should be passionate about it, for sure, because you are leading the ship and you should be seen as somebody, who loves their subject matter. That is in terms of colleagues. I think the administration doesn't care if you know a lot about your subject area matter as long as you can be a good department head (Tracey).

Hence, there is exists a disconnection between the expectations that department heads have put upon them by the staff and by those of administration. For department heads being seen as knowing your subject matter is important because knowing your subject brings credibility to you as a department head and, as such, the department heads is also expected be an advocate

for their subject area. Grace explained that she saw fighting for the department as one of her most important roles because of her love for her subject, and her desire to want to see it thrive.

Even Emily, who is a form of a "super head" with three subject areas in department, did not believe she adequately defended the interest of them all because of a lack of subject expertise. When asked how a department head from a different subject area would do if they became the head of her department, she responded by saying: "Let's say a science teacher did, they would be a figurehead just like I am for those two other departments. They can do ordering and they can delegate, so essentially what they have is the namesake but they are not really doing the work." While she conceded that this arrangement was possible, she added that: "The only thing it might affect is being an advocate; I don't think you can effectively be an advocate for something you don't believe in." In other words, while someone else could take over the role, and there are certainly teachers who teach out of subject expertise, a department needs to have subject expertise to be an effective advocate.

This element of passion and knowledge was oft repeated by the interviewed department heads, such as Mackenzie, not least of which because if the person has a passion for the subject they will have more knowledge and experience related to the courses and, therefore, be able to offer more support: "I think a department is best served by someone who is passionate about the discipline and they have the content knowledge. Maybe not about every single course that is offered in their program but I do think it is my responsibility to be more aware." Further, many department heads argued that their subject expertise gave them a unique perspective and a better understanding of the realities of the classroom. One which administrators are not always able to see:

> In English the there are many activities that don't have meaning, an explicit meaning that somebody parachuting into a class would understand but that another English teacher with see the value of. So let's say, for instance, my teacher was going to have her Teacher Performance Appraisal. If she's not going to put on a dog and pony show but actually teach a regular class, there might be activities that an administrator wouldn't understand [whereas] as an English teacher I would understand what was going on and see the value in it. I know that I've had administrators question the value of some of the things we do in our classes that I see as being extremely important (Trent).

Bill also explained how department heads see things that administrators miss: “I use to teach with this one guy . . . he had the jigsaw lesson in the drawer and it didn’t matter, whenever he was evaluated out came the jigsaw lesson.” As such, it was perceived by the department heads that they had a better understanding of the realities of the classroom. Further, this causes department members to be more likely to seek out department heads since they are better able to identify their member’s needs:

> None of our current administration has any background in history. And my department would be the first place that I would go as well. Now if there are issues of plagiarism, than administration gets involved. But they come to me first. Maybe they don’t come to me first but, it just happens that way; that we have the conversation first, because we are constantly talking in our classes. . . . It’s now come to a place that I know when they need stuff or want stuff. I know when to engage each individual or have a conversation with them (Grace).

Hence, subject knowledge opens the door to conversations within departments. This also allows heads to be able to have conversations about system and school goals – all conversations that would not have occurred had the department head not been viewed as an expert. Hence, this study seems to provide support for Siskin's (1991) notion that ignoring the unique culture of each subject department does not engage teachers or provide them with the supports necessary.

Timetabling: The cause of and solution to a department head's problems. In explaining how they were an advocate, most of the department heads centered their comments on one aspect of their job: timetabling. This one aspect gave the heads the most direct control and input into the school but also caused the most conflict in the departments. Timetabling, the allotting of courses to be taught to particular teachers, is crucial to department heads because it provides them with the most immediate ways to create change. After all, timetabling involves, not only assigning teachers to course, but deciding what courses will run. As such, it not an exaggeration to say that the very existence of a department can sometimes rest on the timetabling decisions of department heads since, as Bill explains: "Kids vote with their feet." As Grace articulates, it is also the means by which a department can make sure it is meeting instructional goals and creating common skill sets from grade level to grade level.

It is, therefore, easy to see that a department that has the best resources, best teachers and best courses will attract more students, and hence provide more opportunities for its members. Department heads, therefore, have every incentive to make sure this happens. As Turner (2003b) and Poultney (2007) argued, the very existence of subject specific departments means that department heads must constantly be competing against each other: "I don't think

it is overstated, but it exists. I would never say anything derogatory about another department, but we are fighting for the same students and we are fighting for sections. And, so yes, that spirit of competition is definitely there" (Emily). Further being a good manager of the department – i.e. getting the courses and resources necessary – was often cited as the best indicator of an effective department head (James & Aubrey-Hopkins, 2003).

Timetabling, however, is also a source of stress and, was cited as the issue most likely to cause conflict since in Marie's words: "There's a lot of ownership and entitlement with teachers and their courses." Trent echoes these sentiments, saying that while he tries to be fair, the doling out of undesirable courses can cause tension and heated discussions. While Kara's response to timetabling each year was visceral: "I dread it. It makes me feel sick every time I get given any piece of paper that has anything to do with timetabling because I have been raked over the coals by some of my fellow teachers because of timetabling. So it's very uncomfortable. I don't enjoy it at all."

Yet, despite the stress and conflict, it was the also seen as the most attractive part of being a department head. For Tracey, the desire to take on the department head role was motivated by the opportunity for a little more control and input: "The official reason [I became a department head] is because I really like being a professional leader in the building. . . Also to be perfectly frank, I was quite sick of getting the "dog's breakfast" and I really liked having some control over what I taught." As Trent explained, being a department head also meant that you could influence what "texts would be chosen" and how quickly his department would "take on new initiatives by the board and implement them."

This control, however, over the teaching lives of their department member is fraught with problems since members have to be kept happy, the needs of the department have to be served and the students have to be looked after as well. Trent explains this statement by outlining a truthful but unpleasant reality to many teachers:

> There is no class that doesn't deserve great teaching, so it's a matter of matching the teacher to the class and balancing that against the need of the teacher to have classes that are more challenging classes and that are going to flow more easily. For instance, some teachers just seem to work better with junior students and some teachers seem to work better with senior students – so times that's part of the balance that I will strike. Some teachers are fine with an applied level of students but would struggle with a locally developed class. Whereas some teachers can teach a locally developed class with great ease and aplomb, and I bet the other ones could too but, those teachers believe they can and enjoy being given those classes. If there isn't enough university or academic level classes to go around, you also need to see which limb is going to bleed. You can choose which limb and make it the appropriately one.

The idea that not everyone gets to teach what they want, and further, that not everyone can teach the "good classes" can be a cause of conflict which department heads are left by administration to figure out. So how is this determined? How do department heads choose "their limbs?"

Unofficially official evaluations. There are two approaches to determining who is best to teach a course. Firstly, there is the strategy employed by James which is a collaborative strategy that can breed animosity:

> I brought my department together, I openly showed them what we had, and I had everyone talk about what they might want to teach. If there was any conflict, I tried to divvy it up evenly. If conflict went any further, I just gave it to the administration. And did I ever have issues with that? Absolutely, there was a belief in my department that senior teachers taught the advanced 4U classes because they were master teachers. I struggled with that belief, because I thought a master teacher could teach all subjects and all learners.

The second way of deciding courses is through doing something that according to union rules, department heads are not supposed to partake in: evaluation of ability. Perhaps scandalously, department heads admitted to informally making these evaluations. As you see below, Tracey checked on the anonymity of the study before she stated that her unofficial evaluations of department members effected how she distributed courses:

> Just the honest answer is yes… not with… yeah, yeah, it does. I don't know what else to say; yes it does, for sure. I have some people in my department that are full time with me and I have some people that are in for one line or two lines and… yup. . . . I'm protective of the people that I know, who I think do a fantastic job and who the kids -- it's not even -- I think everybody in my department works their butts off. It's the people that the kids really respond to very strongly and very positively. Those are the ones that I want to see grabbing the kids for the [Grade] 11 and 12 courses.

This practice was surprisingly prevalent, and most of the department heads who admitted to it, believed that, by doing it, they had the best interests of their department and their students in mind. Emily put this idea into focus as needed for the benefit of the students: "If I think that someone is less than stellar in the classroom, I'd be more concerned about having them out of

the department then try to live with them." Kara agreed: "I'm looking at work ethic and what's being done in terms of the curriculum and those types of things, absolutely. Because I want numbers . . . if we do a better job in the classroom then in a hopeful world, [even] when numbers are dwindling, then you get more kids taking your courses. That's just how it goes." Buck was even more candid and open, stating that these evaluations are being done because: "No department wants the department killer." This notion of protecting your department from teachers, who are not popular or effective, was, again, defended by notions of competitiveness since: "We want our department to be an area where our students want to be" (Buck). Hence, any evaluation of system goals by department heads will be viewed through the lens of creating strong subject areas and may explain why department heads are often reluctant to change educational practices or embrace new education initiatives (Busher, 2005; Rosenfeld, 2008).

Does this mean that department heads, if the union allowed it, would be better evaluators of department heads? While many department heads, believe this was the case, they also stated that they would not want the power to do this. For some, being evaluated by a department head might be a better alternative than being evaluated by an administrator "who is recalling their last days of teaching pre-Internet" (Buck). Others conceded that there would be problems with this approach because of the friendships that are created within a department. Lionel, for example, believed that it would ruin the collegial relationship in departments and create the idea that department members were "subordinates." A notion he rejected. For many, however, these unofficial evaluations speak to the quiet power that a department head represents.

The Roles of the Department Head: The Filter

According to the perceptions of the participants, the department heads is responsible for taking messages and interpreting them and then deciding what to do with that information. Sometime, after interpreting the information, the response of a department head is to act as a filter which accepts some things and stops others from getting through. The reasons to be a filter will be detailed below, but in summary, department heads feel the need to protect their subject, their department, their students and their school. More crucially, they can take on this role because they are more likely to be seen as being a part of the school.

One of us. As mentioned above, the candidates most likely to be hired for the job of department head in the Culvert School Bard most often already work at the school. The predominance of the internal candidate suggests Lave and Wenger's (1991) research on communities of practice. Departments seem to be very much "closed shops" where new inductees must go through a process to learn their trade, and lacking any formalization of the process, are chosen from amongst the ranks of the people currently within the same organizational structure. This conjures up, as well, allusions to Bourdieu (1984) as department heads seemingly are chosen because they have cultivated the necessary social capital or connections – through board initiatives or personal relationships with the administration – to be able to distinguish themselves from the other members of their department. Unfortunately, based on this case study, this seems to indicate that hiring in the Culvert District School Board is not a transparent and open process.

In fact, since principals hire these positions, hiring seems to be motivated by the number of contract lines available at the school or in Abigail's words: "I think department

heads are chosen because they are in the right place at the right time." Not only does it seem that potential department heads candidates are "identified" and "recruited" for the position by administrators, all but one was not already at the school when she was hired. For someone, therefore, that is looking to become a department head or wants to be a department head at another school, in the Culvert School Board, the prospects seem dim. Though, in fairness, being the internal hire does seem to help the department function.

The one exception, who was not an internal hire, was Grace. This, she explained, immediately caused dissension and resentment:

> Only one of the members of the department applied for the headship and there was an assumption, school-wide, that that person would get the job -- partly because he had been working on some things with the current principal that seemed to position him towards that job in some ways or in some people's perception. So when I got the job that caused some hard feelings initially: primarily between the principal and the person in my department and the people within the school who perceived it to be a slight to the person in the department.

She continues that the main reason why her hiring caused dissension was it "hurt" others that were already on the "inside." By getting the job, she "took away" lines from others who were already in the building. On the whole, hiring the external candidate, even if she was the best candidate, led to dissension that by Grace's account lasted almost 2 years. By then she was perceived as being a part of the school and the department. From the evidence presented, it seems that most administrative teams hire internally because they want to save jobs or they do not want to "rock the boat" and disrupt the departmental cultures that exist.

Similarly, Dustan Ramsay was promoted, and later removed, from a teaching position of authority as it suited the needs of this friend Boy Stuanton (Davies, 1970). Like Ramsay, many of the department heads who were interviewed prepared for a job for which they would be designated and made sure they had the qualifications to justify the appointment. Max Weber (1930; 1968) believed that one reason why bureaucracies were established to make sure that there was a clear line of succession but, quite clearly, that is not the case here. As has already been mentioned, there does not seem to be much, if any literature, that deals with the succession of department heads. From this study, however, it can be concluded that successors for department heads are usually searched for within the school community and chosen; usually by higher authority figures or by the previous department head.

This relates to Weber's (1930) transfer of charismatic authority. Seemingly, these "internal candidates" and "designates" must be charismatic leaders in order to win over their departments and be seen as legitimate. For someone who wishes to become a department head, being part of the school, or being seen as the one who is most likely to take over the department, is, therefore, invaluable. He or she already understands the culture of the school. Otherwise, as Kara explains, caution is advised: "If I'm a department head and I come into another school, I'm not going to come in guns a-blazin' and change everything in the first year. I'd want to feel out what's actually happening in the school, in that department, before I would work at things." So working as a teacher at that school is the quickest way that a teacher can learn to become a department head at that school. This is, in essence, an unofficial mentorship program.

Further, there are no means for heads to have the opportunity to gain experience as a department head – to gain the "10,000 hours" needed to be an expert (Gladwell, 2008). As such, many department heads, like Sartre's (1957) waiter, often start the job by copying the previous department head. Bill supports this notion when he says: "I don't know how to be a head. I am like the heads I've had and this was the way they were. I've always assumed [teachers] are all professionals, they all have the degree and they know what they are doing." As evidenced in that statement, many heads do not know how to take on the role – and, hence, identify with the role they know (Schmidt, 2000). This, however, can be a keen advantage for department heads, departments and administrators alike, because as Charles related:

> Personalities in the building have vested interests. Departmentalization is very real in this building. Cliques are very really with the staff. My mentor [the previous department head] had an ability – because he was so well-versed in curriculum and so plugged in to everything going on – to get his way; through a lot of hard work behind the scenes. He was a person who people would be attracted to. I got to see that in action. So, that was the first part, [I worked in] the school, so I knew how things would work. There was also the element of bringing in any change in a building; you often have to know what was here beforehand. So I did not trigger what I call the corporate immune response – where any new ideas are attacked. Not to sound all negative because it was a positive experience. But the other part was knowing the department. Knowing which courses had been offered, which courses had been successful at the different grades. . . . It was good to know which hill to die on.

Hence, the most important process for becoming department head is one of assimilation: into the department, into the school and into the culture of the organization. New people

and new ideas are viewed with suspicion. As Grace, the rare external department head hired, reflected that although her youth was a problem, what she would do, as a new person in the school: "That was the bigger concern that I was coming in and I was going to make them teach differently from how they were teaching. That what was the initially angst was for the people in the department [other] than the person that didn't get the job. Oh she's in here so she can DI [Differentiated Instruction] us up or she's here to teach us new strategies."

From the perceptions of the department heads, schools would seem to be insular places that want sameness and view intruders with doubts and suspicion. They are places where department heads, as Glover et al (1999) and Bennett et al. (2007) argued, have to prove themselves. As such, the internal candidate is preferred because he or she has already been welcomed into the community – one that is often based around expertise in a particular subject area (Siskin, 1994).

The bulwarks of the school. Being part of the school means the department heads have "paid their dues" and understand what needs to happen at the school. As Buck, who also mentioned the awkwardness of dealing with more senior department members, mentioned: "This is a job that is very much based on experience and you have to be able to count on your experience not just for yourself but to help your young staff or the people new to the building." Department heads, as Buck, Trent and Charles elucidated, are often the keepers of the traditions -- the Fifth Business, in the background, who will make sure that everything functions as it should.

There is nothing, after all, that prevents department heads from keeping their role – crucially at the same school – for their entire career. In the case of Emily, she has been a department head for all but one semester of her 30 year teaching career – all at the same school. This also meant that she has, in her words, "taken ownership" for the building. She remains an exceptional circumstance, but she was not alone in holding the role for a very long time. Others, such as Trent and Buck, reported tenures of 15 years or more. That certainly is not a criticism of those department heads or the job they do, but rather an observation of how easily the person within the role can become entrenched into their role.

In fairness, this might be a cause for concern. Bennett et al. (2007) demonstrated that it was very hard to get department heads to change their practice and that schools should be concerned about the practices of particular department heads becoming "ossified" (p. 464). In their findings, department heads often resisted change because they wanting to be viewed positively by their colleagues. From that perspective, echoed by those interviewed here, initiatives come and go, but a head might have to work with the same people for years so it better not to burn bridges. Charles compliments this idea, when asked about whether or not having a low turnover amongst the department heads provided good continuity, he responded with: "I'd like to say yes. I'd like to say that there's a continuity. But in the next breath, my hesitation is that there are [people who are] set in their ways. There's an inertia, and it oscillates, there is an inertia and there is a momentum and it goes back and forth."

To compound the issue, within the Culvert School Board, there is no separate evaluation or performance review for department heads. While department heads do have to submit departmental goals yearly, these are not evaluated. As well, Teacher Performance Appraisals

do not specifically include any criteria to assess their role or effectiveness as a department head. As per labour regulations, they are evaluated simply as teachers (OSSTF, 2014). Hence, department heads can be in their position their entire career and never have their performance evaluated. Which begs the question: how are supports identified? Since, however, the role of department heads is not understood (Clarke, 2009) and undervalued (Weller, 2001) there is also no clear idea of what an evaluation of their performance would look like. Yet if department heads are expected to act differently than teachers (Busher, 2005) why are they not treated or evaluated differently?

To complicate matters, administrators are often at a disadvantage because, in the Culvert School Board, they are often entering a school stacked with department heads that was hired by the previous administration, which often had a different vision of the school. Bill saw this as a distinct disadvantage for the principals and saw them as unable to make any meaningful personalized changes to the school. This also illustrates an unusual quirk in the leadership policies of this school board. As many department heads commented, the Culvert Board makes it a practice to move administrators frequently while department heads usually stay at the same school. Thus, administrators are characterized and perceived by staff and department heads as "just visiting." These "tourists" do not command the same respect because they are not perceived as being "one of us," whereas department heads are viewed as part of the school community.

So while principals are not given opportunity to reshape the school over any great length of time, department heads stay as influencers in the school. Charles mentioned that he has had seven different vice-principals at his school, in the space of as many years. The other

department heads who were interviewed often commented on this changeover as disadvantageous to the school and the principals. Bill made a very colourful comparison stating that the constant turnover of administrative teams at his school "was like Germany in the 30s. It was unstable."

So department heads are the ones that at the school who provide stability and have to live with the decisions of administrators long after those administrators have been rotated out. Though Buck believes this also has the potential to help administrators:

> I'm from a vintage where, in their infinite wisdom, our board decided to rotate department heads every few years and I remember as a senior student seeing department heads who left and came right back. I thought well that is kind of strange. They came back because they gave up their headships, they decided that they wanted to stay as a family member right in the school and that was more important to them. So as someone who has been a head in this school for more than 20 years, I feel I am pretty well-suited to get a tone, I should help the administrator. This is my school; I am not parachuted in here. Whereas with administrators, unfortunately the way the practice is: you're in for a while, you are gone for a while. And it doesn't mean you can't be an effective leader but the people who are already here -- who have their finger on the pulse on the school -- and have a lot invested in the building should make life easier, I would certainly hope for an administrator.

Controlling the message. As demonstrated by Buck's comments, department heads usually have a long history at the school and feel attached to their schools. They want to respect the traditions of their school and, backed with years of creating social capital, can act as influencers on the direction of the school (Worner & Brown, 1993). Accordingly, they act to

make sure that they are protecting their school and department, but also focusing it: “I’ve been able to be a bit of a filter between our administration and our department. What do they need to know, and what do we need to work on and what is important right now?” (Grace)

In order to this effectively, you have to be able to control the message. Grace furthered her above ideas by mentioning how the heads have a vital role in making information meaningful. Most teachers “in the trenches”, she argued, are “doing the best for students every day” and can feel overwhelmed by a constant barrage of new initiatives. So, in her view, it becomes part of the department head role to “spin” the message and make it more tangible to classroom teachers: [It] isn’t a bad thing to be able to spin it to make it seem connected to something that we are already doing. Because sometimes when it is downloaded from admin it can seem like a new initiative when really it is clearly aligned with what we are already working on.”

Hence for many departments being a filter also means being an interpreter of curriculum or, more properly, making that curriculum meaningful for others in your department. Buck states that while department heads are bound by curriculum: “We “have to filter [the curriculum] a little bit.” He does this by focusing on common skills, and breaking down the curriculum into similar themes and ideas that all teachers would then teach in their own particular style. He believes that, while teachers do not need to be identical, department heads must work with department members to interpret the curriculum to make sure it is “equitable and fair” to students. If, after all, every teacher was their own independent interpreter of curriculum, students would be disadvantaged by the inconsistency.

This often helps administration because it allows for goals to become more tangible, as department heads in their filter role, help to clarify what is going on. Tracey has often found herself often having conversations that explained the administration and explained why something which might seem "insane" to a regular teacher can be connected to their classroom realities. Similarly, the department head can create the human relationships and soften messages from the administration so that they do not seem as cold and abstract: "I view my role as being a buffer from a lot of the stuff that seems to be top-heavy . . . Sometimes it is just massaging the language" (Mackenzie).

In sum, department heads, though they occupy entrenched positions in the school can represent a barrier to change but they also are a good arbiter of what will or will not work for their school and their department:

> If I was a new principal coming in I would talk to the heads as a group, and individually, because they are the influencers. Under the previous regime, under one of the incompetent principals, the heads hung together. The heads were forced to come together informally with the "Can you believe it?" Sort of attitude: "Are you kidding me? This bullshit?" The glances are going around the room with the latest stupid idea. In that way [the heads act as] guardians, but protectors of the staff in a way; intermediaries: we'll take the brunt of this bullshit because we know what will happen when our gang hears about it. (Charles)

Here we return to a theme that has been prevalent throughout this analysis: department heads, no matter how ill-defined the position is, will adjust to make things at their individual schools work. The department heads act as Fifth Business, always in the background to make sure that the school functions in a meaningful way. Sartre (1957) argued that, in the absence of

clearly defined ideas, people will attempt to find authenticity and meaning in their work and create their own meanings. As evidenced above, the department heads, in the absence of clearly defined responsibilities, are in the process of adjusting their role to make it "authentic." Rather than simply being a means for the administration to achieve goals, department heads filter ideas and resist change because it does not make sense to them. Hence, it can be concluded from this, that if administrators want to advance "the plot," it is imperative that they realize the importance of Fifth Business

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendations

In looking at the perceptions that department heads had of their role, many ideas have become prevalent. Using an interpretivist approach, I have tried to present you, in their own words, the roles that they believe they occupy, what those roles look like and how that affects a school or system. I believe, after doing this work, that department heads occupy the unique role of Fifth Business, a multifaceted role that sees them work as liaisons, advocates, clerks, filters, coordinators and models, in order to support the school. These roles and how they work together need to be better understood and analyzed. Doing this will be investing in department heads which, in turn, can provide many opportunities for school growth and improvement (Glover et al, 1999; Harris, Busher & Wise, 2001). They are, as Weller (2001) cited, and Clarke (2009) confirms, currently undervalued. There are many avenues of research that can be taken in the future to help support and clarify the role.

In essence, I believe this case study provides a clear guideline for how department heads perceive they want to be treated. This can be summed up in four short ideas: Help them. Respect them. Empower them. Trust them. These, therefore, form the basis of the below recommendations. Since they are based on a case study, the following recommendations have specifically the Culvert School Board in mind, but I have no doubt that these findings are transferable to the context of any school or school board and would allow for significant staff and student improvement:

1. While it might be unrealistic, based on the political realities, to expect that qualifications for department heads will be established within Ontario, they are sorely needed. If department

heads are to continue to exist in a meaningful and consistent way, they must have their role clarified. The lack of qualifications is especially unfair to younger department heads. Further, it is actually individual administrators who are currently deciding whether or not a teacher has the right credentials, experience or qualifications for a leadership position. Department heads remain the only prevalent leadership position in Ontario that does not have any meaningful guidelines. Within the Culvert Board this means that department heads do not know how to become a department head and the hiring process can be described, at best, as ad hoc. In fairness to the department heads and those that want to be department heads, this must change.

2. Echoing Harris, Busher and Wise (2001), Brown, Rutherford and Boyle (2000) and Brown, Boyle and Boyle (2000) department heads represent an effective way to implement system goals and initiatives: as long as they are trained to do so. As such, I believe the perceptions of the department heads point to the need for a course, a workshop or association that would provide guidance in this manner. Not only would this help to clarify the role but it would provide directions and set expectations of appropriate actions and behaviours. All of which department heads do not currently receive. This would further empower them to do more, if they knew what they were supposed to do or how to manage their role. As evidenced by the study, when department heads are given a more active role in creating and implementing school and system goals, they will "buy in" and facilitate significant changes. Further, while the union membership of department heads remains a thorny subject, they currently receive no training or guidance on how to manage their departments. At very least, a course within university education faculties, perhaps related to graduate leadership courses, could be

established for prospective and current department heads. The current system often leads to putting people into positions where they have no idea how to act in their role. As such, department heads need more training or, quite honestly, any training.

3. More allowances need to be made for the importance of subject expertise – especially in hiring of department heads. It needs to be recognized and appreciated how subject knowledge influences the decision-making of department heads. It is also an area that is ripe for study, as how different subject leaders approached solutions, or viewed their role, seems to be very different. Further, considering the support system that department heads provide for curriculum and, also more practically, the necessity of department heads knowing what resources are appropriate for a particular course, subject knowledge is essential. Further, this study seems to complement the observations of Glover et al (1999), Siskin (1991; 1994), Poultney (2007) and Turner (2003b) that subject specialties cause departments to form communities. These communities are further in competition with each other. This should not be ignored, especially when the idea of timetabling, the greatest source of conflict for department heads, is taken into account. Timetabling, for which again department heads receive no guidance or training, provides the basis for department heads to have the most input and shape the school – and this is done along subject lines. It is what department members care the most about and if not handled well, can be lead to the end of certain programming at a school. Finally, it needs to be acknowledged that subject knowledge is the easiest source for legitimacy and authority within the department. In a very simple way, subject expertise should at very least be part of the interview process for department heads.

4. Principals, especially those who are coming into a new school, need to look at department heads, listen to them and give them more authority. Especially in light of how frequently administrative changes in Culvert School Board are made, departments heads, who are not currently required to ever move schools, become the guardians of school traditions and provide stability. They also often have "the pulse of the building." Administrators are not currently perceived to have any long lasting "stake" in the school, whereas department heads have the connections, social capital and tenure to take ownership of a building. They are part of the communities of practice that exist at the school, whereas administrators are not. Quite plainly, department heads care about their school and not every administrator, who is "Just Visiting," is viewed as having the same attitude. Therefore, principals and vice principals should recognize their outsider status and look to the department heads for their cues. As such, principals need to truly embrace their "Leaders Plus" (Spillane, 2006) and empower department heads to make changes. Administrators should also remember that judging from the comments of those interviewed, department heads generally want to help administration.

5. Lastly, this is not a recommendation as much as an appeal. This study did not seek to understand how the role of department head is constructed, since that is beyond its scope and focus. Rather, this was an examination of the perceptions of department heads. The study of department head begs for a greater examination of how the role is constructed with the full participation of those in the role, and those who interact with the role (principals, department members, students etc.). There is also a need for research that looks into how gender, race, ethnicity and political climate all influence the role of department head. The diversity of department heads, or lack thereof, needs to be examined to ensure that the needs of students

are being met and represented. I hope that my study helps to build the literature and helps this to be possible. I fully hope that researchers will pick-up the torch of my research and conduct interviews with the above groups that are mentioned to create a more holistic picture of how department heads operate. These are studies that are desperately needed.

By implementing these recommendations, I believe the role of department head can be clarified, strengthened and their work could be supported and improved. They are an untapped resource that is currently doing many things, in an informalized way, that lead to student and staff improvement. In keeping with the interpretivist paradigm of this study, I will let one of the participants have the final thought:

> I really believe there is pressing needs to define the role of department head. I don't think we will get past the political awkwardness of the position; I don't think there is an impetus on the board or the union to clarify the supervisory powers of the department head. But I think it is something that is achievable to define the role of the department head and to clearly share that with buildings and in the board. I think it would help support not only members in the building but department heads to do so. (James)

Summary

The role of department head is not properly understood. Nor the relationship that department heads have with their particular subject. This study has helped to fill this research gap. Overall, this study has shown that department heads, acting as Fifth Business are crucial to the workings of any educational organization. It has shown this by looking at how department heads view themselves. In doing show, it has shown how department heads aid teachers and influence what content is taught in schools.

It is hoped that a future reader of my research might come to a better understanding of the role of a department head and develop an understanding how department heads adjust their role to meet the needs of their school and their departments. Similarly, my research could be used to help principals and other administrators assess who would be good candidates for a department head. It is my belief that successful instruction which benefits students not only includes department heads, but is driven by knowledgeable department heads with a passion for their subject. Fifth Business is not glorious, but it is essential, and it is high time that it is better understood and appreciated.

References

Ackerman, R. & Mackenzie, S. V. (2006). Uncovering teacher leadership. *Educational Leadership 63*(8), 66-70.

Aubrey-Hopkins, J., & James, C. (2002). Improving practice in subject departments: The experience of secondary school subject leaders in Wales. *School Leadership & Management, 22*(3), 305-320.

Ball, S. J. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Educational Policy*, *18*(2), 215-228. doi: 10.1080/0268093022000043065

Ball, S., Maguire, M & Braun, A. (2012) *How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools.* London: Routledge.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, *13*(4), 544-559. Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-4/baxter.pdf

Bedard, G. J. & Lawion, S. B. (2000). The struggle for power and control: shifting policy-making models and the Harris agenda for education in Ontario. *Canadian Public Administration 42*(3), 241-269. doi: 10.1111/j.1754-7121.2000.tb01848.

Bennett, N., Woods, P., Wise, C., Newton, W. (2007) Understandings of middle leadership in secondary schools: A review of empirical research. *School Leadership & Management: Formerly School Organisation*, *27*(5), 453-470. doi: 10.1080/13632430701606137

Biddle, B. J. (1986). Recent developments in role theory. *Annual Review of Sociology, 12*, 67-92.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of judgement and taste.* (Richard Nace, Trans.). Cambridge: Harvard.

Brown, M., Boyle, B., & Boyle, T. (2000). The shared management role of the head of department in English secondary schools. *Research in Education, 63*, 33-47.

Brown, M., Rutherford, D., & Boyle, B. (2000). Leaderships for school improvement: The role of the head of department in UK secondary schools. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 11*(2),237-258.

Busher, H., & Harris, A. (1999). Leadership of school subject areas: Tensions and dimensions of managing in the middle. *School Leadership* & *Management, 19(3),* 305-317.

Busher, H. (2005) Being a middle leader: exploring professional identities, *School Leadership &*

Management: Formerly School Organisation, *25*(2), 137-153. doi:10.1080/13632430500036231

Clarke, K. A. (2009) *Secondary school department heads as teacher leaders: A study in suburban Ontario* (Master's Thesis). Retrieved from https://dr.library.brocku.ca/bitstream/handle/10464/4207/Brock_Clarke_Kristen_A_2009.pdf?sequence=1

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education.* (7th ed.). London: Routledge Falmer.

Coldren, A. & Spillane, J. (2007). Making connections to teaching practice: The role of boundary practices in instructional leadership. *Educational Policy 21*(2), 369-396. doi: 10.1177/0895904805284121

Crawford, M. (2002). The charismatic school leader--potent myth or persuasive effect? *School Leadership & Management, 22*(3), 273-287.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five designs*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davies, Robertson. (1970). *Fifth business*. Toronto: Penguin Group.

Dey, I. (1993). *Qualititative data analysis: A user-friendly guide for social scientists*. Retrieved from http://www.drapuig.info/files/Qualitative_data_analysis.pdf

Education Act (1990) R. S. O. Chapter E.2. Retrieved from http://www.elaws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90e02_e.htm

Ericcson, K. A., Prietula, M. J. & Cokely, E. T. (2007). The making of an expert. *Harvard Business Review.* Retrived from: http://www.uvm.edu/~pdodds/files/papers/others/everything/ericsson2007a.pdf

Fitzgerald, T, & Gunter, H. M. (2008). Contesting the orthodoxy of teacher leadership. *International Journal in Education: Theory and Practice*, 11 (4), 331-340.

Friedman, Hasia (2011). The myth behind the subject leader as a school key player. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, *17* (3), 289-302.

Gladwell, M. (2008). *Outliers*. New York: Little Brown.

Gerring, J. (2004). What is a case study and what is it good for? *American Political Science Review*, *98*(2), 341-354. Retrieved from:

http://people.ucalgary.ca/~nmstuewe/CaseStudy/pdf/whatisacasestudy.pdf

Glover, D., Miller, D., Gambling, M., Gough, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). As others see us: Senior management and subject staff perceptions of the work effectiveness of subject leaders in secondary schools. *School Leadership & Management: Formerly School Organisation 19*(3), 331-334. doi: 10.1080/13632439969087

Greenfield, T. B., & Ribbins, P. (1993). *Greenfield on educational administration: Towards a humane science*. London: Routledge.

Grossman, P. L. & Stodolsky, S. S. (1995) Content as context: The role of school subjects in secondary school teaching. *Educational Researcher, 24*(8), 5-23. doi: 10.3102/0013189X024008005

Gunter, H., & Ribbins, P. (2003). Leadership studies in education: towards a map of the field. *Educational Administration Abstracts, 38(*3).

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional Capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Harris, A. (2005). Leading from the chalk-face: An overview of school leadership. *Leadership, 1(*1), 73-87.

Harris, A., Busher, H., & Wise, C. (2001) Effective training for subject leaders. *Journal of In-Service Education, 27*(1), 83-94. doi: 10.1080/13674580100200139

Harris, A. & Spillane, J. (2008) Distributed leadership through the looking glass. *Management in Education, 22*(1), 31-34. doi: 10.1177/0892020607085623

Heath, J & Potter, A. (2003). *The rebel sell: Why the culture can't be jammed*. Toronto: HarperCollins Ltd.

Heck, R., & Hallinger, P. (2005). The study of educational leadership and management: Where does the field stand today? *Educational Administration Abstracts, 40*(3), 229-244.

Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change: reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 33*(3). 329-352. doi: 10.1080/0305764032000122005

Hannay, L. M., & Ross, J. A. (1999). Department heads as middle managers? Questioning the black box. *School Leadership & Management, 19*(3),345-358.

James, C. & Aubrey-Hopkins, J. (2003) The leadership authority of educational 'middle managers': the case of subject leaders in secondary schools in Wales, *International Studies in Educational Administration*, *31*(1), 5-64.

Jensen, D. (2008) Transferability. In L. Givens (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. (pp. 897). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Johnson, A.G. (1991). *The forest for the trees: An introduction to sociological thinking.* Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace.

Jung, C. G. (1971). *The portable Jung.* (J. Campbell, Ed.). *New York: Viking*.

Kelly, C. (2010). Advancing student learning through distributed instructional leadership: A toolkit for high school leadership teams. *Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*. Retrived from: http://winss.dpi.wi.gov/files/statesupt/pdf/distributed_leadership_toolkit.pdf

Kruskamp, W.H. (2003*). Instructional supervision and the role of department heads* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from: https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/kruskamp_william_h_200308_edd.pdf

Kincheloe, J. (2012). *Teachers as researchers: Qualitative inquiry as path to empowerment*. [Electronic Resource]. London: Routledge. Retrieved from: http://lib.myilibrary.com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/Open.aspx?id=345948

Lao, T. (1977). *Tao Te Ching* (A. Waley, Trans). Hertfordshire, UK: Wordsworth Editions

Lave, J & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Leithwood, K. & McLean, J. (1987). *The secondary school department head*. Toronto: OISE.

Leithwood, K. (2012) Ontario. Ontario leadership framework 2012: With a discussion of the research foundations. *The Institute for Education Leadership*. Retrieved from: http://iel.immix.ca/storage/6/1360068388/Final_Research_Report_-_EN_REV_Feb_4_2013.pdf

Levin, B. (2010). Governments and educational reform: Some lessons from the last 50 years. *Journal of Educational Policy*, *25*(6), 739–747.

Linton, R. (1936). *The study of man*. New York: Appletonm-Century Co.

Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, self and society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mertens, D. (2005) Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.) Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications

Milley, P. (2006). Aesthetic experience as resistance to the 'iron cage' of dominative administrative rationality. In Samier, E. A., Bates, R. J., & Stanley, A. (Eds.), *Aesthetic dimensions of educational administration and leadership*, 79-96.

Mommsen, W. J. (1989). *The political and social theory of Max Weber: Collected essays*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Moore, E. (2007). *Ringing the changes: The middle leader's role in leading change.* National College of School Leadership. Retrieved from http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/7059/1/download%3Fid%3D17359%26filename%3Dringing-the-changes.pdf

Muijs, D. & Harris, A. (2003). Teacher leadership -- improvement through empowerment: An overview of the literature. *Educational Management & Leadership*, *31*(4). 437-448.

National Professional Qualification for Middle Leadership (2014). Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/national-professional-qualification-for-middle-leadership-npqml (June, 2014)

Nolan, B. and Palazzo, L. (2011). New teacher perceptions of the "teacher leader" movement. *NASSP Bulletin*, 95(4), 302-318

Ontario (1995). Royal Commission on Learning. *For the love of learning: Report of the royal commission on learning*. Vol. 3: *The Educators*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Ontario College of Teachers Act (1996a) S.O. 1996, Ch. 12 Retrieved from: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_96o12_e.htm

Ontario College of Teachers Act (1996b) Ontario regulation 176/10 teacher's qualifications. Retrieved from: http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/regs/english/elaws_regs_100176_e.htm

Ontario Leadership Framework (2012). Ontario. The Institute for Education Leadership. Retrieved from: http://www.hpedsb.on.ca/ec/services/hrss/talentdevelopment/Documents/OntarioLeadershipFramework2012N.pdf

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2005). *The Ontario curriculum grades 9 and 10: Canadian and World Studies* [Program of Studies] Retrieved from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/canworld910curr.pdf

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (2006, October). *Department heads: Bibliography.* Retrieved from: http://www.osstf.on.ca/adx/aspx/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=283e5603-6763-4b3c-8a98-29935a197699

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (2014) *Constitution and bylaws*. Retrieved from https://www.osstf.on.ca/2013-2014-constitution-and-bylaws.pdf

Owens, R. A. & Valesky, T. C. (2011). *Organizational behavior in education: Leadership and school reform* (10th edition). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Pays, T. (2008). Purposive sampling. In Lisa Givens (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. (pp. 697-698). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications

Pollard, A. (1985). The social world of the primary school. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Wilson.

Poultney, V (2007). The role of the effective subject leader: perspectives from practitioners in secondary schools. *Management in Education 21*(2), 8-14. doi: 10.1177/0892020607076655

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Riveros, A., Newton, P. & Burgess, D. (2012) A situated account of teacher agency and learning: Critical reflections on professional learning communities. *Canadian Journal of Education, 35*(1), 202-216.

Rosenfeld, P (2008). *The changing nature and the role of department head in Queensland public secondary schools* (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from: http://eprints.qut.edu.au/17574/1/Peter_Rosenfeld_Thesis.pdf

Ryan, J. (2005). What is leadership? In W. Hare & J. Portelli (Eds.), *Key Questions for Educators* (pp. 22-25). Halifax: Edphil Books

Samier, E. (2002). Weber on education and its administration: Prospects for leadership in a rationalized world. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 30*(27), 27-45.

Sartre, J.-P. (1957). *Being and nothingness*. (H. E. Barnes, Trans). London: Methuen.

Saumure, K. & Given, L. M. (2008) Data saturation. In L. Givens (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. (pp. 196-197). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Schmidt, M. (2000). Role theory, emotions, and identity in the department headship of secondary schooling. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 16* (8), 827-842. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(00)00029-9

Siskin, L. S. (1991). Departments as different worlds: Subject subcultures in secondary schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly,* 27(2), 134-160.

Siskin, L. S. (1994). *Realms of knowledge: Academic departments in secondary schools*. Bristol, UK: The Falmer Press.

Spillane, J. P. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Spillane, J. P. & Hopkins, M (2013). Organizing for instruction in education systems and school organizations: how the subject matters. *Journal of Curriculum Studies.* doi: 10.1080/00220272.2013.810783

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M., & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional learning communities: A review of the literature. *Journal of Educational Change, 7*(4), 221-258.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Streb, C. (2010) Exploratory Case study. In A. J, Mills & G. Durepos & E. Wiebe (Eds.*) Encyclopedia of case study research.* (pp. 373-375). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Talbert, J. (2010). Professional learning communities at the crossroads: How systems hinder or engender change. In Hargreaves, A., Lieberman, A., Fullan, M., & Hopkins, D. (Eds.), *Second international handbook of educational change.* (pp. 555-571). New York: Springer.

Taylor-Powell, E. & Renner, M. (2003) Analyzing qualitative data. *Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System*. Retrieved from: http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/g3658-12.pdf

Turner C. K., (1996). The roles and tasks of a subject head of department in secondary schools in England and Wales: A neglected area of research? *School Organisation*, *16*(2), 203-217.

Turner, C. (2003a). A critical review of research on subject leaders in secondary schools. *School Leadership & Management*, 23(2),209-227.

Turner, C. (2003b). The distinctiveness of the subject being taught and the work of the subject heads of department in managing the quality of classroom teaching and learning in secondary schools in Wales. *School Leadership and Management. 23*(1), 419-435.

Weber, M. (1930). *The protestant work ethic and the spirit of capitalism.* Talcott Parsons (Trans.). Retrieved from: http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/jhamlin/1095/The%20Protestant%20Ethic%20and%20the%20Spirit%20of%20Capitalism.pdf

Weber, M. (1968). Economy and society: An outline of interpretative sociology. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Weller, L. D. (2001). Department heads: The most underutilized leadership position. NASSP Bulletin, *85*(625), 73-81.

Worner, W. & Brown, G. (1993). The instructional leadership team: A new role for the department head. *NAASP Bulletin, 77* (37), 37-45. Doi: 10.1177/019263659307755307

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Appendix 1: Chart of Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Areas of Subject Expertise	Years of Experience as A Teacher	Years of Experience as a Department Head	Subject Area(s) of Department
Abigail	F	Moderns (Languages) Special Education	8	2	Special Education
Bill	M	History Special Education	32	6	History
Buck	M	Geography History	27	20	Geography
Charles	M	Political Science History	12	8	History
Emily	F	Fine Arts	30	30	Art, Music and Drama
Grace	F	History	10	4	History
James	M	Special Education Individual and Society (Sociology)	12	5	History
Kara	F	Physical Education	16	8	Physical Education
Lionel	M	Economics Commerce	20	10	Business
Mackenzie	F	French History	20	3	History
Marie	F	Geography French	14	10	Geography
Tracey	F	History English	9	2	History
Trent	M	English	25	15	English and French

Appendix 2: List of Interview Questions

List of Interview Questions

As a reminder, before we begin the interview, please refrain from revealing any identifiable information, however, in the event that it is accidently released, it will not be transcribed.

1. What is your professional background and how many years have you been a department head?
2. Please describe how you became a department head.
3. a) What do you see as the role of a department head?
b) Describe what you have to do as a department head (routines, activities, practices etc.)
4. What do people in your department ask you to do for them?
5. a) How do you see your role as department head affecting your relationships with other teachers?
b) Do you need to be a "politician" to be a department head?
c) If the union was not a factor, do you believe that department heads are better suited to evaluate those in their department?
d) Would you be willing to give up your union membership for more departmental power?
6. What kinds of expertise do you think is necessary to be a department head?
b) Can you give me a few examples of administrative or curricular decisions you've had to make as a department head?
7. Does content expertise (knowledge of or passion for your subject area) play a major factor in your role and your decision-making?
8. What strategies do department heads use in their role or work?
9. What challenges do you face as a department head?
b) Follow-up: In what ways, since you became a department head, has the role of department head changed or is changing?
c) Are department heads necessary?

Appendix 3: Ethics Approval Notice

Western Research

Research Ethics

Use of Human Participants - Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Augusto Riveros Barrera
File Number:104653
Review Level: Delegated
Protocol Title: Department Heads & Expertise
Department & Institution: Education,Western University
Sponsor:
Ethics Approval Date: April 16, 2014 **Expiry Date:** April 30, 2015

Documents Reviewed & Approved & Documents Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Revised Western University Protocol	Received April 11, 2014	
Revised Letter of Information & Consent		2014/04/11

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above referenced revision(s) or amendment(s) on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Riley Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

[redacted]

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

Appendix 4: Letter of Permission

[Former] Project Title: Department Heads & Expertise

Nik Paranosic, Master's Student, Western University

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Augusto Riveros, Western University

Letter of Information and Consent

Invitation to Participate

My name is Nik Paranosic. I will be conducting a study on the role of department heads for my Masters' of Education Thesis. Dr. Augusto Riveros is serving as my advisor. You are being invited to participate in this research study that is looking at the role of department heads, their decision making and their expertise with the [Culvert School Board]. Because you are currently an experienced department head you are being asked to participate.

Purpose of the Letter

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with all the information you will need to decide whether or not you would like to participate in this study.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to get a greater understanding of the role of department heads. Specifically, the strategies and kinds of expertise you use to understand and be effective in your role

Inclusion Criteria

Individuals who have been department heads in the [Culvert] School Board for more than 2 years are eligible to participate in this study

Exclusion Criteria

Individuals who do not have at least 2 years of experience in the role of a department head are not eligible to participate.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an up to 60 minute face to face interview that will ask you questions about your role. The interview will take place in a location of your choosing. After the initial interview, the study may want you to do a follow-up interview with you. Your participation in any follow-up interview is completely voluntary. The interview will be recorded for research purposes only. There will be 12 participants total in this study.

Possible Risks and Harms

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

Possible Benefits

By participating in this study you will be given a chance to reflect on your role and possibly come to a greater understanding of that role and how you act in it. This may help inform your professional practice.

Compensation

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future employment

Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. Your real name will not be used. The name of the school, as well, will not be used nor will the name of the district school board. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. We will take every measure available to protect your information and as a participant in this study we would encourage you not to include any information that might make yourself identifiable. Should this, however, accidently occur, that information will not be transcribed or used. The nature, location of the study and the inclusion of some details (such as the names of the researchers), however, may allow someone to draw conclusions or make assumptions as to your identity.

All information will be digitized; it will only exist on an encrypted, protected flash drive. Multiple, separate flash drives will be used for the different types of information. All separate flash drives will be encrypted and protected. Within that flash drive, personal information will be stored in a separate password protected file containing identification numbers used in the main data files on a separate flash drive. At the end of the study, electronic data will be overwritten and deleted, any audio recordings will be deleted and paper notes will be shredded. Audio-files may be kept for up to two years. No participants will be identified directly or indirectly in the summary, thesis or any articles that might derive from the research.

Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Health Sciences Research Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Nik Paranosic (XXXXX) or the Thesis Advisor Dr. Augusto Riveros (XXXXXX).

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics (519) 661-3036, email: ethics@uwo.ca.

Publication

This study is being used in order to fulfill requirements for a Master's Degree. If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please provide your name and contact number on a piece of paper separate from the Consent Form.

Consent

You do *not* waive any legal rights by signing this form.

If you agree to the above, then please sign the *attached* consent form.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Appendix 5: Consent Form

Department Heads & Expertise

Nik Paranosic
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Augusto Riveros

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

_____

Name (please print):

_____

Signature: Date:

_____

Name of person obtaining consent (please print):

_____

Signature of person obtaining consent Date:

Curriculum Vitae

Name:	Nikola Paranosic
Post-secondary Education and Degrees:	University of Windsor Windsor, Ontario, Canada 1995-1999 Hon. B.A. History The University of Windsor Windsor, Ontario, Canada 1999-2000 B.Ed. Western University of Canada London, Ontario, Canada 2012-2014 M. Ed.
Honours and Awards:	Board of Governor's Medal for History University of Windsor 1995
Related Work Experience	Teacher in [Culvert] School Board Department Head of History and Social Sciences 2000-present, 2004-present