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LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF MIDDLE

MANAGERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION:

AN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND CASE STUDY

A Thesis submitted by

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ABSTRACT

The middle manager role is seen as central to the effectiveness of higher education organisations. In a managerialist environment of increased accountability for student achievement and financial performance, middle managers carry responsibility for maintaining academic quality. Positioned between senior management and their departments, the middle manager has a complex, multi-faceted, and multi-directional role that requires a wide range of capabilities to perform. The literature indicates that while some aspects of this role may be satisfying, it is a position fraught with ambiguity, conflict, and overload due to high job demands in a resource-constrained environment. Shortfalls in professional development and training for middle managers are also evident.

Although previous studies have informed training recommendations, it is argued that professional development for middle managers should align with the needs of those in the role within their specific organisational context. Of the studies undertaken, very few are based in the Aotearoa New Zealand polytechnic context, a gap in the literature that this study aimed to address.

The aim of this study was to explore the lessons that can be learned from the experiences of middle managers in the context of an Aotearoa New Zealand higher education institution in order to gain insight, from their voices, into what they understand could enhance their performance in the role. Bounded by the voices of the participating middle managers, this case study used qualitative data collection and analysis, presented in two phases. Phase one involved conducting and analysing semi-structured one-on-one interviews with middle managers in the case organisation to identify the factors they consider to define optimal functioning in their role and the factors that enable and inhibit their ability to function optimally. Phase two further explored the phase one findings with the use of a qualitative questionnaire, the results of which also identified similarities and differences in their experiences in the role.

Key findings reveal that middle managers in the case organisation are faced with high job demands in a resource-constrained environment and that they show resilience by cognitively and physically adapting their understanding and enactment of the role to better align job demands with resource availability through the process of job crafting. Although job crafting is understood to improve the experiences of individuals in the

working environment, the findings reveal that these middle managers are unable to craft their jobs to the extent required to overcome the negative impact of adverse workplace and role characteristics on their sense of well-being. As well as being a health and safety concern for the organisation and the middle managers themselves, their negative sense of well-being can have follow-on issues that have a detrimental effect on their performance, the well-being and performance of their team members, and the performance of the organisation. The findings of this study have highlighted well-being as an area of concern in need of addressing in the case organisation.

By viewing these findings through the lens of self-determination theory and drawing from concepts within job-demands resources theory and role theory, the thesis concludes with ten recommendations aimed at improving the experiences and well-being of higher education middle managers. All recommendations offer strategies to increase opportunities for the middle managers to satisfy their intrinsic needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, and to consequently function optimally in the role.

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I certify that the work contained in this thesis is entirely my own effort. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement and reference is made in the thesis to that work.

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Student and supervisors' signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

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This thesis is dedicated to my late paternal and maternal grandmothers, whose love, stability, and strength were the shining lights of my childhood:

Edith May Halstead
1912 – 2010

Margaret Jean Ross O'Sullivan
1925 – 2013

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ABBREVIATIONS

ICT	Information communication technology
ITP	Institutes of technology and polytechnics
JD-R	Job demands-resources
LMX	Leader-member exchange
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
PM	Programme manager
POM	Programme operations manager
RoVE	Reform of vocational education
SDT	Self-determination theory
TEC	Tertiary Education Commission
TEU	Tertiary Education Union
TTH	Target teaching hours (hours tutors are timetabled in class)

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The middle manager role is understood to be essential to the effectiveness of higher education organisations (Gmelch et al., 2017; Marshall, 2012). Hierarchically positioned between senior management and their departments, middle managers are key figures in the implementation of organisational strategy while also being responsible for academic quality at department level (Briggs, 2005; Kallenberg, 2015). The role is multi-faceted and multi-directional (Branson et al., 2016), requiring a wide range of competencies and skills to perform in the complex and demanding higher education environment (Corbett, 2020; Leader, 2004). This study explores the experience of middle managers within the case of one higher education institution in Aotearoa New Zealand to gain an understanding of how they define their role and the factors that they have experienced to enable and inhibit their ability to function optimally.

1.1 Background and Context of the Study

The fate of middle managers has been a topic of debate in the business sector since the 1980s, when management structures changed, organisations delayered, and jobs disappeared (Hales, 2006). These changes were motivated by a need to cut costs to ensure organisations remained competitive in the increasingly global marketplace (Faugoo, 2009). The introduction of new public management strategies in the late 1970s were aimed at increasing the efficiency, effectiveness and performance of organisations in the public sector (Broucker et al., 2015; Gruening, 2001). These reforms have had an impact on the higher education middle manager as they experienced and continue to face higher workloads, longer hours, and increased accountability for financial performance (Corbett, 2020; Davis et al., 2016; Deem, 2001; Mughal et al., 2017). Subsequently, the Ministry of Education implemented a student achievement funding scheme in the Aotearoa New Zealand tertiary education sector (Tertiary Education Commission, 2014) which has further increased pressure on the higher education middle manager to perform optimally in their role as they have become more responsible for student retention and achievement.

Middle managers of higher education institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand work within an education sector that offers several options for post-secondary study

within the higher education and vocational training areas. These options include universities, institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs), private training establishments, and workplace training providers, all of which offer a wide range of programmes to domestic and international students. Also offering post-secondary education are three wānanga, which are publicly owned Māori education providers. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) approves qualifications offered at all the above institutions, with the exception of universities, and acts as the quality assurance body (NZQA, n.d.). The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) leads the relationship between the government and the tertiary sector and manages the investment of government funds into tertiary education (Tertiary Education Commission, n.d.). In 2020 there were approximately 328,180 domestic students and 60,695 international students enrolled in formal tertiary programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand. In that year, of those 388,875 students, approximately 125,680 were enrolled in ITPs. (Education Counts, n.d.).

The late 1980s saw the Aotearoa New Zealand Labour government launch tertiary education reforms that aligned with their economic and public service reform agenda (Crawford, 2016). These reforms were aimed at ensuring the ability of education providers to respond to the needs of the rapidly changing economy and to meet the increased demand for particular skills (Crawford, 2016). Changes in the 1990s saw tertiary funding driven by demand with limited quality assurance, followed by further changes in the 2000s through which the government attempted to steer the system to widen participation and increase the quality and value of outputs (Crawford, 2016). As part of the aim to increase quality, the TEC introduced student achievement funding that measured the performance of the organisation against course and qualification completion rates, along with the retention and further study progression of students (Tertiary Education Commission, 2014). The Aotearoa New Zealand Government aimed for further improvements to the performance of tertiary institutions, focussing on student access, achievement, and outcomes (Tertiary Education Commission, 2014). Those working in the sector have experienced increasing pressure as they attempt to meet the imposed performance measures that have resulted from these more recent initiatives (Narayan, 2020; Sedgwick & Grey, 2018).

The Tertiary Education Union (TEU) is the main trade union, representing approximately 10,000 staff employed across a variety of occupations within the sector (Tertiary Education Union, n.d.). There were approximately 31,000 employed in the sector in 2017 (Figure.NZ Trust, n.d.), therefore the percentage who are union members is not high, and, rather than being sector-wide, each institution has a separate collective agreement. Despite this, the union report to have successfully negotiated pay rises above inflation, prevented the implementation of the "no employment rights for 90 days" law at a number of institutions, and prevented many redundancies during reviews (Tertiary Education Union, n.d.). The union continues to campaign in response to issues raised by those working in the sector.

The participants of this study were middle managers from one of the 16 polytechnics, which offers a variety of programmes in a wide range of subject areas from level 3 certificates to level 8 master's degrees as defined on the New Zealand qualification framework (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, n.d.). Within each qualification are a specific number of credits that represent the amount of learning within the qualification. Credits are often grouped within papers, courses, or units that contain the learning content of the qualification. The term "paper" is used for the purpose of clarity within this thesis.

This study anticipated there would be factors that enable and inhibit the higher education middle manager to function optimally in their role. It also anticipated that there would be factors which influence how they perceive optimal functioning in their role within the organisation. Using an interpretivist framework, this qualitative phenomenological case study took an in-depth look at how these middle managers perceive their role, focussing specifically on the factors that enable and inhibit them to function optimally within their role, and their perceived level of control over the enabling and inhibiting factors. The researcher is connected closely to the topic under study due to being employed in a similar role to the participants within the case institution.

1.2 Motivation for Undertaking the Study

This study holds both intrinsic and instrumental value to the researcher and is motivated by her own experience of working within the sector. Having 13 years'

experience as a middle manager in an Aotearoa New Zealand based tertiary institution, the researcher has seen considerable changes in the sector, and has experienced the impact of these changes on the role. One significant change has been the introduction of student achievement funding, which places more responsibility for the retention and achievement of students on the middle manager. Another significant change has been the targeted review of qualifications, in which the New Zealand Qualifications Authority prompted the expiration of all level six and below qualifications to be replaced by certificates and diplomas to form a unified New Zealand Qualifications Framework (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009). More recently the Ministry of Education has introduced a Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE) initiative aimed at bringing together all of the existing institutes of technology and polytechnics in Aotearoa New Zealand to create one organisation (Ministry of Education, 2019b). Personal experience of how these changes have impacted the role has created an interest in understanding how other middle managers perceive and experience their role, and how they understand their experiences could be improved to increase opportunities for optimal functioning.

1.3 Informing Literature

Several areas of literature relevant to the role of the higher education middle manager were explored while determining the direction this study was to take. Chapter two presents the literature in two sections with the first section focussed on contextualising the role of the higher middle manager and the second section discussing the experiences of middle managers in the role and the factors that have had an impact on their ability to function optimally. The second section also presents several theories relevant to the topic under study, as these theories help to identify factors that have an impact on functioning in the workplace.

The process of undertaking a literature review began with a focus on the experiences of middle managers in the higher education context. This highlighted several areas meriting further investigation and prompted clarification of the terms "leadership" and "management" used for the purpose of this study. Although there is some disagreement regarding how these terms are conceptualised (Lunenburg, 2013; McCaffery, 2018; Nienaber, 2010), much of the literature considers the two roles to be mutually inclusive (Lumby, 2003; McCaffery, 2018; Nienaber, 2010; Swanwick

& McKimm, 2014), with both being important for organisational performance (Bush, 2007; Lunenburg, 2013; Yielder & Codling, 2004). Further discussion on these concepts is presented in section one of the literature review, along with discussion on the middle management role, paths into the role, and experiences of training and preparation for the position.

Davis et al. (2016) and Winter (2009) suggest that, as a result of the new public management movement, the role of middle management in the tertiary sector closely aligns with the role of counterparts in the business sector, and further investigation into the literature supports this view. In both sectors, the role is seen as complex, challenging, and essential to the success of a business (Gmelch et al., 2017; Haneberg, 2010b; Hope, 2010; Marshall, 2012; Rudhumbu, 2015). Given that the value of the position is recognised, it is surprising that the literature has identified, and noted as an area of concern, many shortfalls in the preparation and training for those taking on the role (Gmelch et al., 2017; Greatbatch & Tate, 2018; Inman, 2009; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012).

In addition to sharing insights of middle managers, the literature review draws from several theories considered to have relevance to the topic under study. Self-determination theory (SDT) helps to define what is meant by optimal functioning and the reqirements of individuals to allow opportunities for functioning optimally in the workplace (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT is based on the understanding that three inherent psychological needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness must be satisfied for optimal functioning. This theory also considers the social-contextual factors that have an impact on an individual's ability to maximise the benefits associated with the satisfaction of these inherent needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Job demands-resources theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018), organisational culture theory (Schein, 2010), leader-member exchange theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), and role theory (Bess & Dee, 2008; Katz & Kahn, 1978) are also pertinent to this study as they help to clarify the workplace characteristics that affect the ability of an individual to function optimally, and the potential consequences of their experiences with workplace conditions. These theories, discussed in section two of the literature review and considered in relation to literature pertaining to the experiences of higher education middle managers, inform the conceptual framework of this study.

1.4 Outline of the Problem

Findings from previous studies indicate that the role of the higher education middle manager can be complex, often conflicting, and difficult to define (Briggs, 2005; Corbett, 2020; Kallenberg, 2015). Branson et al. (2016, p. 142) state that the experience of those in this position is "associated with feelings of discomfort and uncertainty at best, but often with tensions or stress caused by frustration, insecurity and disappointment". Those in the role find themselves caught between senior management to whom they are accountable, lecturers who are considered as colleagues, and subordinates for whom they are functionally and often morally responsible (Marshall, 2012).

Leader (2004) believes that middle managers in higher education should have a clearly defined role because of their varied responsibilities, however several authors (e.g., Bolden et al., 2008a; Briggs, 2001a; Cardno, 2014; Santiago et al., 2006) indicate that this is often not the case. In addition to this lack of clarity, they face very long working hours (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Deem, 2001; Gmelch et al., 2017; Smith, 2002; Thornton et al., 2018) and high workloads, leading to role overload (Briggs, 2005; Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Maniam, 2018; Saengaloun, 2012; Smith, 2007). Middle managers are valued by others in the organisation, indicated by the respect gained from subordinates and superiors for the key role they play as experts and facilitators, but being valued can add to their workload as they find themselves "on everyone's agenda" (Briggs, 2001c, p. 15).

There is agreement within the literature that the middle manager role in higher education is challenging (Corbett, 2020; Tietjen-Smith et al., 2020; Wisniewski, 2019), and due to limited training opportunities, middle managers are often not prepared to deal with the many issues they experience in their role (Alberts et al., 2007; Gmelch & Buller, 2016; Gonaim, 2016; Marshall, 2012). Given the importance of the higher education middle management role to the success of the higher education institutions (Tietjen-Smith et al., 2020; Wisniewski, 2019), further exploration into the role is warranted.

1.5 Justification for the Study

Higher education is an important industry in Aotearoa New Zealand, with 416,000 student enrolments in 2016, 15% of which represented higher fee-paying international students (Ministry of Education, 2019a). The international student market contributed significantly to the Aotearoa New Zealand Gross Domestic Product revenue during the 2015/16 financial year, with approximately 67% of the $4 billion coming from the tertiary sector (National Research Bureau, 2016) associated with the education of those students. The industry is responsible for employing a large number of both academic and administrative staff, with a considerable number being in middle management positions.

Middle management in higher education is considered a "unique form of leadership central to the effectiveness of higher educational organisations" (Marshall, 2012, p. 510). It is considered necessary for the success of quality improvement and change (Harrington & Williams, 2004), and is a role that has an impact on the flow of strategic and operational information at department and organisation level (Rudhumbu, 2015). Because the middle manager role is so critical to the functioning of higher education organisations, "factors which impact positively or negatively upon the role may be considered as key factors for the coherence of the whole organisation" (Briggs, 2005, p. 48).

Despite the importance of higher education middle managers, and the high number employed in such positions, this role is not well understood; several authors noted the limited research undertaken in the area (e.g., Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Davis et al., 2016; Gmelch et al., 2017; Inman, 2009; Marshall, 2012; Rudhumbu, 2015; Wald & Golding, 2019). In addition, even less research has explored the understanding of the middle managers themselves regarding their role and the factors that enable and inhibit them within that role. Considering the lack of in-depth understanding of how the middle manager perceives and experiences the role, particularly within the Aotearoa New Zealand higher education environment, this qualitative study has the potential to offer an original contribution to knowledge.

Given the lack of research in this area, it is anticipated that this study will inform the understandings and actions of a range of stakeholders. Senior

management may gain a better understanding of the challenges experienced by the middle manager, and in turn recognise and further develop ways to provide extra support to the middle managers in their role. With a better understanding of the role, subordinates, such as teaching and support staff, may find the expectations placed on them by their middle managers easier to accept and in turn become more supportive in their own roles. The findings of this study may also offer higher education human resource teams ideas for senior and mid-level management induction and training programmes. It is expected that the findings of this study are most relevant to the higher educational middle managers themselves, as they seek to optimise their skills and experience and will benefit directly from having those they work amongst understand the factors that affect how well they succeed in their role.

1.6 Focus of the Study

The following research aim, overarching research question, and research sub-questions were developed to inform the design of this study.

1.6.1 Research Aim

The aim of this study was to explore the lessons that can be learned from the experiences of higher education middle managers in the context of an Aotearoa New Zealand higher education institution to gain insight, from their voices, into what they understand could enhance their performance in the role.

1.6.2 Overarching Research Question

What lessons can be learned from the experiences middle managers have within their role in an Aotearoa New Zealand higher education institution?

1.6.3 Research Sub-Questions

RSQ1. What factors do the higher education middle managers consider when defining optimal functioning in their role?

RSQ2. How well do the higher education middle managers feel they are functioning in their role?

RSQ3. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have enabled them in their role?

RSQ4. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have inhibited them in their role?

RSQ5. How much control do the higher education middle managers feel they have over the factors that enable and inhibit them in their role?

1.7 Methodological Approach

This project used a case study approach (Mabry, 2008) to research the experiences of middle managers within the context of one higher education institution in Aotearoa New Zealand. The case was bounded by the voices of the participants, being middle managers from the chosen institution, and used qualitative data collection and analysis. The researcher worked within the interpretivist paradigm, recognising that knowledge is constructed through lived experiences and through interactions with others, where multiple realities exist and are dependent on the individual (Lincoln et al., 2011). Also understood is that knowledge can be gained by looking at the world from the view-points of those who live in it and by exploring "the 'meanings' of events and phenomena from the subjects' perspectives" (Morrison, 2012, p. 20).

The interpretive approach to research was conducive to this study as the researcher aimed to gain an understanding from the lived experiences of the participants within their role as middle managers in the higher education environment. It is understood that due to their unique situations, the participants have varying experiences and interpretations of the phenomenon under investigation. The interpretivist approach allowed for the gathering and analysis of data that reflects how the role is subjectively experienced and perceived by the participants (Mabry, 2008).

The researcher acknowledges that the interpretive approach assumes researchers cannot separate themselves from their own understanding and experiences, and therefore are not able to offer objective findings. This is particularly relevant in this study, as the interview data was gathered during interactions between

the researcher and participants. Instead of aiming for objectivity, the researcher presents in this thesis a specific version of a social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1990) that was constructed during the researcher's interaction with the participants and in relation to their experiences within the case organisation. Appropriate to the purpose and design of this study, the findings are considered in relation to the individual case and not intended to be representative of the general population of middle managers. The findings may, however, be relevant to middle managers working in similar organisations through naturalistic generalisation (Mills et al., 2009).

1.8 Research Design

There were two phases to this study with each applying data collection and analysis methods suitable for exploring the research sub-questions of focus in each phase.

1.8.1 Phase One

The first phase involved undertaking semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The participants were middle managers from one higher education institution in Aotearoa New Zealand. The interviews were aimed at finding out the participants' perceptions regarding what they consider defines optimal functioning in their role and the factors that enable and inhibit them in their role. This phase focussed on collecting data to answer research sub-questions 1, 3, and 4.

1.8.2 Phase Two

The second phase data collection further explored the findings of phase one and involved the development and implementation of a qualitative questionnaire with a focus on research sub-questions 1 to 5. The factors that emerged from phase one were presented in the questionnaire for rating by those in the role within the same organisation. This phase was designed to gain an understanding of the importance middle managers placed on the factors considered to define optimal functioning, their perceived performance in relation to each factor, their level of agreement with the enabling and inhibiting factors, and the degree to which they feel they can control these factors.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is presented in seven chapters. **Chapter 1** has offered an introduction and background to the study, including a brief overview of the content and context of the topic, along with the research questions that have guided the study. The content of chapters two to seven are summarised as follows:

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature – offers a review of the literature considered relevant to this study and is divided into two sections. The first section discusses leadership and management and aspects of the middle manager role, first in the business context then in the context of higher education. This is followed by an overview of the paths taken into the higher education middle manager role and of experiences of training and preparation for the role. Section one concludes with a summary of training recommendations as offered in the literature. The second section introduces the concept of "optimal functioning" and how it is understood in relation to the experiences of higher education middle managers. Also included are the theories that have relevance to the topic under study; concepts within these theories are discussed in relation to the experiences of higher education middle managers as presented in literature on the role. Section two concludes by highlighting gaps evident in the literature that this study aims to address and offers the conceptual framework for this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology – provides an overview of the research methodology, processes, and procedures followed to undertake this research. There is discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of the study along with how the case study approach applies to this research design. Also included in chapter three is a description of the participants of the study and their role in the organisation. Connections between the two phases of the study, a description of the tools used to gather and analyse data, and the steps taken to reduce bias and increase the validity of the study are outlined.

Chapter 4: Phase One Findings – presents the findings from phase one of the study as factors that emerged from the semi-structured one-on-one interviews in relation to the research sub-questions. The emergent factors have been grouped into categories and presented in a table that links these with the three research sub-

questions explored during phase one of the study. The content of this chapter is presented as factors considered when defining optimal functioning in the role, then factors considered to enable optimal functioning, followed by factors considered to inhibit optimal functioning. Quotations from participants are included to offer context to the categories and factors presented.

Chapter 5: Phase Two Findings – presents the findings from phase two of the study which involved a qualitative questionnaire. The categories and factors that had emerged during interview analysis were presented to the middle managers in the questionnaire for verification and further exploration. In addition, a further two sub-questions were presented in the questionnaire. The chapter presents the questionnaire findings in table format followed by relevant comments offered by respondents.

Chapter 6: Analysis and Discussion of the Findings – offers analysis and discussion of the study's findings in relation to the research sub-questions, with consideration of relevant theories and literature presented in the conceptual framework of the study. The chapter discusses workplace characteristics, role characteristics, and middle manager characteristics that have enabled and inhibited optimal functioning in the role and highlights aspects of the role that could be improved to increase opportunities for those in the role to function optimally.

Chapter 7: Conclusion – guided by the overarching research question that aimed to discover lessons that can be learned from the experiences middle managers have within their role in an Aotearoa New Zealand higher education institution, this chapter offers a conclusion to the study. The chapter begins by revisiting the context of the study. This is followed by a summary of lessons learned, including theoretical contributions, practical applications, and methodological applications, and summarises the recommendations resulting from those lessons. The recommendations offered focus on training and development for those in the higher education senior and middle manager roles. The limitations of the study are also offered, along with recommendations for further research.

1.10 Chapter Summary

As introduced in this chapter, this study offers an original contribution to understanding the role of the higher education middle manager by taking an in-depth look at how people in this position perceive and experience their role within an Aotearoa New Zealand based higher education context. This chapter has offered some background and context to the research topic and outlined the motivation for undertaking this study. The research aim and research questions have been presented, along with the methodological approach and research design that have informed the research process. This chapter has also included a brief overview of the informing literature and given justification for undertaking the study. A review of the literature is offered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 2. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

To help inform and develop the conceptual framework and research questions for this study, many areas of the literature were explored. Chapter one gave a brief overview of some of the literature that offered insight into the context of this study, including a reference to the new public management movement and the impact this has had on the role of higher education middle managers. This chapter, which discusses the literature in more detail, is presented in two sections.

Section one offers an initial discussion of the terms "leadership" and "management", along with a summary of the middle manager role in general, then specifically within the higher education environment. Aspects of the higher education middle manager role are presented to provide insight into the responsibilities and actions associated with the position. This is followed by an overview of the various paths taken to become a higher education middle manager, and the experiences of training and preparation for the role. Section one concludes with a summary of literature that presents training considerations for higher education middle managers informed by contexts outside of Aotearoa New Zealand. These topics are considered relevant to the study because they situate the higher education middle manager within the wider organisational context while highlighting the significance and complexity of the role.

Drawing from self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2017) and job demands-resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), section two of the literature review introduces the concept of "optimal functioning" and the conditions that are required for optimal performance and well-being in the workplace. Section two also summarises literature pertaining to the experiences of higher education middle managers and factors that have impacted their understanding and enactment of their role with a specific focus on job demands in relation to resource availability. This section also introduces job crafting theory (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), organisational culture theory (Schein, 2010), and role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) and considers these theories in relation to the experiences of higher education middle managers as

presented in the literature. With consideration of the content of these two sections, this chapter will then present gaps in the literature that this study intends to address and a conceptual framework that has been used to frame the study.

The initial search attempting to find studies undertaken on the Aotearoa New Zealand based higher education middle manager role offered limited results. This necessitated a wider search to include other countries (Alberts et al., 2007; Briggs, 2001b; Kallenberg, 2007; Potgieter et al., 2011). The literature highlighted similarities in experiences within the role across multiple countries and over a range of years (see Gmelch et al., 2017; Kruse, 2020; Nguyen, 2013; Pham et al., 2019; Santiago et al., 2006; Sarros et al., 1997; Smith, 1997). There were also similarities evident within the role across the various types of higher education institutions whether large or small universities, colleges, or polytechnics (see Briggs, 2001b; Cardno, 2014; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Marshall, 2012). For these reasons, the scope of literature focussing specifically on the higher middle manager role included in this review comprises those based within the wide range of higher education organisational settings.

2.2 The Role and Actions of Middle Managers

The first section of this literature review defines how the terms "leadership" and "management" are applied within this study and discusses the middle management role within both the business and the higher education sectors. Also discussed are the various pathways into the higher education middle manager role, experiences of being trained for the role, and training recommendations that are offered in the literature.

2.2.1 Defining Leadership and Management

Although leadership and management are commonly used terms the literature indicates that there is divide in the understanding of how these terms are conceptualised (Lunenburg, 2013; McCaffery, 2018; Nienaber, 2010), so it is necessary to clarify how they are defined for the purpose of this study. Some literature suggests that leadership involves a different set of functions and requires a different set of competencies than management (Connolly et al., 2019; Horsfall, 2001; McCaffery, 2018; Yielder & Codling, 2004). When viewed as separate,

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leadership is commonly referred to as an ability to influence the actions of others (Connolly et al., 2019; Wolstencroft & Lloyd, 2019), and management is viewed as responsible for the development and maintenance of workplace functions (Connolly et al., 2019; Horsfall, 2001; Lunenburg, 2013). In some cases, a position of leadership can be seen to occur informally and not necessarily be related to a specific position of employment (Lumby, 2012; Lunenburg, 2013; McCaffery, 2018; Van De Mieroop et al., 2020).

Other views of leadership and management are that they are mutually inclusive (Marshall, 2012), interwoven (Nienaber, 2010; Swanwick & McKimm, 2014), or overlapping (Bush, 2007; Toor & Ofori, 2008). When looking into the tasks associated with leadership and management roles, Nienaber (2010) observed that all tasks associated with the role of leadership fall within those associated with management responsibilities, and that tasks within the sphere of management are more comprehensive than those of leadership. McCaffery (2018, p. 94) believes that management is unfairly viewed as a "simplistic, unnecessary and bureaucratic process", in contrast to leadership which is viewed as a "difficult and noble art". He considers both equally important, stating that it is broadly accepted that organisational effectiveness depends on a successful combination of "capable leadership and sound management" (McCaffery, 2018, p. 93). The importance of both roles to organisational effectiveness is also discussed in other literature (see Bush, 2007; Lunenburg, 2013; Yielder & Codling, 2004).

Swanwick and McKimm (2014) explain that separating leadership from management does not reflect the requirements needed for someone in a supervisory position to function effectively in an organisational environment. Leadership skills are required for someone in such a position to remain connected with others in the workplace and to ensure organisations are responsive to change, while management skills are necessary for the effective management of risk (Swanwick & McKimm, 2014). This understanding of the interconnectedness of the two skills is also seen in the higher education environment where, rather than daily activities of those in management roles being divided between leadership, management, and administration tasks, they are "simultaneously all three" (Lumby, 2003, p. 287). In view of this understanding of leadership and management, and with the term

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"manager" being used within the role titles held by the participants of this study, the term "manager" rather than "leader" is used when discussing the role of focus within this study. The term is, however, used with the understanding that the role might encompass aspects of both leadership and management, as discussed within literature (McCaffery, 2018; Nienaber, 2010).

2.2.2 Defining Middle Management

The literature relating to the role of the middle manager in the business sector is considered relevant to this study because the role closely aligns with that of the higher education middle manager, particularly since the introduction of new public management strategies (Davis et al., 2016; Winter, 2009). Exploration of the middle manager role in general also offers an opportunity to show the importance of the role and the positive impact middle managers can have on the performance of an organisation (see Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997; Gjerde & Alvesson, 2020; Haneberg, 2010b; Kallenberg, 2015; Raes et al., 2011).

A considerable amount of academic enquiry has gone into exploring and defining the role of middle managers with respect to who they are, what they do, and how their role has changed over time (e.g., Hales, 2006; Harding et al., 2014; Hermkens & Jansen; McGurk, 2011; Tsuda & Sato, 2020). It is evident from the literature that the wide-ranging contexts and functions of managerial work (McGurk, 2011; Rudhumbu, 2015), and the blurring of boundaries within organisational structures (Hales, 2006), make it difficult to define the term "middle manager" as a single construct. This section offers a number of definitions for the middle manager role presented in literature.

The role of middle management is often defined by where the people performing this job fit within the hierarchical structure of an organisation (Hales, 2006; Haneberg, 2010b; Huy, 2001; Madden, 2013). Ainsworth et al. (2009) state that "middle management is fundamentally a spatial construction of relative organisational location" (p. 6), which indicates a relationship between the role and other levels and roles within the organisation. When considering the term "middle" in this definition, it is expected that as well as being overseen by a manager higher in the hierarchical structure, the middle manager has either managers or team members

lower in the hierarchical structure for whom they are responsible (Haneberg, 2010b; McGurk, 2011).

A clearer definition of the middle management role is gained by considering it in relation to the functions performed in this position within the organisation rather than strictly in reference to hierarchical structure (McGurk, 2011). Hales (2006) identifies specific tasks that define the role of the middle manager: directing, coordinating, and controlling the operation of their unit; deploying resources within the unit; and communicating with internal and external stakeholders. Other functions required of the middle manager role that are prominent in the literature relate to administration, leadership, decision-making, strategy, and communication (McGurk, 2011; Rezvani, 2017).

Huy (2001) states that the role is more complex than can be described by a set of day-to-day activities and describes the contributions of the middle manager to an organisation in relation to specific competencies that add value, particularly during the change process, including the abilities to employ entrepreneurial skills, leverage informal networks, tune into the emotional needs of employees, and manage tension. Huy (2001) recognises that not all middle managers in all organisations are equipped with such skills but stresses how important it is that those in this role recognise and make the most of these skills for the benefit of the organisation.

The complexity of the middle manager role has also been highlighted by Harding et al. (2014), who discuss it in relation to potential control and resistance. Middle managers are in a position of being controlled by their senior managers, yet they control their team members (Harding et al., 2014). At the same time they are in a position where they can resist the control from their senior managers and also have the potential of being resisted by their team members (Harding et al., 2014). Being in this complex position has been likened to being "the meat in the sandwich" (Branson et al., 2016; Marshall, 2012; Pepper & Giles, 2015), and requires careful navigation of relationships both up and down the hierarchy (Branson et al., 2016).

Traditionally, middle managers were not perceived as having an influence on the strategic process (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992), however, there is evidence in the literature that the middle manager does play an important role in both influencing

and implementing strategy, with those in the role considered as valuable strategic assets (Ates, 2014; Balogun, 2003; Currie, 1999; Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992; Hope, 2010; Huy, 2011; Rouleau, 2005; Schilit, 1987; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). Having access to top management along with a knowledge of operations places middle managers in a position of translating strategy into daily activities (Ates, 2014; Huy, 2011; Wooldridge et al., 2008). Being in the essential position to bond strategy with productivity, their actions can either enable or impede the success of a business (Haneberg, 2010b). In short, the middle management position provides an essential direct link between otherwise disconnected layers of the organisation (Raes et al., 2011).

Looking into the tasks and competencies associated with leadership, management, and the role of a middle manager, helps to conceptualise the terms and understand what it means to manage from the middle. The definitions of middle management presented here show the potential scope of responsibility associated with the role and highlight its importance to the success of an organisation (Madden, 2013; McGurk, 2011; Ren & Guo, 2011; Wooldridge et al., 2008). This importance is reported by Haneberg (2010a, p. 15) who considers middle managers to be "the engines that drive strategic implementation and create the momentum for how work gets done". The following section discusses the literature on the middle manager role in higher education, which indicates the role is similarly important to and is as complex as similar roles in the business sector.

2.2.3 Middle Management in Higher Education

The role of middle management in higher education has been discussed by a variety of authors who highlight the significance and complexity of the position, in both the Aotearoa New Zealand context (e.g., Branson et al., 2016; Cardno, 2014; Marshall, 2012; Thornton et al., 2018; Wald & Golding, 2019), and internationally (e.g., Alberts et al., 2007; Briggs, 2005; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Davis et al., 2016; Gmelch et al., 2017; Kallenberg, 2015; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Pham et al., 2019; Wolstencroft & Lloyd, 2019).

Higher education middle managers contribute to organisational strategy (Briggs, 2005; Kallenberg, 2015) while at the same time are in the position of being

"guardians of academic quality" (Thornton et al., 2018, p. 216), and are therefore seen to have an impact on the effectiveness of the higher education institutions in which they work (Gmelch et al., 2017; Marshall, 2012; Thornton et al., 2018). Cardno (2014) found that the role of the higher education middle manager in Aotearoa New Zealand aligns somewhat with how research has defined the role in other countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Australia. With this consideration, and due to the limited availability of literature on the role in the Aotearoa New Zealand context, this section includes literature on the role from within Aotearoa New Zealand and further afield.

The literature on leadership and management in higher education shows reluctance among those in the middle management role to identify themselves as "leaders", instead, they relate more to the management aspects of their roles (Briggs, 2003a; Wolstencroft & Lloyd, 2019). Wolstencroft and Lloyd (2019) believe that some of this reluctance arises from the job title of "middle manager". They found that many of the tasks undertaken by academic middle managers relate to those associated with leadership and believe that the title should be changed to "middle leader", to better align with the leadership aspects of their role. A review of the literature, however, indicated that although the term "middle manager" was used in the title of many articles, the actual titles given to those in the role are varied and not dominated by the term "manager". Some titles include: Dean (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Verhoeven, 2010); Head of Department (Bolden et al., 2008b; Cardno, 2014; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Verhoeven, 2010; Wolstencroft & Lloyd, 2019); Head of School (Bolden et al., 2008b); Academic Director and Programme Leader (Cardno, 2014); Program Coordinator (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012); Head of Area, Team Leader, Course Director, and Curriculum Manager (Wolstencroft & Lloyd, 2019). The titles used for the higher education middle managers within the case organisation in this study are different again, using the term "manager" they are "Programme Manager" and "Programme Operations Manager".

There are similarities between the role and actions of the middle manager in higher education and in other contexts (Marshall et al., 2011; Mughal et al., 2017; Potgieter et al., 2011). Sharing leadership and administration with senior management (Lumby, 2003), the higher education middle manager implements both

private and public sector management skills along with those required of an academic professional (Leader, 2004). As within the business sector, because of where they are placed within the structure of the organisation, the middle manager has an impact on the flow of operational information at department and organisation levels (Briggs, 2003b; Kallenberg, 2015; Rudhumbu, 2015; Thornton et al., 2018). Considered to be key brokers within the organisation (Briggs, 2001a), the higher education middle manager forms a bridge between senior management and their departments (Briggs, 2005; Wolstencroft & Lloyd, 2019). By understanding the wider strategic goals of the organisation while also understanding the needs of their departments and team members (Kallenberg, 2015; Leader, 2004), those in the role are uniquely able to translate strategy into action (Briggs, 2001b). Middle managers are therefore considered to be important agents of change in the higher education context (Greatbatch & Tate, 2018; Marshall, 2012; Pham et al., 2019; Rudhumbu, 2015).

Because of where they are situated within the organisational hierarchy, higher education middle managers are required to navigate relationships which are "multi-faceted and multi-directional" as they work vertically and horizontally within organisational structures and networks (Branson et al., 2016, p. 2). Their role involves being both a leader, an equal, and a follower, as they interact with students, team members, support staff, colleagues, senior management, and external stakeholders (Branson et al., 2016; Kallenberg, 2015; Leader, 2004; Thornton et al., 2018). Given these multiple identities (Floyd & Dimmock, 2011), the middle manager needs to be able to "switch quickly from one role to another" and communicate in more than one "language" to meet the requirements and expectations of the role (Kallenberg, 2015, p. 4).

2.2.4 Aspects of the Higher Education Middle Manager Role

Many aspects of the higher education middle management role have been discussed in the literature, which highlights the wide variety of tasks those in the position are expected to perform within their areas of responsibility (e.g., Gmelch et al., 2017; Potgieter et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2008; Thornton et al., 2018; Wisniewski, 2019). Most often, the literature recognises their role as being that of an administrator, a manager, a leader (Pham et al., 2019; Potgieter et al., 2011; Scott et

al., 2008; Thornton et al., 2018), and an academic (Gmelch & Buller, 2016; Potgieter et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2008), with a wide range of skills and competencies required to be effective in each of these areas (Potgieter et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2008).

Descriptions of the role offered by Briggs (2005) and Kallenberg (2015) identify wide-ranging responsibilities. The categories they have selected to capture the various aspects of the role closely represent the role as discussed in the wider literature, (Pham et al., 2019; Potgieter et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2018; Wisniewski, 2019). Whereas Briggs (2005) looks at the whole role as it is enacted by the higher education middle manager, Kallenberg (2015) discusses the role specifically in relation to strategic innovation.

Briggs (2005) identified five main aspects of the role: corporate agent, implementer, staff manager, liaison, and leader. The "corporate agent" understands and takes part in the big picture, contributes to and implements strategy, and works within the management systems of the organisation. The "implementer" carries out departmental activities, develops and implements curriculum, and manages resources and the interface between institutional systems and departmental activities. The "staff manager" organises, monitors, develops and evaluates their subordinates. The "liaison" is the bridge between senior management and the departmental team and liaises with external stakeholders. The "leader" employs entrepreneurial and inspirational skills to lead the individual, department, and situation. Briggs (2005) found that within each of these aspects, middle managers experienced tension between the need to support the wider organisation while also meeting the needs of their department, team members, students, and external stakeholders.

The corporate agent aspect of the role discussed by Briggs (2005) is associated with influencing and implementing organisational strategies. This has also been recognised by others as an integral part of the role (e.g., Cardno, 2014; Kallenberg, 2015; Leader, 2004; Wisniewski, 2019; Wolstencroft & Lloyd, 2019). Kallenberg (2015) examined this aspect of the role further by investigating the activities higher education middle managers undertake during strategic innovation and aligning those activities with role definitions. Initially, Kallenberg (2015) identified four types of activities in which the higher education middle manager participates: administrative, relational, intervening and result-oriented. Kallenberg

then linked these activities to the following four role definitions. The "guard" focusses on keeping the organisation running by undertaking administrative activities such as managing, monitoring and controlling department-related processes and structures. The "guide" focusses on relationships and department culture in which, through the guide's relational activities, trust, cohesion, and strong communication channels are developed and maintained. The "diplomat" focusses on presenting and achieving their vision by applying intervening activities while being politically sensitive and flexible in their role as a bridge between senior management and their departments. The "constructor" is results oriented, with a focus on goals which are achieved by vision, determination, strong leadership, and being productive and professional.

The role as presented by Kallenberg (2015) closely aligns with that presented by Briggs (2005). Both Kallenberg (2015) and Briggs (2005) see middle managers as having a strong focus on contributing to and implementing organisational strategy. They also see those in the role as both carrying out department activities within the processes, structures and systems of the organisation, and by guiding and managing their team members. Both researchers also consider middle managers to be in the position to achieve department goals by communicating with internal and external stakeholders, be the bridge between the senior management team and their department, and employ strong leadership skills to achieve positive outcomes within their areas of responsibility.

Another way to view the role has been presented by Yielder and Codling (2004), who investigated leadership and management within tertiary institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand. They noticed that traditional universities and vocational polytechnics promote employees to management positions based on quite different qualities, and found that universities look for research abilities or "academic prowess" and polytechnics look for managerial qualities which involve a range of administrative skills (p. 315). Their view is that alone neither academic prowess nor managerial skills capture the full skill set of leadership qualities necessary to fulfil the requirements of the role and believe individuals employed in these positions develop the position to fit within their own skill set. Seeing this as resulting in either an excess focus on management or an excess focus on academic leadership, with

both scenarios resulting in dysfunction, they propose a shared leadership approach involving two separate positions. The view of these researchers is that the "academic leader" should be responsible for teaching and learning, staff and student research, academic aspects of programme development, staff professional development, and personal teaching and research, and the "manager" should be responsible for resource and budget management, staff appointment, allocation and management, viability aspects of programme development, and personal teaching and research. Both positions are thought to be responsible for industry liaison, various institution committees, and liaison with programme administrators. Yielder and Codling (2004) state that one of the essential aspects of this shared model is that the roles of both the manager and academic leader are valued equally within the institution. They see the proposed model to have its place in the larger tertiary institutions, where student numbers can justify dual leadership roles. While the shared model is not necessarily a financially viable option for the smaller institutions, it does help to identify the individual functions of both academic leader and manager in the higher education context.

To successfully achieve in the various aspects of their role, higher education middle managers require a wide range of skills and competencies (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Pham et al., 2019; Potgieter et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2018; Wisniewski, 2019). Financial competencies are important for managing the monetary resources within their departments (Potgieter et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2018). Having a strong understanding of organisational policies and the ability to apply that knowledge within their departments is essential for quality and risk management (Potgieter et al., 2011). Attending to the administrative aspects of their role requires excellent time management and organisation abilities (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Potgieter et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2018), along with skills in using ICT systems for planning, reporting and communication flow (Potgieter et al., 2011). Interpersonal and relationship-based competencies such as active listening and the ability to be honest, build trust, negotiate, and be empathetic are essential for managing and motivating their team members and building a strong culture of collegiality within their departments (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Potgieter et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2018; Wisniewski, 2019). Also important is having the ability to represent their department within the wider organisation (Thornton et al., 2018;

Wald & Golding, 2019), which requires the ability to communicate both up and down the organisational hierarchy (Wisniewski, 2019). Emotional intelligence and self-reflection are also important (Issah, 2020), particularly when managers question their own capability in environments in which time constraints and high workloads limit opportunities to achieve certain aspects of their role, such as teaching and research (Cardno, 2014). As suggested by (Yielder & Codling, 2004), it is unrealistic and unwise for an organisation to expect any one individual to possess these wide-ranging skills and competencies, and to do so has the potential to create dysfunction within the role.

In a study undertaken by Scott et al. (2008) in an Australian context, academic middle managers were invited to offer an analogy that best describes their experience in the role. The following analogies from the study show how varied experiences in the role can be: "herding cats"; "coaching a successful sporting team"; "climbing a mountain together"; "working with a dysfunctional family"; "rowing without an oar"; and "riding a bicycle on a tightrope" (Scott et al., 2008, p. 50). Scott et al. (2008) again highlights how complex the position can be, with those in the role facing constant changes and uncertainties while being frustrated by bureaucracy, unresponsive systems, or passive resistance.

2.2.5 Paths to Becoming a Higher Education Middle Manager

Paths to becoming a higher education middle manager are considered relevant to this study as they help to set the context of the role. In addition, understanding the various paths into the role and the different motivations for taking it on may help to establish the strengths and weaknesses in the process and highlight potential areas for improvement. When considered in relation to the findings of this study, this knowledge may help to inform recommendations.

Literature indicates that the paths to becoming a higher education middle manager vary (Deem, 2001), as do the motivations for taking on the role (Floyd, 2012; Gmelch, 2016; Wald & Golding, 2019). For some, taking on the role is unanticipated and unplanned (Deem, 2001; Henry, 2006; Hotho, 2013), and for others planning to move into such positions begins early in their career (Deem, 2001; Inman, 2011). In some cases, the role is taken on with reluctance (Deem, 2001;

Gmelch, 2016; Thornton et al., 2018; Wald & Golding, 2019), and, in others, with enthusiasm (Deem, 2001; Gmelch, 2016; Wald & Golding, 2019). Perceptions of the role also diverge with some seeing it as a move to the dark side, and others considering it to be a high calling (Palm, 2006).

Floyd (2012) explored the circumstances that result in academics taking on the higher education middle manager role and found that, irrespective of the circumstances that influenced their move into academic careers, those taking on that role felt it would give them an opportunity to make changes to their work environment that would, in turn, enable them to better align and manage their professional and personal identities. Other intrinsically motivated reasons for taking on the role include: to be challenged or learn new skills (Gmelch, 2016; Thornton et al., 2018), to advance in the career (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Floyd, 2012), or to be in more control of the work environment (Floyd, 2012; Gmelch, 2016). Other reasons are associated with being able to give something back, or to make a difference (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Floyd, 2012; Thornton et al., 2018). The role is also seen by some as an opportunity to make a contribution to their departments (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Gmelch, 2016; Thornton et al., 2018), the wider organisation (Thornton et al., 2018), or other faculty members (Gmelch, 2016).

There are also extrinsically motivating factors, such as being convinced to take on the position by colleagues or by their next in line (Floyd, 2012; Gmelch, 2016), or a sense of duty (Hotho, 2013; Thornton et al., 2018). Some feel forced into the position because they are the only person available (Gmelch, 2016) or the only person willing (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015) to take on the role. In some instances, people take on the role to prevent someone less suitable from doing so (Thornton et al., 2018).

When looking at the selection process associated with employing higher education middle managers, Harvey et al. (2013) found numerous shortcomings, particularly with respect to the expectations and requirements of the role and the assessment of an individual's professional and personal qualities. They state the flaws make the process from "convoluted at best", to "dysfunctional at worst", and believe much can be done to improve the current selection processes used by many institutions (Harvey et al., 2013, p. 25). In an Aotearoa New Zealand higher

education setting, Marshall (2012) also found issues in the selection process, which sometimes sees individuals who have been successful in their prior positions being promoted to middle leadership only to find they do not have the required skills. Deem (1998) also suggests there are issues with informal recruitment processes because they are often seen to exclude eligible and capable individuals.

These studies indicate that there are numerous motivations for taking on the position of middle manager, and although some individuals consider it a career path goal, others feel the role is more of an obligation that they accept reluctantly. In addition, studies reveal that those moving into the role are not always prepared and provide evidence of shortcomings in selection processes. When considering the challenges experienced by those in this position, along with the complexity and importance of the role as discussed previously in this chapter, special consideration should be given to the selection and recruitment of higher education middle managers.

2.2.6 Training Experiences of Higher Education Middle Managers

Although there is an increasing focus on the importance of academic leadership in higher education (Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012), limitations have been identified in the literature relating to the preparation and professional development training of higher education middle managers (Floyd, 2016; Inman, 2009; Thorpe & Garside, 2017). The literature current at the time of undertaking this study suggests that many taking on the role receive very little or unsuitable formal training, indicating there is much room for improvement (e.g., Corbett, 2020; Gmelch & Buller, 2016; Marshall, 2012; Mughal, 2019; Thorpe & Garside, 2017; Wisniewski, 2019). Floyd (2016, p. 12) states that limited training and role preparation might be seen as a reflection of "a culture of institutional neglect", which is particularly concerning in an industry that experiences increasing demands and accountability that places higher expectations on those in management positions (Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017; Marshall et al., 2011). In addition, and as discussed previously, the higher education middle manager requires wide-ranging skills and competencies which highlights the importance of ensuring they are well equipped to function in such a complex and demanding role. This section discusses the experiences that higher education middle managers have had with training and

preparation for the role and is followed by training and development recommendations offered in the literature.

Many higher education middle managers have reported feeling unprepared when taking on the role (Gmelch et al., 2017; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012); many often "fall" into the position without prior training (Marshall, 2012). In some instances, there is an expectation that those taking on the role should be qualified to meet the requirements, or at least be capable of working out what the job requires along the way (Inman, 2009). Although the skills are quite different, it is often expected that being a good academic qualifies a candidate for leading and managing (Gmelch, 2000). Baker et al. (2018) and Gonaim (2016) talk of the importance of succession planning to ensure there are suitable people available for such important positions, however, Inman (2009, p. 430) noted the irony that "higher education institutions, regarded as seats of learning, appear to lack commitment to the development of potential leaders within any form of a structured succession plan".

Several authors noted a lack of "formal" training for higher education middle managers (e.g., Aziz et al., 2005; Briggs, 2001b; Deem, 2001; Floyd, 2016; Inman, 2009; Mughal, 2019; Wisniewski, 2019). Even in organisations in which training is offered, the content is often too generic and not necessarily suitable, appropriate, or applicable due to the complexity of the role and the wide-ranging skills and competencies required (Briggs, 2001b; Corbett, 2020; Floyd, 2016; Inman, 2009). In addition, there are barriers to training such as high workloads which do not allow time for development (Alberts et al., 2007; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012; Saengaloun, 2012) and a lack of role clarity which makes training difficult to target (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012).

Many move into middle management without prior experience and without understanding the scope of the role (Gmelch et al., 2017), and those in the position often find themselves acquiring the necessary skills on the job (Gmelch & Buller, 2016; Greatbatch & Tate, 2018; Inman, 2009). Although some of their prior experience is useful (Deem, 2001; Floyd, 2016), often the skills they gained from their previous roles do not prepare them for the position they have moved into (Gmelch & Buller, 2016; Greatbatch & Tate, 2018). Added to the challenge for some is a lack of an official transition period or an opportunity to shadow an expert

(Branson et al., 2016). Briggs (2001b) did, however, note that those in the role accept the responsibility for gaining some of the specialist knowledge required for their areas of responsibility.

As presented here, there are evident gaps in the professional development training and support offered to those in the higher education middle manager role, and often the training that is offered does not meet the specific needs of individual managers. This is particularly concerning when one considers the importance of their role to the effectiveness of the higher education institutions in which they work (Baker et al., 2018; Marshall, 2012; Muijs et al., 2006; Wisniewski, 2019).

2.2.7 Training Considerations for Higher Education Middle Managers

Several studies have investigated the training needs of higher education middle managers and concede that there is not any one correct approach to training (e.g., Aziz et al., 2005; Corbett, 2020; Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017; Inman, 2009; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012; Mughal et al., 2017; Nguyen, 2012; Wisniewski, 2019). The understanding is that training needs are context specific, therefore customised approaches are required to align training with the uniqueness of each institution, department, and individual (Aziz et al., 2005; Corbett, 2020; Floyd, 2016; Inman, 2009; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012; Mughal et al., 2017; Nguyen, 2012; Wisniewski, 2019). Specific formats for training the higher education middle manager and suggestions for the content of training sessions offered in the literature, which present some common themes, are discussed here.

Recognising the benefits of learning through experience, Ladyshewsky and Flavell (2012) highlight the importance of having a workplace culture that supports growth and change. Inman (2009) takes this further and suggests developing the more informal and experiential processes of learning into a more recognised training programme. Inman's framework for developing a training programme takes into consideration a variety of learning approaches that an individual already draws from in their role, such as reading, modelling, observing, questioning, problem-solving, and coaching. Also considered are resources available in the workplace, such as the leaders, mentors, subordinates, and peers of the middle manager(s), as well as the important learning those in the role have already gained from prior experience

(Inman, 2009). These factors are then brought together to inform tailored training opportunities that are meaningful, credible, and productive (Inman, 2009). As well as being content-effective by being tailored for the individual leader, this type of training is also cost-effective, as it can make use of easily available resources (Inman, 2009).

In alignment with Inman's suggestions, other recommended training initiatives include the use of mentors (see Alberts et al., 2007; Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012; Mughal, 2019). Aziz et al. (2005) recognise expert colleagues, role models, or problem-solving assistants as valuable mentors, adding that these people are more effective at facilitating the learning process and enhancing the self-efficacy beliefs of the trainee when the relationships between them are based on "friendship, honesty, mutual respect and professionalism" (Aziz et al., 2005, p. 589). Taking prior experience into account is also a common theme in recommended training initiatives (see Aziz et al., 2005; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012; Muijs et al., 2006). In addition, length of time already served in the role and length of time expected to remain in the role both have an impact on which training topics and formats might be most effective and should therefore also be considered (Aziz et al., 2005).

Other training suggestions discussed in the literature include offering experiential in-house training rather than external courses (Muijs et al., 2006) and using a variety of formats such as seminars, workshops, one-on-one and small group sessions, and on-demand training sessions at small venues (Alberts et al., 2007). Also, online courses (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012), regular discussion sessions, role playing, and feedback sessions are considered valuable when implemented within a wider a training package (Wisniewski, 2019).

As expected, recommendations for the content of training sessions are as wide-ranging as the demands of such a complex role. Some examples offered in the literature are associated with improving specific skills such as: written and oral communication (Wisniewski, 2019); financial management (Aziz et al., 2005); prioritising and time management (Alberts et al., 2007); gaining specific knowledge on the education sector (Corbett, 2020), including curriculum and pedagogy (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012); and understanding and dealing with legal issues,

bureaucracy rules, policies, regulations, and accountabilities (Alberts et al., 2007; Aziz et al., 2005; Mughal, 2019; Mughal et al., 2017). Training in other competencies such as reflection and self-assessment are also recommended (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012; Mughal, 2019; Thorpe & Garside, 2017; Wisniewski, 2019). In addition, it is suggested that training can help to instil a commitment to higher education and a drive for learner success, which are seen as important qualities in a higher education middle manager (Corbett, 2020).

Training recommendations also focus on other aspects of the role. Some are based on learning or improving specific competencies associated with managing people, for example, dealing with personnel issues (Alberts et al., 2007), leading teams (Corbett, 2020; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012; Wisniewski, 2019), and creating an inclusive environment that supports diversity and allows for a high performance culture (Wisniewski, 2019). Several recommendations are associated with training those in the role to manage strategic functions (Wisniewski, 2019) by teaching them ways to lead and manage change (Corbett, 2020; Mughal et al., 2017; Wisniewski, 2019) and be resilient and deal with challenges in the sector (Corbett, 2020; Mughal et al., 2017). Problem-solving and decision-making capabilities are also considered important content for training sessions (Muijs et al., 2006; Wisniewski, 2019), and Nguyen (2012) found that those in the role felt the need to be trained in managing role conflict and role ambiguity.

Training in overall leadership (Alberts et al., 2007) and management (Nguyen, 2012) was also suggested for training sessions. Such training may, however, be too generic and time consuming to be viable. A solution to this issue can be found in the training recommendations presented by Ladyshewsky and Flavell (2012), which incorporate generic competencies while still being individualised to meet specific needs. According to Ladyshewsky and Flavell (2012), both transformational and transactional leadership capabilities are needed for the higher education middle manager to be effective in their complex role. They recommend including competencies associated with both styles of leadership in training programmes. Their view is that transformational leaders have the skills required to create a vision and inspire their team members to harness and utilise their full potential, and transactional leaders have the qualities needed to ensure their

department meets the performance requirements of the institution (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012). Based on experiential learning, their approach to training is context specific and makes use of actual experience and opportunities for reflection, along with peer learning and coaching strategies (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012).

What stands out about the training programme offered by Ladyshewsky and Flavell (2012) is that it manages to incorporate many of the recommendations offered in the wider literature which advocate that middle managers should gain personal leadership competencies, understand leadership theories, pedagogy and curriculum design, and develop skills for communicating, managing people, managing programmes, and aligning with the organisational strategic objectives (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012). In addition, their programme makes use of a 360-degree review process, through which the leader receives feedback from their colleagues and team members (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012). Ladyshewsky and Flavell (2012) found the training programme undertaken by their participants had a positive impact on their personal leadership by providing insights, boosting confidence, and improving self-awareness of their leadership style. Their study also indicates that learning gained from such a programme has the potential for "enduring changes in learned behaviour" (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012, p. 144).

This first section of the literature review has introduced the higher education middle manager role and highlights the significance and complexity of the position. The literature has also highlighted that those in the role receive very limited professional development, training, and support, which is of concern considering the wide-ranging competencies required to meet the demands of such a complex role. Any lack of training has implications for the individual and the organisation and should therefore be addressed so the higher education middle manager is better prepared to meet the demands of the role and able to function optimally. Corbett (2020, p. 13) highlights the importance of the role and stresses that expecting someone "to fulfil such a complex role with little or no relevant training is unreasonable (at best)". The literature presented demonstrates the importance of offering professional development training and support while also addressing barriers to training in order to enable those in the role to succeed.

2.3 Experiencing the Higher Education Middle Management Role

This section of the literature review begins by discussing "optimal functioning", and draws from self-determination theory (SDT) to present the workplace conditions that are required for individuals to function optimally in their role (Ryan & Deci, 2017). An initial review of literature on the experiences of higher education middle managers indicated that many of the challenging issues they face are caused by onerous workplace conditions such as high job demands and resource limitations. This prompted consideration of other theories that consider working conditions in relation to functioning in the workplace. The relevance of these theories to optimal functioning are summarised in Table 2.1. A description of each theory is offered and then discussed in relation to the literature pertaining to the experience of higher education middle managers.

Table 2.1

Theories with Relevance to Optimal Functioning in the Workplace

Theory	Relevance of theories to optimal functioning
Self-determination theory (SDT)	SDT is useful for identifying aspects of the work environment that might limit or allow opportunities for optimal functioning. SDT is based on the understanding that the three inherent needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness must be satisfied for an individual to function optimally. (Ryan & Deci, 2017)
Job demands-resources theory (JD-R)	JD-R theory helps to identify characteristics of the work environment that impact employee well-being and functioning. Optimal functioning requires job demands and job resources to be aligned, with the demands being challenging enough to stimulate engagement and resources being sufficiently available to meet demands. (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001)
Job crafting theory	Job crafting theory helps to identify actions individuals take in the workplace to increase opportunities for optimal functioning. Optimal functioning requires an environment that allows for individuals to craft their role for better alignment of job demands with resource availability while also aligning with organisational goals. (Demerouti et al., 2015; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001)
Leader-member exchange theory (LMX)	Leader-member exchange theory is useful for understanding the potential impact of relationships on the ability of individuals to function optimally in the workplace. A relationship that allows for positive exchanges between leader and follower is understood to be an important workplace resource needed for optimal functioning. (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995)
Organisational culture theory	Organisational culture theory helps to explain some of the less visible aspects of the work environment that have an impact on the experience and behaviours of employees and their ability to function. Aspects of organisational culture considered within this study include organisational systems and processes, strategic planning and implementation, and the control and decision-making latitude applied within the workplace, all of which have an impact on the ability of middle managers to function optimally in their role. (Karasek, 1979; Klein, 1989; Schein, 2010)
Role theory	Role theory is useful for identifying key influences that shape how employees experience and enact their roles and the potential outcomes from these experiences. Optimal functioning requires expectations placed on employees to be clear, compatible, and achievable. (Bess & Dee, 2008; Katz & Kahn, 1978)

2.3.1 Self-Determination Theory and Optimal Functioning

Because a key focus of this study is on the factors that have an impact on the ability of higher education middle managers to function optimally, discussion of factors associated with optimal functioning are presented here. Sheldon (2004, p. 5) coined the phrase "optimal human being" referring to the features that might characterise high-quality human functioning. He defined optimal as attaining a "reasonably successful and rewarding means of functioning" in the face of circumstances (Sheldon, 2004, p. 5). As an area of study, optimal functioning focuses on understanding how individuals may achieve their personal potential and become the best that they can be (Levesque, 2011). Optimal functioning in employment considers factors such as psychological health, job attitudes and job performance (Fernet et al., 2015). Whereas optimal employee functioning would be marked by low strain, positive job attitude, and high performance, sub-optimal employee functioning would be indicated by high strain, low commitment, and low performance (Fernet et al., 2015).

When referring to the "optimal human being", Sheldon (2004) considers three human needs crucial to social life adaptedness: competence in achieving instrumental goals through environmental manipulation, sustaining a basic sense of self or autonomy, and experiencing cooperative relationships with other humans. In alignment with this is self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985), a motivational theory based on the understanding that the satisfaction of the same three inherent needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness is "essential to optimal development, integrity and well-being"; thwarting these needs is associated with "ill-being and impoverished functioning" (Ryan & Deci, 2017, p. 242). SDT considers social-contextual factors to have an impact on the ability of an individual to thrive through the satisfaction of these needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This theory can be applied to personal life and to the workplace, and in both contexts, resources are required to meet these needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

A sense of competence is understood to be attained through effective interaction with one's environment and the achievement of optimally challenging tasks to bring about desired outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2017; White, 1959). "Optimally challenging tasks" are those that slightly exceed an individual's current competence

level and therefore provide optimal stimulation for task engagement (Gagne, 2014). Ryan and Deci (2017) explain that increases or decreases in perceived competence can be directly linked to increases or decreases in motivation, making competence an essential contributor to employee performance and well-being.

Acting with a sense of autonomy involves the ability to self-regulate experiences and actions with feelings of volition, congruence and integration (Ryan & Deci, 2017). According to the SDT understanding of autonomy presented by Ryan and Deci (2017), only some intentional actions are truly autonomous, while others are externally influenced. As they explain, behaviour that can be considered autonomous is self-endorsed or consistent with one's interests and values.

Relatedness is defined as feeling socially connected and having a sense of belonging and significance among others, and involves being cared for by and being able to contribute externally from the self to other individuals, social groups, and organisations (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In a previous text, these researchers explain that extrinsically motivated behaviours are typically prompted by others in the form of simple requests, offers of reward, or an internal belief that the outcome is valued by others. They believe that an individual will likely engage in the extrinsically motivated behaviour out of feeling related to the individual or group, thus placing relatedness as centrally important for promoting the internalisation of externally motivated factors (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Ryan and Deci (2017) stress the importance of the role autonomy-support plays in satisfying the three inherent needs. They state that individuals who are supported to act autonomously are better able to make relevant choices and plans in order to satisfy each of the three needs. Autonomy support is understood to have at least three components: consideration of the individual's perspective, options and choice, and rationale when there is limited opportunity for choice (Sheldon et al., 2003). Research has shown that the benefits of autonomy support in the workplace are numerous (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Baard et al. (2004) found that autonomy-supportive managers facilitated opportunities for their employees to satisfy intrinsic needs, which in turn influenced employee job performance and psychological adjustment. Gagné et al. (2000) found employees to be more accepting of organisational change when their managers employed an autonomy-supportive style.

Other positive outcomes for team members from autonomy-supportive managers include placing greater value on their work efforts, becoming more motivated, and showing evidence of higher levels of job satisfaction and perceived well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Studies provide evidence that training interventions can help leaders to adopt a more autonomy-supportive style. Training provided to leaders with a focus on autonomy support has seen positive outcomes for their subordinates such as autonomous motivation and increased work engagement (Hardré & Reeve, 2009), as well as increased satisfaction with supervisors and greater trust in the organisation (Deci et al., 1989).

SDT is relevant to studies of the experiences of employees in the workplace as optimal employee functioning and well-being are important for the performance of both individuals and organisations (Baard et al., 2004; Graves & Luciano, 2013). Ryan and Deci (2017, p. 558) believe that rather than seeing employment as an exchange of labour for economic reward, it should be perceived as an opportunity for employees to express their abilities, and experience the "inherent satisfactions of autonomy, competence and connection" that work can provide. A well-resourced workplace is understood to have the potential to support both extrinsic motivation, by being instrumental to achieving work goals, and intrinsic motivation, by fostering growth, learning and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Motivating job characteristics such as performance feedback, social support, and skill variety provide meaning to employees and are understood to also contribute to the fulfilment of their inherent needs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Managers can play a part in assisting the fulfilment of these needs by taking the perspective of their subordinates and understanding the specific elements that are required in particular work situations to allow for autonomy, competence and relatedness and the associated outcomes of effective performance and well-being (Baard et al., 2004).

Studies have applied SDT alongside other theories such as job demands-resources (JD-R) theory and leader-member exchange (LMX) theory to explore the experiences of individuals in the workplace. Van den Broeck et al. (2008) investigated the role of inherent needs satisfaction in SDT in relation to job demands and job resources (JD-R). They found that a well-resourced work environment is more likely to allow individuals to experience psychological freedom, interpersonal

connectedness, and effectiveness, and to feel more vigour and less exhaustion in their jobs. They also found that an environment with high job demands is more likely to see inherent needs being unmet and individuals experiencing more exhaustion. The resources considered in their study were task autonomy, supervisory support, skill utilisation, and positive feedback, and the demands considered were workload, emotional demands, physical demands, and work-home interference.

Graves and Luciano (2013) integrated SDT with LMX theory to explore the role of the leader in supporting employee self-determination. They found high-quality leader-member exchanges facilitate the satisfaction of employees' inherent needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. This in turn enhanced autonomous motivation and outcomes such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and subjective vitality. Some of the leader behaviours that they found to help ensure inherent needs are met include validation of the employee's worth, information feedback, task support, organisational and task structure, encouraging initiative, personalised mentoring, and emphasising the importance of the employee's work (Graves & Luciano, 2013).

This section has highlighted the importance of specific workplace conditions such as task significance, autonomy support, and feedback to allow opportunities for inherent needs to be met to promote employee job satisfaction, well-being and optimal functioning (Deci et al., 2017). Literature pertaining to the experiences of higher education middle managers indicates that those in the role are faced with many challenges associated with workplace conditions (e.g., Branson et al., 2016; Briggs, 2005; Cardno, 2014; Saengaloun, 2012; Thornton et al., 2018) which have the potential to inhibit opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs and therefore diminish their ability to function optimally. Of interest to this study is whether the workplace conditions experienced by higher education middle managers in the case organisation allow for opportunities for the people in this role to develop a sense of competence, autonomy, and relatedness. This understanding will then help to inform recommendations for improvements to the work environment to increase opportunities for these middle managers to function optimally in their role.

2.3.2 Job Demands-Resources Theory

As discussed previously, it is understood that the well-being of an employee is dependent on their ability to cope with the demands of their role (HSE, 2004). The Occupational Health and Safety (OSH) service in Aotearoa New Zealand has recognised the impact unreasonable job demands have on employees and state that organisations need to take all practicable steps to manage stressors in the workplace (Hill, 2003). Hockey (2013, p. 87) defines stressors as "an environmental event or state that triggers a response of the stress system". Such events disturb or threaten the balance of an individual and triggers homeostatic responses (Hockey, 2013). These responses attempt to re-establish equilibrium, or homeostasis, "by a complex repertoire of behavioural and physiological adaptive responses" (Chrousos, 2009, p. 374). An imbalance of job demands and resources has been identified as a predictor to job-related strain (Hockey, 2013; Jonge & Dormann, 2006). In turn strain in the workplace creates fatigue and negatively impacts the ability of employees to manage tasks and maintain work goals, particularly under low control conditions (Hockey, 2013).

OSH identifies "stressors" as situations which may lead to the perception that physical or psychological resources are about to be exceeded, and expects organisations to develop and maintain appropriate resources to meet the demands of a role (Hill, 2003). This is in alignment with job demands-resources (JD-R) theory, which posits that coping in a role is dependent on resource availability in relation to role expectations. Bakker and Demerouti (2018) state that JD-R theory is useful for studying organisational practice as it helps to identify factors related to well-being and optimal functioning.

Introduced by Demerouti et al. (2001), the JD-R model is based on the understanding that all work characteristics can be classified into either job demands or job resources. Job demands refer to "physical, social, or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical or mental effort" and job resources (described in more detail in section 2.3.4) refer to "psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job" that help to achieve work goals, reduce job demands, or stimulate the growth and development of the employee (Bakker et al., 2005, p. 170). Job demands are seen to be associated with physiological and psychological costs, and

job resources are understood to reduce or buffer some of those costs (Bakker et al., 2005).

There are two different underlying processes that help to explain and predict job strain and motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). One is the health impairment process, whereby poorly designed jobs with extremely high demands and low resources exhaust an individual's mental and physical resources, leading to the depletion of energy and, potentially, health problems. The motivational process assumes that the appropriate availability of job resources leads to high work engagement and strong performance due to their motivational nature. Even in an environment with significant demands, adequate resources have a positive impact on work engagement, likely because the supply of resources buffers the adverse effects of job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Additionally, experiencing a lack of resources in a demanding work environment can reduce motivation, resulting in mental withdrawal or disengagement (Demerouti et al., 2001). Bakker et al. (2005) state that stress or burnout develops in an environment where job demands are high and resources are low, irrespective of the type of job or occupation. Burnout and work engagement are not only relevant at the individual level; the impact of job demands and resources also has ramifications at the team and organisational levels (Bakker et al., 2006).

The JD-R theory is popular due to its flexibility as it can be tailored to the specific characteristics of any organisational setting (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). A study undertaken based on the early JD-R model was applied to a higher education context by Bakker et al. (2005). They found that autonomy, social support from colleagues, a high-quality relationship with supervisors, and performance feedback (resources) buffered the impact of work overload (demands) on exhaustion (Bakker et al., 2005). The same resources were found to have a similar buffering effect on the physical demands in the workplace and the impact of role pressures on family life (Bakker et al., 2005). Although initially used to explain burnout, the model has developed over time and is now used to examine other aspects of employee well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

JD-R theory posits that the reciprocal relationships between job characteristics and their outcomes result in resource loss and gain cycles (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The loss cycle is based on the relationship between stress and self-undermining behaviours that may lead to increased job demands and greater job strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The gain cycle assumes that motivated employees participate in "job crafting" behaviours which generate higher levels of personal and job-related resources, and in turn increase motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

JD-R theory is of interest to this study as it highlights the importance of resource availability to meeting the demands of a job and the resulting outcomes on the well-being and performance of individuals in the workplace. Section one of the literature review presented the higher education middle manager role as being associated with high demands, and, as presented later in this section, literature pertaining to the experience of those in the role indicates that it is also associated with resource constraints. Of interest to this study are the experiences higher education middle managers have with job demands and resource availability within the case organisation and whether these workplace conditions enable or inhibit their ability to function optimally.

2.3.3 Job Crafting

As presented in association with JD-R theory, job crafting is a way in which individuals are able to better align job demands with resource availability (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Discussion on the concept of job crafting follows with examples of how it has been applied by middle managers in the higher education context.

First introduced by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), job crafting refers to the proactive process of an individual in a workplace making physical and cognitive changes in the way they understand and practice their role (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Possible physical changes to job tasks include the type and volume of tasks they choose to undertake, and cognitive changes include redefining the meaning they associate with their work and their identity in relation to their role (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Changes are also made to relational boundaries which impact their interactions and relationships with others (Berg et al.,

2008; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The job crafting process allows individuals to alter their positions in ways that allow for a sustainable and viable definition of "the work they do and who they are at work", to avoid negative consequences associated with a poor perception of the job, and to engender a more positive sense of self (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 180). In the JD-R model, job crafting is understood to be a way for employees to manage the mismatch between job demands and resource availability (Bakker, 2011), but it can also be seen as a constructive activity taken by proactive employees to add value to their work environment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The ability to disengage from unattainable goals is another form of job crafting which Latham and Locke (2007) recognise as a valuable adaptive strategy for employees because it allows resources to be freed up and available for investment in more attainable goals. This form of job crafting can also be seen as a health-protecting coping mechanism (Petrou et al., 2012).

There are various motivations and outcomes associated with job crafting discussed in the literature (see Berg et al., 2008; Kooij et al., 2017; Rudolph et al., 2017; Sakuraya et al., 2016; Silva júnior et al., 2020; Van den Heuvel et al., 2015). Berg et al. (2008) found motivations for crafting to include such things as the need and/or desire for control over the job, human connection, meaningful interactions, fulfilment of passion, and the ability to cope with adversity at work. Positive outcomes associated with job crafting include: increased self-efficacy and well-being (Van den Heuvel et al., 2015); greater work engagement (Petrou et al., 2012; Sakuraya et al., 2016; Silva júnior et al., 2020); decreased psychological distress (Sakuraya et al., 2016); a reduction in employee turnover (Debus et al., 2020), augmented job-related competencies (Akkermans & Tims, 2017; Berg et al., 2008), enhanced employee sense of control, job satisfaction, and performance (Petrou et al., 2012); and optimised personal resources, job resources, and job demands which result in significant increases in performance feedback and opportunities for professional development (van Wingerden et al., 2017a).

Job crafting behaviours have been evidenced to create resource gain spirals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Employees who are motivated by their work are likely to craft their role constructively, leading to higher levels of resources and motivation, thus creating a gain spiral (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Humans have a significant

need to achieve goals through environmental manipulation (Sheldon, 2004), and this need can also be seen as a motivator for job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Bakker and Oerlemans (2019) explored job crafting alongside SDT with a specific focus on "daily" job crafting to find out in what ways and why this practice is associated with work engagement. They found that momentary engagement is most likely an outcome of employees satisfying their inherent needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019).

Job crafting can also work in negative ways for individuals and organisations and the consequences that result from crafting actions depend on the situation (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The positive outcomes that might be experienced by an individual from their crafting actions might have negative outcomes for the organisation (Petrou et al., 2012). Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) state that if crafting actions work towards aligning work patterns with organisational objectives then the outcomes can be positive for the organisation, however, if the crafting steers work patterns away from organisational objectives, then the outcomes can be negative. They suggest the strategic goals of an organisation be clearly communicated to employees so individuals can focus crafting behaviours towards those goals.

Excessive job crafting can also be counterproductive, as it has the potential to "lead to procrastination, provoke feelings of role ambiguity or unfairness and disrupt group dynamics or managerial control" (Petrou et al., 2012, p. 1137). Job crafting can also result in role conflicts (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019), intermittent regret and role overload (Berg et al., 2010), and reduce engagement and performance (Demerouti et al., 2015). Another disadvantage of job crafting is the considerable cognitive effort it requires, which has been proven to drain the crafting employee's energy resources taking time and energy away from other roles within the workplace (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Brouer et al., 2016).

Roczniewska and Puchalska-Kamińska (2017) recommend introducing job crafting interventions in the workplace to reduce any negative effects and increase the benefits of this practice. Many other studies also recommend that organisations acknowledge and reap the benefits of this practice by encouraging staff to make physical, cognitive, and relational changes within their roles (e.g., Chen et al., 2014;

Demerouti et al., 2015; Petrou et al., 2012; Solberg & Wong, 2016; Tims et al., 2013; Van den Heuvel et al., 2015; van Wingerden et al., 2017a). Job crafting can be facilitated by organisational leaders (Solberg & Wong, 2016), the individual, and the job itself (Tims & Bakker, 2010). Therefore all three avenues should be considered when promoting job crafting in the workplace. At organisational level there should be a focus on the way work is organised, designed and managed, and at leader and individual levels the focus should be on providing appropriate resources and developing initiatives to target the attitudes of leaders and their team members towards job crafting (Nielsen, 2013).

2.3.3.1 Higher Education Middle Managers and Job Crafting. There is evidence to suggest that some higher education middle managers craft their jobs in an attempt to achieve aspects of their role (e.g., Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Davis et al., 2016; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003; Rudhumbu, 2015; Yielder & Codling, 2004). Davis et al. (2016) found that, to provide support to their colleagues and team members, higher education middle managers create their own systems outside of the bureaucracy to counter the negative effects of managerialism. In some cases they have been seen to adapt institutional policies and procedures at department level to better align with the needs of their department (Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019), or pursue strategies outside of those driven by senior management (Hancock & Hellawell, 2003). They have also been found to act covertly to defend potential department revenue (Hancock & Hellawell, 2003). In response to the extensive capabilities required to meet the demands of the job, some middle managers have developed the role to align more closely with their own skill set (Yielder & Codling, 2004). The presence of role autonomy has helped higher education middle managers with job crafting and motivates them to become more flexible in their role and extend themselves in the workplace (Rudhumbu, 2015).

The literature discussed here provides evidence that job crafting can benefit both individuals and organisations. Crafting interventions are a way that organisations can promote and support this practice in the workplace and reap the benefits while managing and reducing the potential negative associated outcomes. Of interest to this study is whether the middle managers within the case organisation

apply the practice of job crafting to better align job demands with resource availability and to create a sense of achievement in their role.

2.3.4 Experiencing Resources in the Workplace

The theories discussed have highlighted the importance of workplace resources for the well-being and optimal functioning of individuals in the workplace warranting their further consideration in relation to the experiences of higher education middle managers. Defining resources within the context of an organisation is not necessarily straight forward as the value placed on a resource is understood to be subjective and dependent on context, and therefore may differ between individuals and cultures (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Workplace resources are, essentially, aspects of work that can help individuals deal with the demands of their job and achieve work-related goals, be used to acquire other resources of value to individuals, and support the achievement of personal goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Furthermore, workplace resources are required for employees to satisfy their inherent needs and function optimally in their roles (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). In the context of an organisation, resources can be located at interpersonal, task, and organisational level (Tims & Bakker, 2010). Within the work environment employees also draw from their personal resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). All resources are understood to be finite, therefore when resources are used to cope with one job demand there are fewer resources left for coping with other job demands (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Hobfoll (1989) has suggested that resources can be grouped within four categories: "objects" as resources with a physical nature, "conditions" as resources that enable access to other resources, "personal characteristics" as the capabilities that an individual possesses, and "energies" as resources that are valued in relation to their aid in acquiring other resources. Resources have also been more broadly defined as anything that an individual might use to attain their goals (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Resource categories are expected to overlap (Alvaro et al., 2010). For example, when considering the above categories in relation to the role of a higher education middle manager, the "personal characteristics" of those they report to can also be considered a "condition" resource, as the character of the organisational

leader(s) has an impact on the culture of an organisation (Schein, 2010), and therefore affects access to and availability of other job-related resources.

Resources are also understood to work together rather than individually because they coexist in ecological conditions and are therefore correlated (Hobfoll, 2011). This concept of coexistence brings organisational culture into consideration for this study, as it is understood to be an ecological condition that impacts the ability of individuals and teams to create and sustain their resources, and is often outside of the control of individuals or teams (Hobfoll, 2011). As such, organisational culture has relevance to the experiences of higher education middle managers.

Literature indicates that many of the challenges higher education middle managers face are caused by resource limitations which inhibits optimal function (see Briggs, 2001b; Cardno, 2014; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Gonaim, 2016; Griffith, 2006; Lumby, 2012; Maniam, 2018; Marshall et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2008). They experience problems associated with insufficient resources of a physical nature (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Kruse, 2020; Scott et al., 2008), and with the personal characteristics of those they work with (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Smith, 2007). In addition, and as discussed in the first section of this literature review, they are further tested by deficiencies in their own capabilities, and much of this is due to inadequate training and preparation (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Maniam, 2018). Time constraints are also a considerable challenge (Gmelch, 2004; Gmelch et al., 2017; Gonaim, 2016). Literature suggests, however, that many of the issues they experience are associated with condition resources such as the management culture and structural framework of their work environment (e.g., Briggs, 2005; Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Kallenberg, 2015; Marshall et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2008). The following sections present key resource challenges in greater detail.

2.3.4.1 Challenges Associated with Department Resources. Bolden et al. (2012) highlight the importance of leaders having a degree of control over resource allocation to be able to gain the professional independence they need to lead. There is evidence in the literature to suggest that higher education middle managers do not always have the necessary control over resources which inhibits their ability to function optimally (Briggs, 2001b; Cardno, 2014; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015;

Gonaim, 2016; Griffith, 2006; Lumby, 2012; Maniam, 2018; Marshall et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2008). Resource limitations are experienced at department level (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Griffith, 2006), with restrictions on teaching and learning resources (Kruse, 2020), staffing constraints (Briggs, 2001b; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Marshall et al., 2011), office space (Kruse, 2020), and inadequate support for managing the high administration workload (Briggs, 2001b; Cardno, 2014). Resource cuts and budget constraints are experienced as being amongst the most challenging aspects of the role (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Scott et al., 2008). Many higher education middle managers find it difficult to maintain and develop departments with minimal financial resources and insufficient time to manage their heavy workloads (Gmelch, 2004; Gmelch et al., 2017; Gonaim, 2016), and some struggle to continue working in an environment where resources are so stretched (Griffiths, 2009).

2.3.4.2 Challenges Associated with Managing People. Having limited control over resource allocation places greater importance on the relationships higher education middle managers have with those who are hierarchically above and below them (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Scott et al., 2008). Managing people, however, has been highlighted as a considerable burden for those in the role (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Maniam, 2018; Smith, 2007; Thornton et al., 2018). Smith (2007) noted that problems with staffing have been experienced by some as the most difficult issues they have to deal with. Middle managers have experienced staff who are unmotivated (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Scott et al., 2008), unprofessional (Maniam, 2018), lazy, incompetent (Smith, 2007), non-collegial (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015), and underperforming (Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2007). Some staff members are resistant to change, particularly when they have been employed at the institution for a long period of time (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001). Challenges also arise when long-serving staff have considerable influence at the institution, or when they are intentionally disruptive due to personal grudges (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001). Dealing with conflict between staff members, supporting staff through their personal issues (Smith, 2007), and dealing with complex staff needs (Briggs, 2005) are also experienced as onerous. Managing underperforming staff with discipline (Smith, 2007) and attempting to engage uninterested staff (Scott et al., 2008) are time-consuming tasks that add to the already high workloads.

While the issues associated with the attitude or capabilities of their team members as discussed here present challenges for the higher education middle manager, one of the most significant relationships they can be influenced by is the one they have with their next in line (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Hobfoll et al., 2018). The following section discusses the importance of this relationship and presents a summary of literature on the relationship experiences higher education middle managers have had with their senior managers.

2.3.4.3 Leader-Member Exchange Theory and Senior Management.

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory offers an effective tool for understanding many aspects of organisational relationships and performance (Liao & Hui, 2019), as it examines and describes the ways in which those in leadership positions exchange important resources such as social support with their subordinates, who in turn achieve work tasks for their leaders (Hobfoll et al., 2018). LMX originated in the 1970s as an alternative approach to understanding leadership that focussed on the relationship between leader and follower (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The LMX theory posits that the relationship between a leader and follower is dyadic and unique, and is influenced by the behaviour and emotions of both leader and follower (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). One of the concepts in LMX is that any one leader might have different quality connections with individual subordinates, experiencing high-quality exchanges with some and low-quality exchanges with others (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This concept supports the assertion that there are three domains to leadership: the leader, the follower, and the relationship between the two (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Dulebohn et al. (2012, p. 1726) clarify how these domains work together, stating that it is "the nature or quality of the leader-follower relationships (i.e., the way in which leader and follower characteristics and perceptions combine) that determines critical outcomes".

A high-quality LMX sees both leader and follower engage in an exchange relationship that comprises mutual trust, respect, and obligation, which then empowers and motivates those in the relationship to go above and beyond their formal role requirements (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). A high-quality social exchange between leaders and their team members is essential for effective individual, team and organisational performance (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This assertion is

supported by considerable research, as presented in meta-analytic studies undertaken by Henderson et al. (2009) and Dulebohn et al. (2012), who confirm that LMX plays a mediating role between antecedents and a wide range of attitudinal and behavioural outcomes. Some of the benefits of a high-quality LMX include increased organisational commitment, job satisfaction, empowerment, role clarity, and performance (Dulebohn et al., 2012). Such exchanges is also seen to be a buffer to workplace stressors (Zhang et al., 2013).

Dulebohn et al. (2012) found the quality of the LMX to be more strongly influenced by leaders than followers and suggest this could be due to the power difference in the relationship. The impact of the behaviour of followers is also considered to be significant, as presented by Xu et al. (2019), who found that when a follower exhibits proactive engagement through their implementation of more effective work methods, policies, or procedures, the LMX relationship is positively affected. Although Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) recommend gathering data from both leader and follower to gain a comprehensive view of the relationship, the scope of this study is limited to the experiences of the middle managers. As noted in SDT, opportunities for satisfying autonomy and relatedness in a role have an impact on an individual's ability to function optimally (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Additionally, leadership can be considered a job resource, a job demand, or a factor that influences job demands and resources, and therefore leadership is understood to have a strong influence on employee well-being (Tummers & Bakker, 2021). As such, the experiences middle managers have of the relationship with their senior managers are relevant to how they understand and enact their role and whether they have opportunities to function optimally. This makes LMX theory a useful lens with which to view the findings of this study.

The literature suggests that some higher education middle managers experience issues associated with the relationship they have with their superiors (e.g., Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Griffiths, 2009; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2007). Effective communication and support from senior management are seen as key to ensuring the depatment outcomes are in alignment with wider organisational goals (Briggs, 2001b), however, these are not always in steady supply. Some middle managers do not receive assistance from their senior

managers when dealing with challenging staff and they have limited control over how the underperformance of team members is addressed (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Smith, 2007). Other barriers to helpful communication and support from senior management discussed in the literature include the high workload of senior managers (Briggs, 2001b), issues with communication across the wider organisation (Briggs, 2003a; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003), and a lack of time for busy middle managers to absorb and apply information that is forthcoming (Briggs, 2005).

Forging constructive relationships with senior management can also be challenging (Griffiths, 2009), and some senior managers are not responsive to the requests made by middle managers on behalf of their departments (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017). In addition, some middle managers have noted that their senior managers do not acknowledge department achievements (Scott et al., 2008), and some apply poor appraisal practices (Marshall et al., 2011). Organisational culture is understood to be embedded within the reward system of an organisation (Schein, 1999), and when reward and recognition systems become an intrinsic part of the culture, they can positively affect employee interest, motivation, and success (Milne, 2007). Through the lens of SDT theory, performance feedback and reward are seen to support the fulfilment of the competence need, which in turn promotes job satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Deci et al., 2017). This suggests that higher education institutions would benefit from implementing such systems, particularly for their middle management teams, given the significance of their role to organisational success.

2.3.5 Organisational Culture

According to Schein (2010), the culture of an organisation is formed from a deeply embedded and collectively held understanding of how things are done in the workplace, and as such organisational culture can explain some of the often unconscious and less visible aspects of how individuals experience their work environment. Schein (2010) presents organisational culture from a three-layer perspective, in which the outer layer is made up of anything that can be seen, heard, and felt by a newcomer, such as the artefacts and symbols used by the organisation and the observed behaviour of employees. The middle layer comprises the standards, values, and rules of conduct, such as the organisation's strategies, objectives and

philosophies, which develop as employees share experiences. The deepest layer comprises the basic underlying assumptions of the organisation, which are often unconscious and difficult for employees to recognise.

Organisational culture is considered to have relevance to the way(s) higher education middle managers experience their role, particularly because it is known to influence the leadership and decision-making control within the organisation (Schein, 2010), and considered an important ecological condition that can either nurture or block the availability of resources, affecting the motivation and well-being of employees (Hobfoll et al., 2018). In addition, due to the complex process involved in the development and maintenance of organisational culture, it is difficult to change (Schein, 2010), and therefore understood to strongly influence the behaviour and expectations of all individuals with whom the higher education middle manager interacts, including their leaders and team members.

Keup et al. (2001) explains that culture is often taken for granted, and the impact it can have can go unnoticed until external forces test it. This is particularly evident during times of transformation and change. The higher education environment is often faced with the need to innovate in order to remain viable and competitive in the global market (Collins & Lewis, 2016; Deem, 1998; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2012). Despite this need, higher education is an industry known for its resistance to adapting to external pressures (Buller, 2014; Freed et al., 1997). This could be partly due to the strong and long-standing cultures evident in higher education institutions (Freed et al., 1997; Obendhain & Johnson, 2004); because it serves as a major stabilising force, culture is something that is not given up easily (Schein & Schein, 2017).

Of particular interest to this study is whether those managing from the middle would say that the environment of the organisation fosters or limits the availability of resources and what impact organisational culture has on how they function in their role. Literature pertaining to the higher education middle manager role suggests that they experience cultural challenges associated with organisational systems and processes, strategic planning and implementation, and the control and decision-making latitude applied within the workplace. These are discussed in the following three sections.

2.3.5.1 Challenges Associated with Systems and Processes. Individuals experience the culture of an organisation, in part, through the systems and processes within it (Schein, 2010). Literature suggests that there are systemic and structural issues within higher education institutions that middle managers have found challenging (e.g., Briggs, 2005; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Smith, 2007). Briggs (2003a) noted that excessive bureaucracy and unwieldy systems take up the time and erode the effectiveness of those in the role; this presents as a recurring theme in the literature (e.g., Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2007; Smith, 2002). Smith (2002) found dealing with bureaucracy and senior management to be amongst the most difficult things middle managers have to address. Adding to the frustration caused by inefficient systems and processes is the fact they are often seen to not achieve any valuable outcome or to relate to the rationale or purpose for which they were developed (Briggs, 2005; Scott et al., 2008). Those in the role have had to deal with understanding complex financial systems and determine how they might be relevant to their department outcomes (Smith, 2007). They also find that the systems applied do not necessarily add value to the student experience (Scott et al., 2008). Task significance has been identified as important to meeting the inherent needs of autonomy and relatedness in the workplace. This indicates that systems should be developed to align with value-adding outcomes to promote motivation and workplace performance (Deci et al., 2017).

Because the middle manager is at the interface of teaching and learning and at the same time has access to senior management, one can presume that a more collegial approach to developing systems could tailor their function to the needs of individual departments, and make them more student focussed. Instead, many of the systems within higher education institutions are developed in response to externally imposed quality monitoring requirements (Marshall et al., 2011) which are particularly evident since the introduction of managerialism (Deem & Brehony, 2005). This is also reflected in a statement made by Marshall et al. (2011, p. 89), who noted that "despite the ideal for leadership and management to be student learning focussed, leadership and management practices are largely being driven by the need for public accountability and thus are management centric". Unfortunately, dysfunctional systems such as those mentioned here add to the time constraints faced by middle managers and, due to the inefficiencies of these systems, can make them

less likely to comply with the associated expectations, particularly where they are perceived to have limited relevant purpose (Briggs, 2005).

2.3.5.2 Challenges with the Strategic Process. As discussed previously, the higher education middle manager plays an important role in the development and implementation of strategy at department and organisational level. Their effectiveness in this process can be impacted by the management culture and the structural framework of the individual organisation (Leader, 2004). There is evidence in the literature to suggest that some higher education middle managers have experienced inhibitors to their effectiveness in this aspect of their role (e.g., Briggs, 2003a; Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Griffiths, 2009; Kallenberg, 2015).

Briggs (2003a) found higher education middle managers to have little understanding of strategy or to have had strategy imposed upon them. A lack of control and influence over strategic planning was also noted by Creaton and Heard-Laureote (2019). In addition, time constraints have been found to limit opportunities for higher education middle managers to be involved in the strategic planning process (Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019). When top-driven strategy is imposed on departments, some middle managers struggle with keeping their team members motivated throughout the implementation process (Griffiths, 2009).

Kallenberg (2015) noted that although those in the role are expected to think and act strategically, middle managers are often hindered by the complexity of some organisational structures. Higher education institutions are made up of various components, each often having their own cultures and interests, which influence processes. This can limit the higher education middle managers' understanding of the wider organisational context and in turn slow down the strategic innovation required to adapt to their constantly changing environment (Kallenberg, 2015).

2.3.5.3 Control and Decision-Making Latitude. Control theory proposes that an individual uses internal goals, perceptions of their current state, and desire in order to resolve discrepancies between where they are and where they want to be (Klein, 1989). Under the umbrella of control theory is the construct of job control which refers to the control (e.g., decision-making latitude and autonomy) that employees have over the actions they need to take to achieve their goals (Park et al.,

2014; Sparks et al., 2001). In this context, "control" refers to the perceived ability to influence a situation or outcome (Burger, 1989; Pacheco et al., 2013; Perry et al., 2010), "autonomy" refers to an individual's ability to influence their own scheduling and tasks, and "decision latitude" refers to their ability to influence results at the organisational level (Dhondt et al., 2014). Evidence from research indicates that having a sense of control effects health and well-being, with high levels of control contributing positively to mental health, in particular (Sparks et al., 2001). In an organisational context, perceived control has been associated with job satisfaction, motivation, commitment and subjective well-being (Dhondt et al., 2014; Sparks et al., 2001). In addition, Halbesleben et al. (2014) suggest that the conservation and acquisition of autonomy-related resources holds the "highest motivation" and has the "greatest impact on well-being" (p. 1342) signifying the importance of control in the workplace.

One way of increasing employee control in an organisation is by taking a distributed or shared approach to leadership, which engages a collegial decision-making process, which has been seen in the higher education environment (see Gosling et al., 2009; Jones & Harvey, 2017; Youngs, 2017). This form of leadership encourages all employees to be involved, distributes power, and facilitates the sharing of a collective voice (Marshall, 2012; Youngs, 2017). In the higher education environment, collegial decision-making has been seen at department level where middle managers encourage input from their team members during the decision-making process (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Marshall, 2012).

Those in the role also rely on achieving department outcomes by leading through influence (Branson et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2008), which indicates that their role is a relational endeavour and their authority is developed through "trust, transparency and consistency" (Branson et al., 2016, p. 15). Nurturing relationships help middle managers gain the support and cooperation of their team members, which are particularly valuable in an environment such as higher education that requires adaptivity (Cardno, 2014; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Marshall, 2012).

Collegiality, however, is seen to be less common further up the hierarchy (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001), and many middle managers feel they have very little influence over the decisions made at senior management level (Cardno, 2014;

Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Marshall, 2012). This more top-down approach to decision-making, driven by senior management, reduces the autonomy of middle managers at department level and diminishes their ability to be advocates for their departments (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017). It is suggested by several authors that managerialism has caused this top-down control type of culture (e.g., Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Davis et al., 2016; Gleeson & Knights, 2008; Lumby & Tomlinson, 2000) and is seen as the driving force behind the decision-making of senior managers, who are pressured to meet financial and performance targets in the highly competitive higher education environment (Gleeson & Knights, 2008). In this business context, senior managers struggle to allow middle managers enough autonomy to achieve desired outcomes at department level while at the same time ensuring they comply with organisational strategy (Briggs, 2001b).

Not all middle managers take seriously the responsibility for meeting department targets, which might justify the need for some senior managers to monitor them closely (Briggs, 2001b). The resulting experience of being overseen and loss of control, however, can create in the middle manager a sense of not being trusted, which then impedes accountability (Briggs, 2005), and reduces that middle manager's motivation for using personal initiative or putting extra effort into the role (Rudhumbu, 2015). Davis et al. (2016, p. 1480) summarise the impact of this type of managerialism on the higher education middle manager: "Managerialism has resulted in a tyranny of bureaucracy which translates into disempowered middle managers, a culture of conformance over collegiality, control at the cost of innovation and experimentation and an over-articulation of strategy which devalues the strategy". Being handed responsibilities without being empowered to fulfil them and being excluded from the decision-making process makes middle managers feel that they are being held accountable for the decisions of others and for solving problems they do not create themselves (Davis et al., 2016).

The amount of control an individual has over their work environment is an aspect of organisational culture that directly impacts their experience of resource availability (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Therefore, sense of control has relevance to this study, specifically whether the autonomy and decision-making latitude experienced by higher education middle managers enable or inhibit optimal functioning.

2.3.6 Role Theory

Role theory is based on the understanding that the social role individuals play involves a set of requirements, such as duties and behaviours, and that each person is expected to behave in a predictable way to fulfil those requirements (Katz & Kahn, 1978). When considered in an organisational context, role theory is based on the division of labour principle, which requires individuals to enact specific roles to fulfil their job responsibilities (Katz & Kahn, 1978), and both considers how these roles are developed, communicated, and responded to, and examines the outcomes of this process (Bess & Dee, 2008). Concepts of role theory such as role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload present a useful framework in which to consider the ability of individuals to function in an organisation; several authors refer to these concepts when discussing the experiences of higher education middle managers (e.g., Briggs, 2003b; Cardno, 2014; Gonaim, 2016; Maniam, 2018; Marshall et al., 2011). Role theory concepts are discussed here along with literature on role-related challenges faced by higher education middle managers.

A "role-set" is made up of those who have a stake in the performance of the role-holder and can include anyone inside or outside the organisation who is connected to the role holder's behaviour (Kahn et al., 1964). "Role-expectations" come from those in the role-set who develop their own understanding of what the role should encompass and how each role-holder should perform or behave (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Role-expectations go beyond the specifications of the formal job descriptions individuals receive from their employer (Katz & Kahn; Owens & Valesky, 2015). On the one hand, role-holders are guided by their job descriptions, which can be seen as objective documents that identify what is expected of the role-holder and might include their responsibilities, the tools and equipment used, knowledge and skills needed, and relationships with other positions in the organisation (Heathfield, 2020). On the other hand, role-holders are influenced by the subjective expectations of the role, which are determined by the values, beliefs, and opinions of the role-set members (Korpela, 2014). Individuals will respond to the work environment according to how they perceive it, therefore, it should not be expected that individuals will respond in a predetermined and similar way even if they work in the same organisation or team (Korpela, 2014). Katz and Kahn (1978) contend that members of the role-set will be influenced by the responses received

from the role-holder and will adjust their expectations accordingly. They also note that other influences have an impact on how individuals view their roles, such as the influence of the non-mutual members of their role-set, the way the role-holder responds to members of their role-set, influences outside of the organisation, and personality factors.

When members of a role-set compile their differing values, understandings, and beliefs about what the role-holder should and should not do, rather than keeping these expectations to themselves, they usually communicate them both directly and indirectly in an attempt to influence the behaviour of the role-holder (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Korpela, 2014). This can lead to role conflict situations such as role pressure, role ambiguity, and role overload which, in turn, can have a negative effect on the role-holder's performance in their role (Briggs, 2003b; Katz & Kahn, 1978). Role conflict and ambiguity have the potential to create role strain or role pressure for the role receiver (Bess & Dee, 2008). Role conflict and ambiguity are known to cause "lower productivity, tension, dissatisfaction, and psychological withdrawal from the workgroup" (Van Sell et al., 1981, p. 66) and have a negative impact on employee well-being (Bess & Dee, 2008; HSE, 2004). Job content, organisational structure, and personal characteristics of the individuals within the role set have an influence on role conflict and ambiguity. Therefore, requirements placed upon employees should be compatible and roles should be clearly communicated and understood (Bess & Dee, 2008; HSE, 2004).

Literature indicates that higher education middle managers have experienced role related issues such as role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload (e.g., Briggs, 2003b; Cardno, 2014; Maniam, 2018; Marshall et al., 2011). A summary of this literature is presented in the following sections, which give an indication of the factors that contribute to these issues and the impact they have on optimal functioning in the higher education middle manager role.

2.3.6.1 Experiencing Role Ambiguity. Role ambiguity arises when there is uncertainty about the expectations of a role due to lack of clarity from messages sent, or lack of clarity in how they are understood when received (Bess & Dee, 2008). There are both advantages and disadvantages to having clarity in a role. Research shows that role clarity increases work satisfaction and reduces turnover rates

(Hassan, 2013), contributes to the empowerment and engagement of employees (De Villiers & Stander, 2011), enhances intrinsic motivation (Kundu et al., 2019); improves role efficacy and performance (Bray & Brawley, 2002), and can moderate job demands and psychological strain in the presence of organisational support (Bliese & Castro, 2000). Excessive role clarity, however, can create workplace implications (Lyons, 1971; Zheng et al., 2016). Focussing on rigidity as a way to achieve clarity can place too much structure on a role and make the job unbearable (Lyons, 1971), impede innovation (Bess & Dee, 2008) and limit opportunities for job crafting (Sluss et al., 2011). Role ambiguity is strongly evidenced in the literature as an area of concern for the effectiveness of the higher education middle manager (see Briggs, 2005; Cardno, 2014; Corbett, 2020; Gonaim, 2016; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003; Maniam, 2018; Marshall et al., 2011).

Several factors contribute to the role ambiguity experienced by the higher education middle manager with the most frequently mentioned cause being a misalignment of their responsibilities and their authority to act (Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001). Those in the role want to know their status, duties, and the level of influence and authority they have over decision-making (Hancock & Hellawell, 2003), but instead experience a lack of role clarity (Briggs, 2005; Cardno, 2014; Gonaim, 2016; Scott et al., 2008), unclear and shifting responsibilities (Kallenberg, 2015; Maniam, 2018), a vague sense of rank, and limited influence with respect to decision-making (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Briggs, 2005; Maniam, 2018). Branson et al. (2016) found ambiguity present in middle leader job descriptions along with inconsistencies between messages sent and actions taken by those further up the hierarchy. They argue that such uncertainty limits opportunities to develop trust between middle managers and their leaders. As well as being a stressor (Briggs, 2005; Cardno, 2014; Marshall et al., 2011), having an unclear understanding of their scope of authority is seen to restrict the ability of middle managers to deal with underperforming staff (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001), and can also hinder planning at department level which can have consequences on the quality of teaching and learning (Cardno, 2014), and ultimately on the achievement of optimal outcomes for their departments.

Briggs (2005) found some of the ambiguity to be caused through communication issues that prevent changes in policy and direction from being passed on to the middle manager. Adding to this is the complexity of some organisational structures that blur lines of responsibility and prevent an understanding of the wider organisation context (Briggs, 2005). Marshall et al. (2011) further suggest that the conceptual vagueness of the terms "leader" and "manager", a lack of acknowledgement of the importance of these aspects of the middle manager role, and the use of workload allocation models, job descriptions, and performance measures that do not clearly identify these aspects all contribute to the experience of role ambiguity. Cardno (2014) stresses the importance of higher education institutions taking responsibility to reduce role ambiguity and its associated challenges by first understanding the complexity of the middle manager role and then clarifying the description of the position.

2.3.6.2 Experiencing Role Conflict. Role conflict arises when the received expectations of the role do not align with the values of the role receiver, when the expectations sent from two or more role senders to the role receiver are incompatible, or when expectations sent from one role sender are incompatible with those of the receiver (Bess & Dee, 2008). Role conflict within the higher education middle manager role has also been discussed widely in the literature (e.g., Briggs, 2005; Gmelch, 2004; Kallenberg, 2015; Marshall et al., 2011). These middle managers experience competing demands associated with being stuck in the middle of the wider organisational requirements and the needs of their own team (Branson et al., 2016; Bryman & Lilley, 2009; Gleeson & Knights, 2008; Smith, 2007). This has been described by some as "one of the most challenging aspects of the role" (Griffiths, 2009, p. 402).

Tensions are created from sent role conflict (Briggs, 2005), which results in the receiver having conflicting and competing expectations and demands from the wide range of stakeholders associated with their role (Bolden et al., 2008b; Briggs, 2005; Griffith, 2006; Hotho, 2013; Thornton et al., 2018). Team members have an expectation that the middle manager considers the needs of their department over those of the organisation, while at the same time senior management expect the needs of the organisation to be of primary focus (Griffith, 2006; Hotho, 2013).

Occupying this position, as the interface between their departments and senior management, is particularly challenging for middle managers during restructuring (Griffiths, 2009) as well as in environments such as higher education that experiences rapid and constant change (Smith, 2007).

Marshall (2012, p. 502) described the middle manager experience as akin to being the "meat in the sandwich": those in the role felt caught between their colleagues, their subordinates, and senior management. These opposing aspects of the role are difficult to balance and occasionally clash (Bryman, 2007; Smith, 2002), particularly in times when maintaining leadership aspects of the role impedes the middle manager's ability to pay attention to other aspects (Bryman, 2007). Some in the position also find it challenging to switch between those multiple roles and identities (Floyd & Dimmock, 2011). There are further issues associated with leading from within their team (Branson et al., 2016; Briggs, 2005). Middle managers are expected to employ a position of authority as department managers while also being expected to offer relational support and guidance, which Branson et al. (2016, p. 15) explain is "extremely difficult to seamlessly align into a single role". Some have found the role to be a lonely one, due to the tough decisions they have to make (Hotho, 2013), especially when they have limited support from their leaders (Griffiths, 2009).

Role conflict also arises with respect to the higher education middle manager's role responsibilities as an academic and an administrator. Kallenberg (2015) notes that attempting to fulfil these competing aspects of their role satisfactorily pulls them in both directions. This is particularly difficult to manage when they experience an imbalance or poor clarity of role expectations and a lack of decision-making power, along with time constraints due to high workloads (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017).

2.3.6.3 Experiencing Role Overload. Role overload arises when the sent expectations exceed the available resources of the role receiver (Bess & Dee, 2008) and is another challenge faced by higher education middle managers, who, as has been discussed by several authors, experience high workloads or long working hours (e.g., Alberts et al., 2007; Bolden et al., 2008a; Briggs, 2003a; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Gmelch et al., 2017; Saengaloun, 2012; Smith, 2002; Thornton et al., 2018).

They struggle with having too many tasks to do and not enough time in their working hours to achieve them (Briggs, 2005; Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Maniam, 2018; Smith, 2007). A lack of time has been reported as being "one of the most challenging aspects of the role" (Floyd, 2016, p. 13). Smith (2007) noted that in a study undertaken involving over 200 higher education middle managers, nearly all reported working more than 50 hours per week, and a high number reported working in excess of 60 hours. Not surprisingly, such role overload is evidenced to create stress, exhaustion (Alberts et al., 2007), anxiety (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017), and work-life balance issues for many employed in the role (Alberts et al., 2007; Gmelch et al., 2017; Maniam, 2018; Smith, 2007).

Some of the time-consuming or problematic aspects of the role that are seen to contribute to role overload are associated with the time and effort required to work within the dysfunctional systems and management structures of the organisation (Briggs, 2005; Smith, 2007). Examples include managing restructures (Scott et al., 2008), managing staff contracts (Briggs, 2005), managing appraisal processes (Marshall et al., 2011), educating bureaucrats (Scott et al., 2008), and dealing with general bureaucratic processes (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Floyd, 2016; Smith, 2002). Middle managers also experience a high volume of administration and operational duties, having to, for instance, respond to large volumes of emails (Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Gmelch et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2008), attend numerous meetings (Gmelch et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2008), engage in endless travel without valuable outcomes (Scott et al., 2008), manage reviews (Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019), and do excessive report and proposal writing (Scott et al., 2008). Briggs (2005) noted that resource limitations lead to staffing constraints which place a heavier workload onto the middle manager. In addition, those in the role are valued by their colleagues which has the unfortunate outcome of placing them on everyone's agenda, consequently further increasing their load (Briggs, 2001b).

Literature suggests that, due to role overload, some middle managers do not have enough time to achieve all the responsibilities associated with their role (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017). Aspects of the role that some middle managers have found difficult to fulfil include: training staff (Saengaloun, 2012), remaining current in their discipline (Gmelch, 2004), developing their leadership skills (Seerup,

2014), undertaking personal reflection (Pepper & Giles, 2015), developing resources (Saengaloun, 2012), and fulfilling teaching responsibilities (Alberts et al., 2007). It has even been noted that those in the role sometimes struggle to find time to lead their teams (Scott et al., 2008) or manage their departments (Briggs, 2005). In addition, there is an expectation that higher education middle managers remain research active to contribute to the research responsibilities of the organisation and to maintain academic credibility for themselves and the institution (Thornton et al., 2018). Unfortunately, role overload limits the time they have available to undertake such research responsibilities (Alberts et al., 2007; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Gmelch et al., 2017; Smith, 2002), which can have a negative impact on both their research careers (Thornton et al., 2018) and future employment opportunities within academia (Floyd & Dimmock, 2011).

The literature summarised here indicates that role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload present challenges for higher education middle managers which can affect their ability to function optimally in their role. It is evident that these role issues need to be seriously addressed to create an environment in which the higher education middle managers can carry out their duties effectively (Saengaloun, 2012). Understanding and considering these concepts in relation to the experiences of higher education middle managers within this study can help to identify key influences on the role and their potential consequences.

2.3.7 Satisfaction in the Role

Despite the complexity, challenges, and frustrations associated with the role, there is evidence to suggest that some higher education middle managers find certain attributes of the role to be satisfying (Briggs, 2005; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Smith, 2007; Thornton et al., 2018; Wald & Golding, 2019). Satisfaction has been experienced from: employing new team members (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Wald & Golding, 2019); mentoring, developing and seeing the achievement of their team members (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Lees, 2015; Thornton et al., 2018; Wald & Golding, 2019); improving and developing their departments (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Smith, 2007; Thornton et al., 2018; Wald & Golding, 2019); creating an environment where others can be successful (Lees, 2015); representing their

departments (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Wald & Golding, 2019); and contributing to the wider organisation (Thornton et al., 2018).

Seeing the success of their departments and team members also offers the personal benefit of sustaining the middle manager's self-image (Briggs, 2005), as does being respected by their colleagues (Smith, 2007). Other personal benefits include having a measure of control over their work environment (Floyd, 2012; Wald & Golding, 2019), enjoying new challenges, having the opportunity to learn new skills, feeling a sense of belonging, developing relationships and networks within the organisation, and developing an increased profile both internally and with external stakeholders (Wald & Golding, 2019). These studies indicate that some aspects of the higher education middle manager role are satisfying and potentially motivating, particularly those that result in improvements within their team and department and enhance their own professional profile.

2.4 Literature Summary

The first section of this literature review has emphasised the complexity and significance of the higher education middle manager role and has highlighted shortfalls in their experience of being trained and prepared for the high demands associated with the position (Corbett, 2020; Gmelch & Buller, 2016; Marshall, 2012; Mughal, 2019; Thorpe & Garside, 2017; Wisniewski, 2019). The second section of this literature review has presented the concept of optimal functioning and the impact of workplace conditions on the capacity of higher education middle managers to function optimally in their role.

As has been highlighted in this chapter, the middle manager role is particularly multifaceted and demanding when it is experienced within the ever-changing higher education environment (Corbett, 2020). Being hierarchically positioned between senior management and their team members, higher education middle managers are faced with conflicting priorities and demands along with unclear role expectations (Briggs, 2005; Kallenberg, 2015). Those in the role also experience significant pressure to perform effectively and efficiently to meet externally driven accountability requirements (Mughal et al., 2017). The multifaceted

nature of the role, along with its many complexities, make it increasingly challenging for those in the role to perform (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001).

It is unsurprising, then, that the middle manager role has been viewed as having "a high potential for issues to occur" (Corbett, 2020, p. 13), and is considered to be "one of the most challenging" roles in higher education institutions (Wisniewski, 2019, p. 48). It is also no wonder that the role has been experienced by many as stressful and seen to present a considerable risk of burn-out (Kallenberg, 2015). Informed by theories associated with functioning in the workplace and literature pertaining to the higher education middle manager role as presented in this chapter, Figure 2.1 summarises some of the demands and resource limitations people in this position have experienced along with the resulting outcomes as discussed in this literature review.

Figure 2.1

Experiencing the Higher Education Middle Manager Role: A Visual Representation of the Literature
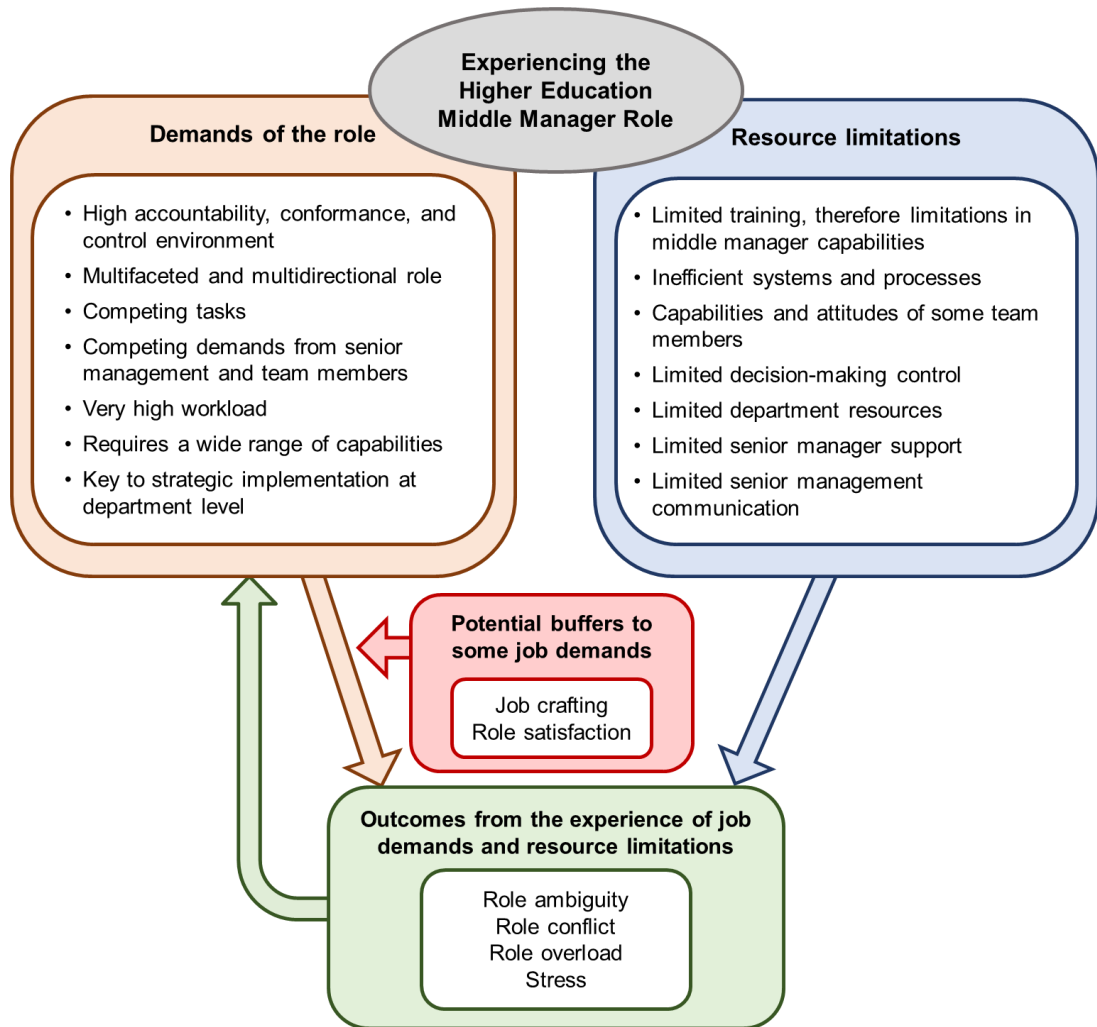
As indicated by the arrows in Figure 2.1, resource limitations in a role with such high demands result in role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload (Briggs, 2005; Maniam, 2018; Marshall et al., 2011), as well as stress (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Gmelch et al., 2017; Gonaim, 2016; Issah, 2020; Kallenberg, 2015). Through the process of resource loss cycles, such outcomes have the potential to add to the demands of the role (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Although there is some evidence that higher education middle managers have attempted to better align the job demands with resource availability by crafting their job (see Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Davis et al., 2016; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003; Rudhumbu, 2015), opportunities to do so are restricted by the scope of autonomy afforded to those in the

role (Slemp et al., 2015), which for some is limited (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017). Role satisfaction can also buffer some of the demands (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009), however, given the many challenges the literature has shown to be associated with the role, it is unlikely that the satisfaction these middle managers experience is sufficient to counter the effects of the high job demands.

Consideration of optimal functioning in the workplace through the lens of SDT reveals that sufficient resources are required to allow for inherent needs satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Literature pertaining to the experiences of higher education middle managers as presented in this chapter indicates that many of the conditions within the higher education environment are not conducive to the satisfaction of inherent human needs and therefore create barriers that prevent higher education middle managers from functioning optimally in their role. Table 2.2 presents some of these barriers, specifically in relation to opportunities to satisfy needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness.

Table 2.2

Barriers to the Satisfaction of the Inherent Needs of Higher Education Middle Managers

Inherent needs	Examples of barriers presented in the literature
Competence	Role overload preventing achievement of all role responsibilities (Briggs, 2005; Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Maniam, 2018; Smith, 2007).
	Inefficient and unsuitable structures, systems or processes impeding achievement (Briggs, 2005; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2007; Smith, 2002).
	Limitations in capabilities due to lack of training or preparation (Briggs, 2001b; Corbett, 2020; Floyd, 2016; Gmelch et al., 2017; Inman, 2009).
	Team members not achieving due to their abilities and/or attitude (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Maniam, 2018; Smith, 2007; Thornton et al., 2018).
	Managing problematic or lack of staff adding to workload (Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2007).
	Limited resources impeding ability to achieve department responsibilities (Briggs, 2001b; Cardno, 2014; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Gonaim, 2016; Griffith, 2006; Lumby, 2012; Maniam, 2018; Marshall et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2008).
Autonomy	Limited decision-making control (Cardno, 2014; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Marshall, 2012).
	High accountability and monitoring (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Davis et al., 2016; Gleeson & Knights, 2008; Lumby & Tomlinson, 2000).
	An inability to make changes to resource availability (Briggs, 2001b; Cardno, 2014; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Gonaim, 2016; Griffith, 2006; Lumby, 2012; Maniam, 2018; Marshall et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2008).
Relatedness	Being positioned between organisation and department creating a sense of loneliness (Hotho, 2013).
	Limited senior management support (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Griffiths, 2009; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2007).
	Challenges with team members (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Maniam, 2018; Smith, 2007; Thornton et al., 2018).

As summarised in Figure 2.1 and Table 2.2, literature concerning the higher education middle manager role suggests that the workplace conditions they experience involve extensive job demands and significant resource limitations in a role that they are often unprepared for. These conditions have the potential to inhibit opportunities for those in the role to function optimally. Due to their position in the organisational hierarchy, middle managers are key to strategic implementation and

academic quality, and therefore central to the effectiveness of higher education institutions (Gmelch et al., 2017; Marshall, 2012; Thornton et al., 2018). It is understood that optimal employee functioning is reflected in an organisation that functions optimally (Fernet et al., 2015), therefore, the sub-optimal functioning of the higher education middle manager has implications for organisational performance and issues experienced by those in the role should be addressed. Of interest to this study is whether the higher education middle managers within the case organisation have opportunities to achieve optimal functioning, and, if there are barriers to optimal functioning, how these middle managers might be better prepared and supported in their role.

2.5 Gaps in the Literature

The literature review has helped to gain a deeper understanding of the topic under study and has helped to identify gaps in the literature that this study intends to address (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). Several authors have noted that there is limited literature offering insight into the perceptions and experiences of higher education middle managers (e.g., Clegg & McAuley, 2005; Gmelch et al., 2017; Inman, 2009; Marshall, 2012; Rudhumbu, 2015; Wald & Golding, 2019). One of the challenges of defining their experiences in the role is that the nature of the position changes depending on the type of higher education institution in which they are employed (Clegg & McAuley, 2005). Of the studies undertaken, very few are based in Aotearoa New Zealand and even fewer in a polytechnic context.

As has been identified in this chapter, there are many challenges associated with the role due to workplace conditions that limit opportunities for higher education middle managers to function optimally. This study seeks to offer an original contribution to understanding the role by taking an in-depth look at how the higher education middle manager perceives and experiences their role, and the factors that enable or inhibit their ability to function optimally within it in the context of an Aotearoa New Zealand polytechnic.

2.6 Conceptual Framework and Scope of the Study

An initial understanding of the role, as well as the motivation for undertaking this study, came from the researcher's own experience as a higher education middle manager in the Aotearoa New Zealand polytechnic sector. Further understanding of the role came from a review of literature on the middle management role in general and more specifically within the higher education context. The literature review was also instrumental in identifying the ways in which other researchers have approached the study of how individuals function in the workplace and the factors that influence their ability to do their jobs successfully (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). All of the above has helped develop the conceptual framework for this study.

The intention of a conceptual framework is to offer a tentative theory of the phenomenon under study and to inform and guide the research process (Maxwell, 2008). It is understood that an overreliance on theory has the potential to limit the researcher's ability to recognise some of the findings that might emerge from the data (Collins & Stockton, 2018), or might force preconceptions of the findings (Osanloo & Grant, 2016). With this in mind, and in alignment with an interpretive approach, the conceptual framework for this study has been developed as a "soft interpretation of intentions" (Levering, 2002, p. 37) rather than the suggestion that it presents firm evidence of the experiences of higher education middle managers within the case organisation. The concepts within the framework will inform the design of the research and be re-visited when discussing and analysing the findings.

Sometimes the application of a single theory is not enough to study a phenomenon and synthesising relevant theoretical concepts from various sources can be a more suitable approach (Imenda, 2014). Due to the complexity of the higher education middle manager role, several organisational theories have been considered within this study. The theories explored within the literature review have highlighted multiple factors that influence how individuals perceive and experience their work environment and the various outcomes and actions that result from those experiences. In addition, literature on the higher education middle manager role has suggested that people in the role have faced many of the issues associated with concepts presented in the organisational theories. The way that the theories and

literature associated with the role have informed the conceptual framework of this study is presented in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2

Conceptual Framework for Exploring Optimal Functioning in the Higher Education Middle Manager Role
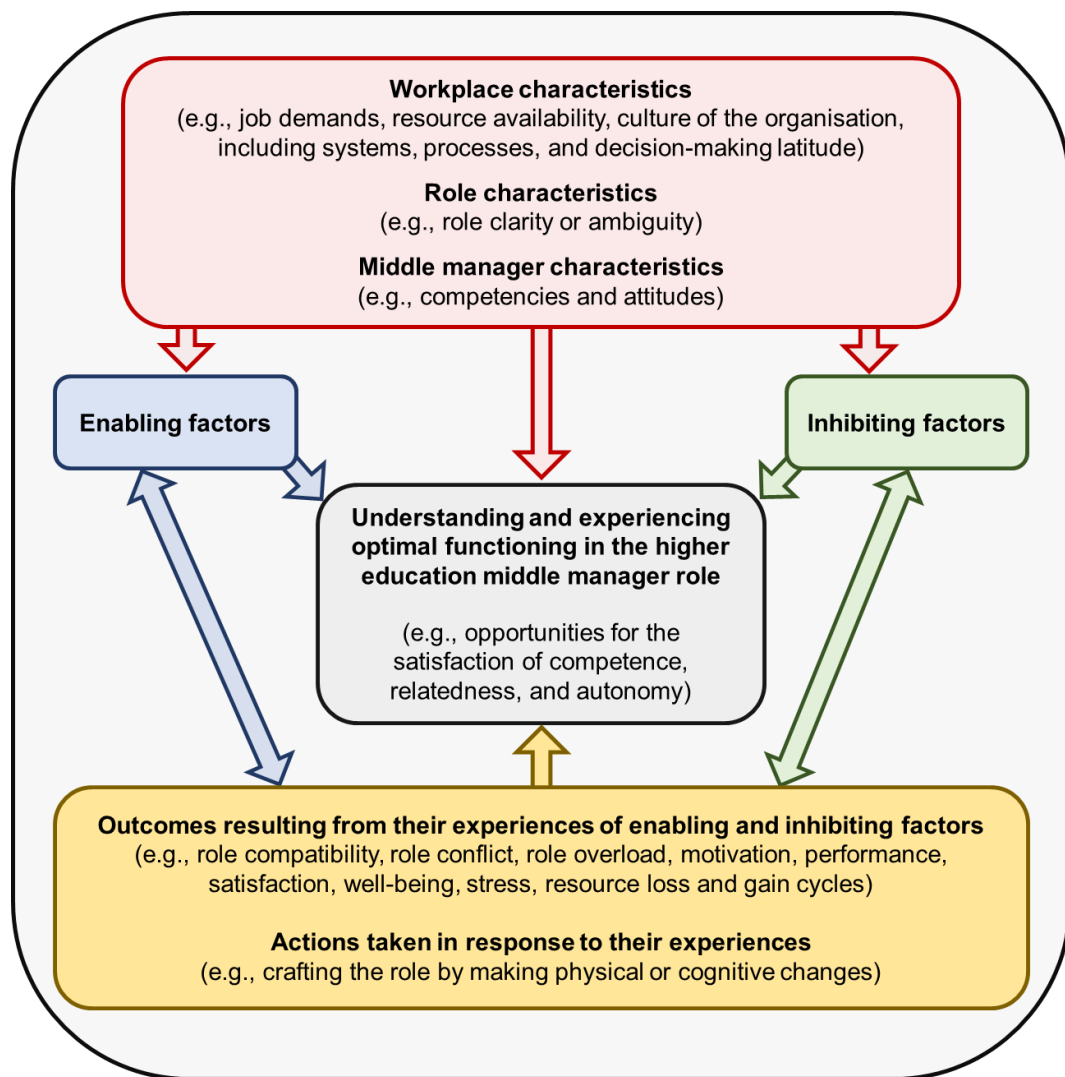
The concept of optimal functioning in this study is informed by SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2017), and is based on whether the experiences higher education middle managers have in their role allow opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs for competency, autonomy, and relatedness. Workplace and role characteristics are considered in relation to JD-R theory (Bakker, 2011) and role theory (Bess & Dee, 2008). Outcomes and actions taken in response to their experiences are considered in

relation to job crafting (Demerouti, 2014), role theory (Bess & Dee, 2008), and the JD-R concept of loss and gain spirals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

Drawing from concepts within JD-R theory (Bakker, 2011), the framework considers workplace and role characteristics, along with the characteristics of the higher education middle managers themselves, to be experienced as either enabling or inhibiting factors that influence their understanding and experiences within the role. Workplace and role characteristics may include factors such as the demands of the role, resource availability, the clarity of the role, and the culture of the organisation, including systems, processes, and decision-making latitude. Individuals respond to their environment according to how they perceive it (Korpela, 2014), and the value placed on resources is subjective (Halbesleben et al., 2014), therefore personal characteristics of the higher education middle manager are also understood to influence their understanding and experiences of optimal functioning in the role. In addition, and as represented by arrow direction in Figure 2.2, these characteristics may influence understanding and experiences in the role regardless of whether they are experienced as enabling or inhibiting factors.

The higher education middle manager role is recognised as being multi-faceted and multi-directional with many competing demands and expectations (Branson et al., 2016; Briggs, 2003b), making role theory a useful lens with which to view the outcomes and actions taken by higher education middle managers in response to their experiences. The conceptual framework identifies some concepts within role theory as role characteristics that could be experienced as enabling or inhibiting factors (e.g., role clarity or ambiguity), and others as role characteristics that could be experienced as outcomes (e.g., role conflict or overload). Informed by the JD-R concept of loss and gain spirals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018), those outcomes may then result in further enabling or inhibiting factors. Another consideration within loss and gain spirals is the process of job crafting whereby, in response to their experiences, individuals may adapt their roles either physically or psychologically to better align job demands with resource availability and therefore their understanding and enactment of the role (Demerouti, 2014).

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed relevant literature which has informed the conceptual framework of this study and has highlighted gaps in the literature that this study aims to address. The following chapter presents the methodology that has guided the research process for this study.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed literature relevant to this study, highlighted gaps found in the literature, outlined the gaps this study aimed to explore, and presented the conceptual framework that has been used to guide the study. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the research methodological approach and the related research processes followed to undertake this study.

Using a case study approach, this research explored the phenomenon of the experiences of middle managers within the context of one higher education institution in Aotearoa New Zealand. The case was bounded by the voices of the participants, being middle managers from the chosen institution, and used qualitative data collection and analysis. This chapter discusses the methodological framework and research design of the study along with validity and ethical considerations.

3.2 Methodological Underpinnings

A theoretical social enquiry framework, referred to as a paradigm, involves "a set of interlocking philosophical assumptions and stances about knowledge, our social world, our ability to know that world, and our reasons for knowing it" (Greene & Caracelli, 1997, p. 6). Whether implicit or explicit, a paradigm influences the way we interpret and understand knowledge, therefore it influences the way we choose to undertake research (Morrison, 2012). The research paradigm should be established at the beginning of a study to set out the "intent, motivation and expectations for the research", and provide the foundation for subsequent methodological choices (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 194).

Grogan and Cleaver-Simmons (2012) talk of three dimensions associated with a research paradigm: an ontological perspective, being perceptions about the nature of reality; an epistemological perspective, being the understanding of how knowledge can be gained; and the methodological approach usually associated with the paradigm. A researcher working within the interpretivist paradigm acknowledges a relativist ontology and understands that rather than reality being "out there" as

external phenomena to be discovered as "facts", reality is a construct that people understand in different ways (Morrison, 2012). The interpretivist researcher understands that knowledge is constructed through lived experiences and through interactions with others, therefore multiple realities exist and are dependent on the individual (Lincoln et al., 2011). Guided by a subjectivist epistemological standpoint, the interpretivist researcher understands that findings are created during the process of interaction between the inquirer and inquired (Guba, 1990). This means our own experiences will influence the research process, including the gathering and analysis of the data and the "knowledge we generate as researchers" (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 104).

The interpretive approach to research was contributory to this study, as the researcher aimed to gain in-depth knowledge from the lived experiences of the participants within their role as middle managers in the higher education environment. The researcher understands that knowledge can be gained by looking at the world from the view point of those who live in it and by exploring "the 'meanings' of events and phenomena from the subjects' perspectives" (Morrison, 2012, p. 20). It is understood that, due to their unique situations, the participants have varying experiences and interpretations of the phenomena under investigation. This study involved recording and analysing participants' experiences of the middle manager role as it is subjectively perceived and encountered (Mabry, 2008).

The researcher acknowledges that the interpretive approach assumes we cannot separate ourselves from our own knowledge and experiences, and are therefore not able to offer objective findings gained from taking this approach (Angen, 2000). Instead, the researcher aimed to present a specific version of a social reality that is constructed by the participants and their experiences within the case organisation. The findings from this research were not intended to be considered generalisable knowledge, nor to constitute a definitive reality existing independently of social actors (Briggs, 2003b). It is, however, expected that patterns found in the findings can offer areas for discussion with the acknowledgement that the researcher's own understanding of the subject will also influence this discussion (Briggs, 2003b).

3.3 Research Questions

With consideration of the study's conceptual framework and methodological underpinnings, the following overarching research question and sub-questions this study aimed to explore were developed.

3.3.1 Overarching Research Question

What lessons can be learned from the experiences middle managers have within their role in an Aotearoa New Zealand higher education institution?

3.3.2 Research Sub-Questions

RSQ1. What factors do the higher education middle managers consider when defining optimal functioning in their role?

RSQ2. How well do the higher education middle managers feel they are functioning in their role?

RSQ3. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have enabled them in their role?

RSQ4. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have inhibited them in their role?

RSQ5. How much control do the higher education middle managers feel they have over the factors that enable and inhibit them in their role?

3.4 Qualitative Case Study

With consideration of the interpretivist theoretical framework and purpose of the study, a qualitative case study approach was chosen because of its appropriateness in gaining a deep understanding of particular instances of phenomena (Mabry, 2008).

The case study is a well-established research method used in many situations to contribute to knowledge of a wide variety of phenomena including the experiences and actions of individuals, groups, and organisations (Yin, 2014). A defining aspect of the case study approach is the setting of boundaries that encase the individual unit

to be investigated (Flyvbjerg, 2011; Stake, 1995). Case studies therefore focus on a bounded phenomenon (Mabry, 2008) and examine a single setting, object, event or depository of documents (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), a special "something" to be studied (Stake, 1995), or "relationships, experiences or processes" in a "particular instance" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 52).

The case study approach has been used predominantly for the discovery of information rather than the testing of theory (Denscombe, 2010), and for such purposes, it tends to be "inductive", where theory development is only approached after data collection (Mabry, 2008). There are several theory-based applications, or case study design types, discussed in the literature such as exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive (Berg & Lune, 2012; Swanborn, 2010; Yin, 2014). The choice over which design to use depends on the aims and objectives of the research (Yin, 2014). The "descriptive" application to case studies involves establishing a viable theoretical framework which then informs the development of research questions and guides the research process (Berg & Lune, 2017). Questions used for descriptive applications include the "what" or "how" of the subject under study (Swanborn, 2010). Descriptive case studies are among the most commonly used and are valuable for a variety of situations (Yin, 2012).

This study can be described as a descriptive case study due to the identification of the theoretical framework prior to the research questions being developed and the choice of research questions focusing on the "what" and "how" of the phenomenon under study. By focusing on a phenomenon shared by insiders, this case study was intended to enable the researcher to gain an in-depth account of experiences or processes occurring within their context (Denscombe, 2010; Mabry, 2008). This single site case study explores the phenomena of the "experiences of middle managers within the context of one higher education institution". This being the "case", the study is bounded by the voices of the participants, and the findings are discussed in relation to their understandings and actions of being a middle manager within the context of the selected Aotearoa New Zealand higher education institution.

3.5 Research Design and Phases of the Study

The research design focussed specifically on gathering information to address the research questions, and it was essential that the focus remained on this objective throughout the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In alignment with the interpretivist theoretical framework, data collection and analysis procedures were chosen to offer a description of the experiences of middle managers in higher education from a qualitative perspective.

Applying a sequential design (Morse, 2010), this study was conducted in two phases, with one data collection and analysis procedure preceding the other, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1

Two Phases of the Sequential Design

The study began with phase one, which involved gathering and analysing primary data in the form of semi-structured one-on-one interviews with middle managers to gain an understanding of their experiences in the role. Factors that had emerged from the analysis of phase one interview data were further explored through a qualitative questionnaire during phase two of the study. Each of these two phases of the study focussed on specific research sub-questions. Table 3.1 links the phases of the study to the research sub-questions explored at each phase. The individual interview findings are presented in chapter four and the questionnaire findings are presented in chapter five.

Table 3.1

Research Sub-Questions and Phases of the Study

Research sub-questions and phases of the study	Phase one Individual interviews	Phase two Qualitative questionnaire
	Chapter 4	**Chapter 5**
RSQ1. What factors do higher education managers consider when defining optimal functioning in their role?	✓	✓
RSQ2. How well do the higher education middle managers feel they are functioning in their role?	✗	✓
RSQ3. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have enabled them in their role?	✓	✓
RSQ4. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have inhibited them in their role?	✓	✓
RSQ5. How much control do the higher education middle managers feel they have over the factors that enable and inhibit them in their role?	✗	✓

3.6 Participants of this Study

In qualitative research, it is necessary to select participants who can best help develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2014). In this case, the phenomenon under study was the experiences of middle managers in a specific Aotearoa New Zealand higher education institution. Therefore, the participants considered suitable for answering the research questions were middle managers who manage programmes of study within the case organisation and are hierarchically positioned between senior managers and tutors, as presented in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2

Position of the Middle Manager Role in the Case Organisation's Hierarchical Chart

Chief executive reports to an executive committee	Chief Executive	
Senior managers report to the chief executive	Senior Manager (Head of Faculty)	Senior Manager (Head of Faculty)
Participants of this study Middle managers report to the senior manager	**Middle Manager (PM or POM)**	**Middle Manager (PM or POM)**
Tutors report to the middle manager.	Tutors	Tutors
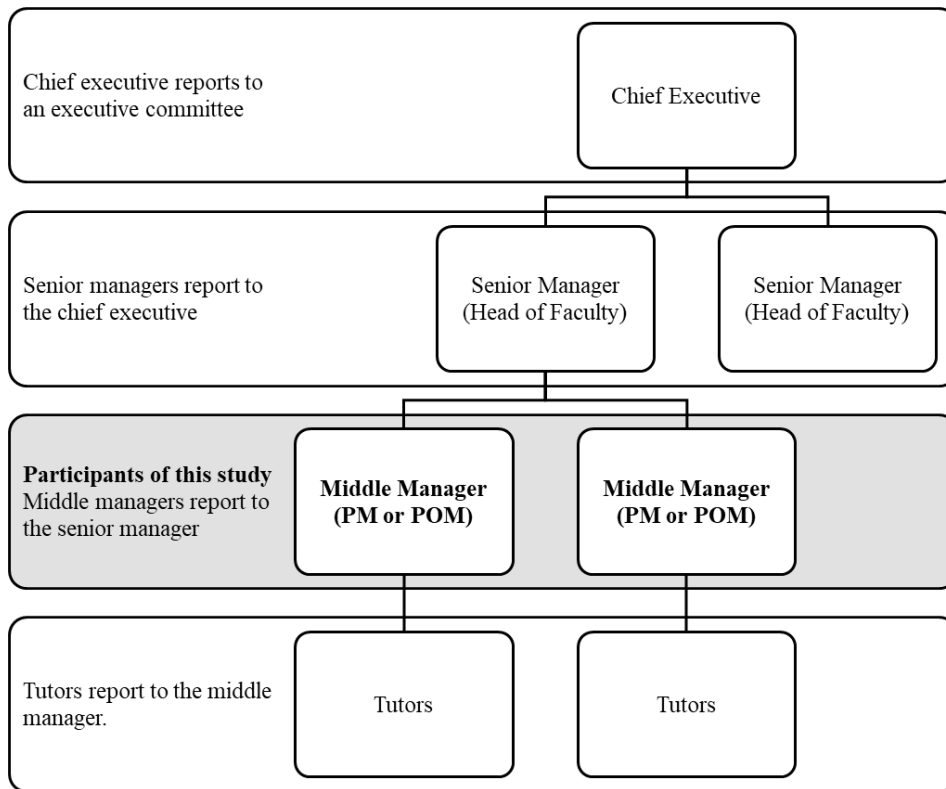
Note. This figure is a representation of the hierarchical position of the middle manager role in the case organisation, developed by the researcher, and not from an official document of the organisation.

Each middle manager is responsible for a range of programmes within their departments and oversees a team of contracted and/or tenured tutors. Depending on the subject areas, number of programmes, and enrolment numbers, some departments might have a technician to oversee equipment and materials within the learning environment or an administrator to support the middle manager.

The middle manager role titles are either programme manager (PM) or programme operations manager (POM). The difference between the two roles is that academic leadership, teaching tasks, and scholarship and research are not required of the POM where they are of the PM. The organisation has more middle managers employed in the PM role than they do in the POM role, with only a small number employed as a POM. Because of this, throughout this thesis, there is no mention of the number of participants in either role, as doing so could risk disclosure of their identity.

3.7 Phase One – Semi-Structured Interviews

The process of selecting participants, gathering data, and analysing data for the semi-structured interviews during phase one of the study is discussed in this section.

3.7.1 Interview Participant Selection

An appropriate number of participants needed to be chosen with consideration of the data collection techniques, the amount of data needed to answer the research questions, and the time constraints of the study (Creswell, 2014). Reflecting the number currently employed as middle managers in the chosen institution at the time of undertaking the interviews, the potential participant number for the interviews was limited to 18. However, as this was an in-depth enquiry, in a given context, and based on the literature (see Crouch & McKenzie, 2006), this number or fewer is considered acceptable.

Guest et al. (2006) believe that when the aim of the research is to understand common perceptions and experiences among a group of relatively homogeneous individuals, about 12 participants should be adequate. For this proposed study, the participants are homogenous in the sense that they have experienced the role as a middle manager within the same Aotearoa New Zealand tertiary institution. With consideration of the amount of data needed to answer the research questions, and the time constraints of the study, the researcher asked for volunteers from the 18 individuals currently employed in the role, with 11 agreeing to be interviewed. Both male and female programme managers and programme operations managers were included within the participant group.

3.7.2 Interview Data Collection

Being one of the most frequently used qualitative data collection techniques (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006), interviews are important sources of evidence within case study research (Yin, 2014). Data gathered from interviews is understood to be insightful, offering the personal views of participants, such as their perceptions and attitudes, along with explanations of their experiences (Yin, 2014). They can be undertaken by face-to-face, telephone, online voice, online video, or email formats,

and can be unstructured, semi-structured, or structured, with the choice of interview determined by the research purpose (Gillham, 2005).

The semi-structured interview involves topic-focussed, open-ended questions which are used to guide the discussion but leave enough flexibility to enable the participant's voice to be heard (Gillham, 2005). The benefit of this type of interview is that having some form of structure helps during the analysis process to identify themes within the data, and the flexibility also allows for a "strong element of discovery" (Gillham, 2005, p. 72). One-on-one semi-structured interviews were considered to be suitable for this study due to their ability to provide a thorough understanding of the phenomenon of interest while having enough structure to ensure the focus remained on the pre-determined research sub-questions.

Having structure allowed for the data to be analysed in "terms of commonalities", which were the emerging factors that directly related to the research sub-questions (Gillham, 2005, p. 72). The aim of the interviews was to gain an understanding of the factors that the middle managers from the case organisation consider to define optimal functioning and what they have experienced that enables and inhibits optimal functioning, therefore, the interview questions were designed to reveal those factors. Interview documentation is presented in Appendix A.

3.7.3 Undertaking the Interviews

Saunders et al. (2019) suggest starting a semi-structured interview with some key questions relating to predetermined themes to guide the interview structure. The way the questions and themes are used within the interview will depend on the researcher's philosophical assumptions (Saunders et al., 2019). When adopting an interpretivist approach the researcher expects to use the questions in a flexible manner that will change in response to interviewee input and the flow of conversation (Saunders et al., 2019). The researcher prepared some guiding interview questions which were based on the research sub-questions. In addition, prior to the interviews, the researcher re-read the job descriptions to gain an understanding of the documented requirements of the role. The main tasks listed on the job descriptions were used as prompts during the interviews if the topics had not already emerged in the conversation.

To undertake successful interviews it is important for the researcher to be aware of the many stages of an interview process and to plan well, from initial preparation through to closure (Gillham, 2005). This was acknowledged throughout the process. Middle managers overseeing programmes of study were invited to participate during an initial phone call and then through a follow-up email which contained an information sheet consent form. The interviewees were offered the choice of location for the interview and chose either their own offices or a classroom. Items taken to the interview included two voice recorders and the previously emailed documentation along with a copy of the relevant job description.

Because the participants were known to the researcher in a professional capacity as peers in the organisation, the initial contact phase was relatively informal. Gillham (2005) explains the importance of the orientation phase of an interview, during which the interviewer offers a more detailed explanation of the information about the study that had been previously provided to the participant. During the orientation phase of each interview for this study, the researcher outlined the purpose and expected structure of the interview and asked the participant if they had any questions. The interview commenced once questions were answered and the consent form had been signed. Once the interview had concluded, closure involved offering an opportunity for the interviewee to ask questions and acknowledging the interviewee's input. There were no concluding questions asked by the interviewees.

The interview audio recordings were organised and stored as electronic files which were labelled using a number for each interviewee. These recordings were transcribed by an external transcriber and the electronic transcriptions were also organised and stored as electronic files. Sections of each recording were then compared against the written account to check for transcription accuracy. Before the interview data analysis began, each transcribed file was emailed to the individual participants and they were offered two weeks in which to suggest any adjustments.

3.7.4 Interview Data Analysis

The phase one individual interview data were analysed using an inductive approach to categorical analysis (Creswell, 2013a) through which the categories and factors emerged. The general process for qualitative data analysis involves preparing

and organising the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes by coding and subsequently condensing the codes, followed by representing the data in figures, tables, or discussion (Creswell, 2013a). The interview data for this study has been presented in the format of tables followed by discussion and excerpts from the interviews. Saldaña (2013) outlines the processes of qualitative data coding within first cycle and second cycle coding stages, which guided the interview analysis within this study.

The initial stage of the interview data analysis involved the researcher becoming familiar with the data by reading the transcripts several times. The electronic files were then imported into NVivo software (NVivo, 2015) in preparation for coding. Considered to be the core feature of qualitative data analysis, coding involves dividing text into units and then grouping these into themes to offer a broad perspective of the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Creswell (2013b) suggests starting with approximately five or six categories, then, regardless of the amount of data, expanding to no more than 30. He then recommends reducing those categories into five or six general themes, which are then used to write the narrative. The researcher followed a similar process expanding the number of categories during first cycle coding and reducing the number of categories during second cycle coding.

3.7.4.1 First Coding Cycle. During the first coding cycle, the researcher applied "structural coding", which Saldaña (2013) suggests is suitable for interview transcript analysis when coding data to categories relating to specific research questions. To ensure the focus remained on the objectives of the research, research sub-questions 1, 3, and 4 were created as overarching prefigured categories in the software. These overarching categories, which remained throughout the coding process, are called "parent nodes". The first coding process involved placing direct quotations from the transcribed interview data into the parent nodes. Table 3.2 shows the research sub-questions and the related prefigured parent nodes.

Table 3.2

Prefigured Parent Nodes for Interview Analysis

Research sub-questions to be covered during analysis	Parent nodes prefigured in the analysis software

RSQ1. What factors do higher education managers consider when defining optimal functioning in their role?	Optimal functioning in the role
RSQ3. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have enabled them in their role?	Enablers to optimal functioning
RSQ4. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have inhibited them in their role?	Inhibitors to optimal functioning

Within each parent node, groupings of quotations that related to similar topics were placed into categories for "initial emergent factors", each with a label that reflected the topic. These formed groupings of "emergent" data, a process which is considered to be effective in allowing the participants' voices to be reflected in a traditional qualitative way (Creswell, 2013b). This process, called sub-coding, results in the creation of so-called "child nodes" and is appropriate for analysing the content of interviews, particularly when the data are to be later used for more extensive categorisation (Saldaña, 2013). The first coding cycle is represented in Figure 3.3, which shows how excerpts from the interviews were coded to the prefigured parent nodes and then coded to initial emergent factors.

Figure 3.3

First Coding Cycle of Interview Data Analysis in Phase One: An Illustrative Example
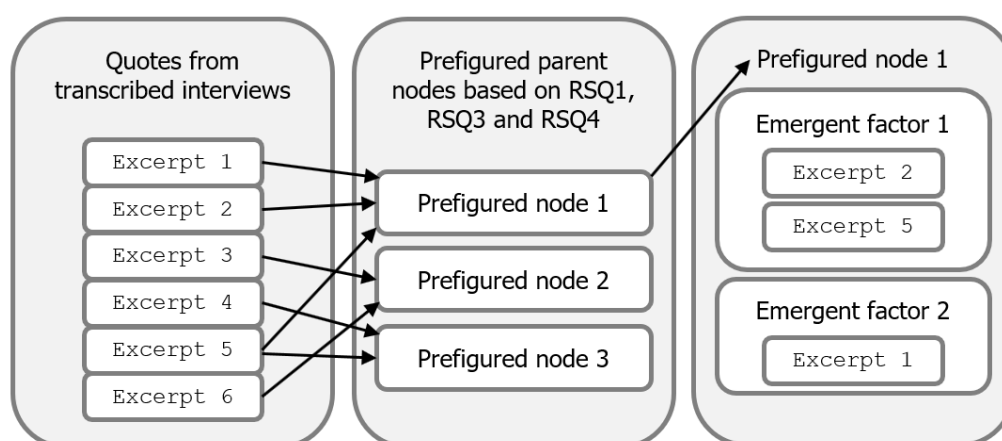
During this stage of data analysis, the researcher allowed for "simultaneous coding" whereby some of the data was coded to more than one parent and child

node. This type of coding is justified when it is difficult to assign the data to any one code or when the focus of the study includes more than one area of interest (Saldaña, 2013). In this case, some of the statements made by the participants were relevant to more than one research sub-question and emergent factor. Saldaña (2013) states that simultaneous coding should be used sparingly when done manually, due to the logistical challenges it can create, however, the use of software for coding can make this process easier to manage. The use of the NVivo "coding stripes" tool (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2018) enabled the researcher to view the nodes in which any one quote was coded and allowed for easy management of simultaneous coding.

3.7.4.2 Second Coding Cycle. This stage of interview analysis involved "second cycle coding", which comprises the reanalysis and reorganisation of the data coded during the first cycle (Saldaña, 2013). There is not necessarily a clear line between the processes that happen within the two coding cycles, however, there is a clear goal for the second cycle, which is "to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of First Cycle codes" (Saldaña, 2013, p. 207). "Focussed coding" was used during the second coding cycle. Focussed coding draws out the most frequent or significant codes from the initial coding cycle to create categories that make the most analytical sense (Saldaña, 2013), and, in this case, help to answer the research questions.

Silver and Lewins (2014) stress the importance of refining the coding scheme to be able to progress analysis. During this stage of the analysis the researcher followed some of their recommendations for the refining process, by: merging conceptually similar codes; grouping or dropping little-used, marginal or redundant codes; using tables and figures available in the software to view the coded data and categories; and writing information to help with the thinking and planning process (Silver & Lewins, 2014). Many of the quotations that were coded to more than one node during the first stage of coding were reorganised at this second stage. Given the nature of qualitative data, it was not expected that a list of completely separate factors would emerge. However, this process enabled further refinement of the factors to help illuminate major themes or concepts (Saldaña, 2013) in preparation for presentation, analysis, and discussion.

Figure 3.4 outlines the second coding cycle and shows how the initial emergent factors were merged into a refined factor (called a grandchild node) while also being placed into a category (child node) within the prefigured parent node.

Figure 3.4

Second Coding Cycle of Interview Data Analysis in Phase One: An Illustrative Example
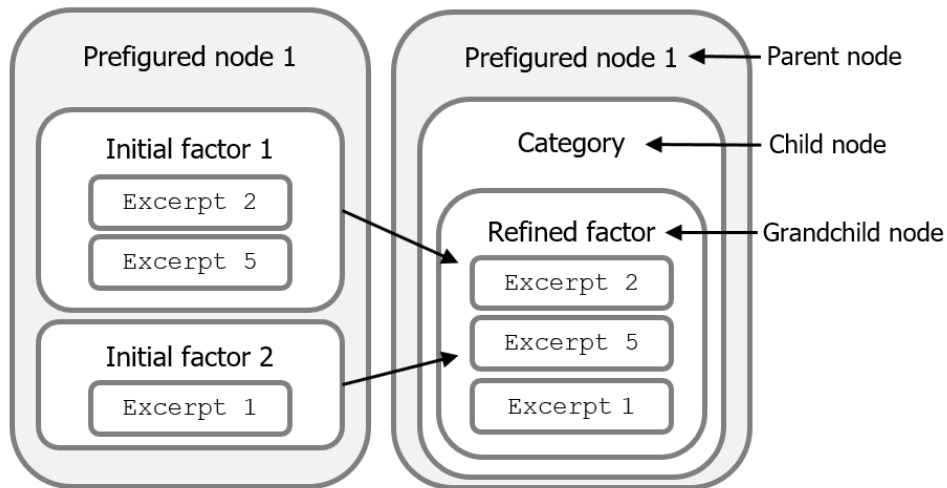
Each prefigured parent node contains several child nodes (called categories), each child node contains several grandchild nodes (called factors), and each grandchild node contains several excerpts from the transcribed interviews. The categories and factors were then used to develop the questionnaire in preparation for phase two of the study which is discussed in the following section.

3.8 Phase Two: Qualitative Questionnaire

The processes of selecting participants, gathering data, and analysing data for the qualitative questionnaire that took place during phase two of the study are discussed in this section.

3.8.1 Questionnaire Participant Selection

When discussing the use of low participant numbers for qualitative questionnaires, Boddy (2016) states that the sample size chosen is dependent on the context and paradigm of the research being conducted. The factors to consider for the

questionnaire in this study were the number of potential participants in the case under study and the interpretive approach to the research. Being qualitative, the questionnaire aligns with the interpretivist paradigm. In contrast to the larger numbers required in research that is based on a positivist paradigm, in-depth qualitative research can use low numbers of participants for questionnaires, so long as the researcher offers justification for the small sample size (Boddy, 2016). The acceptability of having a low number of participants for the questionnaire is therefore justified by the purpose of the questionnaire, the limited pool of potential participants, and the type of data valuable to interpretivist research.

With the case being bounded by the one organisation, the participants were those currently employed in the middle manager role at that organisation. At the time the questionnaire was distributed, there were 18 people employed in the role, so the participant numbers were limited to a maximum of 18. Of the 18 invited to respond to the questionnaire, some had participated in the one-on-one interviews and some had not, due to staff turnover in between phases one and two of the study, and because not all in the role participated in phase one. The questionnaire received 15 full responses and 1 partial response.

3.8.2 Questionnaire Data Collection and Analysis

It is understood that the way individuals view their roles in organisations is influenced by a variety of factors such as the interpersonal communication between themselves and others within and outside of the organisation, the expectations placed on them from others, and individual personality factors (Katz & Kahn, 1978). With consideration of these factors, and in alignment with the interpretivist theoretical underpinnings of this study, it was expected that the participants of this study might view their roles from differing perspectives. The questionnaire was designed to capture those experiences and interpretations by giving middle managers the opportunity to rate each factor that had emerged from the interview analysis along with offering comments of their own in relation to the various categories.

Charlotte and Hagström (2017) state that qualitative questionnaires can offer highly informative data about various aspects of everyday life and are therefore a useful tool for researchers from a variety of disciplines. Questionnaires are also

considered useful to complement other data collection techniques such as interviews (Saunders et al., 2019), which is how the qualitative questionnaire was applied within this study. Findings that had emerged from the interviews were used to inform the content of the questionnaire.

    3.8.2.1 Developing the Questionnaire. The design of a questionnaire can affect the quality of the data collected, so careful planning is required to minimise the risks associated with ineffective questionnaire design (Saunders et al., 2019). Following recommendations given by Saunders et al. (2019), a clear explanation of the purpose of the questionnaire was included within the introduction section, ensured an easy-to-follow and clear visual presentation of the questions, and undertook a pilot test. LimeSurvey software was used to develop the questionnaire (LimeSurvey, 2003). This survey tool was recommended by The University of Southern Queensland (USQ), who granted ethics approval for this study and who consider the survey tool as acceptable for use in postgraduate research.

    During the development of the questionnaire, input was sought from a work colleague with expertise in research to ensure the questions were designed appropriately to meet the objectives of the research and suit the participant group. The questionnaire also went through the ethical approval process at the University of Southern Queensland. A pilot test was undertaken with three individuals to gain feedback on the clarity of the introduction and instructions, the design and layout of the questions, the clarity of question phrasing, and the length of time the questionnaire took to complete.

    The ideal number of people to use in a pilot test depends on the research objectives and questions, the size of the research project, the resources available, and how well the initial questionnaire has been designed (Saunders et al., 2019). During the pilot testing stage, the researcher chose not to use anybody who could be a participant in the finalised questionnaire, so as not to exclude those people from participating. Considerable care went into the design of the questionnaire. Because the questions were directly related to the factors that had emerged from the interview data, it was only necessary to pilot the clarity and flow of the content, the visual appearance of the formatting, and the length of time to complete. These elements were able to be tested by those not in the participant group; the three pilot testers

selected were considered suitable because they were able to offer the required feedback. The pilot testers included two people who were information technology professionals specialising in design, programming, and proof reading but were not working at the case organisation. The third pilot tester worked at the case organisation and had a good understanding of the organisation's systems, processes, and compliance requirements and was therefore able to check the questions in the context of the organisation. Table 3.3 outlines the comments and recommendations made by the pilot testers along with associated changes made.

Table 3.3

Feedback Received and Changes Made from Questionnaire Pilot Test Feedback

Feedback received	Changes made
Design and layout of the questionnaire Two testers found the layout clear and easy to follow and one tester recommended some colour changes for clarity.	None. It was not possible to make the recommended colour changes due to limited formatting options within the software.
Length of time to complete The times taken to complete the questionnaire were 20, 25 and 40 minutes.	The information sheet and questionnaire introduction were updated to indicate 40 minutes instead of 20 minutes as the expected completion time.
Spelling and grammar There were a few spelling mistakes which occurred during the process of transferring information into the survey software.	Spelling mistakes were corrected.
Clarity of the questions The testers suggested changing the structure of some questions to increase clarity. One tester recommended changing the order of some questions.	The structure of some questions were changed for clarity. The order of some questions was rearranged to improve the flow of the topics.
Introduction and instructions Two of the testers found the instructions and introduction were clear and easy to follow. One of the testers said the instructions did not make it clear enough to know the perspective from which the questions should be answered.	Improvements were made to the information sheet to clarify that the questions should be answered based on the participant's experience in their role as middle manager.

3.8.2.2 Distributing the Questionnaire. Saunders et al. (2019) highlight the importance of carefully planning how questionnaires are delivered and returned and suggest considering several factors related to the research questions and objectives

when making such decisions. Of consideration when deciding on the questionnaire delivery mode for this study were the communication channels used at the organisation, the types of questions asked in the questionnaire, and the number of individuals invited to participate.

A considerable amount of communication at the case organisation is done via email, so delivering a link to the self-administered questionnaire within an introductory email was considered appropriate. In response to feedback from the pilot testers, the researcher met face-to-face with the respondents individually prior to emailing out the questionnaire link. The reason for the meeting was to offer an explanation of the types of questions asked in the questionnaire, present the background and purpose of the questionnaire, and leave an information sheet with each of the participants. This was an opportunity for the participants to ask any questions they might have had regarding the questionnaire or the study in general. The low number of participants made this part of the process possible.

3.8.2.3 Data Gathered from the Questionnaire. Two types of data were gathered from the questionnaire. The principal content of the questionnaire included single item Likert-type questions with ordinal rating scale response options (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). The questionnaire also included open-ended questions in each of the sections that offered the participants an opportunity to add anything they might like to share relating to the topics within the rating scale questions. Likert-type questionnaires are different to Likert questionnaires in that Likert-type questionnaires are not developed with the aim of combining responses during analysis (Clason & Dormody, 1994). The response options in the questionnaire were able to be ordered, but the differences between each of the response options were not able to be measured. Due to these characteristics, the closed-ended questions fell into the category of an ordinal measurement scale (Bernard, 2006). The questionnaire is included in Appendix B.

3.8.2.4 Questionnaire Analysis. Boone and Boone (2012) explain that analysis method decisions for rating scale data are determined by the type of scale used. The Stevens' scale of measurement emphasises the need to differentiate between nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio scales and stresses the importance of using the appropriate statistical tools for each one (Stevens, 1946). The questionnaire

in this study made use of categorical variables in an ordinal scale of measurement. This scale of measurement is characterised by the ability to "rank" the response options but not calculate the difference between them, because they are not considered to be evenly spaced due to their subjective nature (Stevens, 1946; Sullivan & Artino, 2013). In addition, the categories overlap because they are ambiguous by nature (Vonglao, 2017). Subjective variables therefore do not have numerical value and are not able to be measured mathematically (Svensson, 2001).

The Likert-type items and subjective nature of the variables used the questionnaire for this study influenced the type of analysis tools used. Mean value, standard deviation, and other mathematical calculations are not able to be applied to such data (Svensson, 2001), and due to the low participant numbers, percentages are also not recommended (Blaikie, 2003). Instead, descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, which provides "categorical information on number of occurrences", are more suitable for ordered categorical variables (Burrell & Motel, 2018, p. 594), and have been used to analyse the findings of the questionnaire. Frequency distribution of the questionnaire data is presented using tables.

3.9 Using Visual Representation During Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

Visual displays have been applied during the analysis and discussion of the findings of this study to help identify and clarify the experiences of middle managers and how they function in their role within the selected higher education institution. The use of visual displays such as models are understood to be useful for analysing and presenting research findings (Briggs, 2012; Buckley & Waring, 2013; Somekh & Lewin, 2011), as they can offer further insight into situations by exposing complexities and establishing relationships between underlying principles and concepts (Briggs, 2012). In addition, a visual representation of research findings can help to simplify complex information into a framework that is easy to follow (Somekh & Lewin, 2011). Although more often used in quantitative studies, visual displays, according to Verdinelli and Scagnoli (2013), are also useful in qualitative research. This is particularly so in case study research, where modelling helps to

represent the findings of the study while also acknowledging the uniqueness of the context in which the study is undertaken (Briggs, 2007).

Existing models are often borrowed and adapted during the research process (Buckley & Waring, 2013). In alignment with the study's conceptual framework, the visual representation of the findings have drawn from model concepts within the informing theories. The creation of the visual displays for this study relied heavily on an iterative process that Berkowitz (1997) describes as a loop-like pattern of revisiting data to unearth new connections and a deeper understanding of the findings.

3.10 Position of the Researcher in the Research

Being employed in the organisation in which a researcher undertakes their study can have ethical implications, and can impact the validity of the findings of a study, if not considered and managed well throughout the research process (Greene, 2014). For this reason, an outline of the nature of the relationship between the researcher and participants is presented here as background information prior to the discussion of the validity and ethics considered within this study.

There are four faculties at the research site. Each faculty has a senior manager (Head of Faculty) who is responsible for a team of middle managers who are either responsible for programme areas or support services. The faculty heads hold meetings once a month with the middle managers from their faculty to discuss administrative topics. The organisation holds a manager training day once a year which covers current topics of interest such as sector updates, organisational strategy, and finances. There are approximately nine faculty meetings a year and one manager training day. These are the only times the middle managers meet in a formal work-related context. The researcher is at the same hierarchical level within the organisation as the participants and has no personal bonds or professional commitments with any of the participants, therefore no power relations exist between the participants and the researcher. The researcher perceives the relationship between herself and the participants to be professional, positive, and collegial.

3.11 Validity and Bias

Validity is an important consideration for establishing the quality of a research design (Saunders et al., 2019). Internal validity refers to whether the findings of the research accurately represent the phenomenon under study, and external validity refers to the generalisability of the findings (Briggs et al., 2012). Bias due to systematic errors in the research process (The Association for Qualitative Research, 2013) can distort findings and negatively impact a the internal validity of a study at any stage of the research process (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010). External and internal validity were considered when planning and undertaking this research project, as discussed in the following sections.

3.11.1 External Validity

External validity refers to the extent in which the findings of one study can be generalised or transferred to other situations, populations or samples (Saunders et al., 2019) and is reliant on having a large sample of the population under study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Case studies can be seen only as reflecting a sample group of a larger population and therefore are not broad enough or not statistically representative of the whole population in question to be externally valid (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2012). Such studies are understood to provide "an interpretation of a situation rather than a single representative truth" (Chadderton & Torrance, 2011, p. 58). In addition, because case study research is often focussed on discovering the uniqueness of each case, generalisation is not necessarily a goal from the outset (Stake, 1995). This study investigated the phenomenon of the experiences of middle managers in the case of one organisation, therefore, the findings have low external validity and are considered in relation to the individual case rather than intended to be representative of the general population of middle managers. The findings may, however, be relevant to middle managers working in similar organisations through the process of "naturalistic generalization" which Mills et al. (2009, p. 2) define as "a process where readers gain insight by reflecting on the details and descriptions presented in case studies" which can then be "transferred" to similar contexts.

3.11.2 Internal Validity

Four potential threats to the internal validity of this study have been considered. These threats are associated with researcher bias, which occurs when an inaccurate description or conclusion has been generated due to any aspect of the research design, implementation or reporting process (Byrne, 2017). Researcher bias is often subconscious, so it is important to understand how it might present itself during a study in order that steps can be taken to reduce the negative impact it can have on internal validity (Choi & Pak, 2005). The first threat arises from being an insider researcher, which can have implications such as insider bias when the researcher is too familiar with the topic under study to remain objective. The second threat is interviewer bias, which can occur as a result of the researcher consciously or subconsciously transferring their biases to the participants in a way that affects their responses (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Questionnaire bias is the third threat which can be posed by issues within the design of a questionnaire leading to the generation of inaccurate results (Choi & Pak, 2005). The fourth threat is interpretation bias which compromises internal validity of a study when a researcher interprets the data to confirm their already existing beliefs (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). These are discussed in turn along with steps undertaken to reduce the threats of researcher bias on the validity of this study.

3.11.2.1 Insider Bias. The close connection of the researcher to the topic could create potential implications for the internal validity of the study. As an insider undertaking qualitative research, the researcher can influence the research process by their personal beliefs, experiences, and values associated with the research site (Greene, 2014; Hewitt-Taylor, 2002). Researchers need to take consideration of the potential that biases may creep in, and take steps to ensure that the research conducted is as bias-free as possible (Greene, 2014). Although it can be problematic for them, researchers should be able to undertake insider research with confidence "as long as the appropriate ethical boundaries are established at the outset and constantly re-visited throughout the process" (Floyd & Arthur, 2010, p. 5).

There are advantages to being an insider researcher: insiders have an in-depth understanding of the organisation along with established rapport and shared frames of reference with the participants (Floyd & Arthur, 2010). This familiarity with the

research environment offers background knowledge of the research context, gives the researcher a better sense of how to approach the target individuals, enables easy access, and creates more natural interaction with the participants during interviews (Greene, 2014).

Negative issues associated with being an insider researcher are caused by subjectivity narrowing the researcher's perception, which then influences many stages of the research process and ultimately the research outcomes (Greene, 2014). The researcher has control over which data are observed, which are ignored, and how the results are interpreted and presented (Costley et al., 2010). Because the researcher has a prior understanding of the context of what they are studying, subjectivity is understood to be unavoidable (Costley et al., 2010). It is, however, possible to reduce the impact of subjectivity during the research process (Greene, 2014).

One of the steps taken within this study to address the issue of subjective involvement was the use of reflexive practice, which can help increase internal validity (Greene, 2014). Reflexivity involves a process of self-examination of one's own attitudes, beliefs, and actions and the ways these influence the research process (Saunders et al., 2019). Reflexive practice requires the researcher to be aware that they exist in a mutual relationship with the phenomenon under study (Whitaker & Atkinson, 2019). By acknowledging this relationship, steps can be taken to reduce the potential of researcher bias. Carlson (2010) recommends keeping a journal that is used for "recording thoughts, feelings, uncertainties, values, beliefs, and assumptions that surface throughout the research process" (p. 1104). During this study, the researcher undertook reflective practice in the form of writing reflective personal notes. The notes were used for checking ethical and quality decision-making and personal motivations during the research process. They were also used as prompts for discussion during meetings with her supervisors for ethical and quality guidance throughout the period of supervision.

3.11.2.2 Interviewer Bias. An interviewer can influence the way an interviewee responds to questions by the way they communicate verbally and non-verbally during interviews; this interaction can result in interviewer bias (Saunders et al., 2019). Interviewer bias can also occur when the questions are worded or ordered in a certain way that has an influence on the responses (Salazar, 1990). These

influences can then negatively impact the success of the interview and the validity of the study (Salazar, 1990; Saunders et al., 2019). The steps taken to reduce the potential for interviewer bias within this study included being well prepared, establishing rapport with the respondents (Salazar, 1990; Saunders et al., 2019) and allowing flexibility in the order of discussion of topics. In addition, the interviewees were offered an opportunity to member check the interview transcripts prior to analysis (Birt et al., 2016).

Developing interview themes and supplying information to the interviewee before the interview helps to promote validity (Salazar, 1990; Saunders et al., 2019). The researcher formulated the interview questions in advance and used them for guidance during the interviews, which helped to keep the discussion focussed on the research sub-questions. In addition, days prior to the interviews taking place, participants were given an information sheet which outlined the questions that were expected to be covered during the interviews. Giving the participants an opportunity to think about the questions and formulate their own opinions before the interviews took place reduced some of the potential researcher influence (Saunders et al., 2019).

Establishing positive interaction with the respondents from the outset of an interview is important for reducing the potential anxiety an interviewee might have in sharing their experiences (Saunders et al., 2019). Being an insider researcher can help to establish this rapport more effectively than can be done by someone less familiar with the social setting or with the experiences of the interviewees (Greene, 2014). The researcher drew from her experience as a middle manager within the same organisation to develop rapport with the interview participants throughout the interview process. Some of the interviewees shared sensitive information; this was enabled by the trust that had developed between the two parties prior to and during the interviews. Having direct knowledge of the role and research environment also allowed the researcher to interact and communicate in a more natural or contextually appropriate way with the participants than an outsider researcher would have been able to (Greene, 2014). This relationship between the researcher and participant increased the validity of the study, as it enabled the participants to share their experiences with someone they could relate to and feel comfortable with.

"Member checking", referred to above and known as participant validation, involves the return of data to study participants to check for accuracy and is a means to reduce potential bias (Birt et al., 2016; Creswell, 2014). The member checking method applied in this study involved sending the initial interview transcripts to the interviewees to correct any errors, challenge any misrepresentation, or add information. When this process is undertaken by a researcher, there is the possibility that interviewees will choose to change their narrative, which, as Birt et al. (2016) point out, might not benefit the study. In this instance, none of the participants required changes to be made to their transcripts, although there were requests to ensure anonymity which the researcher was able to confirm.

3.11.2.3 Questionnaire Bias. Questionnaire bias can result from poor questionnaire design that generates inaccurate results (Choi & Pak, 2005). The bias can be due to the design of individual questions, the design of the whole questionnaire, the way the questionnaire is administered, or how it is completed by the respondent (Choi & Pak, 2005). If not designed, administered, or completed correctly, a questionnaire will not gather the data it was intended to measure, which in turn undermines its validity (Saunders et al., 2019). In addition, responses can be influenced by the order of questions and the use of leading, loaded, or ambiguous questions (Briggs et al., 2012). These factors were considered when developing the questionnaire.

Measurement validity of the questionnaire refers to whether the questionnaire "actually represents the reality" of what is being measured (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 517). Because the questions were developed from the factors that emerged during interview data analysis, and the response options represented the research sub-questions, it was expected that the questionnaire had high measurement validity. Given the qualitative nature of the study, the inclusion of open-ended question options in each section of the questionnaire also increased the measurement validity. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to add any information they felt was missing on the questionnaire and/or offer comments they felt were relevant to the topic.

Content validity of a questionnaire refers to the extent to which the questions provide adequate coverage of the overarching research questions and aims of the

research (Saunders et al., 2019). The research sub-questions of this study linked directly to the overarching research question and aims of the research. The questions in the questionnaire were informed by the findings from the interview data, and the interview data were analysed in direct relation to the research sub-questions. In addition, the remaining research sub-questions were directly asked in the questionnaire within the response options and therefore all relevant research sub-questions were covered within the questionnaire. For these reasons, the content validity of the questionnaire is high.

Robson and McCartan (2016) state that questionnaires work best when they contain standardised questions that are likely to be interpreted the same way by all respondents. Therefore, in addition to addressing the above validity considerations in the design of the questionnaire, the researcher met individually with all managers who had been invited to participate in the questionnaire to talk through its content. During this meeting, it was explained clearly to the participants that the questions had been developed from the interview findings so they could understand the context of the categories and factors that were presented in the questionnaire. The researcher explained to the respondents that all questions were to be answered from their own experience and point of view in relation to each of the factors. Participants were also encouraged to add anything they felt was relevant to the sections within the open-ended response options.

The information sheet was left with the participants at the conclusion of the meeting and emailed out with the questionnaire link. In addition, because the meaning of questions might not always be understood by participants in the same way that they are by the researcher (Boynton et al., 2004), the researcher's contact details were included in the questionnaire introduction so the participants in this study could ask for clarification if necessary.

3.11.2.4 Interpretation Bias. Interpretive validity relies on the researcher being able to honestly represent the experience of the participants from their perspective rather than from the researcher's prior understanding of the subject under study (Maxwell, 1992; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Using direct quotations from verbatim interview transcripts during the coding process and for the presentation of

the findings, along with employing more than one data collection method, increased the interpretive validity of this study.

The use of verbatim transcripts during the data collection process can help to improve the rigour of qualitative research as it allows the researcher a closer connection to the data (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006; Seale & Silverman, 1997). Employing direct quotations that are able to represent the data authentically is also a valuable way to present evidence within a research report (Lingard, 2019). During interview analysis, direct quotations were coded from the transcribed interview data which then directly informed the categories and factors that emerged during the analysis process. A selection of illustrative direct quotations were then included in the findings chapter to inform the reader of the foundation of the emerging categories and factors and to lend authenticity to the findings.

Triangulation is a validation strategy that involves using different data sources, or different types of data, to enhance the accuracy of a study (Carlson, 2010; Creswell, 2014). By checking the factors that had emerged during the interview analysis with questionnaire participants from the same population, the internal validity of this study was increased. Questions in the questionnaire were developed from the factors that emerged during the interviews and were not "made up" by the researcher. The questionnaire also included open-ended questions, giving the participants an opportunity to include relevant information that might not have been gathered from the set questions. Findings from both the interviews and questionnaires were then considered during analysis and discussion of the findings.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

When undertaking research, it is essential to employ sound ethical practices to ensure minimal risk to participants (Creswell, 2014). Ethical issues can arise during several stages of the research process and can relate to participants, sites, stakeholders, and publishers of research findings (Creswell, 2013a). Because primary data was gathered from human participants during this study, ethical consideration was needed throughout the planning and implementation of data gathering, data analysis, and report writing.

Prior to the gathering of primary data, ethics approval was applied for from USQ. The ethics application involved detailing the benefits and risks of the study and the processes of data gathering and maintaining security. The project was assessed as being of low risk and received approval. The ethical considerations for this study discussed here include the process of gaining participants' consent to participate, maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, storage and destruction of the data, and dissemination of the findings.

3.12.1 Free and Informed Consent

Smythe and Murray (2000) define "free" consent that being given by individuals who voluntarily agree to participate without having been influenced or coerced. The participants of this study were asked if they were interested in participating and it was made clear to them that they were under no obligation to do so. "Informed" consent involves giving the participants all of the necessary information they need to make an educated decision regarding their participation prior to giving consent (Smythe & Murray, 2000). The document used to share this information was given to participants prior to data collection and outlined what they needed to know before choosing to participate, including: a description of the purpose, risks, and expected benefits of the study; a privacy and confidentiality statement; the expected length of the interview; the main questions that were to be asked; and what they could do if they had queries or complaints regarding the conduct of the project. In addition, this document explained that the interviews were to be recorded and transcribed. This information was sent to the participants by email along with an invitation to participate. If they agreed to participate, they were given an informed consent form to sign before the interview began. These documents are presented in Appendix A.

Another ethical consideration in relation to free and informed consent is the participants' capacity to make an informed decision which can be reduced in vulnerable populations or individuals (Macleod et al., 2018). To be deemed able to give consent under the requirements of USQ's ethical guidelines, all participants were over the age of 18 and not considered to be intellectually, culturally, or physically vulnerable.

3.12.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

It is necessary to put measures in place to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants to respect their right to privacy and protect them from harm (Macleod et al., 2018). Coffelt (2017, p. 228) defines "confidentiality" as "separating or modifying any personal, identifying information provided by participants from the data", and defines "anonymity" as "collecting data without obtaining any personal, identifying information". In contrast, Morse (1998) understands "confidentiality" as keeping concealed all information given by participants; and understands "anonymity" as the way in which identifiers are linked within the written presentation of the findings to ensure the participants are not recognisable. Novak (2014, p. 38) states that "confidentiality and anonymity are often linked together in research because anonymity of subjects is seen as a tool used by researchers to maintain confidentiality of their sources". Although these three understandings of anonymity and confidentiality differ, all three were considered throughout the research process to develop approaches to protect the participants' identities.

Given the natural flow of conversation during interviews, it was not possible to gather the data without identifying information as participants spoke of their subject areas and used names when talking of staff they interact with across the organisation. In these situations, the researcher's responsibility when presenting data gathered by interview is to mask such identifying information (Coffelt, 2017). It is not enough to just change the name of participants to protect their identity because individuals can be recognised by a number of identifiers, particularly when they are presented together (Morse, 1998). When writing the report, there was no use of personal characteristics of each participant such as their name, gender, job title, subject area, faculty, length of time in their role, or number of students and staff in their departments. Within the report, gender neutral pseudonyms were used in place of the names of the participants when citing direct quotations from the interview data. In addition, as recommended by Coffelt (2017), other identifying information such as details on the consent forms and names within the transcriptions were separated out from the data as early as possible.

3.12.3 Storage and Destruction of Data

As required by USQ's ethical guidelines, data were securely stored throughout the research process and will continue to be at the conclusion of the research. The electronic files of all data, including audio recordings and transcriptions, are securely stored on password-protected storage systems including an external hard drive and the researcher's laptop. The only third party to have access to the data was a professional commercial transcription service which was pre-approved by the researcher's supervisors. The participants had this explained to them on the information sheets and all consented to the transcription process. The raw data was not made publicly available. This is because the data was personal and only relevant to this particular study. Questionnaire data was also stored electronically and password protected.

The data will be stored for a minimum of 5 years and, if no longer needed, it will be destroyed using the secure disposal processes of the researcher's organisation. Hard copies of data are shredded on site and removed by a company specialising in the removal of confidential material. Electronic files will be permanently deleted by use of an eraser tool rather than just using the delete option on the computer. An eraser tool is especially designed to permanently delete electronic files. The consent forms will be retained for 15 years after the project has concluded.

3.12.4 Dissemination

Another ethical consideration of the study is the researcher's responsibility to disseminate the findings. The principle of beneficence refers to maximising the benefits of research while minimising risk or harm (Lapan et al., 2011). The Community Alliance for Research Engagement (2013, p. 1) consider dissemination to be "a crucial step in community-based research" and believe researchers have an "ethical obligation" to share their research findings with their participants and others who might benefit from them.

As previously discussed, risk was minimised by ensuring participant anonymity and confidentiality. To maximise the benefits of this research, copies of the report will be offered to the participants and other stakeholders and the results

will be published. The format in which the findings will be disseminated will depend on the audience. It is expected that a variety of formats will be used, including written reports, conference presentations, and visual presentations.

3.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the research methodology used to undertake this study. Using a case study approach, qualitative data collection and analysis techniques were employed to research into the phenomenon of the experiences of middle managers within the context of one higher education institution in Aotearoa New Zealand. The chapter covered the methodological framework, participant selection, research process (including data collection and analysis), bias and validity, and ethical considerations related to the study. The following chapter presents the findings that emerged from phase one of this study.

CHAPTER 4. PHASE ONE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in chapter three, this study utilised two data collection techniques to explore the experiences of participating middle managers working within one higher education institution in Aotearoa New Zealand. This chapter presents the findings from phase one of the study, which involved undertaking semi-structured one-on-one interviews to explore research sub-questions 1, 3, and 4, as indicated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Research Sub-Questions Explored During Interviews and Presented in Chapter Four

Research sub-questions explored during interviews	Phase one Individual interviews
	Chapter 4
RSQ1. What factors do the higher education middle managers consider when defining optimal functioning in their role?	✓
RSQ2. How well do the higher education middle managers feel they are functioning in their role?	✗
RSQ3. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have enabled them in their role?	✓
RSQ4. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have inhibited them in their role?	✓
RSQ5. How much control do the higher education middle managers feel they have over the factors that enable and inhibit them in their role?	✗

At the time of undertaking this study, there were 18 academic middle managers employed in the role at the institution and all were invited to participate in the study. Of the 18 potential participants, 11 agreed to participate in the interviews. The 11 interviews were analysed using an inductive approach to categorical analysis through which categories and factors emerged during the analysis process. Following is a summary of the coding process used to analyse the interviews.

4.2 Summary of the Coding Process

The interview data coding process was discussed in chapter three. Section 4.2 offers an example of how the first and second coding cycles led to the emergent categories and factors presented in this chapter. Figure 4.1 demonstrates these first two cycles of the process using excerpts from two interviews.

Figure 4.1

Example of Coding Interview Excerpts
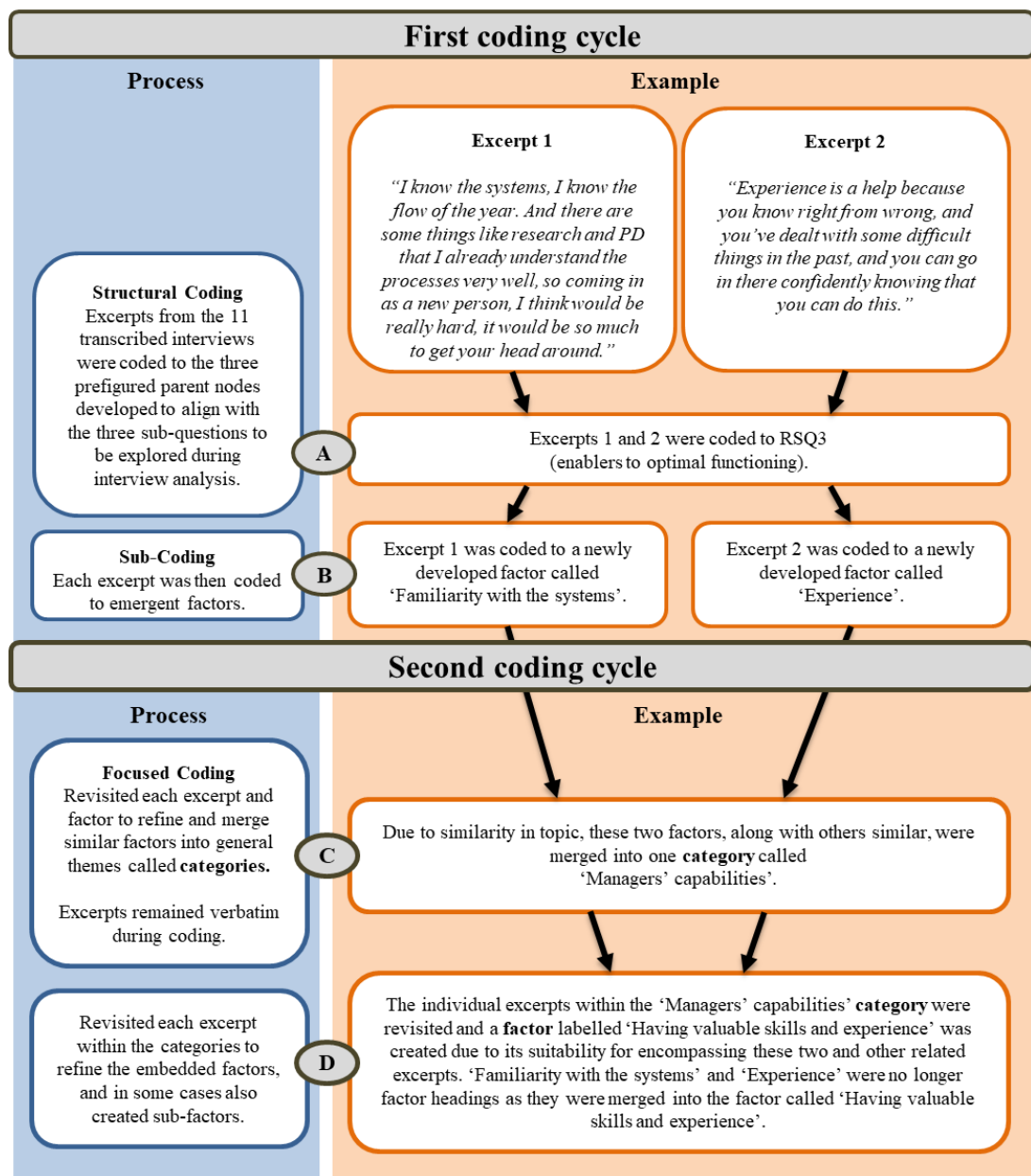
During the first coding cycle, at point A in Figure 4.1, excerpts from the transcribed interviews were coded to the prefigured parent nodes which were selected to relate directly to research sub-questions 1, 3, and 4. At point B, excerpts were then coded to initial emergent factors. The choice of each emergent factor title was informed by the content of each excerpt. This stage created a high number of overlapping factors, and excerpts were often coded to more than one factor. During the second cycle, at points C and D in Figure 4.1, the coding became more focussed, with the aim being to refine the coding from the first cycle. Similar factors were merged into overarching categories and, where necessary, new factor titles were created that were deemed suitable for encompassing a range of excerpts with a similar theme.

Throughout the coding process, each excerpt remained verbatim in the form of direct quotations taken from the transcribed interviews. These quotations often included some of the surrounding conversation to provide context during coding. Excerpts from the larger direct quotations have been presented in this thesis in three formats. Short phrases have been embedded within the discussion and indicated by quotation marks and italicised. Longer verbatim and adapted excerpts are indicated by being set in from the body of the text and are also italicised.

Adaptations were made for ease of reading and to protect the identity of the participants. Repetitions and stalling words such as "um" and "ah", which are a natural part of spoken language, have been removed. In some cases, parts of sentences or full sentences have been removed from larger quotations where they do not add to or remove from the meaning expressed by the participant. Ellipses have been used to indicate omitted sections. Square brackets have been used to indicate where content has been added to improve readability. To protect the identity of interview participants, any identifying characteristics have been removed from the excerpts and gender-neutral pseudonyms have been used. As recommended by The American Psychological Association, gender neutral pronouns such as "they/them/their" are used in place of "he/him/his" and "she/her/hers" (American Psychologial Association, 2020).

4.3 Research Sub-Questions and Corresponding Categories

The categories and factors that emerged from the interview analysis process are presented in this chapter under sections that correspond with research sub-questions 1, 3, and 4. Table 4.2 outlines the research sub-questions and their corresponding emergent categories in the order presented in this chapter.

Table 4.2

Research Sub-Questions and their Corresponding Categories – Interviews

Presented in the following order	Categories that emerged during interview analysis
Presented first	
RSQ1. What factors do the higher education middle managers consider when defining optimal functioning within their role?	a. Meeting stakeholder needs b. Administration and resource management c. Health and safety management
Presented second	
RSQ3. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have enabled them in their role?	a. Relationships b. Capabilities of middle managers c. Staff d. Risk management
Presented third	a. Time constraints b. Resource limitations
RSQ4. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have inhibited them in their role?	c. Task conflicts d. Workload allocation e. ICT systems f. Room booking system and classroom space g. General processes h. Enrolment numbers i. Staff j. Senior management

At the beginning of each section, a table is offered to indicate the category and associated factors discussed, highlighted by blue shading. Quotations from the participants are included within the discussion to contextualise each of the categories and related factors.

4.4 Factors Considered to Define Optimal Functioning

This section presents aspects of the role that the interview participants consider to define optimal functioning. The categories that emerged during the coding process are presented in Table 4.3, and, as discussed in the following sections, each category contains a variety of factors that one or more interview participants associated with defining optimal functioning in their role.

Table 4.3

Categories Defining Optimal Functioning

RSQ1. Defining optimal functioning	
Category a.	Meeting stakeholder needs
Category b.	Administration and resource management
Category c.	Health and safety management

4.4.1 Meeting Stakeholder Needs

When defining optimal functioning within the role, the participants raise a variety of factors that relate to meeting the needs and expectations of internal and external stakeholders by directly addressing these needs (of students, industry, tutorial staff) and by ensuring the quality and value of service provision. The factors within this category are presented in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

Category a. Meeting Stakeholder Needs

RSQ1. Defining optimal functioning	

Category a.	Meeting stakeholder needs
	    Meeting student needs
	    Meeting industry needs
	    Ensuring quality and value of the service offered
	    Meeting tutorial staff needs

Category b.	Administration and resource management
Category c.	Health and safety management

4.4.1.1 Meeting Student Needs. Some middle managers measure optimal functioning within the role by how well they meet the needs of the students. The

factors discussed with respect to students include: retention, completion, and employment outcomes; personal development; satisfaction; and health and well-being.

4.4.1.1.1 Retention, Completion, and Employment Outcomes. Several middle managers measure their optimal functioning against the number of students who remain enrolled throughout the course of their study, who complete their qualification, and who gain employment after completing their study.

Jordan, reflecting a common theme amongst the managers, assesses their department's success by how well the students achieve, stating that "*their success is our success*". Jordan also sees industry demand for graduates as evidence that "*what we're doing is working and what we're doing is successful*". Seeing students transition through programme levels to graduate at a qualification level higher than the one they initially enrolled in is one of the ways Alex evaluates success. Alex also looks for "*the standard and quality*" that students present and evidence that students "*appreciate what they've learnt*".

Blair sees the importance of ensuring that what is offered to the students "*actually meets industry demand, regional demand, and student demand*", and believes that tutors need to have the skills required to "*get a good result out of the students*". Lee also recognises the importance of the tutor role to student success, believing that "*productive happy staff*" are needed to maximise outcomes related to "*course completion and potential employment for the students*". Lee understands that the future employment of students is the "*ultimate goal*" of the organisation, and emphasises ensuring the department is in a "*strong financial position*" to continue to be able to offer study opportunities to the students.

Motivation to see students succeed can be driven by enrolment, retention, and completion targets set by external parties. These expectations, along with low enrolment numbers, create more pressure on middle managers to keep students engaged and to help them complete their programmes of study. Jordan believes that this pressure creates an environment in which "*there are always students that you chase, on-going throughout the year*". Jordan goes further to suggest that, if enrolment numbers were higher, "*then* [we] *wouldn't be as diligent, because the fact*

is that some students you need to let go". Kerry acknowledges that not all students can be successful, but feels strongly that to meet their needs, tutors and staff should offer direction to the unsuccessful students rather than leave them *"feeling they've got nowhere to go"*. Kerry manages this by guiding the students towards more suitable programmes of study.

4.4.1.1.2 Student Personal Development. Seeing the students develop in personal areas not directly related to their subject or qualification can be a motivator for some middle managers. Kerry and Bailey both see value in *"making a difference"* to the students. Bailey considers this to be what makes them *"feel really good about the job"*. Kerry talks of students who begin their study with limited confidence and self-belief, often having had *"really bad experiences at school"*, but in a supportive learning environment *"prove to themselves they can learn"* and are able to succeed.

The learning environment is also considered by some middle managers to be a place to develop the strong work ethic that will improve a student's employability. Alex places value on students *"automatically and instinctively"* being able to meet industry standards, thanks to the development of good habits in the learning environment. Lee acknowledges the responsibility and importance of *"instilling life values"* so students know that, in industry, *"it's not actually cool to be late, it's not actually cool not to turn up without contacting your boss"*.

Kerry further recognises the ability to interact with members of the community as an important skill for students to have. Including this in their programmes of study can give students opportunities to *"see the pleasure that they can give other people"* while learning about themselves.

4.4.1.1.3 Student Satisfaction. Having satisfied students has been recognised as an important aspect of optimal functioning. Middle managers report measuring this formally by programme- and paper-specific evaluations, and informally during discussions with students, or when they share their study experience with others. Kerry has found graduates to be *"really good at encouraging others to come and do the programme"* and considers this a good indication of student satisfaction.

However, two middle managers offer contrasting comments about the formal student satisfaction surveys used at the organisation. Bailey states that it is *"optimal"* when they get the surveys back and *"there's nothing I need to respond to"*, whereas Casey places little value on the findings of these surveys. Casey notes that their programme has *"100% satisfaction"* but actually believes that *"it's not necessarily the case"* that all students are happy with their experience of studying at the institution. Casey's understanding is that students do not respond honestly because they are fearful of being recognised. Instead of relying on these surveys, Casey meets face-to-face regularly with the students and considers communication as the key to ensuring optimal student satisfaction.

4.4.1.1.4 Student Health and Well-Being. Ensuring the health and well-being of students is recognised by some of the middle managers as important to the optimal functioning in their role. Two middle managers, place a particular emphasis on maintaining a high standard of physical safety in the learning environment, which they report is managed by actions such as:

> *Ensuring that a student knows how to operate a piece of equipment correctly* (Lee).

> [Not walking] *past something that's not right. I've got to deal with it, and I've got to be accountable in that role* (Blair).

Lee expresses concerns with students entering industry where there is not the same high level of health and safety awareness but noted that they understand that this is out of their control; Lee instead focusses on ensuring the students' *"experience when they're here is as safe as possible"*.

As a manager of entry level programmes, Jordan focusses on the pastoral care of students and on making sure that their health and well-being are taken care of because this *"takes a lot of time* [but is] *generally achieved"* by keeping a close eye on students and dealing with issues quickly.

> *They have reasons for either not attending or struggling when they're here, so I monitor that reasonably closely and set up, at the beginning, an open-*

door policy so if there's any issues, we can deal with them quite quickly.
(Jordan)

Kerry highlights the high number of students enrolling into their programme with mental health concerns, stating that *"some of those issues are very, very serious"*, with a considerable amount of time going into *"getting emergency help"* for some of these students. Kerry's focus is on ensuring all students *"get the best chance to achieve"*, which they manage by getting students to complete a health assessment checklist at the beginning of the programme. This allows for a more proactive approach to managing such issues in the learning environment.

4.4.1.2 Meeting Industry Needs. Meeting the needs of industry is of particular importance to those managing trades-based programmes. Comments indicate this to be a driver for programme offerings and suggest that meeting industry needs takes precedence over internally driven initiatives. Two middle managers emphasise the need to please industry partners and to show the organisation and the departments in a positive light.

4.4.1.2.1 Meeting Industry Demand. Blair points out that the programmes they manage require that a considerable amount of time be spent on ensuring the needs of the industry are met and considers this to be *"one of those things that adds real value"* and therefore is an *"absolutely critical"* aspect of their role. This can sometimes mean running courses that need to be financially supported by other programmes as a *"cost recovery exercise"* because they have value to the industry.

> *So, you've got to balance all of that out and make sure that, as an area, you're viable. If you didn't do the block courses, you wouldn't have the industry interested in taking on your students from fulltime courses, so it's the big picture.* (Blair)

4.4.1.2.2 Priority to External Stakeholders. For Blair, there is a strong drive to prioritise industry requests over potential internally driven initiatives. They note that they *"very seldom"* have the chance to *"come up with some cool ideas for the tutors"* because the emphasis is usually on creating course content in quick response to requests from industry.

4.4.1.2.3 Satisfying External Stakeholders. Interviewees reveal a strong focus on ensuring the external stakeholders see the programmes are run well and result in industry level outcomes for the students. Lee notes that satisfying students and industry generates *"vital marketing"* that is not achievable through other forms of advertising, and *"if we are not at the industry level, people do not want to train with us"*. To ensure their department is presented as *"smooth-running"*, Blair focusses on maintaining good organisation and shielding external stakeholders from the *"madness in the background"*, stating that *"there's a fair bit that happens to make sure that's the case"*.

4.4.1.3 Ensuring Quality and Value. Middle managers affirm the importance of ensuring that a high standard of quality and value is offered to the stakeholders. Quinn feels accountable to the *"standards laid down"* by external bodies, which drive the quality of teaching and learning in their department. Blair is also driven to maintain a high level of quality and value in order to meet stakeholder needs. Blair believes their role involves constantly engaging with industry to *"keep abreast of changes"* and to future-proof their programmes.

> *You can't sit on your laurels; you've got to be always looking to improve and to make sure that what you're doing has value.* (Blair)

To achieve this, Blair believes that even the small decisions need to be considered, as they can have an impact on the standard of quality offered to the stakeholders. Personal satisfaction also drives Blair to ensure quality.

> *We need to stay covered from a viability point of view, but we should always be looking at the quality output for the students, for the industry, for ourselves, for our personal satisfaction.* (Blair)

When talking of quality, Erin likes to see the teaching and learning delivered in a way that meets the programme specific systems and standards, which Alex measures by the quality of student outcomes. Being relatively new to the role, Bailey has identified less than optimal teaching and learning practices in their department and is therefore focussed on improving the *"quality of what is going out"* by *"almost having to micromanage"* what is delivered and assessed.

4.4.1.4 Meeting Tutorial Staff Needs. Several middle managers address the value associated with meeting the needs of their team members.

4.4.1.4.1 Productive and Happy Staff. Comments referring to the necessity of ensuring the systems are *"user-friendly for the tutors"* (Francis), and having things *"set up in such a way that the tutors can do their job"* (Blair) indicate that some managers consider themselves to be in a supporting role. Blair considers the tutors to be the talent and understands the manager role as being to support the talent, stating that *"there is no way that the tutor can do their job properly"* unless they are supported.

Lee can see a link between staff being productive and happy and positive outcomes for the students including *"good results"* and *"potential employment"* opportunities. Lee also recognises the word-of-mouth marketing that comes from the effort put into supporting those involved in the learning process.

4.4.1.4.2 Teamwork and Culture. When talking about the optimal functioning of their departments, some middle managers focus on the value associated with creating a culture of teamwork, in acknowledgement of how vital it is to help their team members work well together and towards shared goals. Bailey talks of a *"united sense of the school"* with *"everyone being on the same page"* and where *"people aren't confused"*. Blair works to facilitate a *"collegial and innovative environment"* where their team are *"in the same canoe, rowing in the same direction"* and *"dealing with whatever barriers come along"*.

Flynn believes that certain aspects of the role, such as dealing with the administration and working with students, become *"straightforward when you're in the right environment"*, but has found issues with team culture to be the *"biggest challenge"* in every workplace they have been in. Casey and Jordan also recognise the importance of having an effective team culture in their departments but have experienced problems. Casey has experienced *"unwritten rules"* seeping into the work environment, in which individuals *"kind of bully, or just 'say it until it's true'"* to new members of their team. Jordan feels there is a *"culture of disrespect"* for professional judgement that filters down the hierarchy.

4.4.1.4.3 Undertaking Research and Professional Development.

Undertaking research is a requirement for academic staff members tutoring on degree level programmes, and professional development training is available to all staff at the organisation. Although these are institute-wide initiatives, only two middle managers emphasise the importance of staff members developing their knowledge and skills by these methods. Flynn believes that *"research and professional development are really important to be effective"* in an academic role, and believes their team is improving in this area. Kerry sees research and professional development as valuable opportunities for their team to *"keep up to date"*. They support professional development by arranging for guest speakers to attend staff meetings, so their team are *"getting the same kind of information* [as each other]*"* and, as a team, can *"debate or discuss points as they arise"*.

4.4.2 Administration and Resource Management

The middle managers identify administration and resource management as aspects of the role that relate to optimal functioning. The factors within this category are presented in Table 4.5 and include administrative support for the tutors, good financial management, and meeting administrative deadlines.

Table 4.5

Category b. Administration and Resource Management

RSQ1. Defining optimal functioning	
Category a.	Meeting stakeholder needs

Category b.	Administration and resource management
	    Administrative support for tutors
	    Good financial management
	    Meeting administrative deadlines

Category c.	Health and safety management

4.4.2.1 Administrative Support for Tutors. According to the interviewees, middle managers can support tutors in their role by maintaining strong administration practices that ensure systems work well and resources are made available. Casey talks of the importance of *"simple things"* such as making sure online access runs *"smoothly for the staff and students"*. Alex likes to plan timetables with *"years mapped ahead"* so *"we're not having to constantly chase our tail to get things*

done". Blair aims to have the areas they are managing be *"well-organised, well-resourced, and well-staffed"*.

4.4.2.2 Good Financial Management. References by the middle manager interviewees to *"doing"* or *"managing"* staffing costs and overall operational budgets indicate that these are a necessary part of their role. One manager in particular, Lee, places considerable emphasis on the importance of good financial management and considers this to be a key focus, saying:

> *So as a middle manager, trying to understand the cost to run the business and where we're making money and where we're losing money is extremely important because it's what basically keeps the lights on in the end.* (Lee)

4.4.2.3 Meeting Administrative Deadlines. Interviews reveal mixed feelings about whether meeting administrative deadlines is necessary for optimal functioning in the role. Francis considers this to be *"definitely important"*, particularly when other departments have to receive information before they can respond to external stakeholders. Erin also recognises the need to meet deadlines, and does their best to achieve this, but states that *"you can have the best intentions* [and they go] *out the window"* because other things come up that require immediate attention.

Some middle managers, while acknowledging the importance of achieving administrative requirements, do not consider this aspect of their role to be as critical as others. For example, Jordan understands optimal functioning to encompass *"everything in relation to administrative outputs"* but chooses to put more emphasis in their day-to-day work on ensuring the well-being of the students. This approach is also reflected in Flynn's comments; they consider administration to be a significant part of the role but a part that is *"less important than actually running the classroom"* or keeping the programmes current. Bailey states that what makes them *"feel really good about the job"* is not getting reports done on time, but instead the *"stuff in the classroom when you make a difference to a student"*.

4.4.3 Health and Safety Management

Several middle managers put the spotlight on health and safety as an essential determiner of optimal functioning in their role. The factors within this category are

presented in Table 4.6 and include the manager being accountable for health and safety, the requirement for staff and students to be aware of the health and safety requirements, the need to balance the health and safety of students while still allowing them to conduct their work, and consideration for the personal well-being of the middle managers.

Table 4.6

Category c. Health and Safety Management

RSQ1. Defining optimal functioning	
Category a.	Meeting stakeholder needs
Category b.	Administration and resource management

Category c.	Health and safety management
	    Manager accountability for health and safety
	    Awareness of health and safety requirements
	    Balancing health and safety with learning
	    Managing personal well-being

4.4.3.1 Manager Accountability for Health and Safety. One manager, Blair, places considerable emphasis on their own responsibility in ensuring the health and safety of the students and staff in their department and feels accountable for keeping both students and their team members *"safe from an organisational, procedural, funding, and legal point of view"*. Blair achieves this by *"looking at the* [small] *things that make the big things right"* and by caring about their team members, supporting them in challenging situations, and making sure they are well enough to manage the learning environment. Quinn also feels strongly about the well-being of their team members, considering their *"most important role"* as manager to make sure that *"everybody's okay"* and that there is not *"somebody having a nervous breakdown"*. Quinn stresses that *"if the staff aren't okay, then the students are not going to get the teaching they need"*.

4.4.3.2 Awareness of Health and Safety Requirements. Ensuring that staff and students are aware of the health and safety requirements of the organisation is considered by some middle managers to be a fundamental aspect of their role. Alex states that, for their department to function optimally, the staff *"are required"* to know about the health and safety policies, and should be able to follow the identification and reporting process autonomously. When talking of reporting

hazards and incidents, Alex expresses their understanding that *"staff are required to go online and report these themselves"*. Blair stresses the importance of all staff feeling *"brave enough and accountable enough"* to deal directly with health and safety issues,

> *...because once you've identified* [a hazard]*, if you don't deal with it straight away and something goes wrong, it's a major problem.* (Blair)

This is similarly emphasised by Lee, who believes they have *"massive health and safety responsibilities"* in their department, because *"there are things* [in that environment] *that can kill you"*.

Kerry also addresses the necessity of having students be aware of the health and safety requirements of the organisation, noting that they start teaching these to students *"on day one"* and then *"consistently"* throughout their study. Kerry believes students need to know what to do in a fire drill, for example, and how to manage hazards in the learning environment.

4.4.3.3 Balancing Health and Safety with Learning. Lee discusses how important it is for the department to offer a safe environment without restricting the ability of the students to complete the requirements of the programme. This is revealed in the following statement:

> *... obviously, the aim with health and safety is having a robust process in place that leads to no accidents but also does not hinder our students in being able to conduct their work. And that's the balancing act, because if we completely guard something, is it going to be functional?* (Lee)

Lee also notes some concerns with respect to students not experiencing the same robust health and safety practices when they enter industry roles, but acknowledges that once the students are employed, it is no longer the responsibility of the tertiary provider to keep them safe. Lee accepts their lack of control over this issue, stating *"there's nothing we can do about that"* and instead focusses on ensuring that the student experience during their study is *"as safe as possible"*.

4.4.3.4 Managing Personal Well-Being. Middle managers confirm that the role involves a considerable workload, noting that, to achieve their management responsibilities, they would have to work over the expected duty hours:

> *The only way I can get through my work is often to work late at night.* (Quinn)

> *There just aren't enough hours in the day.* (Kerry)

> [I'm limited by] *time constraints – the amount of time in the day to get through everything.* (Erin)

Bailey states that, to achieve optimally, they would like to fit *"everything"* into *"Monday to Friday from 8:30 to 5:30* [and] *not* [have] *to come in on the weekends"*. Quinn expresses a desire to make a change to the amount of time they put into their role: *"I've started to review that, thinking, if I can't do it in* [working] *hours, then I'm not going to do it"*.

Jordan feels particularly disillusioned by the workload, stating that their personal well-being is negatively impacted by it, and stresses the importance of self-care to be able to function optimally:

> *I would say my own well-being is really critical to holding this thing together. There have been enormous pressures on me… If these programmes crash, it's because I've crashed, and I've been brought to the brink a few times… Self-care is critical but not done very well. I don't believe there's such a thing anymore as optimal functioning in this job…there's too much to do and to do well, and sometimes you end up feeling totally incompetent because you can't achieve everything to the optimum across the board. It's actually physically, mentally, and emotionally impossible.* (Jordan)

4.4.4 Summary of Factors Considered to Define Optimal Functioning

It is evident from the interview findings that higher education middle managers in the case organisation place a priority on meeting the needs of both internal and external stakeholders and consider this to be essential to optimal functioning in their role. Middle managers talked consistently about meeting student

and industry needs, which is perhaps unsurprising when one of the main goals of tertiary education is to help align student skills and knowledge with future workforce demands (Dawkins et al., 2019; Wolf et al., 2016). There is evidence, however, that for some middle managers, preparing students is not only about teaching practical skills and knowledge to the students but also about assisting them with personal development and putting extra effort into helping those who might not otherwise succeed due to learning difficulties or prior negative learning experiences. Some middle managers also expect this level of dedication from their team members and recognise that optimal functioning includes ensuring their team members have what they need to help students accomplish their goals.

Effective health and safety, administration, and resource management practices were also revealed as being essential to optimal functioning, which is again driven by the overarching objective and desire to meet the needs of students, industry, and their team members. Managing health and safety well within their departments is motivated by a strong sense of responsibility to keep staff and students safe in the learning environment. Although middle managers are aware of the role they themselves play in health and safety management, they also expect their team members and the students to take on some of this responsibility; doing so is particularly important in learning environments known to have high physical risks. Some middle managers spoke of the high workload associated with the role and not being able to complete their tasks within working hours and made mention of their desire to reduce the impact the role has on their personal time. One manager in particular talked about the negative impact the role has on their personal well-being.

These findings highlight the significance middle managers place on satisfying students, industry, and their team members, and also show how middle managers extend themselves to achieve in areas they consider important to optimal functioning, for some, even at the expense of their work-life balance.

4.5 Factors Considered to Enable Optimal Functioning

This section presents aspects of the role that the interview participants considered to enable optimal functioning. The categories that emerged are presented in Table 4.7, and, as discussed in the following sections, each contains a variety of

factors that one or more interview participants identified as enabling their ability to function optimally in their role.

Table 4.7

Categories of Enablers to Optimal Functioning

RSQ3. Enablers to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Relationships
Category b.	Capabilities of middle managers
Category c.	Staff
Category d.	Risk management

4.5.1 Enabling Factors Relating to Relationships

All the middle managers discuss the importance of establishing constructive relationships and effective communication with the stakeholders including: the students, industry, their teams, their leaders, and other staff across the organisation, as presented in table 4.8. Aspects discussed are broad with most relating to the characteristics of interpersonal relationships between the manager and other on-campus stakeholders. External stakeholder relationships discussed relate to connections with relevant members of industry, including individuals, businesses, or associations.

Table 4.8

Category a. Relationships

RSQ3. Enablers to optimal functioning	

Category a.	Relationships
	    Relationships with students
	    Relationships with external stakeholders
	    Relationships with own team
	    Relationship with senior manager
	    Relationships with other staff

Category b.	Capabilities of middle managers
Category c.	Staff
Category d.	Risk management

4.5.1.1 Relationships with Students. Some middle managers emphasise the value of having good interpersonal relationships with the students to keep communication channels open.

4.5.1.1.1 Being Honest and Approachable, and Building Trust with Students. Middle managers stress the importance of *"communication"* with the students (Erin), *"working with the students"* (Flynn), and having *"close contact and being available"* (Alex). At times, Francis has had upset students in their office daily, and they feel that *"if* [students] *get* [the situation] *off their chest, a problem shared is one halved"*. Casey and Kerry talk of *"building trust"* and *"being approachable"* with their students so the students *"aren't afraid to talk"* and will *"communicate concerns directly"*. Casey has found that building trust *"has been really difficult"*, but reports managing this by *"getting in the classroom,* [which makes] *a huge difference"*. Kerry also works on gaining trust from students, believing that *"you don't get trust in a parcel – you have to earn it"*; Kerry finds honesty to be the key to building these relationships.

Francis believes that tutors should also develop strong connections with the students but has been surprised to find that some students do not necessarily find their tutors approachable. Francis would like to see the tutors taking a more *"holistic approach"* to their role and take advantage of the environment of their institution:

> *We're not professors at Yale. That's our point of difference. You're one of 30, you get a one-on-one…you're not in a lecture of 1,000.* (Francis)

4.5.1.2 Relationships with External Stakeholders. Having productive relations with industry is considered by some managers to be an enabler to optimal functioning. These external relationships can offer opportunities for the institution to promote its programmes and, in some cases, have been found to improve the quality of teaching and learning practices.

4.5.1.2.1 Connecting with Industry. Flynn talks of *"connecting to other people working in the industry"* and finds this to be a *"key pathway"* to promoting the programmes by *"getting out there"* and *"presenting your research"* to help people understand what is going on in their department. Francis recognises the value of having a strong rapport with careers advisors from the local schools which helps

to promote programmes. Blair finds that industry engagement helps to ensure their department is able to *"keep abreast of changes"* and future-proof programmes. This is also important to Alex, who sees the benefits of *"looking at industry"* to see *"what we can we bring to the* [learning environment]*"*.

4.5.1.2.2 Industry Influencing Practice. Two middle managers appreciate the accountability that comes with industry involvement, stating that that the benchmark for passing students is influenced by the expectations industry place on student competencies. Blair has found that *"external forces",* for example, have helped with health and safety management.

> *…if we do any work with external organisations, they need to see all our information about health and safety, and that's driven us to be better at what we're doing.* (Blair)

Building and managing relationships with external stakeholders has been *"a significant part"* of Quinn's role, who found the relationships between their department and industry to be *"not good"* when they first moved into the management role. In their case, the industry body overseeing their department strongly influences decision-making within the teaching and learning environment. In addition, many students rely on placements within the industry to be able to attain their qualification.

4.5.1.3 Relationships with Own Team. Several middle managers highlight the significant benefit they gain from the relationship they have with their team members, and work to create an environment that facilitates these relationships and serves as a site for building a team culture within the department.

4.5.1.3.1 Developing a Team Culture. Building a culture in which team members feel valued and respected, have autonomy to work towards their own passions, and have a shared vision for the department supports these key factors that enable optimal functioning within the role. Comments that express preferences for *"having a team approach"* (Jordan) and being a *"facilitator working as a team member"* (Erin) reflect the extent to which these middle managers value collegiality. Casey feels strongly that if they *"didn't work together as a team, we wouldn't have been able to do some* [of the] *amazing things* [that we have achieved]*"*. Flynn talks

of bringing together a *"diversity of people"* to *"work towards one shared goal"*. This same focus on teamwork is reflected in the following statement from Blair:

> *…working with people who are in the same canoe, rowing in the same direction, looking to do the job, and dealing with whatever barriers come along,* [while] *still being positive and rowing forward…*(Blair)

4.5.1.3.2 Regular Meetings with Team Members. Several middle managers emphasise the importance of having regular team meetings to encourage the sharing of information and to help with building a team culture. Bailey feels that developing *"a united sense of school"* requires *"regular meetings"* and *"regular communication with staff"*. Quinn believes that, although they do *"get together quite a lot"* with their team, having a weekly staff meeting *"is absolutely critical"*. Alex feels that the group discussions they have with their team members are instrumental in strengthening student achievement within their department. Typical topics they discuss during the meetings include *"student performance…program content…programme development…industry liaison…professional development"* (Alex), *"research"* (Quinn), and *"plagiarism"* (Casey). During these meetings, robust discussion can be considered a healthy part of the process, as reflected in the following statement from Casey:

> *If there's an issue, we discuss it. And again, we disagree sometimes, and we have arguments, but we don't take it personally because we know we're all doing it because we care about the programme and the students.* (Casey)

4.5.1.3.3 Providing Autonomy to Team Members. Providing autonomy to team members was spoken of by three middle managers. Quinn spoke of "place" rather than "focus" of work stating that they do not mind where their team members are working from *"as long as they are in front of the students when they should be there"*. This is, however, the same manager who felt strongly that all of their team members should attend the weekly team meetings stating that *"nobody's allowed to take a leave day on that day"*. Allowing for autonomy while at the same time ensuring a team culture is also evident in Flynn's comments:

> *…everybody has autonomy, but at the same time they're part of the team in terms of working towards that goal…* (Flynn)

Blair talks of being flexible with their team members regarding workload. They find that some of their team members *"give plenty of private time to make sure that what's happening is happening well* [whereas others] *want to come in the door at 8:30 and leave at 4:30"*. Blair explains:

> *Some people have a strict way of approaching their life where they say, "this part of my life is going to be about work, this part's going to be about my family, this part's going to be about me, and that's how I'm going to survive". You've got to respect that, as long as they're doing their part for work as well as they can possibly do it, and it's meeting their needs, I think personally, that's okay.* (Blair)

4.5.1.3.4 Being Honest and Personable and Caring for Team Members.
Maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships with their team members is considered by many interviewees to be a contributor to their optimal functioning. Qualities commonly valued include being *"honest"*, *"personable"*, and *"caring"*. Flynn talks of *"getting to know people, what their ambitions are, what their interests are"* so Flynn can support their team members to pursue their passions. Francis has found that having *"a good relationship with the staff"* has helped them overcome their own barriers in the role. Francis believes their approach during the early stages of being a manager has helped them to build positive connections with their team members.

> *Well, if I came in and I was a taskmaster, and I thought I knew everything and went above them, that wasn't the approach to take in this situation.* (Francis)

Casey talks of the benefits of being honest with their team members, stating that *"you've got to be honest, even if it's uncomfortable"*:

> *People are so worried about hurting someone's feelings, but people actually appreciate honesty more than someone being nice to them. If you tell someone, "You're doing a good job" for six months, and you know they're not, and you get frustrated with it, to the point where they actually get in trouble later, the first thing they're going to say is, "Why didn't anyone tell me?".* (Casey)

Blair reiterates the importance of honesty, stating: *"I've got to be brave enough to say what I think* [and I need to] *care that they should do a good job"*. Blair explains how caring for those they work with has helped them manage the more challenging situations:

> *To be a good manager, I need to care for the people I work with, and it can't be a face-value thing. It's got to be real. If I don't really care about someone, if they don't make me happy for whatever reason, and I'm not communicating openly with them, and things become tense, and the environment's not happy, then it doesn't work for either of us.* (Blair)

Along with genuinely caring, *"showing people just common respect"*, and letting them know that *"their feelings and their opinions have value"* has helped Blair maintain healthy relationships with team members.

4.5.1.4 Relationship with Senior Manager. Each of the participants say that the relationship they have with their leader has an impact on their ability to function in their management role. Autonomy in the role, along with clear direction, accountability, and support were some of the factors discussed that shape this critical relationship. The middle managers interviewed expect their senior managers to have the ability to communicate well and the willingness to feed information through the chains of command.

4.5.1.4.1 Having Autonomy in the Role. Several middle managers mention their appreciation of the autonomy they experience in their role. Comments such as *"I've got great autonomy, it's one of the strengths of the job"* (Jordan), and *"I don't want to have someone on my back all the time, I want to be quite autonomous"* (Flynn), reflect of how autonomy is evident or desired in the role. Alex sees the benefits of autonomy, but expects their senior manager to *"give support"* and offer *"direction"* when needed and believes that it is up to the senior manager to make *"ultimate decisions"*. A desire for input is also reflected in comments from Blair when they talk about managing change within their department:

> *...rather than having a totally autonomous sort of situation, where someone makes all the decisions, you've got to be able to seek good input.* (Blair)

Although Jordan considers autonomy to be *"one of the strengths of the job"*, they also reflect on the negative impact of experiencing this in their role:

> *...with* [autonomy] *comes a huge responsibility which means that the only way that you manage in this place is if you provide the deliverables, the retention, the completions, and the budgets... But it's at quite a high personal cost these days. Maybe it always has been, but it seems more personal these days.* (Jordan)

4.5.1.4.2 Being Supported by Senior Management. Support in a variety of ways has been recognised by interviewees as an essential requirement of their senior manager. When discussing their senior managers, middle managers use the words *"assisting", "resolving", "supporting",* and *"helping"* to describe the actions senior managers perform. Several middle managers consider their senior manager to be the person they go to when issues arise or when they need *"expertise"* (Bailey). Typical comments include:

> *...when things happen or you've got a problem, that's the person that you're going to go to.* (Flynn)

> *The support of my manager ... really helped to take care of that situation.* (Casey)

Erin sometimes requires issues to be dealt with outside of working hours and values their manager being able to deal with things *"efficiently and quickly and right around the clock"* noting that *"things can happen sometimes, and we have to respond"*.

4.5.1.4.3 Getting Clear Direction and Removal of Barriers. The middle managers need and welcome direction from their senior managers, but report that this direction is not generally received without the removal of barriers. Heavy workload is something that is discussed throughout the interviews, and all middle managers express feeling that they are hindered by having too many tasks and not enough time in which to achieve them. Alex expects their senior manager to *"understand the environment"* and not put expectations on them that will not necessarily work. Reflecting comments from several middle managers, Lee says direction and support

from their senior manager is *"an absolute priority"*, but to achieve the directives, Lee wants their senior manager to help ensure that their tutorial and administration workload is not going to get in the way. Lee would like to see their senior manager *"remove some of those barriers"* to achieving department initiatives.

Removal of barriers requires the senior manager to be effective at communicating the requirements and identifying the potential of the given department to the senior management team, who make the financial and strategic decisions. Comments such as *"they've got to be able to communicate all the developments in the school"* (Flynn), and *"I can't take it upstairs, it has to go through the chains of command"* (Alex), indicate the importance of this line of communication to the ability of these middle managers to function optimally.

4.5.1.4.4 Being Held Accountable by Senior Management. In addition to the benefits of getting clear direction from their superiors, some middle managers speak to the advantages of being held accountable within their role by someone in a higher position. Rather than having a supervisor *"directing what we're doing"* (Alex), *"screaming down the phone"*, or *"really putting the heat on"* (Francis), the preference is to have their senior manager *"give a task"* (Francis) or *"give direction"* (Alex), and, if things aren't working, then ask why and offer support when needed. Blair benefits from having their senior manager communicate expectations and be actively aware of their performance, recognising that these practices can filter down and influence Blair's own management techniques:

> *So, the things that help me do my job well are clear expectations on me. I think one of the keys to that is not only clear expectations, but active follow up…if we have people above us who hold us accountable, then that makes us better at being accountable to those around us, and* [at being] *responsible for those around us.* (Blair)

4.5.1.5 Relationships with Other Staff. Having good relationships with staff, both within the faculty and organisation wide, is also recognised as an enabler to optimal functioning. Interviewees acknowledge and value the wide variety of expertise across the organisation and feel a sense of camaraderie with other members of staff.

Comments such as *"it's everybody around us, and the systems and support we have in place"* (Alex), *"people want to help each other across our campus"* (Lee), *"they send me the spreadsheets that work for them"* (Francis), and *"getting assistance from the international department"* (Alex), reveal that these middle managers value the support networks they experience across the organisation. Bailey finds the middle management team meetings to create *"a sense of comradeship and support for each other"*, likening the team to *"a little club of people…which is really nice"*. One manager, Blair, talks of working closely with the student support team to connect at-risk students with professionals early on in their study. This general feeling about the wider network of available support within the organisation is summed up well by Blair:

> *…we have some people with wonderful experience and knowledge in very specific areas, and then we have some people with really broad knowledge across a whole range of areas. They all have a part to play.* (Blair)

Speaking of relationships in general, one manager highlights the importance of taking care when communicating with others and acknowledging the impact outside influences can have on people. Being *"really diplomatic when dealing with people, …*[because] *you don't necessarily understand what someone else might have going on in their department* [or] *in their lives,"* helps Flynn manage relationships with those they interact with in their role.

4.5.2 Enabling Factors Relating to Capabilities of Middle Managers

Several middle managers refer to their own capabilities as having an impact on their optimal functioning within the role. The factors within this category are presented in Table 4.9 and include the skills and experience of the middle managers, and their attitudes towards the role.

Table 4.9

Category b. Capabilities of Middle Managers

RSQ3. Enablers to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Relationships
Category b.	Capabilities of middle managers 　　　　Having valuable skills and experience 　　　　Having a good attitude
Category c.	Staff
Category d.	Risk management

4.5.2.1 Having Valuable Skills and Experience. A range of personal skills and experience enable middle managers to succeed in their role. Practical skills such as being able to *"read things really fast"* and *"write well fast"* are considered by Bailey to be useful for helping to *"deal with things quickly and efficiently"*. Being efficient is also discussed by Erin, particularly in relation to dealing with the high administration workload. Several middle managers identify other qualities, such as being able to prioritise, plan, set goals, respond to change, and adapt, as enabling factors. Typical comments include:

> *...you've got to be able to adapt along the way...growing with that knowledge.* (Alex)

> *...it's just up to me to adapt, adjust, and to find ways to be more efficient.* (Casey)

> *...things happen and you have to respond.* (Erin)

Quinn refers to three *"very different"* roles they experience within the middle management position: budgeting, teaching, and research. Quinn thinks *"there's a balancing act here to get all those things done"* to meet the expectations of the role.

Having prior knowledge to draw from and having experience in the role is seen as extremely valuable. Being relatively new to the organisation, Lee acknowledges that *"it will take a long time to understand the complete academic process"*. Having recently moved into the management position, Francis is particularly aware of the time they required to gain enough *"knowledge of the*

content of the programmes" to be able to complete certain tasks efficiently. Another manager who had moved from within the organisation into the management role found that familiarity with the systems helped them to adjust quickly and acknowledged the extra effort that would have been otherwise required.

> *I know the systems, I know the flow of the year… Coming in as a new person, I think would be really hard – it would be so much to get your head around.* (Bailey)

Having been in middle management for a long time, Blair reflects on the learning experience:

> *…I made a lot of mistakes along the way, as most people do, and some of that was maturity based, some of it was experience based, and some of it is just about understanding the role that I play.* (Blair)

Blair goes on to explain how prior experience has helped with guiding team members:

> *Your staff rely on you; they'll come to you with a problem, and you've got to answer it. You've got to have a solution, or at least give them direction that is appropriate and fits within the policies, procedures, and guidelines. Sometimes, there is no right answer, but there are certainly a lot of wrong ones, and you need to be able to help them get in the right direction…* (Blair)

Personality is also discussed by several middle managers. Being *"approachable", "personable", and "selfless"* is generally considered by middle managers to help them relate to others in the workplace. Also valuable to the relationship between the middle manager and their team members is the ability of the middle manager to act as a role model and have credibility:

> *I think role modelling is really important. I have been around in education for a long time, there's not much I haven't seen…* (Quinn)

Casey speaks of their appearance having a positive influence on their ability to relate to students, commenting that a *"comfortable look"* makes students feel

more at ease with them, whereas someone *"too handsome or too tall, or too big or too loud"* can be more intimidating.

4.5.2.2 Having a Good Attitude. Interestingly, not many middle managers give themselves credit or acknowledge directly that their own attitude towards the role contributes largely to their ability to achieve. However, many of their comments reflect their motivated attitude towards the job despite the evidently challenging environment. Typical comments include: *"to overcome that barrier"* (Francis), *"you go with the flow"* (Alex), *"I've always felt responsible to do well"* (Blair), *"we really believe in supporting our students"* (Jordan), and *"you have to be prepared to put in the effort"* (Kerry).

The following statements further demonstrate that these middle managers have the willingness to put effort into doing a good job and that their own passion for the job or sense of responsibility can help them be successful in it. Blair talks of being selfless and feeling accountable for those within their sphere of influence:

> *I don't expect anyone else to do my job for me… I think feeling responsible for myself, and accountable, makes me want to do a good job… I think, like [in] any job, in order to do a good job, you've got to enjoy what you're doing. That's the important thing, and if you're not, go and do something else… You can't be selfish about what you're doing anymore. You've got to think about the people around you, because you're responsible for them, and accountable for them.* (Blair)

Kerry describes getting satisfaction from seeing students achieve:

> *…you've got to have a passion to see people succeeding…And when you see people getting it…and you see the look on their face, you know that it's worth the effort. You don't need anyone to tell you, you just know.* (Kerry)

4.5.3 Enabling Factors Relating to Staff

Several middle managers recognise the benefits of having skilled staff in their team and across the organisation. Factors recognised to enable optimal functioning within this category are presented in Table 4.10. Middle managers emphasise the importance of team members managing their own workload and following

organisational procedure. They also recognise, acknowledge, and value the hard work and passion that is required for their team members to support the students.

Table 4.10

Category c. Staff

RSQ3. Enablers to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Relationships
Category b.	Capabilities of middle managers

Category c.	Staff
	    Staff being self-sufficient
	    Having passionate team members
	    Tutorial staff supporting students
	    Having good support staff

Category d.	Risk management

4.5.3.1 Staff Being Self-Sufficient. Comments such as *"[I'm]* really lucky to have some very experienced tutors" (Erin) and *"she goes over and above, she always delivers"* (Jordan), show that these middle managers appreciate the experience and work ethic of those in their team. When talking of their experience of being new to the role, Erin found their *"very experienced"* tutorial team to be supportive, patient, and understanding, which helped Erin grow into the role. Erin also acknowledges the benefit of having team members who *"hold really good value with industry connections"* which are vital to the subject areas within their department.

The desire among interviewees for their team members to be self-sufficient is unsurprising, due to the high workload associated to the middle manager role, and is emphasised by Casey, who wants their staff to be *"self-sufficient, self-reliant"* and not need manager input because *"they're* [already] *doing what they need to do"*. The ability to rely on the skills of their staff is also emphasised by Alex, who manages a high-risk learning environment:

> *I expect them to be on track with course development, materials, and*
> *reporting... The staff are required to know about the health and safety*
> *policies. They know where they can go online to check* [the policies]. *We keep*
> *records of any incidents that happen, and the staff are required to go online*
> *and report them themselves.* (Alex)

4.5.3.2 Having Passionate Team Members. Interviews highlight the heavy workload evident in the roles of the tutorial and support staff at the organisation, and middle managers value the dedication, passion, and strong work ethic that these staff present in the workplace. This is evidenced in the following comments:

She's worth her weight in gold… so lovely with people, she's just fantastic. (Quinn)

They'll do all sorts of things that add value. (Blair)

They're very hard working…get in there, boots and all. (Erin)

The following excerpt shows recognition of the passion tutorial and support staff need to manage the tasks at hand:

…the job becomes something that really is driving something that they love, because you're not in these kinds of roles for it to just be a job…it's not really a 9 to 5 thing. (Flynn)

4.5.3.3 Tutorial Staff Supporting Students. Middle managers expect their tutors to proactively monitor student attendance and achievement and follow up when there are concerns. They recognise the effort their team members put into supporting students, and understand that doing so requires a strong work ethic and the right attitude. The following comment reflects the appreciation middle managers have of the extra effort their tutors put into the role:

…we do an enormous amount of support work here in our department, so I certainly feel no issue with respect to how hard the staff work to help the students be successful. (Flynn)

Kerry believes staff who share a belief in the potential of their students and *"who really like working with people having second-chance education"* can best support students through their learning journey, and notes that having *"your own personal experiences to use"* helps teaching staff to guide people towards their goals.

When managing programmes that have a high percentage of students who did not achieve at school, Blair explains that they specifically choose *"a really good*

tutor who is progressive and willing to put the extra effort in" to increase the likelihood that those students who have previously struggled with learning get the best help.

4.5.3.4 Having Good Support Staff. Middle managers say that they know they are functioning optionally in their role when the needs of students are met. However, several managers state that there are not enough support staff available at the organisation to meet those needs. Kerry, in contrast, contends that the student support services are extremely beneficial:

> *Many students go and see learning support to get some extra help… And there are our student services with the nurse and the counsellor, and the disability liaison. Māori studies are very, very helpful with the students, because early in the program* [the students] *go to them, and they've actually started to have a little bit of introduction to the culture… and start to feel part of their own culture. Particularly those who have a Māori background, who've never, ever had anything to do with their culture.* (Kerry)

It is evident that some interviewees recognise the importance of having capable team members and support staff across the organisation in order to function optimally in their role. However, considerably more interview discussion was focussed on the challenges middle managers experienced with staff than the benefits they experienced, and these are discussed further on in this chapter.

4.5.4 Enabling Factors Relating to Risk Management

Effective management of risk is discussed by several middle managers as necessary to optimal functioning in their role. As presented in Table 4.11, factors discussed are specifically related to having good health and safety management practices at the organisation and ensuring the well-being of staff and students through the identification and prevention of potential health and safety issues.

Table 4.11

Category d. Risk Management

RSQ3. Enablers to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Relationships
Category b.	Capabilities of middle managers
Category c.	Staff

Category d.	Risk management
	      Having good health and safety management practices
	      Identifying and preventing issues with students
	      Identifying and preventing issues with staff

4.5.4.1 Having Good Health and Safety Management Practices. Early identification and prevention of issues related to physical and emotional well-being, the recognition that a student might need learning support, and the maintenance of a safe learning environment for staff and students are all considered essential for effective risk management. Levels of risk vary between the departments at the case organisation due to differences in the learning environments. For example, the workshop environment of the trades-based programmes have higher physical risk factors than the classrooms of the business-based programmes. As Blair explains, good health and safety policies and practices assist with the management of risk in the departments with higher risk factors:

> *The thing that we've improved on has been our policies around health and safety, and in some cases, our reaction to things when they do come up… Having people like our health and safety manager involved has been healthy* [and] *brings a lot more rigour to what we do… Having clear policies and procedures, so a code of conduct…knowing that the students have the same information, and that there's no confusion around what's right and what's wrong.* (Blair)

Blair further emphasises the urgency with which hazards must be addressed, and gives an example of how staff and students can be at risk due to the behaviour of others in the learning environment:

> *If a student is actually acting out in such a way and putting other people at risk around them, that person has got to be dealt with straight away…* (Blair)

Blair also notes that if ineffective risk management results in accidents in the learning environment, which then end up on *"the front page of the paper* [or] *if the funders or police find out about it"*, there can be follow-on implications for the organisation.

4.5.4.2 Identifying and Preventing Issues with Students. Many of the middle managers discuss the importance of identifying learning issues that might have an impact on a student's ability to achieve. They express the need to put support in place early on for these students and have found regular communication with their team members to be integral to managing this area of risk. Pasifika and international students have been recognised as groups needing extra support, and also those who may not have succeeded during their previous learning experience. The following excerpt presents Kerry's experience of student risk factors:

> *Considering that we have people from various cultures for whom English is their second language, through to people who really didn't have much educational background…you've got to work with Pasifika people to get them to understand the study rules, and their time management isn't good…and a family event happens…and they get taken away…and they've been away so much and haven't grasped what they needed.* (Kerry)

Early intervention with those students vulnerable to failure is considered to be an important part of the risk management process. Typical comments address the need for *"close monitoring"* and *"supporting the student from day one, to be able to recognise where their needs lie"* (Jordan). Several middle managers say they meet regularly with their team members to review student progress. In those meetings, they *"discuss people that we feel have specific needs"* (Kerry), and plan how their needs might be met. Then managers describe *"working with them individually"* (Flynn), and *"trying to realign their drivers and motivators"* (Lee) to help students succeed. Kerry believes that the programme of study should be lengthened for some students, particularly those who miss out on classes for cultural reasons.

Various provisions can be put into place to allow these students greater opportunity for success. Typical services discussed by middle managers include peer tutor support, counselling, disability liaison, learning support, and counselling, all of

which are available at the organisation at no charge to the student. The following statement reflects of the general approach to managing "at-risk" students:

> *We put in a lot of effort, assistance, and support with the student. It could be you're looking at a leave of absence, a withdrawal, or maybe transfer to another programme…looking at all those options…nipping it in the bud…and being on top of what's happening with the students and where their needs lie, because that can change a lot.* (Erin)

Two middle managers speak of using formal "warning letters" as a way to motivate the students. One of them, Francis, highlights the need to issue the warning letters early on:

> *… it's about issuing the warning letters early. There's no point doing it when they've got exams the next week.* (Francis)

Lee feels strongly that other options should be considered before resorting to the organisation's formal warning letter process.

> *I think the idea of just purely writing warnings and then booting them off the course is not the right approach, because we don't know their backgrounds, necessarily.* (Lee)

4.5.4.3 Identifying and Preventing Issues with Staff. Two middle managers talk of ensuring their team members are well enough to teach their classes. Quinn considers this to be a *"really important"* aspect of their role and specifically refers to mental health and making sure *"that we've not got somebody having a nervous breakdown"*. Quinn believes that *"if the staff aren't okay, then the students are not going to get the teaching they need"*. Blair bases some of their more important decisions around the well-being and safety of their staff:

> *That comes back again to caring about your staff. You've got to be sure that they're in a good place themselves, and, sometimes, the most important decisions are around their well-being and their safety…* (Blair)

4.5.5 Summary of Factors Considered to Enable Optimal Functioning

As presented in this section, middle managers have identified many factors that they have experienced as enabling their ability to achieve in their role. Of note is that most of these enabling factors are associated with people rather than the systems, processes, or physical resources middle managers encounter in the work environment.

Middle managers talked of their own capabilities, the skills of those they work alongside, and the constructive relationships they have with internal and external stakeholders as enabling optimal functioning. Being able to draw from their own capabilities has helped them to achieve practical tasks associated with the role and to develop and maintain important relationships with internal and external stakeholders. These relationships have enabled middle managers to support students through the learning process and have assisted with the management of risks associated with the learning environment.

The discussion offered by middle managers when identifying factors that they consider to enable optimal functioning in their role further highlights the great value they place on meeting stakeholder and student needs. Unfortunately, as will be demonstrated in the next section, the factors that inhibit optimal function outnumber those that enable it.

4.6 Factors Considered to Inhibit Optimal Functioning

This section presents the aspects of the role that the interview participants experienced as inhibitors to optimal functioning. The categories that had emerged during the coding process are presented in Table 4.12 and, as discussed in the following sections, each category contains a variety of factors that one or more interview participants identified as inhibiting their ability to function optimally in their role.

Table 4.12

Categories of Inhibitors to Optimal Functioning

RSQ4. Inhibitors to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Time constraints
Category b.	Limited resources
Category c.	Task conflicts
Category d.	Workload allocation (targeted teaching hour) system
Category e.	Information communication technology systems
Category f.	Room booking system and classroom space
Category g.	General processes
Category h.	Enrolment numbers
Category i.	Staff
Category j.	Senior management

4.6.1 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Time Constraints

Issues associated with time constraints are recognised by middle managers as inhibitors to optimal functioning. The general discussion is around work overload and having too many tasks to be able to complete them to a satisfactory standard, or to achieve them at all. When asked what might prevent them from being able to achieve optimally in the role, typical responses are: *"in the time that's available, I can't do all of those things"* (Blair), *"it's probably time constraints – the amount of time in the day to get through everything"* (Erin), *"I don't have, once again, enough time"* (Alex), and *"it's not so much the tasks that are required, but the time* [needed] *to do them"* (Jordan). Time pressure creates considerable dissatisfaction and frustration for those in the role. Table 4.13 presents the specific aspects of their role that middle managers say are impacted by time constraints.

Table 4.13

Category a. Time Constraints

RSQ4. Inhibitors to optimal functioning	

Category a.	Time constraints
	    Inability to fit tasks into working hours
	    Restrictions to the development of new initiatives
	    Negative affect on student experience
	    Negative affect on research quality
	    No time to learn new systems
	    Creation of conflicting priorities
	    Constant change drives further constraints

Category b.	Limited resources
Category c.	Task conflicts
Category d.	Workload allocation (targeted teaching hour) system
Category e.	Information communication technology systems
Category f.	Room booking system and classroom space
Category g.	General processes
Category h.	Enrolment numbers
Category i.	Staff
Category j.	Senior management

4.6.1.1 Inability to Fit Tasks into Working Hours. All 11 interviewees mention that issues with time constraints have an impact on their ability to function optimally. For the middle managers who also have a teaching responsibility, teaching abatement hours are allocated to leave room for their management responsibilities. Several of the middle managers say that the abatement hours are not sufficient to cover the requirements of the management role. The number of abatement hours granted to the managers varies widely across the organisation, with some middle managers having very little teaching responsibility and more abatement and some with very little abatement and more teaching responsibility. Interestingly, those with very little or no teaching responsibility also felt they could not fit all the requirements of their role into the working hours, perhaps because they have a larger number of programmes and/or enrolment numbers within their area of responsibility.

It is challenging at best and unachievable at worst for interviewees to fit their tasks into the hours they are contracted to work, as indicated by the following comments:

Sometimes there isn't the time and the only way I can get through my work is often to work late at night, and I've started to review that, thinking, if I can't do it in [working] *hours, then I'm not going to do it.* (Quinn)

I'd been here about a month and I realised that actually you can't come to work expecting to get anything done… I had a day recently where I only added things to my list. (Bailey)

…the only price that you pay is your own time and I'm sick of it being my own time and my own health. (Jordan)

When asked what might help to alleviate some of the pressure, Jordan suggests *"less teaching, more allocated programme manager abatement"*, an idea which is representative of the general opinions of those middle managers with teaching requirements as part of their role.

4.6.1.2 Restrictions to the Development of New Initiatives. Two middle managers address the lack of opportunity they have to use their skills fully to benefit the programmes that they manage. As noted previously, when talking of *"coming up with some cool ideas for the tutors"*, Blair states that they *"very seldom have the chance to do that"*. This experience is mirrored by Erin, who says: *There's so much more that I could bring to some programmes if I had the time.* Being unable to enhance courses due to time constraints not only has an impact on the teaching and learning experience of the students, it also has the potential to affect external stakeholders, as evidenced by the following statement:

As far as going out and trying to create exterior opportunities, for example, offering extra courses to local industry, or whatever it might be, I don't think I've ever in my years here had the time to do a good job of it. (Blair)

4.6.1.3 Negative Affect on Student Experience. Interviewees discuss the specific negative impact on students resulting from time constraints. When talking of being able to offer pastoral care to the students who are considered to be "at-risk", Kerry says that they feel that doing so is limited by time, stating that *"it really is a time factor, because there just aren't enough hours in the day to do that"*. Kerry's concern is that these students, without support, may not achieve their goals:

…if you haven't got time to [offer pastoral care to] *them individually, you're never going to give them that opportunity* [to succeed]. (Kerry)

Time constraints can also undermine the success of students who are achieving well and could benefit from being extended. Jordan commented that over the last two years they have not had an opportunity to *"stretch the really good ones"*, because they find a considerable amount of their time is spent on supporting students who really *"need to be in a lower-level course"*. Jordan feels that this situation is *"undermining for the high achievers in the class"*.

For middle managers with a teaching component to their role, there is the potential for time constraints to limit their ability to prepare for their classes, as indicated by the following comments:

…my preparation time for what I teach is really limited because I have to spend it all on the programme manager stuff, so my classes are always the last to get organised... (Jordan)

I'm passionate about teaching and that's why I do not mind teaching…but I don't always feel I do the best, or I stress because I think I'm just not going to get all this done in time. (Quinn)

4.6.1.4 Negative Affect on Research Quality. Most of the middle managers interviewed are in a role which involves undertaking professional development and research along with their tutoring and management responsibilities. There is value placed on undertaking research and professional development, but it is not necessarily prioritised, nor is it achievable to the standard some middle managers would like. Bailey calls research and professional development *"my own stuff"*, and stresses that they do not want to let the *"big picture stuff"* eat into it. The following statement indicates that not all middle managers have the luxury of putting research first:

…the research I'm doing, I'm going to have it done, but it's not going to be the quality that I want it to be, because I just don't have time… (Casey)

Quinn talks of the conflict between teaching and research, saying: *"I'm not doing it because I've got to do my teaching"*. They note that they are either not meeting the research requirements or not meeting the needs of the students.

4.6.1.5 No Time to Learn New Systems. The management role requires the use of many systems which are regularly being updated or changed. Some of the middle managers have found that they do not have enough time to learn the new systems, even to the point that they avoid using them. Alex finds it particularly frustrating to keep up with the wide range of systems they are expected to use:

> *They just put it on you, dump it on you, and say "go learn it"… All of these people, they have their specific roles in these departments, and they just focus on that. But then we have to pick up information from all of these departments and areas and absorb it…and it becomes more workload.* (Alex)

Jordan reflects on how having insufficient time to put into becoming comfortable with changes to the ICT systems negatively impacts their sense of competence:

> *Yeah, I just try and avoid it because it's just constantly changing, and I can't keep up…you end up feeling incompetent even though you know you're not.* (Jordan)

4.6.1.6 Creation of Conflicting Priorities. The management role includes a wide variety of tasks and limited time in which to achieve them. Time constraints create conflicting priorities in specific areas, as presented in the previous sections. As discussed, time constraints create issues with balancing the main tasks of the role such as teaching, research, and management responsibilities. Time constraints also limit opportunities to implement initiatives within the department to improve the teaching and learning experience for the students and tutors. Furthermore, time constraints have the potential to have a negative impact on the middle managers' sense of competence. There is a general sense of frustration with the volume of urgent tasks that prevent middle managers from putting time into the tasks they believe are important to the optimal functioning of the department.

The need to prioritise is discussed by several of the middle managers. Typical comments include: *"it's prioritising, and we have to do that all the time"* (Erin); *"I've got to prioritise, and sometimes defer"* (Blair); and *"systems are not a priority"* (Jordan). The following comment reflects how tasks get shuffled around as competing demands appear throughout the day:

> *...when I get back into the office there's an appointment or a phone call, or an email, so the* [meeting] *minutes aren't necessarily a priority.* (Francis)

Quinn has concerns with being in situations where they might miss an *"important strategic meeting about the way forwards"* because other tasks are deemed more important and also finds it a challenge to *"be a competent teacher"* because they are too busy with other aspects of the role. Quinn also highlights concerns with being *"observed"* and *"meeting the requirements of student satisfaction"*, indicating that being time pressured can diminish their performance as measured by the organisation. Quinn offers an example of how task conflicts have an adverse impact on their teaching responsibilities:

> *Sometimes I'm so busy getting everybody else's paper guidelines in, because I do look at everybody's ... I forget to do my own.* (Quinn)

The following comment indicates that prioritising requires choosing between *"urgent"* and *"important"* tasks and that these decisions are made as issues arise:

> *...given the different roles I play, I've got a lot of conflicting priorities. So I've got to try and review that almost on a daily basis, and look at where the big priorities sit...you've got all your urgent stuff coming at you all the time, and it's the urgent versus the important.* (Blair)

4.6.1.7 Constant Change Drives Further Constraints. Some of the middle managers feel that the climate of *"constant"* change contributes to the time constraints they experience and that this climate affects their ability to achieve some of the requirements of their role. When reflecting on what might get in their way of optimal functioning, Jordan says:

> *...every year I come to the same conclusion that no, I can't do it, because something always gets added.* (Jordan)

Bailey also talks of the impact of change:

…the climate of change…there's always something that comes up that you have to do next week. It's just constant. (Bailey)

Examples of changes provided by middle managers include staff illnesses, staff availability, resignations, change of management, change of timetabling, programme changes, and changes to the systems and processes at the organisation. Alex has seen the impact of change on the student experience, which has at times required them to *"juggle"* and *"rearrange"* student timetables which then is *"sometimes reflected in the student* [feedback] *evaluations"*.

Jordan talks of experiencing the *"targeted review"*, which was a country-wide initiative driven by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority that required all qualifications level 6 and below in Aotearoa New Zealand to be re-developed. Some tertiary institutions outsourced this development, and some chose not to. This particular organisation relied on their staff to manage the development, and the following statement, reflecting on that situation, indicates that change is not necessarily supported with resource availability:

I was involved heavily in [the targeted review] *for three years for no abatement, no extra pay, nothing. I actually did three years of work for free, and yes, I had an investment in that for my programmes. But they're the organisation's programmes. Something like that can put you on the back foot – and you're still expected to reach your target for research and everything else that surrounds the role, including your teaching.* (Jordan)

Change not only adds to the high workload; Jordan says they found it particularly *"demoralising"* when the CE spoke publicly about how the organisation *"saved $4.5 million because they got their staff to do it for free, whereas other people are outsourcing exactly the same* [work]*"*. Although the public statement may have been intended as a commendation, from Jordan's viewpoint, it came across as offensive. In addition to highlighting resource limitations, this statement and the response to it are an indication of shortfalls in communication and understanding between the senior leadership and middle management levels.

4.6.2 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Limited Resources

As discussed in the literature review, resources can be anything that an individual perceives to help them attain their goals. Therefore, the impact of limited resources is associated with other inhibiting factors such as time constraints, task conflicts, and problems with systems and processes, which are presented in separate categories within this chapter. As highlighted in Table 4.14, category b. of this section focusses specifically on the mention by middle managers of limited resources, with respect to: budgeted resources being held back; stress experienced due to resource limitations; and not having enough resources to implement change, manage health and safety, or support students.

Table 4.14

Category b. Limited Resources

RSQ4. Inhibitors to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Time constraints

Category b.	Limited resources
	    Budgeted resources held back
	    Stress caused by limited resources
	    Limited change support resources
	    Limited health and safety management resources
	    Limited student support
	    Limited tutor support

Category c.	Task conflicts
Category d.	Workload allocation (targeted teaching hour) system
Category e.	Information communication technology systems
Category f.	Room booking system and classroom space
Category g.	General processes
Category h.	Enrolment numbers
Category i.	Staff
Category j.	Senior management

All middle managers mention issues associated with the limited availability of resources, which is seen to have a negative impact on many aspects of their role. When asked what gets in their way of achieving optimally, a typical response was *"time and resources"* (Alex). The following statement encompasses the general feeling of how resources are experienced by these middle managers in their role:

> *…it's the whole resources, including people – if we had more people helping…but there are not enough resources for ICT…there are not enough resources for staff…there are not enough resources for classrooms.* (Casey)

Ultimately, middle managers agreed that the supply of resources to support their work is inadequate.

4.6.2.1 Budgeted Resources Held Back. The middle managers develop budgets as part of fulfilling operational requirements within the organisation. These budgets are individually planned for all programmes within each department, and the funds available depend on the number of expected enrolments. The approval process requires the endorsement of senior management for funds to be released for each purchase. One manager describes *"times when resources were being restricted"* and they were *"literally having to argue about every single purchase order that went through"* (Flynn). Of note here is that, in that situation, the resources being restricted were items that had been budgeted for, putting Flynn in a position of having to *"fight to just get the basics done"* while *"trying to not make* [it] *a stress for the tutors"*. Flynn found this situation taxed their time and energy.

4.6.2.2 Stress Caused by Limited Resources. Stress associated with limited resources is also discussed by Jordan, who has experienced this as an ongoing issue that has had a negative impact on their personal well-being and says: *"I am absolutely exhausted and don't have any sense of satisfaction"*. Jordan reports a real sense of job- and department-related fear, adding:

> *…I also live the entire year in fear because I know that I'm holding on tight to try and keep this thing from falling apart because there's not enough resources and time…And I also know and fear that if it does fall apart, my head is on the chopping block in this place, and there's no possibility to have any discussion with my manager about it.* (Jordan)

Jordan does *"all the things that we are resourced to do"*, and notes that students are successful, but *"would love* [to have] *the satisfaction of feeling closer to optimal"*. When asked what might help, Jordan responded:

…easier communication, some leadership, some human resources, would make a huge difference to your ability to cope with the pressures of the job… (Jordan)

Although Jordan was the only manager who specifically emphasised the impact the role has on their sense of well-being and the related concerns with their department and job, the comments of other middle managers evidenced the high pressure and stress experienced due to limited resources: *"I'm stressed because…"* (Quinn), and *"One of the stressful things…"* (Erin).

4.6.2.3 Limited Change Support Resources. Meeting stakeholder needs is one of the factors middle managers consider when defining optimal functioning in the role. Doing so requires programme offerings to be kept current, which can sometimes require significant changes to existing programmes or the introduction of new programmes. In addition to being involved in the standard process of keeping programmes up to date, some of these middle managers, as mentioned previously, experienced the "targeted review" of qualifications for which all qualifications level 6 and below required re-development. Those expected to undertake programme development, regardless of circumstances, are most often people who are already employed in a full-time capacity.

Blair has experienced situations in which the team is expected to *"make all this change"* while at the same time should *"do everything else that needs* [to be] *done"* without extra resources and states this type of circumstance creates *"an impossible equation"* that lowers the quality of outputs and increases the workload of those involved. As previously noted, Jordan has also experienced a large increase of workload without the corresponding extra resources.

4.6.2.4 Limited Health and Safety Management Resources. Lee talks of finances being *"the greatest restriction for health and safety"* while acknowledging that finances are finite, stating:

…if we spent every single dollar that we have making everything super safe, then we'd have no money to actually pay staff or spend on courses…we can assist, we can make recommendations…but, ultimately, it's the financial implications of that. (Lee)

Lee's comments highlight the difficulty managers face in balancing the health and safety of students and staff while also ensuring there are enough finances to also run the programmes of study.

4.6.2.5 Limited Student Support. As discussed previously, middle managers see students with high needs enrolling in their courses across all programme levels. These students have English as their second language, mental health issues, learning disabilities, or a lack of confidence in their ability to learn due to prior experiences in education. At the time of data gathering, the organisation had a student support department comprising one counsellor, one nurse, one learning assistance person, and one disability liaison officer. Some of the middle managers have found value in these services but feel they are not adequate for the volume of students who require support, or do not necessarily meet the wide variety of student needs. This is evidenced by comments such as: *"there's a real lack of learning support"* (Jordan); *"we have good student support in place, but it's not broad enough"* (Blair); and *"there's not enough of them* [student support service members]*, and they can only devote a certain amount of time per person"* (Kerry). For some programmes, even those with low enrolments, the student needs are significant and difficult to address.

> *...even with the lower student numbers here, at quite a high tutor-to-student ratio, still we just don't have the tools or the resources to help them achieve.* (Blair)

A programme managed by Kerry also has students with significant needs and Kerry has found the organisation does not have the ability to support the level of need required. They explain that *"some of those people have such serious issues"*, offering *"mental health concerns"* as an example, and say *"many hours* [have been spent] *getting emergency help"* for students with *"very, very serious"* issues. Kerry expresses particular frustration at requests not being responded to:

> *You make comments time and time again about things that would be helpful, like having an extra person to work with Pasifika people or this or that. But they never happen. So you have to do it yourself...* (Kerry)

Discontented with the lack of learning support at the organisation, Jordan altered the curriculum of a programme of study to include literacy skill development:

> *I know that some of our students go to learning support and they can't get in in the time that they need to, it just becomes too difficult…I've actually had to alter our curriculum to bring in reading and writing skills to support them. There was no support and students would fail…* (Jordan)

This has then put more pressure on the tutors, but Jordan considers it necessary for student achievement.

> *So now it's back on to the tutors…and they're not English teachers, but something's better than nothing, which is what was happening. And there's another load on the tutor, there's another load on the programme manager…I've got no other pathway to assist these students and I don't get the extra teaching hours or the budget.* (Jordan)

To meet the target achievement rates for the department (as set at the senior management level), Jordan does a *"calculation"* and decides which students to put their learning support efforts towards, as they do not have enough resources to support all of them:

> *So we know if we've got four that are, on their own back, less likely to achieve and we can only afford for two of them to not achieve, then we have to target a couple and figure out how we can help them.* (Jordan)

Meeting the needs of the students was one of the aspects of the role that managers consider to define optimal functioning, however, as evidenced here, interviewees have found that there are limitations to the student support available at the organisation that could help them meet these needs. In response to these limitations, middle managers have found ways to assist their students within their departments. However, this has put more pressure on the middle managers and the tutors, who all already carry a high workload and the associated time constraints.

4.6.2.6 Limited Tutor Support. Tutors do not necessarily have all the skills required to deal with the wide-ranging learning needs of students, particularly with learning or behaviour management difficulties. This issue is exacerbated when

learning support services are also not able help high-needs or at-risk students. According to Blair, the polytechnic learning environment can require *"quite a big step up from what* [students have] *done in the past"* and the organisation does not *"have much support around the edge of the tutor at all"* to help them cope with the transition required. Blair manages this by *"choosing a really good tutor who is progressive, and willing to put the extra effort in, and good with people who struggle"*.

This example demonstrates that this particular manager has been able to overcome wider organisation resource shortfalls by making the most of what they have available to them within their department and scope of control. There is the potential for this to create implications, particularly where workload imbalances become evident within their tutorial team, however, Blair shows resilience, stating: *"you work with the cards you're dealt"* (Blair).

Another area that has been recognised as having limited tutor support relates to training those new to the tutorial role. As stated in their employment contract, new tutors are expected to complete a certificate or diploma in adult education. At one stage, these adult learning classes were previously run onsite in the face-to-face mode of delivery, but are now only available via distance learning. Alex found this mode of delivery to be less effective for the tutors in their department, saying that tutors *"struggle with their learning and don't achieve as quickly…or efficiently"*, and they miss out on the communication and interaction with other staff associated with the face-to-face classes.

4.6.3 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Task Conflicts

As discussed in a previous section, time constraints make it difficult to balance the main tasks of the role, such as teaching, research, and management responsibilities. As presented in Table 4.15, middle managers, particularly those whose role includes tutoring, experience task conflicts that can create ethical issues between the manager and students, or the manager and their team members. One manager in particular found task conflicts to be an inhibitor to optimal functioning.

Table 4.15

Category c. Task Conflicts

RSQ4. Inhibitors to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Time constraints
Category b.	Limited resources

Category c.	Task conflicts
	      Student-related ethical issues
	      Staff-related ethical issues

Category d.	Workload allocation (targeted teaching hour) system
Category e.	Information communication technology systems
Category f.	Room booking system and classroom space
Category g.	General processes
Category h.	Enrolment numbers
Category i.	Staff
Category j.	Senior management

4.6.3.1 Student-Related Ethical Issues. Quinn discusses being presented with ethical issues due to being a tutor while also a manager. One of the issues relates to a *"power imbalance"* which is evidenced in the behaviour of students:

> [The students] *know I'm the one that signs them off, and* [the tutors and I] *notice that when we discuss students. I might say, "That student's fantastic", and someone will say, "No, they're not – they're terrible". But* [the student is] *playing to me…* (Quinn)

Another issue Quinn experiences with role conflict affects their ability to engage with the students in the classroom environment and therefore has a negative impact on their ability to tutor effectively. When referring to student behaviour, Quinn explains that when tutors *"don't manage* [students] *in their class properly"*, the tutors request manager intervention: *"So, I go in and tell* [the students who are behaving inappropriately] *that they absolutely can't be like that"*. Quinn has found that having this behaviour management role creates *"relationship issues with students"*, the result being that students then become more hesitant to interact and share during the classes they later have with this manager.

Quinn also talks of the organisation's formal student complaints process which specifies that students are to approach the department manager if they have issues with any particular tutor. If the manager does not resolve the student issue, the student is expected to take their complaint to the senior manager. Quinn states that, when they are the tutor with whom the student has an issue, because they are at the *"top of the chain below the senior manager…ethically, there're some real issues there"*. They feel that telling a student to *"go straight to the Head of Faculty"* to address problems removes the usual opportunity to manage the complaint within the department and places the manager in a compromising position.

4.6.3.2 Staff-Related Ethical Issues. Conflict between the responsibilities of being both a tutor and a manager can also create staff-related ethical issues. Quinn talks of a situation in which a team member was extremely unwell and not able to work. In this particular situation, there was a sense of urgency, and the following statement shows the sense of responsibility Quinn felt:

> *She couldn't talk to us about what she needed, and we're trying to frantically find out what she was doing to make sure that those classes were covered* [and] *that's what I should be doing as a manager.* (Quinn)

The conflict in this situation arose because Quinn had a class about to start: *"It was literally five minutes before I went into class that the phone call came"*. This put Quinn in a position of being required to deal with the tutor's class and her own class while at the same time considering the care needs of the sick team member:

> *…here I am, hopefully as a caring manager, being told that this person is really unwell and I'm about to go into class and that, for me, was real role conflict.* (Quinn)

Another conflict Quinn talks of, as a manager who also tutors, is the experience of *"not knowing where you stand in the organisation"*. Quinn talks specifically of accountability for the quality of teaching practice. Tutors are accountable to the manager, but the manager does not have anybody to be accountable to. Quinn feels their position of power makes members of their team uneasy about giving feedback: *"The staff might not want to challenge my marking. They might think, "Gosh, she's the manager, she must know what she's doing"*, [but]

I can make mistakes". As a result, Quinn misses out on opportunities that other tutors have for improving teaching practice.

4.6.4 Inhibiting Factors Relating to the Workload Allocation System

The organisation uses a targeted teaching hour (TTH) system for allocating teaching workload to the tutors and middle managers. Table 4.16 presents several issues with this system that were discussed by middle managers.

Table 4.16

Category d. Workload Allocation

RSQ4. Inhibitors to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Time constraints
Category b.	Limited resources
Category c.	Task conflicts
Category d.	Workload allocation (targeted teaching hour) system 　　　Inconsistent use of the system across the organisation 　　　Unsuitability for different programme levels 　　　Impact on research outputs 　　　Conflicting priorities 　　　Impact on quality of teaching for some staff
Category e.	Information communication technology systems
Category f.	Room booking system and classroom space
Category g.	General processes
Category h.	Enrolment numbers
Category i.	Staff
Category j.	Senior management

4.6.4.1 Explanation of the Workload Allocation (Targeted Teaching Hour) System. Every academic staff member, including tutors and academic middle managers, is expected to reach their teaching hours target by the end of the academic year. Each paper (i.e., module or unit of learning within a programme of study) within each programme has a specific number of timetabled teaching hours allocated to it. Timetabled hours are the targeted hours the tutors spend in class with students. The paper descriptors for each programme specify hours as "in-class" and "self-directed". Generally, lower-level programmes have more in-class hours per paper credit than the higher-level programmes do. The reason the hours fluctuate with the

level of the programme is because the students are expected to need more tutor-directed learning on the lower-level programmes and to be capable of doing more self-directed learning on the higher-level programmes. The in-class hours specified on the paper descriptors are used to allocate TTHs to the academic staff members. The general rule is that the TTHs for each paper do not usually change with respect to enrolment numbers. Some papers can have a small number of students enrolled and some can have large numbers. Having larger numbers of students in any paper creates a heavier workload for the tutor, particularly when each student needs one-on-one direction and when there is a high number of sizeable assessments to mark. Because TTHs are not set relative to class size, compromises often have to be made for larger classes.

With the TTH system being the workload allocation model applied to the tutorial and middle manager roles, it is one of the factors that contribute to the above issues associated with time constraints discussed by many of the middle managers. Amongst other issues, the general feeling is that, for the management role, there is a *"lack of actual allocated time given"* (Jordan), so tasks associated with the role exceed the TTH abatement offered. During interviews, a small number of middle managers referred specifically to the TTH system when discussing challenges or frustrations in the role. These are presented in the following sections.

4.6.4.2 Inconsistent Use of the System Across the Organisation. Middle managers are given TTH abatement for their management duties. What became evident throughout the interviews was that the abatement varies across the organisation with some middle managers having a low teaching workload and others having a high teaching workload. Interview data did not reveal any formula applied to calculate abatement allocation, and middle managers did not seem to be aware of how inconsistent the abatement allocations were, as this information is not disclosed between departments. Jordan compared their manager abatement with the researcher's and stated: *"Well, that's less than* [mine]*"* (Jordan). Kerry suggested that abatements vary with programme levels, and stated that they *"don't get as many hours abatement"* for programmes lower than degrees even though students enrolled in lower-level programmes *"are really needy"* (Kerry).

Another inconsistency across the organisation is that some but not all middle managers have been directed to reduce the TTHs for papers with low enrolments. In addition, some but not all middle managers have been allowed to increase TTHs for papers with high enrolments. This inconsistency is a point of frustration for Jordan, who states that *"there have actually been three or four different systems under the one organisation"*. Jordan further explains that:

> *Even the funding for programmes, and the TTH given to programmes, and the way things operate are different…and it's only just in the last year or so* [another manager's] *department got hit by a system that I've been running under for years, and they're going, "How on earth do you make this work?"*. (Jordan)

4.6.4.3 Unsuitability for Different Programme Levels. Higher level programmes have lower in-class hours specified on the paper descriptors because a considerable amount of the student study required is self-directed. This means that the tutors are only allocated a small number of TTHs for these papers. One manager has found this system to be flawed in that, despite their self-directed nature, the higher-level programmes can still generate significant workloads for the tutors, as they usually have extensive written assessments that the students complete in their self-directed learning time. The tutors have to mark these assessments and do not receive any TTHs for the marking. Casey offers an example of a paper that has 30 teaching hours allocated to it:

> *…it's still 150 hours for the student overall, so that other 120 hours* [of self-directed learning] *that the student's doing to learn, they're putting it into their output* [i.e. assessment]*, and guess who's going to deal with that output?* (Casey)

So they can meet their teaching targets, tutors teaching papers with low teaching hours are also often loaded up with more classes and therefore have more assessments to mark and less time cope with this workload. Casey believes there should be TTHs allocated to marking.

Well, if we're going to do that, we need to realise that marking high-level papers, you need hours for it. It can't be: well, it's a 30-hour class so you're getting 30 hours TTH. (Casey)

Quinn also complained of the workload associated with marking: *"the volume of marking that has to be done* [is my] *biggest bugbear"*. When suggesting what could improve their situation, Quinn said, *"I'd want to see a reduction in my teaching responsibilities"*.

4.6.4.4 Impact on Research Outputs. Academic staff members teaching on programmes at degree or above level can apply to receive TTH abatement for undertaking research. The maximum abatement that can be received is equivalent to about eighteen percent of their targeted teaching workload. Some of the middle managers felt that this abatement was inadequate and that the TTH system does not help towards creating quality research outputs. In Casey's experience:

[The TTH system] *completely doesn't work* [because at high level programmes] *you can't have people having research outputs __and__ being good teachers…even if you have time to do the research, it's not going to be the quality that's needed*. (Casey)

Casey compares the teaching workload of their tutors to that of lecturers in a university who have *"two classes a week"* and *"graduate assistants marking"*, and feels that the current situation at their institution makes it *"impossible"* to meet the expected research outputs.

4.6.4.5 Conflicting Priorities. As discussed previously, time constraints make it challenging to balance teaching, research, management, and other responsibilities. The TTH system contributes to this issue for two reasons: firstly, because the system does not adequately reflect the actual workload, which is considered to be much higher than the number of allocated TTHs; and secondly, because it is tied to a "requirement" that the teaching hour targets be achieved at the conclusion of the academic year. This quantifiable target is used as a measure within the obligatory individual performance appraisal of each teaching staff member. Quinn explains that the drive to meet their teaching target means they often neglect other aspects of their role, for example:

...meetings come up and I say "I can't, I'm teaching" [and] *again, the TTHs come in the way* [because] *if I miss that teaching session, when am I going to get my TTHs again?* (Quinn)

4.6.4.6 Impact on Quality of Teaching for Some Staff. The "requirement" to meet high teaching targets is seen to lower the quality of teaching. In Casey's experience, staff can be *"unwilling to do what's necessary to be a* [good] *teacher, because they're not getting a TTH for* [the associated tasks]*"*. In their management role, Casey has found working within the TTH system to be *"the toughest part of working at this organisation"*.

The organisation's strong focus on teaching targets often means new tutors and managers are required to start teaching from the onset of their employment at the organisation. Quinn feels strongly that it would be beneficial for new staff with teaching duties to have a lead-in period *"where they don't have to do anything that contributes to their TTHs,* [so they have] *time to get to know the policies and personalities"*. Quinn reflects on when they started in the management role:

Suddenly, I was a programme manager. I had no idea what I was doing, there was no one to do a handover, [and I was] *fumbling in the dark.* (Quinn)

Quinn felt fortunate that their transition into the role was made outside the teaching period; otherwise, they would have had to deal with the extra workload of teaching on top of being new to the management role.

4.6.5 Inhibiting Factors Related to the Information Communication Technology Systems

Many of the middle managers describe experiencing challenges with the information communication technology (ICT) systems used at the organisation. As presented in Table 4.17, issues experienced relate to the systems being dysfunctional or not fit for purpose, often adding to the workloads of middle managers' and their team members.

Table 4.17

Category e. Information Communication Technology Systems

RSQ4. Inhibitors to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Time constraints
Category b.	Limited resources
Category c.	Task conflicts
Category d.	Workload allocation (targeted teaching hour) system

Category e.	Information communication technology systems
	    Dysfunctional ICT systems
	    Double system necessary
	    Disconnected ICT systems
	    ICT problems in classrooms

Category f.	Room booking system and classroom space
Category g.	General processes
Category h.	Enrolment numbers
Category i.	Staff
Category j.	Senior management

The management role involves completing a considerable number of administrative tasks, such as those associated with reporting on student progress, attendance, and achievement. There are ICT systems developed for this purpose, but they often do not work because their outputs do not necessarily align with the data required, or because the data are collected or presented incorrectly. Some middle managers have found these issues to add to their already considerable workload. The systems have been described as *"clunky"* (Jordan), *"disconnected"*, *"time-wasting"*, and *"not there to help"* (Quinn). Casey summarises their experience:

> *…everything related to ICT makes our job as managers, as teachers…more complicated. We end up doing these tasks over and over, or doing tasks that we shouldn't have to do.* (Casey)

Alex has mixed feelings about the ICT systems, and says, *"Some are good, some are not"*, and some are often *"not working"* when needed. Alex has also found that even when the systems are working, the training time required to learn to use them properly is not available:

[Some of] *the systems are good, but it takes time for us to work with them…they just put it on you, dump it on you, and say "go learn it".* (Alex)

4.6.5.1 Dysfunctional ICT Systems. Some middle managers have found that the systems they have to work with are not fit for purpose or have glitches that misrepresent the statistics. Examples of comments regarding such issues include:

The system doesn't work for me…so I can't get the actual physical number. (Francis)

There was a glitch in the enrolment system. (Jordan)

I was getting quite frustrated, and it actually turned out there was a glitch in the system. (Quinn)

[The system] *doesn't do what it's supposed to.* (Kerry)

When talking of trying to fix ICT issues, Quinn believes that, because everybody is *"really busy…things just go in the too hard basket"*. Jordan says of their attempts to communicate ICT issues to their senior manager that *"I continued to bring that to my manager"* but was *"completely ignored for an entire year almost"*. Jordan summarises their experience with ICT systems:

At the end of the day, the systems are too slow. What they've put in place for us just isn't user friendly, it's not workable, and we're not being listened to. (Jordan)

4.6.5.2 Double System Necessary. There is evidence to suggest that, to function in their role, middle managers find their own way of managing information in their departments, either because the organisation's choice of ICT systems are inadequate or because they fail. Jordan has *"gone back to running a double system"* that involves using Excel spreadsheets in addition to the organisation's designated system to monitor student results. Francis talks of *"photocopying applications"* rather than relying on the organisation's system to track student enrolments. Quinn and Kerry talk of the system losing data *"all of those results have gone – lost"* (Quinn), *"all of the cross credits that I had put through months ago weren't in there"* (Kerry). Kerry feels the need to keep evidence of their work.

> *...if you didn't keep copies of everything yourself, you could never prove that*
> *you've done what you said you did. And you shouldn't have to, but you do.*
> (Kerry)

4.6.5.3 Disconnected ICT Systems. Two middle managers describe the ICT systems as disconnected, which makes them time consuming and inefficient to use. Casey finds they have to do *"the same work over and over"* because the system requires them to *"download* [the details] *on my computer, then upload it back to the programme* [when] *there should be a direct link"*. Lee believes that the ICT systems present information in a way that is difficult to access: *"We've got lots of systems, but they appear to be disconnected* [and I] *struggle with finding certain information"*. Lee has found this to be *"one of the biggest headaches"* they and their staff complain of. Lee would like to see the ICT systems be more streamlined:

> *We're not saying throw away all the systems that we have, but we're saying*
> [develop] *one thing that sits on top of the lot that can point us and navigate*
> *us to the right direction of the information we're looking for.* (Lee)

4.6.5.4 ICT Problems in Classrooms. Two middle managers have experienced issues with the reliability of the classroom ICT systems. Whether it is that the *"projector doesn't work"* (Casey), or because *"somebody's fiddled"* with the equipment (Quinn), having problems with technology during class time adds to the stress of the role. As Quinn says: *"Probably 70% of the times you go into a class and something's not working"*. To manage this, they *"go into a class 20 minutes before"* it starts to make sure the systems operate properly. Quinn is now concerned with a change in process for getting classroom ICT issues fixed, which requires increased paperwork and time and does not allow for an immediate response:

> *...you can't even go and knock on the door* [of the ICT team] *anymore, you*
> *have to log a job, your credibility as a teacher is compromised by* [having to
> deal with these issues during class time]. (Quinn)

For Quinn, the stress they experience is evident even to those outside of the work environment.

My partner will say to me before I'm going to class, "Hey, you're really
stressed". And I'm stressed because [I'm about to use] *the IT* [which] *often*
doesn't work in the classrooms. (Quinn)

4.6.6 Inhibiting Factors Related to the Room Booking System and Classroom Space

Middle managers develop timetables and book classrooms for each of the papers or courses within their areas of responsibility. The process is less challenging for those who can roll over their timetables each year or who have physical space specifically allocated to their programmes. For others, timetabling and reserving class space can be on-going and considerable tasks that have a negative impact on the experience of the middle managers, tutors and students. As presented in Table 4.18, issues specifically associated with the unavailability or unsuitability of rooms and challenges with the room booking system have been experienced as inhibitors to optimal functioning for some of the middle managers.

Table 4.18

Category f. Room Booking System and Classroom Space

RSQ4. Inhibitors to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Time constraints
Category b.	Limited resources
Category c.	Task conflicts
Category d.	Workload allocation (targeted teaching hour) system
Category e.	Information communication technology systems
Category f.	Room booking system and classroom space 　　　Lack of classrooms 　　　Unsuitability of classrooms 　　　Difficulties with room booking system
Category g.	General processes
Category h.	Enrolment numbers
Category i.	Staff
Category j.	Senior management

4.6.6.1 Lack of Classrooms. Several middle managers have found it difficult to find rooms for their classes to run in. They describe their experience with booking

rooms as: *"a nightmare"* (Jordan); *"the biggest challenge"* (Erin); and *"a bit of a rat race"* (Francis). Jordan talks of being late developing their timetable, the consequence of which being *"there will be no rooms left"* to run their classes in. Francis believes that challenges with room bookings means *"students can be disadvantaged"*. The following comment from Quinn shows that students notice the organisation's issues with classroom space:

> *I'm learning te reo Māori* [on campus] *at the moment and one of the guys in our class is a student on another programme here. He said, "What is it with this organisation and rooms? There's never enough rooms".* (Quinn)

Even when rooms are successfully booked for classes in advance, Quinn has found they get asked to move rooms because another tutor needs the space, which adds to the stress experienced with this aspect of their role. The organisation can lose credibility when students notice and share their observations of such resource limitations.

4.6.6.2 Unsuitability of Classrooms. Issues with classrooms being unsuitable for supporting student learning are evident from the interviews. Casey talks of classrooms being *"too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter"*; this seems a simple thing to fix, but it has not been addressed by the organisation despite being very important for the learning environment. As Erin notes, some programmes require classrooms with specialised equipment. Erin says, *"We want to be able to deliver programmes within the correct rooms",* but they have found they are not always able to do so. Casey has also experienced this issue:

> *A programme our size should have a room where all the students can use a computer, because we should have lots of classes where they're on the computer. But we have two rooms, that's it, so that means two computers* [available to use] *between the two rooms.* (Casey)

4.6.6.3 Difficulties with Room Booking System. Interviewees report problems with the room booking software and process used at the organisation. The software used is described as *"a horrendous system"* (Lee), and *"not that flash"* (Francis). Lee talks of issues with rooms not showing on the system, and Jordan talks of *"ghost bookings"*: rooms booked for the year by someone *"saying they're going*

to use it all year and they don't". Jordan explains that classrooms cannot be booked until timetables are signed off. Timetables cannot be signed off until the budget for the programme is signed off, therefore *"you're not going to room book until March or February"*. Given their programme starts in February, Jordan believes the system is unfeasible and unrealistic, and creates unnecessary pressure.

4.6.7 Inhibiting Factors Related to General Processes

There is evidence from the interviews of frustration around processes and systems used at the organisation. Table 4.19 shows how problems with general processes are associated with documentation requirements and inefficiencies.

Table 4.19

Category g. General Processes

RSQ4. Inhibitors to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Time constraints
Category b.	Limited resources
Category c.	Task conflicts
Category d.	Workload allocation (targeted teaching hour) system
Category e.	Information communication technology systems
Category f.	Room booking system and classroom space

Category g.	General processes
	      High volume of documentation
	      Inefficient processes

Category h.	Enrolment numbers
Category i.	Staff
Category j.	Senior management

4.6.7.1 High Volume of Documentation. Previous sections presented issues associated with the high workload experienced by these managers. Contributing to workload issues is the high volume of documentation middle managers are faced with in their role. Erin talks of the *"amount of* [paperwork] *that needs to be done at times"*, saying the role involves a *"huge amount of administration"* and that they would benefit from having *"somebody else to come in"* to help with some of the workload. When asked what would be ideal with respect to the administrative part of the role, Kerry states: *"a bit less of it would be good"*. Because some of their

administrative work seems to go missing, Kerry wonders if *"there is a big, black hole between here and administration that it falls into"*.

4.6.7.2 Inefficient Processes. When talking of *"all that documentation and paperwork"* preventing optimal functioning, Kerry points out that they have to *"repeat the same thing time, and time, and time again"*, and feels that the time put into repetitive and redundant paperwork would be better spent on supporting students. Casey also mentions the *"really inefficient"* processes and shares their experience of getting contracts approved as an example: *"it comes to this department, goes to that department, comes back, gets signed again"*. Casey believes contracts should be processed through a streamlined computer system rather than by hard copy.

4.6.8 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Enrolment Numbers

Programmes can only run when there are enough enrolments for them to be financially viable. Some middle managers have programmes that regularly attract high enrolments, and other middle managers struggle to keep their programmes running due to low numbers. As indicated in Table 4.20, less than ideal enrolment numbers can have a negative impact on the learning experience of the students, and, in turn, the optimal functioning of the middle managers in their role.

Table 4.20

Category h. Enrolment Numbers

RSQ4. Inhibitors to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Time constraints
Category b.	Limited resources
Category c.	Task conflicts
Category d.	Workload allocation (targeted teaching hour) system
Category e.	Information communication technology systems
Category f.	Room booking system and classroom space
Category g.	General processes
Category h.	Enrolment numbers Negative student experience
Category i.	Staff
Category j.	Senior management

Two middle managers describe having to make sacrifices to their programmes when enrolments are low. Francis feels they have a responsibility above and beyond their job description to market their programmes, because if they *"don't get the numbers, and papers are cut"*, then existing students will not be able to complete their qualification and will have to enrol in papers elsewhere. At the time of the interview, Jordan discusses being faced with cuts in their department because of insufficient enrolments, stating: *"I'm so desperate to run the programme that if I get a low intake of students, I will promise to deliver it in less hours"* to meet the budget. Jordan feels strongly, however, that the programme *"can't be delivered in fewer hours"* and explains that it would be preferable if they received a *"fair allocation of teaching hours"* despite low enrolment numbers, so *"I'm not having to teach for free"*.

Other issues associated with low enrolment were addressed by Flynn, who believes that *"20 students is optimal"* for a class size. They find that a low number of applications results in a smaller pool of students to choose from to achieve ideal class sizes, and this has follow-on issues:

> *When there are less applications, we have to be more focussed on seeing students that perhaps we wouldn't think will achieve as well through the programme. So basically, your selection options start to go down, and you know that you're going to have to put more support services in place* [to help students achieve]. (Flynn)

Flynn discusses another issue associated with low enrolment numbers:

> *I'm not a big fan of teaching small classes* [because] *students need to learn off each other, and having a very small group, if you've got a difficult student, or a student that's struggling, or a high-achieving student, makes all those differences really apparent. And that can be quite uncomfortable for the students, and it can be quite difficult for the tutor to manage. So, you're more likely, in a larger student body, to have students helping other students, and the differences in that group are less pronounced because of that mutual student support.* (Flynn)

4.6.9 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Staff

During their interviews, participants shared many experiences of staffing-related challenges both within their department and across the organisation. Some of these are associated with the aforementioned target teaching hour (TTH) system and others, as shown in Table 4.21 and discussed in this section, are specifically related to staff skill, attitude, and turnover.

Table 4.21

Category i. Staff

RSQ4. Inhibitors to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Time constraints
Category b.	Limited resources
Category c.	Task conflicts
Category d.	Workload allocation (targeted teaching hour) system
Category e.	Information communication technology systems
Category f.	Room booking system and classroom space
Category g.	General processes
Category h.	Enrolment numbers

Category i.	Staff
	        Challenges with staff skill
	        Challenges with staff attitude
	        Challenges with staff turnover

Category j.	Senior management

4.6.9.1 Challenges with Staff Skill. When talking about some of the issues they have experienced with their team members, the middle managers made statements such as: *"it's really hard to get them to perform"* (Casey); *"staff struggle with finding certain information* [through] *poor practice on their part"* (Lee); *"*[some staff have] *deficiencies in their abilities* [and some are] *not as efficient as they should be"* (Alex). In an example shared by Francis, one class *"had a 50% fail rate"* among students that was directly attributed to the ineffectiveness of their tutor.

Blair believes that, although most tutors *"*[want] *to maintain* [teaching of] *a high quality"*, some are not necessarily aware of what high quality teaching and learning involves: *"their impression of what that is, is stuck inside a box* [because they do not] *get out and see what others are doing enough to really appreciate what*

'good' looks like". Casey believes that ineffective teaching practice can stem from the tutors' own prior learning experience:

> *They think "when I was in school, this is how the teacher taught, so this is how I'm going to teach". They fall into that comfort zone, and they keep going that way.* (Casey)

It can be challenging to motivate tutors to develop the quality of their teaching, as students are not always willing to give feedback. Casey shares their experience of this, saying that students often do not give honest feedback *"because they just don't trust that it's anonymous"*. This then limits a tutor's opportunity to improve. Casey believes that *"even people who are trying to do good, and want to do good, don't always know that they're not, because the students aren't going to tell them"*.

4.6.9.2 Challenges with Staff Attitude. Negative staff attitudes, within the team and the wider organisation, has also been experienced as problematic for some of the middle managers. Some of the specific attitudes mentioned include having a *"resistance to change"* (Lee and Blair), being *"tunnel-visioned"* (Lee), being *"unwilling"* to do what is required (Casey), having an *"it'll be right attitude"* (Francis), and lacking *"self-discipline"* (Alex).

Casey notes the difference between those in their team who are passionate tutors, who feel *"better"* after a session of teaching, and others who *"just complain about the students every time they leave the classroom"*. In their experience, some are just natural teachers; dealing with those who are not can be challenging. Francis also struggles with team members who are not passionate about their tutoring role, and, as a result, do not follow up with students. Francis reflects on their own experience of being a passionate tutor: *"When I was tutoring, if a student missed a class, I would follow it up"*. They believe that some tutors have too much of an *"it'll be right attitude"* that results in them leaving student problems for the manager to deal with, when it is often too late to fix them.

4.6.9.2.1 Resistance to Change. Two middle managers in particular find it problematic that not all team members are able to cope with change. Blair talks of staff who are unable to adapt when faced with change because they are *"[so] used to*

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doing things a certain way [that they] *can't see past what they've been doing,* [which is a] *real limiting factor for them"*. Blair has experienced situations in which *"people in that team haven't lasted because they wouldn't make the change"* and considers change to be *"one of the biggest challenges for some people"*.

Lee recognises that a person's resistance to change can be related to their length of employment, saying: *"the longer that you're with an organisation, the more tunnel-visioned you become* [and] *the more you struggle with change"*. Lee believes that some of these issues are associated with the *"emotional baggage side of things"* which some individuals are unwilling to let go. Lee's solution is to say to their team:

> *Let's try and forget about what's happened in the past and build on* [what we have] *now to ensure that* [such issues don't] *happen again in the future.* (Lee)

Alex believes resistance to change stems from a lack of self-discipline and the reluctance of staff to put the effort in, and believes that if someone says they *"can't do it,* [then they] *don't want* [to put the effort in, and] *if you're willing* [and] *focussed and driven* [then the rest will come]". Blair believes that resistance to change can be present for a variety of reasons:

> *You can have someone who's wonderful at certain aspects of their job, but just doesn't have the skill base, or even the willingness to get outside the box and do this other wee thing that would be really helpful – they just really struggle with* [change]. *Whether it's a mindset thing, or whether they've had no experience in that area, or they just simply hate change, there are reasons for it.* (Blair)

4.6.9.2.2 Divided Team. Two middle managers in particular recount situations when it has been a challenge to get all of their staff working together as a team, using terms such as *"renegade"* (Flynn), *"a bit negative"*, and *"drag things down"* (Blair) to describe individuals who undermined the team culture. Blair's expectation is:

If we're under real pressure, everyone should be hands on, [but when staff are] *sitting over to the side…not actually getting anything done at all and are unwilling to,* [it] *becomes quite a negative factor on the environment.* (Blair)

In these situations, Blair chooses to *"move away from negative people"* and focus more on those who are positive and willing to put the effort in.

When new to the management role, Flynn experienced a culture in which team members were *"really divided"*; in this team, *"people who practically sat next to each other didn't even know each other"*. Flynn found this to be *"problematic"* and a *"real barrier"* to the successful operation of the department. Flynn offers an example of what they refer to as a *"renegade"* team member:

Because you have to be on the same page when you're writing new programs… [there's] *a vision that surrounds that development, and if tutors aren't on board…or they have an attitude about it…that can be hugely difficult. They might talk* [negatively] *to students about it, they might talk to other staff about it, and it can really undermine what you're trying to achieve.* (Flynn)

4.6.9.2.3 Unrest Between Staff Members. One manager in particular, Casey, talks of times when there has been unrest between staff members which has had an adverse impact on the optimal functioning of their department. One example offered by Casey involves someone in an administrative role whose negative attitude and limited skills creates friction within their team: *"That person definitely doesn't make anyone's job easier…she's not efficient, she loses documents, then says, 'You didn't give it to me'"*. Casey has found this situation to undermine the team spirit and has tried to address it: *"I called her out one day and said, 'you know, we're on the same team', and it fired her up even more"*.

Casey describes another situation in which a high workload, compounded by unconstructive attitudes from other staff, drove one of their best team members to resign. As discussed in previous sections, there are inconsistencies in how the TTH allocation is applied across the institution such that it does not take into consideration differing programme levels or enrolment numbers. One tutor in particular had been

allocated a very high workload and was therefore not able to achieve their required research outputs. Casey explains:

> *We had a staff member leave who was one of our best staff members in the classroom. Other staff members were just talking negatively about them because they didn't do research. This tutor was amazing. In the classroom, they were perfect. Couldn't ask for anything more. They were just overworked and not appreciated because they weren't researching.* (Casey)

4.6.9.3 Challenges with Staff Turnover. Staff turnover is high in some departments and considered one of the significant time-consuming challenges of the management role. Reflecting how other middle managers experience staffing challenges, Bailey speaks about the *"difficulty of co-ordinating so many part-timers"* and dealing with resignations, on top of *"staff getting sick and not having any backup"* and being in the position of having to take the classes themselves. Middle managers also report that staff turnover within the organisation's marketing team and at senior management level inhibit optimal functioning in the role.

In one faculty, turnover at senior management level was particularly high, with several senior managers starting and leaving over a short period of time. Two middle managers share their experiences of the impact this had on their role. Flynn talks of going *"through a period of uncertainty"* and there being *"a lot of obstacles"* placed in their way each time a new senior manager stepped into the position. Flynn found the transitions added to their workload because they were *"trying to help that person get to know the role at the same time as doing our own jobs"*. During this same period, another manager, Casey, had two of their team members leave. Casey believes these staff members left, in part, due to the instability in the senior manager position, explaining that *"over the time, it happened there were four different heads of faculty and I don't think* [the incoming senior managers] *understood* [how this affected the staff]*"*. The new senior managers were therefore unable to help Casey retain their staff.

One manager in particular, Quinn, associates the extra workload required to market their programmes with high staff turnover in the marketing department, stating *"the amount of time* [I have to spend] *with marketing related issues is*

significant". According to Quinn, this issue is because the marketing department *"keep losing staff"*, or are short staffed or have untrained staff, so they lack the capacity to respond to marketing queries. Quinn explains:

> [It] *depends on who's in marketing, whether it makes your job easier or not. So, there are some people who just* [forward] *every single enquiry to us, whereas most of that* [information] *is on the website. If* [those in the] *marketing* [department] *actually looked at the website, then they should be able to answer most of the questions.* (Quinn)

Middle managers of departments with a high number of contracted/part time, rather than tenured, staff spend significantly more time dealing with high staff turnover. Casual staff cannot expect to be reappointed each semester, because their positions depend on enrolment numbers and teaching hours available. For this reason, many can only commit to tutoring for short periods and leave when they secure full-time employment elsewhere. Each time a new casual tutor appointment is made, the manager has to train the new staff member. The training includes familiarising the new employee with the policies, procedures, and systems at the organisation, with assessment planning and management, with content of the programmes, and, quite often, with the role of tutoring.

Although having casual tutors instead of tenured tutors creates a considerable amount of extra work for the higher education middle managers in this organisation, Jordan considers this option to be *"the lesser of the two evils,* [even though I'm] *always a bit concerned about the educational quality"*. Jordan also explains that casual tutors are *"not forced to do the adult education programmes"*, while tenured tutors are. Jordan's view on tenured versus casual staff is expressed in the following statement:

> *I've employed staff that have been terrible. Being "casual" means that you can actually get rid of them if they don't work* [out]*…I just think we could get better if they were "permanent", but if they weren't a good choice to employ, then they're just going to cost you more time anyway.* (Jordan)

Even when a casual tutor goes over and above what they are required to do in their job, Jordan says there is *"a little bit more of a load"* associated with the

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management of that tutor, whereas *"if you've got someone fulltime, that's just an expectation that they do* [all aspects of a tutor's] *job"*.

4.6.10 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Senior Management

All middle managers highlighted the impact their senior manager can have on their ability to function optimally in the role. The findings indicate mixed experiences of this relationship, with some qualities in their leader experienced as enabling, as outlined in previous sections, and others as inhibiting. Table 4.22 reveals that features of this relationship considered to inhibit optimal functioning include a lack of respect, a lack of leadership and understanding, poor lines of communication, and the restricting of resources.

Table 4.22

Category j. Senior Management

RSQ4. Inhibitors to optimal functioning	
Category a.	Time constraints
Category b.	Limited resources
Category c.	Task conflicts
Category d.	Workload allocation (targeted teaching hour) system
Category e.	Information communication technology systems
Category f.	Room booking and system classroom space
Category g.	General processes
Category h.	Enrolment numbers
Category i.	Staff

Category j.	Senior management
	      Lack of respect
	      Lack of leadership and understanding
	      Poor lines of communication
	      Restriction of resources

4.6.10.1 Lack of Respect. One manager in particular, Jordan, feels strongly that a *"culture of disrespect"* created by their senior manager regarding their *"own professional judgement"* to be *"demoralising"* and says that this negatively affects their well-being and ability to function optimally in their role. Jordan refers to the limited decision-making latitude they have experienced under the management of their senior:

I have autonomy, which people might say, "Well, gosh, you've got a lot of autonomy, and therefore that shows [your senior manager has] *trust in you and respect for your professional decisions". But it doesn't work like that in the system, it doesn't cross back…all your tasks are micromanaged, and all your purchases are micromanaged, even down to the smallest item.* (Jordan)

Jordan expresses great weariness with respect to the environment they work in as evidenced by the following:

I'm sick to death of it. Not in my soul or my heart, but in my well-being…because it's relentless and there's been no relief and let alone the fact that there's no professional respect from [senior] *management…I find that it undermines my well-being and therefore my ability to do the job well – optimally, we're talking about.* (Jordan)

4.6.10.2 Lack of Leadership and Understanding. Some of the middle managers express their need for direction, accountability, and support from their senior managers, along with an understanding from them of what is required to keep the programmes running optimally. The middle managers also want their seniors to have realistic expectations. Several comments indicate that middle managers do not receive the leadership they desire from their senior manager. The impact of unclear direction from their senior manager is clearly articulated by Blair:

…in some cases, their expectations aren't clear. So, [lack of clarity] *can be through imposing conflicting priorities on me, or it can be by simply not having a clear direction themselves. If they're all over the place, if they're scattered, it's really hard to say, "I'm doing a good job", because I don't necessarily know what I'm supposed to be doing.* (Blair)

Alex talks of needing more support to motivate the performance of some of their team members and finds a lack of action from their senior manager devalues the performance review process, which Alex finds *"pointless…if nothing gets done"*, and likens to *"chucking water uphill"*.

Two middle managers raise issues associated with what they perceive as the limited understanding of senior management regarding the resources needed to

achieve the outputs expected of those managing programmes. Casey states that *"the biggest weakness of upper management is a disconnect from the classroom"* and believes this to be the reason their department is under-resourced. Casey's impression of upper management is that they *"don't understand what it's like to be in the classroom"* or that *"you can't just show up and teach"*. Alex has also experienced how this lack of understanding contributes to the setting of unrealistic goals. Alex feels strongly that an ideal senior manager has *"got to have an understanding of the environment"*, as their senior manager at the time of the interview set objectives while *"not knowing the situation"*, which resulted in goals that are *"not realistic"*.

One manager, Jordan, understands that certain resources need to be restricted by senior management, acknowledging that sometimes *"there's not the space to increase teaching hours or abatement"*. Jordan does not, however, understand why their senior manager *"won't communicate* [and] *won't listen"*, as they find this to be a *"major barrier"*. The following statement reflects Jordan's desire for more support:

> *…easier communication, some leadership, some human resources would make a huge difference to my ability to cope with the pressures of the job.* (Jordan)

Jordan's understanding of the situation is that their next in line is *"not allowed to lead"* suggests the influence of an organisational culture that limits the decision-making power of senior managers. Jordan explains:

> *So, they're not allowed to lead, but they're meant to be leaders, so I actually don't have a leader, I have a paper pusher and an administrator. No leadership at all, absolutely zilch.* (Jordan)

4.6.10.3 Poor Lines of Communication. A considerable amount of decision-making at department level needs to be approved by the senior manager. Often, the senior manager must gain approval from the Chief Executive (CE) if the decision involves financial expenditure. As revealed by their comments, some middle managers have experienced issues due to the inability or unwillingness of their senior manager to communicate department needs to the CE:

You can pass things on, but if they don't go any further up the line, you just
don't get the support. (Kerry)

I think, at times, they don't want to take things further. (Quinn)

[I'm] *so tired and sick of the grind and the constant battle up the line* [which
is] *really difficult* [and] *quite wearing.* (Jordan)

Quinn explains that their ability to make decisions is compromised because their
"next in line is far too busy", to a point where meetings *"get cancelled a lot"*,
making it *"really hard to get in and discuss issues"*. Quinn acknowledges that this
problem has stemmed from the increasing workload of their senior manager:

When I came into this role, I have to say the support was incredible…but I've
seen that person's job expand and expand and expand… (Quinn)

This lack of communication goes both ways: middle managers feel that their
senior managers do not give enough information to the CE and that they do not
receive enough information from the CE via their senior managers. Jordan talks of
regularly getting *"a filtered version of the organisation"* via their senior manager,
saying *"I don't actually get to hear what the CE thinks, and what's actually*
needed". This places Jordan in a position of, in their words, being given *"directives"*
with *"no chance of discussion or clarification"*.

Flynn describes the impact senior manager turnover has had on lines of
communication, saying that the *"lack of consistency and communication* [was] *a real*
obstacle in terms of a whole lot of things". Flynn felt these issues diminished the
support available and hindered the development of team culture within the faculty,
and also presented financial obstacles, which were *"definitely getting in the way of*
being able to achieve lots of things in all of the departments".

4.6.10.4 Restriction of Resources. One manager articulates how change can
have a negative effect on quality if it is not resourced and managed well. External
forces often impose change on the organisation and restrict resources. Blair states
that it is essential to the future of the organisation to ensure quality throughout such
changes. Blair's take on change management is that it *"should be driven by a need or*
a desire to maintain or increase quality" but has found that some of the changes

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forced upon them and their team have *"no consideration for quality at all"*. Blair believes that when changes are *"based solely on funding"*, without consideration of maintaining quality, then, *"a year, or two, or five years down the track, we won't have a very good organisation"*.

4.6.11 Summary of Factors Considered to Inhibit Optimal Functioning

As presented in this section, middle managers have identified many factors that they believe inhibit their ability to achieve in their role. Of note is that, in contrast with the enabling factors, which are connected with people, most of these inhibiting factors are associated with the systems, processes, and physical and financial resources middle managers experience in the work environment. Challenges with some staff and within the relationship they have with their senior manager also affect performance in the middle manager role. Of particular note is the way that shortfalls in resources, along with a high workload, contribute to time constraints and task conflicts; together, these workplace and role characteristics further contribute to role-related stress for many middle managers and limit their achievement.

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of 11 semi-structured one-on-one interviews that were undertaken with middle managers from one tertiary institution in Aotearoa New Zealand. The focus of the interviews was to explore research sub-questions 1, 3, and 4, as presented in Table 4.23. Also shown in the table are the categories addressed in this chapter that encompass the many factors that emerged during interview analysis.

Table 4.23

Research Sub-Questions and Corresponding Categories

Research sub-questions	Categories that encompass factors that emerged from interview analysis
RSQ1. What factors do the higher education middle managers consider when defining optimal functioning within their role?	a. Meeting stakeholder needs b. Administration and resource management c. Health and safety management
RSQ3. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have enabled them in their role?	a. Relationships b. Capabilities of middle managers c. Staff d. Risk management
RSQ4. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have inhibited them in their role?	a. Time constraints b. Limited resources c. Task conflicts d. Workload allocation (targeted teaching hour) system e. ICT systems f. Room booking system and classroom space g. General processes h. Enrolment numbers i. Staff j. Senior management

Comments of all interviewees reveal the desire and passion of the middle managers to achieve in the areas they consider to define optimal functioning, particularly with regard to meeting the needs of the internal and external stakeholders. Other aspects of the role vital to optimal functioning, such as applying good administration, resource, and health and safety management practices, can be considered as supporting mechanisms that are also required to attain the ultimate goal of meeting stakeholder needs.

Many of the enabling factors identified and discussed by middle managers might be considered to be aspects of the role over which they have some measure of control. For example, the quality of the relationships middle managers have with the internal and external stakeholders can, to a certain extent, be influenced by the manager, as might opportunities to draw from their own capabilities and the application of risk management practices within their departments. There are, however, many aspects of the role that limit opportunities to draw from these

enabling factors. Many of the inhibiting factors middle managers experience are associated with high job demands, resource limitations, and inefficient or ineffective policies and processes. Middle managers indicate that many of these inhibiting factors are aspects of the role over which they feel relatively powerless.

During interview analysis, it became apparent that there were some aspects of the role that middle managers have experienced in a similar way and other aspects they have experienced differently. These similarities and differences are evident in the findings presented in this chapter: for some factors, the voices of many middle managers are represented, and for others, only one or two voices are represented. The second phase of data gathering and analysis, presented in the following chapter, further explores these apparent similarities and differences in experiences by surveying middle managers at the same organisation by questionnaire.

CHAPTER 5. PHASE TWO FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

As explained in chapter three, this study utilised two data collection techniques to explore the experiences of participating middle managers working within one higher education institution in Aotearoa New Zealand. Building on the findings of phase one, this chapter presents the findings from phase two, which involved undertaking a qualitative questionnaire to explore research sub-questions 1 to 5.

5.2 Purpose of the Questionnaire

The purpose of the qualitative questionnaire was to further explore the factors that had emerged from the interview analysis. It was expected that each of these were not going to be discussed by every interviewee due to the many influences that can affect how an individual experiences their role. By giving those in the position at the institution the opportunity to rate each of the factors, the researcher was able to investigate them from the perspective of all questionnaire participants, including middle managers who had not been interviewed. To achieve this, the categories and factors directly relating to research sub-questions 1, 3, and 4 that had emerged during interview analysis were presented to the middle managers in the qualitative questionnaire for verification and further exploration. In addition to these sub-questions, sub-questions 2 and 5 were explored during the questionnaire.

5.3 Research Sub-Questions and Order of Chapter Five

This chapter is presented in three parts. Table 5.1 indicates the research sub-questions and the corresponding categories that are of focus within each part of this chapter. Also shown in Table 5.1 are the three parts of the questionnaire which form the order of this chapter.

Table 5.1

Research Sub-Questions and their Corresponding Categories – Questionnaire

Questionnaire findings are presented in this chapter in the following order	Categories that emerged during interview analysis and were further explored in the questionnaire
First part of the questionnaire	
RSQ1. What factors do the higher education middle managers consider when defining optimal functioning within their role?	a. Meeting stakeholder needs
	b. Administration and resource management
RSQ2. How well do the higher education middle managers feel they are functioning in their role?	c. Health and safety management
Second part of the questionnaire	
RSQ3. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have enabled them in their role?	a. Relationships
	b. Capabilities of middle managers
RSQ5. How much control do the higher education middle managers feel they have over the factors that enable ~~and inhibit~~ them in their role?	c. Staff
	d. Risk management
Third part of the questionnaire	
	a. Time constraints
	b. Limited resources
RSQ4. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have inhibited them in their role?	c. Task conflicts
	d. Workload allocation
	e. ICT systems
	f. Room booking system and classroom space
RSQ5. How much control do the higher education middle managers feel they have over the factors that ~~enable and~~ inhibit them in their role?	g. General processes
	h. Enrolment numbers
	i. Staff
	j. Senior management

5.4 Questionnaire Participants

At the time of undertaking this study, 18 academic middle managers were employed in the role at the institution and all were invited to participate in the study. Of the 11 interviewees, six were no longer employed in the role at the time of

undertaking the questionnaire. From the 18 invited to participate in the questionnaire, 16 responded; 15 completed full responses and one gave a partial response.

5.5 Response Options for the Questionnaire Findings

The questionnaire was developed using ordinal rating scale response options and open-ended questions. Presentation of the findings includes a summary of each part of the questionnaire, followed by the rating scale responses for each category, which have been presented using frequency distribution in table format. Also included are quotations from responses to the open-ended questions.

5.5.1 Response Options for the First Part of the Questionnaire

For RSQ1, the rating scale response options in the questionnaire were:

a. Of extreme importance
b. Of high importance
c. Of average importance
d. Of low importance
e. Of no importance

For analysis and presentation of the data, responses a and b have been merged, and responses d and e have been merged. The data have been ordered by enabling factors that were rated as being of a higher level of importance from the respondents down to those being of a lower level of importance. This ordering was done using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and custom sorting the data, starting with "Of high or extreme importance" ordered from the highest to the lowest number of responses, then "Of average importance" ordered from the highest to the lowest number of responses.

For RSQ2, the rating scale response options in the questionnaire were:

a. Very high
b. High
c. Moderate
d. Low
e. Very low
f. Not applicable or not relevant

There were 16 responses to the first part of the questionnaire. Responses a and b have been merged, and responses d and e have been merged. The data have been ordered from enabling factors that middle managers rated at a higher level of achievement down to those rated at a lower level of achievement, starting with "High or very high" ordered from the highest to the lowest number of responses, then "Moderate" ordered from the highest to the lowest number of responses.

5.5.2 Response Options for the Second and Third Parts of the Questionnaire

For RSQ3 and RSQ4, the rating scale response options in the questionnaire were:

a. Strongly agree
b. Agree
c. Neutral
d. Disagree
e. Strongly disagree

Responses a and b have been merged, and responses d and e have been merged. The data have been ordered by factors that received a higher level of agreement from the respondents down to those that received a lower level of agreement, starting with "Agree or strongly agree" ordered from the highest to the lowest number of responses, then "Neutral" ordered from the highest to the lowest number of responses.

For RSQ5, the rating scale response options in the questionnaire were:

a. Complete control
b. Quite a lot of control
c. Some control
d. Very little control
e. No control
f. Don't know or opt out

There were 15 responses to the second and third parts of the questionnaire. Responses a and b have been merged, and responses d and e have been merged. For

enabling factors, the data have been ordered by the highest number of responses indicating quite a lot or complete control over the enabling factors down to the those indicating the lowest amount of control, starting with "Complete or quite a lot of control" ordered from the highest to the lowest number of responses, then "Some control" ordered from the highest to the lowest number of responses.

For inhibiting factors, the data have been ordered by the highest to the lowest number of responses indicating very little or no control over the inhibiting factors, starting with "No or very little control" ordered from the highest to the lowest number of responses, then "Some control" ordered from the highest to the lowest number of responses.

5.6 Terms Used for Discussing the Questionnaire Findings

The findings of this questionnaire are understood to be qualitative, however, for clarity, the terms used for discussing the spread of responses within each category in the questionnaire findings have been quantified. Amounts included in these ranges are necessarily overlapping, due to the spread of responses. Where specific numbers are not mentioned, the following terms are used:

a. "Most" – 12 or more
b. "A majority" – eight or more
c. "Some" – A range between one and seven
d. "A small number" – A range between one and three
e. "Shared experiences" – when there are eight or more responses to one merged response option and under four responses to the opposite merged response option
f. "Varied" or "vary" when discussing experiences or responses – any response variations outside of those specified at point e.

5.7 Part One: Factors Considered to Define Optimal Functioning

This section presents part one of the questionnaire findings which explored aspects of the role that middle managers consider define to optimal functioning. Middle managers were asked to rate the importance they place on the defining

factors that had emerged from interview analysis and their perceived level of achievement regarding those factors. The research sub-questions and their corresponding categories are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2

Research Sub-Questions and Corresponding Categories – Optimal Functioning

Research sub-questions relevant to this section	Categories presented in this section
RSQ1. What factors do the higher education middle managers consider when defining optimal functioning within their role? **RSQ2.** How well do the higher education middle managers feel they are functioning in their role?	a. Meeting stakeholder needs b. Administration and resource management c. Health and safety management

5.7.1 Meeting Stakeholder Needs

Middle managers were asked to rate the level of importance they place on aspects of the role associated with meeting stakeholder needs in relation to optimal functioning. Responses presented in Table 5.3 show that for all the factors most of the middle managers consider meeting the needs of internal and external stakeholders to be of extreme or high importance. Some of the factors were rated as being of average importance by some middle managers, and ensuring student satisfaction was rated to be of low or no importance by one of the respondents.

Table 5.3

Importance of Meeting Stakeholder Needs

Meeting stakeholder needs	Extreme or high importance	Average importance	Low or no importance
Meeting the needs of the students	16	0	0
Having productive and happy staff	16	0	0
Having a teamwork culture in the department	16	0	0
Meeting the needs of the stakeholders	15	1	0
Ensuring quality and value in the service offered to stakeholders	15	1	0
Ensuring student health and well-being	15	1	0
Having good retention, completion, and employment outcomes	14	2	0
Meeting the needs of industry	14	2	0
Meeting the needs of tutorial staff	14	2	0
Meeting industry demand	14	2	0
Ensuring student satisfaction	14	1	1
Staff undertaking professional development	13	3	0
Students developing their personal skills	12	4	0
Satisfying external stakeholders	12	4	0

Note. N=16

Comments highlight the how critical middle managers feel it is to satisfy the demands of both internal and external stakeholders. As one manager points out: *"All of these factors are of high importance as they are performance indicators"*. It seems that the challenge is less about how much value is placed on these factors and more about what one manager explains as the *"difficulty* [of navigating between] *factors that are all, nearly, equally important, and yet quite often in contradiction with each other"*.

Middle managers were also asked to rate their level of achievement in areas associated with meeting stakeholder needs. Responses presented in Table 5.4 indicate that a majority of the respondents believe they are meeting stakeholder needs at a high or very high level in all but one of the factors.

Table 5.4

Perceived Level of Achievement in Meeting Stakeholder Needs

Meeting stakeholder needs	High or very high	Moderate	Low or very low	N/A
Satisfying external stakeholders	15	1	0	0
Ensuring student satisfaction	14	2	0	0
Having good retention, completion, and employment outcomes	14	2	0	0
Meeting the needs of the students	13	3	0	0
Meeting the needs of industry	13	3	0	0
Meeting the needs of the stakeholders	13	3	0	0
Ensuring student health and well-being	11	5	0	0
Ensuring quality and value in the service offered to stakeholders	11	5	0	0
Meeting industry demand	11	3	1	1
Having a teamwork culture in the department	10	6	0	0
Having productive and happy staff	10	5	1	0
Meeting the needs of tutorial staff	10	4	2	0
Students developing their personal skills	9	7	0	0
Staff undertaking professional development	5	7	4	0

Note. N=16

There are areas in which some middle managers indicated their achievement level as moderate, and a small number as low or very low. One manager explains that they selected lower performance ratings in some of these factors because, due to the Privacy Act, they are not able to receive feedback from employers and therefore find it *"difficult to gauge"* graduate performance. Staff undertaking professional development is an area in which achievement levels vary. Unfortunately, no comments were added to indicate the reason(s) why some middle managers have found their team members have been able to fulfil their professional development responsibilities and others have not.

Comments in this section identify two main challenges that affect the ability of middle managers to meet stakeholder needs. The first challenge experienced by a number of middle managers is time constraints:

There is never enough time in my role to really explore some of these factors [because I am always] *running to keep up*.

[My] *level of achievement is limited by amount of time,* [and I find it] *very frustrating to have skilled staff and not the resources to allow them to shine*.

The second issue experienced by several middle managers relates to conflicting demands or *"challenges with and within industry partners"*, as one manager explains:

It is difficult at times to meet the expectation of industry stakeholders, due to the perception of graduates' abilities and requirements of employers. The realities of student capabilities in a real-world environment as opposed to a teaching and learning environment can at times be significant.

Another manager acknowledges:

You cannot please everyone all of the time, [and] *if you genuinely try to do the best you can, and keep focussed on making the right decisions, you can stay on the right side of the line.*

5.7.2 Administration and Resource Management

Middle managers were asked to rate the level of importance they place on aspects of the role associated with administration and resource management in relation to optimal functioning. Responses presented in Table 5.5 show that a majority of the middle managers consider these aspects of the position to be of high or extreme importance. Some of the factors were rated as being of average importance by some of the respondents, and meeting administrative deadlines is seen as the least important of these factors.

Table 5.5

Importance of Applying Good Administration and Resource Management Practices

Administration and resource management	Extreme or high importance	Average importance	Low or no importance
Managing the finances well	15	1	0
Applying good administration and resource management practices	13	3	0
Offering administrative support to the tutors	12	4	0
Meeting administrative deadlines	9	6	1

Note. N=16

While comments indicate that middle managers consider these factors to be *"a necessary part of the role"*, they note an *"excessive repetition of the administrative tasks"* and a *"doubling up of information"*, along with *"too much"* paperwork. One manager has noticed an increase in administrative requirements, which they have termed the *"annual compliance expansion effect,* [which seems to] *hinder the job of teaching students"*.

Middle managers were also asked to rate their level of achievement in areas associated with applying good administration and resource management practices. Responses in Table 5.6 indicate that a majority of the middle managers consider their level of achievement to be high or very high. Some have rated their level of achievement as moderate, and a small number as low or very low.

Table 5.6

Perceived Level of Achievement in Applying Good Administration and Resource Management Practices

Administration and resource management	High or very high	Moderate	Low or very low	N/A
Managing the finances well	13	3	0	0
Applying good administration and resource management practices	12	4	0	0
Meeting administrative deadlines	13	2	1	0
Offering administrative support to the tutors	11	3	2	0

Note. N=16

Some written comments help to explain the variation in responses to these factors. For example, one manager believes their ability to *"maintain a good standard"* in this aspect of their role to be *"impacted significantly due to unexpected demands and deadlines required for compliance"*. *"Conflicting deadlines"* and *"limited time"* also contribute to challenges in this area. Another manager states that *"the funding model within the sector"* is not conducive to optimal financial management. In addition, as one manager points out, priority is often placed on meeting stakeholder demands over completing administrative tasks. Other comments indicate that middle managers are able to draw from their prior experience and feel motivated to achieve a *"good standard"* or *"high standard"* of administrative and financial outputs.

5.7.3 Health and Safety Management

Middle managers were asked to rate the level of importance they place on aspects of the role associated with health and safety management in relation to optimal functioning. Responses presented in Table 5.7 show that a majority of the respondents consider the factors to be of high or extreme importance, and that three of the factors were rated as being of average importance by a small number of respondents.

Table 5.7

Importance of Managing Health and Safety

Health and safety management	Extreme or high importance	Average importance	Low or no importance
Ensuring a safe environment without hindering the students' ability to learn the subject related skills	16	0	0
Applying good health and safety practices within the department	16	0	0
Having the staff and students in the department aware of the health and safety requirements	14	2	0
Managing your own personal well-being in your management role	13	3	0
In your management role, you being accountable for the health and safety practices within the department	11	5	0

Note. N=16

None of the respondents considered these factors to be of low or no importance. Comments included:

Health and safety compliance is part of my role indeed.

[I am] *extremely conscious of my staff and student well-being.*

I support and expect good practice.

All comments reflect the sense of responsibility middle managers have for the well-being of students and staff.

Middle managers were also asked to rate their level of achievement in areas associated with health and safety management. Responses presented in Table 5.8 indicate that the middle managers believe they are able to manage most of the health and safety requirements well, with a majority of the respondents indicating a high to very high level of achievement in four of the five factors. Managing their personal well-being is an area of concern for which a majority of the respondents indicated low or very low achievement. Of the minority of respondents, four selected moderate and only two claimed a high level of achievement.

Table 5.8

Perceived Level of Achievement in Managing Health and Safety

Health and safety management	High or very high	Moderate	Low or very low	N/A
Ensuring a safe environment without hindering the students' ability to learn the subject related skills	15	1	0	0
Applying good health and safety practices within the department	14	2	0	0
Having the staff and students in the department aware of the health and safety requirements	10	6	0	0
In your management role, you being accountable for the health and safety practices within the department	9	7	0	0
Managing your own personal well-being in your management role	2	4	10	0

Note. N=16

Many comments on this section of the questionnaire suggest that a high workload and time constraints contribute to the negative sense of well-being these middle managers experience:

> *The job demands more than what is allocated in time* [and] *this naturally eats into personal time and my own well-being.*

> *...other tasks taking priority over personal well-being.*

> [There is] *constant pressure to achieve from senior management,* [which] *can at times lead to personal well-being issues at work.*

The following comment was offered by one manager who sounds particularly disillusioned:

> *My well-being? What a joke. It's impossible with the demands of the job and a bullying boss.*

Other comments indicate that middle managers efficiently and effectively deal with health and safety issues as they arise. This may be the case because, as one manager writes, health and safety is area that *"relies on simple common sense"*.

5.7.4 Summary of Factors Considered to Define Optimal Functioning

Questionnaire findings support the interview findings which show that a majority of the respondents consider meeting or exceeding stakeholder expectations, along with the effective management of administration, resources, and health and safety, to be of extreme or high importance to optimal functioning within their management role. Although still considered important by a majority of the middle managers, the meeting of administrative deadlines is evidently less important overall than other aspects of the role; this is also reflected in the interview findings. Questionnaire findings further demonstrate that a majority of the middle managers feel they are achieving well in most aspects of the role that are considered important to optimal functioning, except for ensuring their team members undertake professional development, an aspect of the role over which middle managers have varied experiences.

Of note is that although only one manager spoke at length during their interview about the role having a negative impact on their personal well-being, the questionnaire findings indicate that a majority of the middle managers struggle with managing personal well-being, with ten rating their achievement level in this area as being low or very low, four as moderate, and only two as high or very high. Comments offered in the questionnaire suggest that high job demands, limited resources, and time constraints, along with unexpected deadlines, conflicting demands, and challenges with prioritising, have an impact on the ability of middle managers to achieve in some of the areas they consider important to optimal functioning and leave them unable to prioritise their personal well-being over other requirements of the role. The comments offered also indicate that tension experienced by some middle managers due to *"pressure"* or *"bullying"* from their senior manager also contributes to their negative sense of well-being.

5.8 Part Two: Factors Considered to Enable Optimal Functioning

This section presents part two of the questionnaire findings which explored aspects of the role that middle managers consider to enable optimal functioning. Middle managers were asked to rate their level of agreement with the enabling factors that had emerged from interview analysis along with their perceived level of control regarding those factors. The research sub-questions and their corresponding categories are presented in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9

Research Sub-Questions and Corresponding Categories – Enablers

Research sub-questions relevant to this section	Categories to be presented in this section
RSQ3. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have enabled them in their role? **RSQ5.** How much control do the higher education middle managers feel they have over the factors that enable them in their role?	a. Relationships b. Capabilities of middle managers c. Staff d. Risk management

5.8.1 Enabling Factors Relating to Relationships

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding their experience of the relationship-related enabling factors. Table 5.10 reports their responses.

Table 5.10

Level of Agreement with Statements Relating to Enabling Relationships

Relationships	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
It is important to get clear direction from my senior manager	15	0	0
It is important that I develop a team culture in the department	15	0	0
It is important to be honest with the staff in my department	15	0	0
It is important that my senior manager supports me	15	0	0
It is important that I build trust with the students in my department	15	0	0
It is important that I am honest with the students in my department	15	0	0
Having good relationships with the staff in my department is an enabling factor	15	0	0
It is important that I have autonomy in my role	15	0	0
Having good relationships with the staff across the organisation is an enabling factor	15	0	0
It is important for me to make industry connections	15	0	0
It is important that I genuinely care for the staff in my department	15	0	0
It is important that I communicate well with other staff across the organisation	15	0	0
It is important that I have regular meetings with the staff in my department	15	0	0
It is important that senior management remove barriers to support initiatives	14	1	0
It is important for me to be approachable to students in my department	14	1	0
It is important that my senior manager holds me accountable for my responsibilities	14	1	0
Having good relationships with students is an enabling factor	13	2	0
It is important that the staff in my department have autonomy	13	2	0
Having good relationships with external stakeholders is an enabling factor	13	2	0
Having a good relationship with my senior manager is an enabling factor	13	1	1

Note. N=15

Responses show that all of the factors are considered to be enablers by most of the respondents, who either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements. A small number of the respondents selected "neutral" for some of the statements, and one disagreed or strongly disagreed with one of the statements.

Respondents were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over the relationship-related enabling factors. Their responses, presented in Table 5.11, indicate that a majority of the middle managers feel they have either quite a lot of or complete control over the relationships they have with their students and external stakeholders.

Table 5.11

Perceived Level of Control over Enabling Relationships

Relationships	Quite a lot of or complete control	Some control	Very little or no control	Don't know or opt out
Having good relationships with students is an enabling factor	14	1	0	0
It is important that I build trust with the students in my department	14	1	0	0
It is important that I genuinely care for the staff in my department	13	2	0	0
It is important that I am honest with the students in my department	13	2	0	0
It is important for me to be approachable to students in my department	14	0	1	0
It is important that I have regular meetings with the staff in my department	12	2	1	0
It is important to be honest with the staff in my department	12	2	0	1
Having good relationships with the staff in my department is an enabling factor	12	3	0	0
It is important for me to make industry connections	10	4	1	0
It is important that I communicate well with other staff across the organisation	10	2	3	0
It is important that I develop a team culture in the department	10	3	2	0
Having good relationships with external stakeholders is an enabling factor	9	5	1	0
It is important that the staff in my department have autonomy	9	5	1	0
Having good relationships with the staff across the organisation is an enabling factor	8	5	2	0
Having a good relationship with my senior manager is an enabling factor	7	5	3	0
It is important that my senior manager holds me accountable for my responsibilities	7	5	3	0
It is important that I have autonomy in my role	7	5	3	0
It is important to get clear direction from my senior manager	5	5	5	0
It is important that my senior manager supports me	4	6	5	0
It is important that senior management remove barriers to support initiatives	2	8	5	0

Note. N=15

Brief comments alongside these questions, such as *"extremely important"*, *"taking the initiative"*, and *"it's my responsibility"* indicate the strong sense of responsibility middle managers place on themselves to develop and maintain the relationships they have with their team members.

One comment highlights the impact time constraints have on relationship-building opportunities:

> *I selected "some control"* [because although I] *have the skills and the attitude, I do not have enough time to attend to these things.*

As indicated in Table 5.11, responses vary with respect to the sense of control middle managers have over their relationship with their senior manager. One manager states that a *"limiting factor"* to building these relationships can be the *"willingness, capacity and ability"* of the other party. Another comment from one manager who struggles with the relationship they have with the organisation's senior management team shows how having limited control over this relationship can affect optimal functioning in the role:

> *There are always problems* [such as senior managers] *not being open to new ways of thinking* [and taking a] *top-down approach that does not support innovation.*

Of note is that the participants of this study were from any one of three faculties and therefore answered to any one of three senior managers, which could account for the reporting of varied experiences of control over the middle/senior manager relationship.

5.8.2 Enabling Factors Relating to Capabilities of Middle Managers

Middle managers were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding their own capabilities. Responses presented in Table 5.12 show that all respondents, who either selected agree or strongly agree in response to the statements, considered all of the factors to be enablers.

Table 5.12

Level of Agreement with Statements Relating to the Capabilities of Middle Managers

Capabilities of Middle managers	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
My own attitude helps me in my role	15	0	0
My own capabilities are enabling factors	15	0	0
My own skills and experience help me in my role	15	0	0

Note. N=15

Respondents were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over these factors. Responses presented in Table 5.13 indicate that most feel they have either quite a lot of or complete control over their own capabilities, with a small number indicating having only some control.

Table 5.13

Perceived Level of Control over the Capabilities of Middle Managers

Capabilities of Middle managers	Quite a lot of or complete control	Some control	Very little or no control	Don't know or opt out
My own attitude helps me in my role	14	1	0	0
My own skills and experience help me in my role	14	1	0	0
My own capabilities are enabling factors	12	3	0	0

Note. N=15

Comments reveal that middle managers recognise the benefits of having prior experience to optional function, but one points out that the demands of their role at the case organisation are *"longer and more involved"* than what they have experienced in middle management elsewhere. Two middle managers indicate in their comments that they take responsibility for their own personal or professional development when they identify skill gaps that need addressing. However, another manager states that they do not have complete control over the development of their skills and abilities because training is not always made available when required.

5.8.3 Enabling Factors Relating to Staff

Middle managers were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements relating to aspects associated with staff as enablers to optimal functioning. Responses presented in Table 5.14 show that, with all respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statements, all the factors are considered to be enablers.

Table 5.14

Level of Agreement with Statements on Staff-Related Enabling Factors

Staff	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
Having team members who are good at self-direction is important	15	0	0
Having team members who are good at supporting students is important	15	0	0
Having team members who are passionate about their job is important	15	0	0
Having valuable staff/team members in my department is an enabling factor	15	0	0
Having good support staff across the organisation is important	15	0	0

Note. N=15

Comments offered show the importance these middle managers place on their staff for the optimal functioning of their department:

Everyone in the team plays an important role.

Those who directly support our students must do so to a high standard.

A complete team creates a school that is successful and delivers a quality education.

Respondents were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over the staff-related factors. As presented in Table 5.15, responses vary regarding perceptions of control over four of the five factors relating to staff.

Table 5.15

Perceived Level of Control over Staff-Related Enabling Factors

Staff	Quite a lot of or complete control	Some control	Very little or no control	Don't know or opt out
Having team members who are good at self-direction is important	6	6	3	0
Having team members who are good at supporting students is important	6	7	2	0
Having valuable staff/team members in my department is an enabling factor	5	7	3	0
Having team members who are passionate about their job is important	5	6	4	0
Having good support staff across the organisation is important	2	3	10	0

Note. N=15

Having good support staff across the organisation is an aspect over which a majority of the respondents feel they have very little or no control. The comments offered alongside this statement give further indication of varied experiences of control over staff related aspects of the role. One manager explains that they have some control through their involvement in the hiring process, where they aim to employ individuals *"with the ability to work both as a team but also in isolation"*. Other comments indicate managers have limited control over the *"attitude"* of some team members, and, as one manager states, *"regardless of time, support and guidance…it comes down to the individual"*. Another manager, who feels that, although they do their best to support the tutors, says *"it is* [the tutors] *themselves that do not want to go the extra bit for the organisation, their programmes and students"*.

Issues with support staff mentioned by several middle managers help to explain why a majority of the respondents experience very little or no control in this area. Comments like *"we have had a recurring problem with some of the support staff"* and *"*[support staff are] *not available in the capacity required"*, indicate a lack of resourcing in this area at the organisation.

5.8.4 Enabling Factors Relating to Risk Management

Middle managers were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements relating to risk management as an enabler to optimal functioning. Responses presented in Table 5.16 show that, as most of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to the statements, all the factors are considered to be enablers. A small number selected "neutral", and no respondents selected "disagree" or "strongly disagree".

Table 5.16

Level of Agreement with Statements Relating to Risk Management

Risk management	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
Identifying and preventing issues with students is important	15	0	0
Identifying and preventing issues with staff is important	14	1	0
Having good health and safety practices in the department is important	14	1	0
Managing risk in the department is an enabling factor	13	2	0

Note. N=15

Respondents were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over factors related to risk management. As presented in Table 5.17, respondents reported varied experiences for three of the four factors.

Table 5.17

Perceived Level of Control over Risk Management

Risk management	Quite a lot of or complete control	Some control	Very little or no control	Don't know or opt out
Having good health and safety practices in the department is important	9	5	1	0
Identifying and preventing issues with students is important	7	5	3	0
Managing risk in the department is an enabling factor	7	5	3	0
Identifying and preventing issues with staff is important	7	4	4	0

Note. N=15

Although a majority of the middle managers experience quite a lot of or complete control over having good health and safety practices in their departments, responses varied regarding management of risk. Comments indicate that staff and student issues can be *"unpredictable"* and *"not easily identifiable"*; this could account for the limited control reported by some middle managers. Another manager has found managing risk to take *"significant energy"* and feels that their *"own well-being is challenged with the demands of anticipating and preventing potential and actual issues"*.

5.8.5 Summary of Factors Considered to Enable Optimal Functioning

Questionnaire findings support the interview findings: a majority of the respondents consider their own capabilities, the capabilities of staff within their departments and across the organisation, and the relationships they have with internal and external stakeholders to be enablers to optimal functioning in their management role.

A majority of the middle managers feel they have quite a lot of or complete control over their relationships with students, team members, and external stakeholders, over the management of health and safety within their departments, and over their ability to draw from their own capabilities to achieve optimal functioning

in their management role. Where middle managers have indicated having limited control, comments suggest these limitations mostly result from an imbalance between job demands and resource availability. Examples of this are offered across all categories.

Comments regarding their own capabilities reveal a work context in which job demands are high and training is not always available to fill skill gaps. Middle managers indicate that their capacity to manage risk in their departments is limited by both the difficulty of identifying and predicting student issues and the significant energy that is required to manage risk, which tax those with an already high workload.

Questionnaire responses indicate that middle managers have experienced limited control over the capability and availability of support staff, and comments suggest that this lack of control arises from limited resourcing, which is decided by senior management. Comments also reveal an evident passion among middle managers to support their team members, and show that most middle managers have found that they have control over their ability to do so. However, some, regardless of the assistance they offer, feel relatively powerless over the attitude of some of their team members. This highlights the impact individual support staff can have on the ability of middle managers to function optimally.

A majority of the respondents selected "quite a lot of control" or "complete control" in response to most of the relationship-related enabling factors, with the exception of those associated with the relationship they experience with their senior manager, to which responses varied. Comments give the clear impression that, while some middle managers benefit from this relationship, others have found it to be challenging. Evidence of shortfalls in this relationship-based resource for some middle managers highlights this as an aspect of the role in need of addressing.

5.9 Part Three: Factors Considered to Inhibit Optimal Functioning

This section presents part three of the questionnaire findings which explored aspects of the role that middle managers consider to inhibit optimal functioning. Middle managers were asked to rate their level of agreement with the inhibiting

factors that had emerged from interview analysis along with their perceived level of control regarding those factors. The research sub-questions and their corresponding categories are presented in Table 5.9.

Table 5.18

Research Sub-Questions and Corresponding Categories – Inhibitors

Research sub-questions relevant to this section	Categories to be presented in this section
RSQ4. What have the higher education middle managers experienced as factors that have inhibited them in their role? **RSQ5.** How much control do the higher education middle managers feel they have over the factors that inhibit them in their role?	a. Time constraints b. Limited resources c. Task conflicts d. Workload allocation e. ICT systems f. Room booking system and classroom space g. General processes h. Enrolment numbers i. Staff j. Senior management

5.9.1 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Time Constraints

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding their experience in their role of time constraints. Their responses are shown in Table 5.19.

Table 5.19

Level of Agreement with Statements Relating to Time Constraints

Time constraints	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
I have conflicting priorities due to time constraints	14	1	0
Time constraints inhibit my ability to function optimally	14	1	0
I do not have enough time to fit all of my tasks into the expected working hours	12	3	0
I do not have enough time to keep up with the constant changes in my role	11	2	2
I do not have enough time to implement new initiatives within the department	11	1	3
I do not have enough time to produce quality research outputs	10	4	1
Students are negatively impacted by my time constraints	9	4	2
I do not have enough time to become familiar with newly introduced information technology systems	9	2	4

Note. N=15

A majority of the respondents have experienced time constraints to inhibit optimal functioning. Some respondents selected "neutral", and a small number disagreed or strongly disagreed with some of the statements. The factor relating to not having enough time to become familiar with the newly introduced ICT systems received a range of responses, and, unfortunately, no comments were made that could explain these variances. In one comment, a respondent notes that not all middle managers undertake research, which could account for the neutral responses to that factor by those who do not carry that responsibility.

Of the 15 respondents, nine offered comments regarding time constraints, the high workload, and the inability able to fit the responsibilities of their role into the specified working hours. The questionnaire comments mirror those offered by interviewees:

Time is the enemy.

It is a constant juggling act.

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*There is always too much to do – too many new changes constantly
introduced.*

Middle managers are especially [time-] *stretched in this organisation.*

Challenges with ICT systems and with the compliance-driven requirements of
the role are identified as adding to the workload. Middle managers say they *"[work]
longer hours, including weekends"* to manage the workload, with one manager
stating:

It is truly bordering on exploitation.

Respondents were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over time
constraints. Their ratings are presented in Table 5.20.

Table 5.20

Perceived Level of Control over Time Constraints

Time constraints	Very little or no control	Some control	Quite a lot of or complete control	Don't know or opt out
I do not have enough time to fit all of my tasks into the expected working hours	9	4	2	0
I do not have enough time to implement new initiatives within the department	8	3	4	0
Time constraints inhibit my ability to function optimally	7	6	2	0
I have conflicting priorities due to time constraints	7	4	4	0
Students are negatively impacted by my time constraints	7	3	5	0
I do not have enough time to produce quality research outputs	7	4	1	3
I do not have enough time to keep up with the constant changes in my role	6	6	2	1
I do not have enough time to become familiar with newly introduced information technology systems	6	5	4	0

Note. N=15

Responses show that although a majority of the middle managers experience very little or no control over their ability to fit all of their tasks into the expected working hours, the responses to other aspects are varied, with one to five of the 15 respondents experiencing quite a lot of or complete control over these factors. Even though some of the middle managers report having a measure of control over them, Table 5.19 shows that these factors are still deemed to inhibit optimal function by a majority of the middle managers.

Comments confirm that middle managers have autonomy over the order in which they approach their tasks:

Prioritising is an essential aspect of my role.

You prioritise and manage risk, make time for the urgent, and do your best to achieve the important.

Other comments indicate that, even with autonomy over scheduling and tasks, middle managers are not able to control the overall workload and ability to complete all tasks:

Time put into any area will always result in time being taken away from another.

In order to survive, you need to be willing to do your best but also accept that the work is never done.

One manager summarises their situation in the following statement:

[I have] *no control* [in this area] *because I have already done all I can to manage the time problem.*

There were no comments to explain why the experience of some middle managers differs from others with respect to time constraint related issues. However, having the ability to prioritise might account for the fact that some middle managers feel a sense of control over specific factors. Of concern is that Table 5.19 shows that a majority of the respondents identified time constraints as factors that inhibit

optimal functioning in many aspects of their role and have a negative impact on students.

5.9.2 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Limited Resources

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding their experience of limited resources inhibiting their ability to function optimally in the role. Their responses are shown in Table 5.21.

Table 5.21

Level of Agreement with Statements Relating to Limited Resources

Limited resources	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
Limited resources inhibit my ability to function optimally	10	3	2
Limited resources creates stress for me in my role	10	3	2
There are not enough resources to support new initiatives within the department	9	2	4
There are not enough resources to support tutors	8	2	5
There are not enough resources to support students	7	2	6
There are not enough resources to run the programmes optimally	7	3	5
There are not enough resources to manage health and safety well in the department	6	3	6

Note. N=15

Responses show that resource limitations inhibit optimal functioning and create stress for ten of the 15 respondents. However, each of these issues has not been experienced by two of the respondents where they disagreed or strongly disagreed to the statements. Although a higher number of participants agreed than disagreed with most of the factors, responses vary regarding the negative impact of limited resources on specific aspects of the role.

Comments offered suggest that some departments are well resourced, whereas others are not. These middle managers report having above-adequate resources:

I feel the resourcing is excellent and well considered.

Student resourcing is vast.

The department has a very good standard of resources and equipment.

Clearly, however, others do not share similar access to resources:

There is still no budget to increase material resources…this is dangerous and negligible.

Asking for more time or resources is often met with a blanket "no" or questioned thoroughly.

This difference in resourcing of departments could account for the variety of responses to the questionnaire statements relating to limited resources.

Respondents were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over their experience of resources inhibiting their ability to function optimally. Responses are presented in Table 5.22.

Table 5.22

Perceived Level of Control over Limited Resources

Limited resources	Very little or no control	Some control	Quite a lot of or complete control	Don't know or opt out
There are not enough resources to support tutors	8	4	3	0
There are not enough resources to run the programmes optimally	8	3	4	0
There are not enough resources to support new initiatives within the department	8	2	5	0
There are not enough resources to support students	7	4	4	0
Limited resources inhibit my ability to function optimally	7	4	4	0
Limited resources creates stress for me in my role	6	6	3	0
There are not enough resources to manage health and safety well in the department	6	3	6	0

Note. N=15

Responses reveal a variety of experiences regarding perceived control over limited resources inhibiting optimal functioning. Although more middle managers experience very little or no control over these factors than the number of those who experience quite a lot or complete control, the responses are spread across all levels. One respondent notes:

> *The main resourcing challenges sit around organisation-wide systems* [which are] *out of your control and often eat into your most precious resource – time.*

Comments from those who feel they have a measure of control over resources indicate that attribute some of this to their own ability to manage their department, to *"justify expenditure"* or to *"explore wider"* to *"tap into"* certain resources.

5.9.3 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Task Conflicts

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding their experience of task conflicts in the role. The degree to which they agree and disagree is presented in Table 5.23.

Table 5.23

Level of Agreement with Statements Relating to Task Conflicts

Task conflicts	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
Task conflicts inhibit my ability to function optimally	13	1	1
Task conflicts create staff related ethical issues	7	5	3
Task conflicts create student related ethical issues	6	6	3

Note. N=15

Responses show that although most of the middle managers have had task conflicts inhibit their ability to function optimally, only some agree that such conflicts have created ethical issues. One manager adds that they find conflict to be *"a positive aspect"* of their role that *"offers challenges"*. Another manager considers it their responsibility to *"make sure task conflicts don't affect staff and students"*, a statement which also indicates their sense of a having measure of control over this aspect of their role. Other comments mirror interview findings that attribute task conflicts, in part, to high workloads.

Respondents were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over task conflicts in the role. Their ratings are presented in Table 5.24.

Table 5.24

Perceived Level of Control over Task Conflicts

Task conflicts	Very little or no control	Some control	Quite a lot of or complete control	Don't know or opt out
Task conflicts inhibit my ability to function optimally	4	7	4	0
Task conflicts create student related ethical issues	4	5	5	1
Task conflicts create staff related ethical issues	4	5	5	1

Note. N=15

Responses vary. Some middle managers have experienced a measure of control over these factors, while others have experienced very little or no control. Comments, including *"the only control I have is choice"* and *"you weigh the importance of tasks and prioritise those that are in your control"*, suggest that, although middle managers have control over what tasks they put their time into. However, other comments make it clear that task conflicts associated with a high workload remain. One manager attributes task conflict to the *"large amount of admin"* and to having to cater to *"a small number of staff and students with significant issues"*, which then takes time away from the *"wider student/staff body"*.

The varied responses to these factors could be attributed to evident differences in how secure middle managers feel regarding their decision-making. One manager talks of the *"fear culture"* they experience when making decisions at the organisation:

> *No solution is a good solution as something is always done badly because of time problems*.

This manager describes their experience of control:

> *Choosing between yourself, students, and senior manager demands so I can keep my job* [because I have seen] *dismissals of good people*.

In contrast, another manager's comment indicates that they have the confidence to ask for support for their decision-making:

> *Where tasks can be deferred, or you know that targets simply cannot be achieved* [the best way to deal with these situations is to] *be up front to manage expectations.*

5.9.4 Inhibiting Factors Relating to the Workload Allocation System

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding the target teaching hour (TTH) system used to allocate workload at the organisation. Responses are presented in Table 5.25.

Table 5.25

Level of Agreement with Statements Relating to the Workload Allocation System

The target teaching hour (TTH) workload allocation system	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
The TTH system does not work for all programme levels	13	2	0
The TTH system has a negative impact on the quality of the department's research outputs	10	4	1
The TTH system has a negative impact on the quality of teaching	10	4	1
The TTH system inhibits my ability to function optimally	9	4	2

Note. N=15

A majority of the respondents indicate that this system inhibits their ability to function optimally. A small number of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with three of the statements and some chose the "neutral" response, which indicates that not all middle managers are negatively affected by this system.

Comments presented mirror those offered by interview participants. Two middle managers believe there is a need to have such a system for *"benchmarking"* and to use as a *"tool to monitor and gauge course progress"*, but also talk of the need for *"flexibility and compromise"* when applying the system across varying

programmes, enrolment numbers, and department objectives. This is reflected in other comments:

> *It is not a one-stop solution.*

> *The teaching target is very high and research abatement small when asking for quality research outputs*.

> [The time given for research] *is crushing* [and the expectations] *unsustainable and reduces a staff member's ability to offer quality outputs in teaching, researching and management*. [The abatement] *is nowhere near an accurate reflection of the amount of time spent fulfilling those duties*.

Another manager talks of inconsistencies in how the system is applied across the various departments:

> [The TTH system] *creates the biggest inequities in the institution* [with some staff receiving] *bucketloads of abatement hours* [whereas others are] *dying on their feet and having their spirits crushed.*

These inconsistencies are further highlighted by comparing the comments above to those of another manager, who says:

> *Because my teaching target is lower,* [the TTH system] *does not inhibit my ability to function* [and my department's research outputs] *are exceeding expectations*.

The same manager does, however, acknowledge that the high teaching hour targets do have an impact on their team members, *"often creating significant concern"*. This further suggests inconsistent application of the workload allocation system within the one department.

Respondents were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over the TTH system inhibiting their ability to function optimally. Their responses are presented in Table 5.26.

Table 5.26

Perceived Level of Control over the Workload Allocation System

The target teaching hour (TTH) workload allocation system	Very little or no control	Some control	Quite a lot of or complete control	Don't know or opt out
The TTH system does not work for all programme levels	11	2	1	1
The TTH system has a negative impact on the quality of teaching	11	2	1	1
The TTH system inhibits my ability to function optimally	10	2	2	1
The TTH system has a negative impact on the quality of the department's research outputs	8	4	1	2

Note. N=15

Responses reveal that a majority of the middle managers feel they have very little or no control over these factors, some have experienced some control, and a small number have experienced quite a lot of or complete control. Comments offered by two middle managers identify contrasting experiences with the flexibility of this system, which might account for the differences in response across the group. Whereas one manager is able to consider the programme level and other demands on the tutor to *"allow for those variables in TTH expectations"*, another manager states that they have experienced *"no room for creative solutions, discussions or fairness"* when it comes to negotiating the teaching workload allocation.

5.9.5 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Information Communication Technology Systems

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding their experience of the information communication technology (ICT) systems used at the organisation. Their responses are presented in Table 5.27.

Table 5.27

Level of Agreement with Statements Relating to ICT Systems

Information communication technology systems	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
Some of the ICT systems used by the organisation are not streamlined	14	1	0
I have to keep my own spreadsheets because the ICT systems do not serve the required purposes	12	3	0
Information ICT systems often don't work correctly in the classrooms	11	3	1
Some of the ICT systems used in the organisation are not fit for purpose	10	5	0
Some of the ICT systems used by the organisation are dysfunctional	10	5	0
Some of the ICT systems used by the organisation inhibit my ability to function optimally	10	3	2

Note. N=15

Responses make evident that a majority of the middle managers have experienced issues due to these systems inhibiting their ability to function optimally. One respondent has not experienced issues associated with the ICT systems not working correctly in the classrooms and two have not found ICT systems to inhibit their ability to function optimally. Comments highlight the significance of these issues to the majority of participants:

This is one of my biggest frustrations.

ICT systems are one of the major failures of this organisation.

Two middle managers acknowledge the efforts of the ICT team:

We feel that IT has done a lot to address this.

I commend our IT department and acknowledge their hard work.

Other comments highlight the breadth of ICT-related problems experienced by middle managers:

Some specialist programs we use for teaching do often crash and cause problems for students.

Systems have been developed by compliance-driven data requirements [in a] *top-down* [manner and with a] *lack of consultation with the end users.*

[The systems are] *not flexible* [enough] *for team members to use functionally in the classroom.*

One manager seems particularly disillusioned by ICT system changes and dysfunction:

The constant upgrades, the constant changing of programmes, the inflexibility of access…inaccurate information.

However, the spread of responses shows that some middle managers are able to work around these issues or have not experienced the same challenges. There are no comments to help identify why the optimal functioning of some middle managers is less inhibited by the ICT systems.

Respondents were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over the impact ICT systems have on their ability to function optimally. The responses are presented in Table 5.28.

Table 5.28

Perceived Level of Control over ICT Systems

Information communication technology systems	Very little or no control	Some control	Quite a lot of or complete control	Don't know or opt out
Some of the ICT systems used by the organisation are not streamlined	15	0	0	0
Some of the ICT systems used in the organisation are not fit for purpose	14	0	0	1
Some of the ICT systems used by the organisation are dysfunctional	12	1	0	2
Some of the ICT systems used by the organisation inhibit my ability to function optimally	12	2	1	0
Information ICT systems often don't work correctly in the classrooms	11	3	1	0
I have to keep my own spreadsheets because the ICT systems do not serve the required purposes	9	1	3	2

Note. N=15

Responses show that a majority of the middle managers feel they have very little or no control over the impact of ICT issues on their experience in the role and a small number have some control over these factors.

Respondents' comments illuminate some of the reasons middle managers feel these issues are outside of their control. Several middle managers feel the systems are forced on them without consultation or input, such that they are *"required to learn"* and *"to work in a particular way using particular generic systems"*, rather than being able to offer input or give feedback. As one manager explains: *"often I don't feel listened to when expressing concerns"*. The following statement encompasses the impact of ICT system development and implementation issues:

> *Many of the systems that have been introduced are poorly conceived, have limited end user input into their development, are poorly tested prior to introduction, are introduced with limited training, and lead to significant frustration and limited benefits. We should take the time and invest in resources to get it right.*

Comments indicate that middle managers have their own systems *"for backup"* because they do not trust the institute's systems to manage the data, whereas they *"have control"* over their own spreadsheets. As revealed in Table 5.27, 12 of the 15 respondents have had to establish their own data management systems.

5.9.6 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Room booking system and classroom space

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding their experience of the room booking system and of classroom space available at the organisation. Responses are presented in Table 5.29.

Table 5.29

Level of Agreement with Statements relating to the Room Booking System and Classroom Space

Room booking system and classroom space	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
Issues related to classroom space inhibit my ability to function optimally	10	4	1
I have trouble finding enough classroom space for the classes to be taught in	12	2	1
There are not enough appropriately sized classrooms available	12	2	1
There are not enough appropriately equipped classrooms available	11	3	1
The classroom booking system is difficult to use	8	5	2

Note. N=15

Responses show that, while a majority of the middle managers have experienced these factors to inhibit their ability to function optimally, a small number have not, and some middle managers selected "neutral". Comments suggest that the varied experiences arise because some middle managers, who have learning space specifically allocated to their departments, are not exposed to the same challenges as others:

> *We have a purpose-built environment that rarely is used by anyone other than our school.*

I have not had to use the booking system.

Due to the course specifics and facilities, we encounter limited issues with this.

Middle managers express a general dislike for the room booking system used by the organisation, describing it in their comments as *"clunky"*, *"rubbish"*, *"horrible"*, *"not flexible"*, and saying, *"while it has many exciting and wonderful features, the day to day use of* [the room booking system] *is challenging"*. As one manager writes, the organisation chose the *"budget option"* when choosing the current system, when *"there were far better systems available"*.

Several middle managers note the severe lack of appropriately sized or adequately equipped classroom space available at the organisation. They *"struggle to find classrooms big enough"* to accommodate students, *"especially* [in] *computer labs"* and for running exams. Of concern for some middle managers is the organisation's goal to increase enrolment numbers when there is already pressure on classroom space. One manager, despite their attempts to support a growth in student numbers, has experienced no increase in resources, and suggests that the organisation should *"either improve the space and venue situation, or give expanding programmes more hours to split large class sizes"*.

Other comments indicate that many of the classrooms available are not conducive to teaching and learning, a view which is captured by one manager in the following statement:

Classrooms are difficult to find and the equipment in them is often faulty, outdated, and generally shabby. The learning environment is embarrassing as it is obvious that maintenance is not a priority, e.g., peeling paint, dirty old drapes, old worn carpet, old desks and chairs. Very few classrooms are modern, light and bright and a pleasure to be in. It's hard to teach in such spaces.

Middle managers were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over classroom-related factors. Responses are presented in Table 5.30.

Table 5.30

Perceived Level of Control over the Room Booking System and Classroom Space

Room booking system and classroom space	Very little or no control	Some control	Quite a lot of or complete control	Don't know or opt out
There are not enough appropriately equipped classrooms available	13	0	2	0
There are not enough appropriately sized classrooms available	13	0	2	0
I have trouble finding enough classroom space for the classes to be taught in	11	2	2	0
Issues related to classroom space inhibit my ability to function optimally	9	3	3	0
The classroom booking system is difficult to use	8	2	3	2

Note. N=15

Responses indicate that a majority of the middle managers feel they have very little or no control over these factors while some have experienced some, quite a lot of, or complete control over room booking system and classroom space. These differences in experiences of control are, again, likely due to some departments having classrooms specifically allocated to them.

5.9.7 Inhibiting Factors Relating to General Processes

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding their experience with general processes at the organisation. Table 5.31 presents their responses.

Table 5.31

Level of Agreement with Statements Relating to Inhibiting General Processes

General processes	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
The high volume of documentation to complete inhibits optimal functioning	13	1	1
Inefficient processes inhibit my ability to function optimally	13	1	1
The processes the organisation has for managing documentation are inefficient	11	3	1

Note. N=15

A majority of the respondents indicated they have experienced general processes that inhibit optimal functioning in their role. Comments such as *"there's too much paperwork"*, *"*[there are] *too many processes that often double and triple up"*, and *"a lot of the paperwork seems redundant or could be done more efficiently"* reveal that middle managers feel the systems could be more streamlined. One manager finds it *"extremely concerning"* that the organisation takes a *"one size fits all"* approach to its processes without considering the *"differing factors required for differing programmes"*. The small number of middle managers whose experiences diverge from those of the majority did not offer any explanation as to why.

Respondents were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over general processes. Their responses are presented in Table 5.32.

Table 5.32

Perceived Level of Control over Inhibiting General Processes

General processes	Very little or no control	Some control	Quite a lot of or complete control	Don't know or opt out
The high volume of documentation to complete inhibits optimal functioning	13	1	1	0
The processes the organisation has for managing documentation are inefficient	13	1	1	0
Inefficient processes inhibit my ability to function optimally	11	3	1	0

Note. N=15

A majority of the middle managers feel they have very little or no control over the systems and processes used at the organisation. One manager explains their frustration with *"glitches in the system"* which have a negative impact on the enrolment process. They find *"students withdrawing or not turning up"* because they *"hadn't received any information about the programme"*. There is acknowledgement that the organisation is moving towards an electronic system for document management, but one manager notes that the processes *"should be more efficient for the organisation, but generally* [result in] *the end user doing more of the work in a sometimes more frustrating environment"*.

5.9.8 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Enrolment Numbers

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding their experience with enrolment numbers inhibiting optimal functioning. Table 5.33 reports their responses.

Table 5.33

Level of Agreement with Statements Relating to Enrolment Numbers

Enrolment numbers	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
Low student numbers inhibit optimal functioning	10	1	4
Low student numbers have a negative impact on the student experience in the classroom	8	2	5
Low student numbers have a negative impact on the ability to meet student needs	8	2	5

Note. N=15

Responses show that middle managers have varied experiences with enrolment numbers, and although a majority consider these factors to inhibit optimal functioning, over a quarter of the middle managers do not. One manager notes that they generally *"do not experience low numbers"* or that they have only experienced a dip in numbers for short periods of time.

Comments suggest the two main concerns with low enrolment numbers are that, first, having a low number of students in the class creates a more challenging learning environment and, second, low enrolment translates into reduced funding and financial viability issues. One manager explains that although they have not experienced low enrolment numbers, they *"have been told by upper management* [that if enrolments] *were to fall below a certain class size, the program would not be viable to run"*.

From the comments, it seems that whereas some programmes of study are negatively impacted by low enrolments others do not benefit from high enrolments; one manager states that *"large or excessive student numbers"* have more of an adverse impact on the student experience. Some middle managers say they see the benefit of smaller class sizes, which *"can provide some real benefits to the students"* and can allow for *"better student/tutor interaction"*.

Respondents were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over whether low enrolment numbers impact their ability to function optimally. Responses are presented in Table 5.34.

Table 5.34

Perceived Level of Control over Enrolment Numbers

Enrolment numbers	Very little or no control	Some control	Quite a lot of or complete control	Don't know or opt out
Low student numbers inhibit optimal functioning	5	6	4	0
Low student numbers have a negative impact on the student experience in the classroom	5	6	4	0
Low student numbers have a negative impact on the ability to meet student needs	4	6	5	0

Note. N=15

Responses indicate that middle managers have varied experiences, and their comments indicate that some middle managers believe the ultimate control over enrolment numbers sits with those who make marketing decisions. One manager points out that a *"lack of targeted marketing"* leads to reductions in enrolments, and another notes that the marketing of one programme might be *"chosen in favour"* of the marketing of another, and the outcome of that choice would, in turn, be directly reflected in an increase or decrease in enrolments. One manager has found low enrolment to be *"a huge problem"* and believes numbers are low because the *"marketing department is not doing a good job"*. This manager suggests that the department *"can't* [do any better] *if they are restrained by top managers"*. However, in contrast, another manager's comment indicates that they are able to influence the enrolment numbers by *"making a concerted effort to engage directly in more marketing and promotional activities"*.

5.9.9 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Staff

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding their experience of staff-related factors inhibiting their ability to function optimally. Their ratings are presented in Table 5.35.

Table 5.35

Level of Agreement with Statements on Staff-Related Inhibiting Factors

Staff	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
When a team member in my department has a negative attitude, my job is more difficult	13	1	1
When one of my team members does not have the required skills, my job is more difficult	13	1	1
Team members who resist change make my job more difficult	13	1	1
Unrest between team members creates dysfunction in the department	13	1	1
If my team members are divided and not working towards a shared goal, my job is more difficult	12	2	1
High staff turnover inhibits optimal functioning	11	3	1
Issues with staff/team members in my department inhibit optimal functioning	11	3	1

Note. N=15

Responses show that while a majority of the respondents agree or strongly agree with these factors, a small number selected "neutral", and one manager selected "disagree" or "strongly disagree" for each factor. One manager, who believes there are benefits to be gained from conflict, might account for the single contrasting response, as evidenced by their comment:

Conflict and divided opinion is optimal in a functioning team [and having a team of] *"yes-people"* [would] *significantly remove innovation, robust discussion and effective outcomes.*

Other comments, mirroring those offered during interviews, express the belief among middle managers that *"the team environment is critical"*, and that effective teams are those in which *"all staff feel valued"* and team members are *"rowing in the same direction"*.

Middle managers were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over the staff-related inhibiting factors; their responses are presented in Table 5.36.

Table 5.36

Perceived Level of Control over Staff-Related Inhibiting Factors

Staff	Very little or no control	Some control	Quite a lot of or complete control	Don't know or opt out
High staff turnover inhibits optimal functioning	6	6	2	1
Team members who resist change make my job more difficult	4	7	4	0
When one of my team members does not have the required skills, my job is more difficult	3	8	4	0
When a team member in my department has a negative attitude, my job is more difficult	3	7	5	0
Unrest between team members creates dysfunction in the department	2	8	4	1
Issues with staff/team members in my department inhibit optimal functioning	2	6	7	0
If my team members are divided and not working towards a shared goal, my job is more difficult	1	10	4	0

Note. N=15

Responses show that the experiences differ among middle managers regarding their level of control over staff-related inhibiting factors, although the spread of responses indicates that some measure of control is experienced by a majority of the middle managers. When considering the spread of responses in Table 5.35 in relation to those in Table 5.36, it is assumed that, although they consider staff-related factors to be inhibitors to optimal functioning, middle managers are slightly better able to manage them.

Comments highlight both the strong sense of responsibility some middle managers feel towards the staff and about the influence they have on the team culture within their departments:

My interaction with and expectations of staff members plays a critical role.

Where issues arise within the dept, it my responsibility to address concerns or issues and find a solution.

I do my best to create a positive work environment.

Other comments indicate that challenges with staff are, in some cases, manageable at department level but require commitment from individual team members:

When staff members have a reluctance to change or have a negative approach, strategies are undertaken to improve the situation.

I have little control over [staff] *skill set except to train or encourage professional development where appropriate.*

5.9.10 Inhibiting Factors Relating to Senior Management

Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with statements regarding their experience of senior management inhibiting their ability to function optimally. Responses are presented in Table 5.37.

Table 5.37

Level of Agreement with Statements Relating to Inhibiting Senior Management Factors

Senior management	Agree or strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
Issues with my senior manager inhibit optimal functioning	9	5	1
Resources being restricted by my senior manager makes my role more difficult	8	4	3
Poor lines of communication through the chain of command, via my senior manager, makes my role more difficult	8	5	2
Lack of leadership from my senior manager makes my role more difficult	7	6	2
Lack of respect from my senior manager makes my role more difficult	7	4	4

Note. N=15

Responses show that the middle managers have mixed experiences with senior management. Seven to nine of the 15 respondents considered these factors to be inhibitors, and one to four of the respondents did not. Between four and six respondents felt "neutral" about the influence of senior management on their effectiveness.

The comments provided came from those who have not found these factors to inhibit optimal functioning:

> *I have an effective and mutually respectful relationship with senior management.*

> *I have not had any issues with my senior manager that have impacted my ability to perform optimally, I have always had good support.*

As noted previously, the respondents report to one of three senior managers, and, interestingly, one manager stated: *"our faculty does not have that problem"*, which implies that the difficulties experienced with these factors might be influenced by the individual senior manager and this could account for the varied responses.

Middle managers were also asked to rate their perceived level of control over factors associated with senior management. Their responses are presented in Table 5.38.

Table 5.38

Perceived Level of Control over Inhibiting Factors Relating to Senior Management

Senior management	Very little or no control	Some control	Quite a lot of or complete control	Don't know or opt out
Resources being restricted by my senior manager makes my role more difficult	10	3	2	0
Lack of leadership from my senior manager makes my role more difficult	10	2	2	1
Lack of respect from my senior manager makes my role more difficult	9	2	3	1
Poor lines of communication through the chain of command, via my senior manager, makes my role more difficult	8	6	1	0
Issues with my senior manager inhibit optimal functioning	7	6	2	0

Note. N=15

Responses indicate that a majority of middle managers feel they have very little or no control over inhibiting aspects of the role associated with their senior manager. A small number of the middle managers feel they have quite a lot of or complete control and some experience some control. Given the previous findings, it is not surprising to see a range of responses to questions relating to the impact of senior managers on the ability of middle managers to function in their role. Of note is that one manager acknowledges that their senior manager *"is often just being restricted by their manager* [emphasis added]*"*, indicating that the control over some of these factors is understood to reside with the CE of the organisation.

5.9.11 Summary of Factors Considered to Inhibit Optimal Functioning

Questionnaire findings support the interview findings: a majority of the respondents indicate that they experience shortfalls in the systems, processes, physical resources, and financial resources within their work environment which inhibit their ability to function optimally in their role. A majority of the middle managers also feel they have limited control over these inhibitors, which for some contribute to task conflicts and time constraints that further restrict their ability to function.

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Comments suggest, however, that there are inconsistencies within the organisation that result in some departments being better resourced than others. Consequently, some middle managers are not being as negatively impacted as others are by resource limitations or by some of the systems and processes used within the organisation. There is also evidence that, while many middle managers experience challenges with their senior managers, this is not the case for some, and these variances may in part be attributed to differences in the leadership style of the individual senior managers.

Having autonomy at task level has enabled some middle managers to reduce the negative impact task conflicts and time constraints would otherwise have on their experience in the role. While this may have helped these middle managers to achieve in areas they consider to be important, it has not completely buffered them from the adverse effects of high job demands and limited resources on their ability to function optimally.

5.10 Comparing the Questionnaire Findings Between the Two Roles

It was possible to compare responses between the Programme Operations Manager (POM) role and the Programme Manager (PM) role, as the questionnaire respondents were asked to identify whether their role involved any teaching, which is not a task associated with the role of a POM. Using the filter tool in an Excel spreadsheet, the PM results have been separated from the POM results. These isolated sets of results were then considered in relation to the overall results for each question in the questionnaire. The outcome of this cross-referencing established that the spread of responses from the PMs and POMs was reflective of the spread of responses overall. This is the case with respect to how they define optimal functioning, how well they believe they are achieving in the role, the factors that enable and inhibit them in their role, and their perceived level of control over the enabling and inhibiting factors. For this reason, the findings of this study are understood to encompass the experience of the middle managers in both roles within the case organisation.

5.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings from phase two of this study, which involved a qualitative questionnaire aimed at further exploring the factors that had emerged from the phase one interview findings. The questionnaire findings confirm that many factors enable middle managers to achieve in the areas they consider to be important to optimal functioning. However, dysfunctional systems and processes, limitations in economic and human resources, and limited decision-making latitude present barriers to optimal functioning. The findings from analysis of responses to the questionnaire also illuminate similarities and differences in the experiences these middle managers have in their role. Figure 5.1 summarises the findings.

Figure 5.1

Summary of Questionnaire Findings

Enabling Factors

Enablers middle managers experience control over:
- Relationships
- Managers' capabilities
- Risk management – good health and safety practices

Enabler middle managers experience limited control over:
- Staff – support staff

Enablers that received varied responses to control:
- Staff - team members
- Senior manager relationship
- Risk management – with students and staff and in general

Workplace, role, and middle manager characteristics

Defining and Achieving Optimal Functioning

Important and achieving well
- Meeting stakeholder needs
- Administration and resource management
- Health and safety management

Important and not achieving well
- Managing personal well-being

Inhibiting Factors

Inhibitors middle managers have experienced limited control over:
- Room booking and classroom space
- Information communication technology systems
- General processes
- Target teaching hour system
- Some senior manager factors

Inhibitors that received varied responses to control:
- Staff
- Task conflicts in general
- Time constraints
- Some resource factors

Aspects that received varied responses as inhibitors and varied responses to control:
- Enrolment numbers
- Task conflicts creating student or staff related ethical issues
- Some resource factors
- Some senior manager factors

Questionnaire results confirm that middle managers share the understanding that meeting the needs of stakeholders in general, and of students in particular, is important to optimal functioning and show that they report similar levels of achievement in these areas. In all but one aspect of the role that middle managers consider to define optimal functioning, they indicate that they achieve at a high level.

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The one area that a majority of the middle managers feel they are not achieving well in is the management of their personal well-being; this is highlighted in questionnaire comments as an area of concern.

Through this phase of the study, middle managers also demonstrate a shared understanding of many factors they consider to enable their ability to function optimally and their perceptions of control over the enabling aspects of the role. It is evident that these middle managers depend on factors associated with people to achieve, including their own capabilities as well as those capabilities of staff within their departments and across the organisation. Reflecting findings from the interviews, questionnaire findings illuminate the importance middle managers place on building and maintaining relationships with both internal and external stakeholders; these relationships are evidently considered to be the most important mechanisms for achieving in the role. It is also clear from respondent comments that shortfalls in these relationships have a considerable impact on their ability to achieve. Where middle managers lack control over enabling factors, they can instead be experienced to inhibit optimal functioning. As an example, Figure 5.1 shows that relationships with senior managers and staff are experienced as both enablers and inhibitors to optimal functioning.

Questionnaire results also demonstrate that middle managers have shared experiences regarding some aspects of the role considered to inhibit optimal functioning, particularly those that are associated with organisation-wide systems and processes. Where their experiences with inhibiting factors differ, comments suggest divergences could be due to inconsistencies in resource allocation across the organisation, differences in the leadership styles senior managers, and variances in the popularity of some programmes of study which attract steady enrolment numbers not attained by others. Autonomy in the form of task decision-making latitude has allowed middle managers some control over which aspects of their role are negatively affected by time constraints and task conflicts, but not the same measure of control over the high workloads they experience or the pressure experienced by some due to demands from their senior manager. Of note is that, even though some departments are better resourced than others, a majority of the middle managers have

experienced issues with time constraints, limited resources, and a negative sense of well-being.

The following chapter presents analysis and discussion of the findings from stages one and two of this study alongside literature on the higher education middle manager role and theories that have informed the conceptual framework for this study.

CHAPTER 6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

This study used one-on-one semi-structured interviews and a qualitative questionnaire to explore the experiences of participating middle managers working within one higher education institution in Aotearoa New Zealand. Findings from phases one and two were presented in chapters four and five and identified the workplace, role, and personal characteristics that middle managers say enable or inhibit their ability to function in their role. Also established were the factors that define optimal functioning and the participants' perceived level of achievement in relation to those factors.

The findings indicate that higher education middle managers in the case organisation experience a number of factors that enable and many more factors that inhibit optimal functioning in the role. The findings also demonstrate that the enabling factors can be drawn upon by the middle managers to achieve success in all areas that define optimal functioning except to manage their personal well-being. As well as being a health and safety concern for the organisation and middle managers, a negative sense of well-being can have an adverse impact on their performance, the well-being and performance of their team members, and the performance of the organisation (Green, 2014; Litchfield et al., 2016). Therefore, the findings of this study highlight personal well-being as an area of concern in the case organisation.

To address this important issue, the findings have been analysed with the aim of identifying and recommending changes that can be made to improve the experiences these middle managers have in their role, and, in turn, potentially improve their well-being and their ability to function optimally. To achieve this, and in alignment with the conceptual framework of the study, this chapter will further explore the findings in relation to self-determination theory (SDT) and opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017) while also drawing from concepts associated with job-demands resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018), and role theory (Bess & Dee, 2008). These theories help to identify workplace stressors and the potential buffers to those stressors and the

resulting outcomes and actions that influence the understanding and enactment of the higher education middle manager role in the case organisation.

6.2 The Process of Understanding and Experiencing Optimal Functioning

Taking an overall collective view of the findings that emerged from both phases of this study, it is evident that the middle managers have come to their understanding of optimal functioning in the role by way of a process. This process, presented in Figure 6.1, has been used to form the structure of this chapter.

Figure 6.1

The Process of Understanding and Experiencing Optimal Functioning in the Higher Education Middle Manager Role
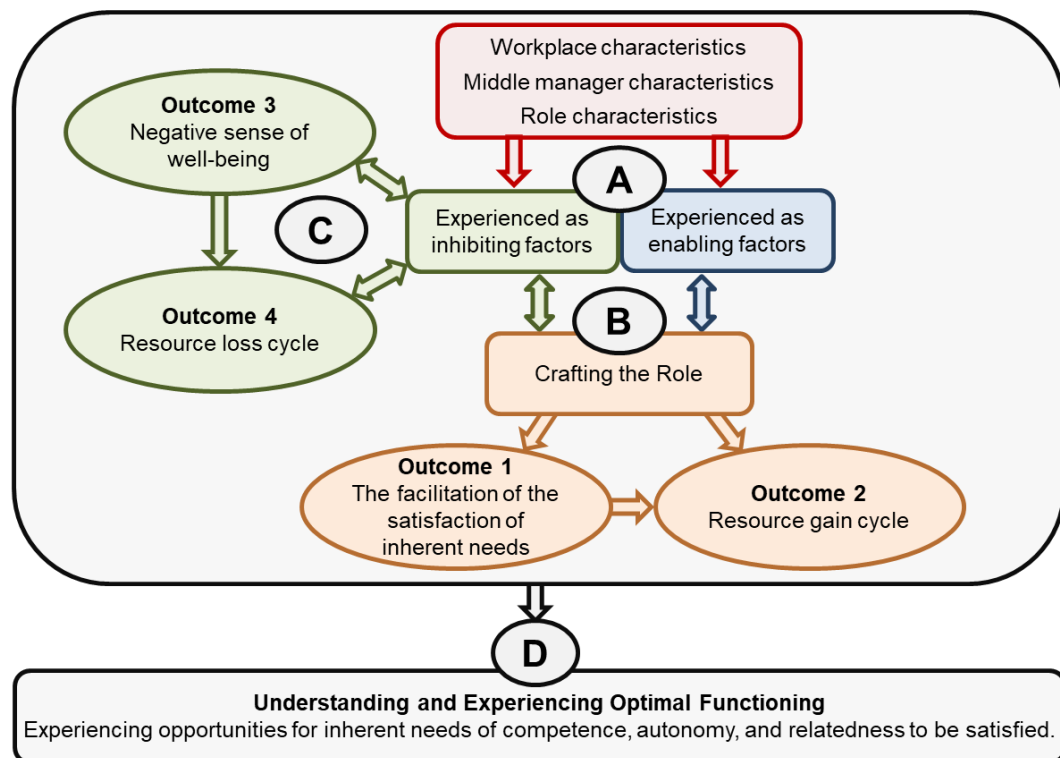
Note. The process presented in this figure has been developed by considering the findings of the study while drawing from concepts within job demands-resources theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) and self-determination theory (Deci et al., 2017).

The process of understanding optimal functioning in the role has evolved from the middle managers experiencing the workplace characteristics, their own

characteristics, and the role characteristics that have either enabled or inhibited their ability to meet job demands, as indicated by Point A in Figure 6.1. Even though the middle managers experience many inhibiting factors in their work environment, a majority believe they are achieving well in the areas they consider to define optimal functioning. This suggests that through the process of job crafting (Point B) (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), the middle managers have adapted their understanding of what they consider to define optimal functioning and taken actions in their role to better align their job demands with the resources available in the work environment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Demerouti et al., 2015). As has been the case for other employees, this process of job crafting by the middle managers has facilitated opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs (Outcome 1) (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014) and has also allowed for a positive cycle of resource gain (Outcome 2) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

Work environments that present barriers to achievement are known to limit the ability of employees to satisfy their inherent needs, an ability identified as being essential to well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As such, the inhibiting factors experienced by the middle managers in this study are understood to contribute to their negative sense of well-being (Outcome 3). As indicated at Point C, negative consequences that have transpired from the ongoing experience of inhibiting factors, together with having a negative sense of well-being, have resulted in a cycle of resource loss (Outcome 4) (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

The process presented in Figure 6.1 is discussed in the following sections, beginning with a summary of the factors considered to define optimal functioning by those in the role. This is followed by descriptions of the workplace and role characteristics along with the characteristics of the middle managers themselves that have been experienced as enablers or inhibitors to optimal functioning. The chapter then describes the outcomes and actions that have resulted from the experiences of the middle managers in relation to loss and gain cycles (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018) and the opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs (Point D) (Ryan & Deci, 2017) that they have experienced.

6.3 Defining and Achieving Optimal Functioning

Interview analysis identified three main aspects that the middle managers consider to define optimal functioning in their role: meeting stakeholder needs, effectively managing administration and resources, and having good health and safety management practices in their departments.

A desire and strong sense of responsibility to keep staff and students safe in the learning environment and to see successful outcomes for the students drives the middle managers to work to meet the needs of internal and external stakeholders, including students, their team members, and industry. The middle managers are also driven by performance measures set by the organisation, industry, or funding bodies. Meeting stakeholder needs is achieved by managing administration and resources effectively, creating a team culture within the department, and taking on a supporting role to ensure that tutors and students experience an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. The findings, as presented in Figure 5.1, indicate that a majority of the middle managers feel they have attained a high level of achievement in these areas.

It might be expected that a sense of achieving well in areas that they consider to define optimal functioning would align with a positive sense of well-being. However, this is not demonstrated in the results of the interview and questionnaire. Comments from some of the middle managers during the interviews indicate that they had reached a point at which changes were needed to their role because the pressure of managing in an environment with such high job demands negatively impacts their health and well-being. Questionnaire findings highlighted the issue of being unable to manage their well-being as being widespread amongst the participants, with only two of the 16 respondents feeling they are achieving well or very well in this aspect of the role.

The following sections discuss points A, B, C, and D presented in Figure 6.1. These points are based on the process of understanding and experiencing optimal functioning in the higher education middle manager role in the case organisation.

6.4 Point A: Enablers and Inhibitors to Optimal Functioning

This section presents and discusses the workplace characteristics, middle manager characteristics, and role characteristics that have either enabled or inhibited the middle managers to achieve optimally in their role.

6.4.1 Workplace Characteristics

Workplace characteristics such as autonomy and decision-making latitude, systems and processes used within the organisation, economic resources, and human resources have either enabled or inhibited the ability of the middle managers in this study to function optimally.

6.4.1.1 Autonomy and Decision-Making Latitude. Autonomy and decision-making latitude within the organisation are workplace characteristics that have had a considerable impact on the experience of these middle managers and their ability to function optimally in their role. A majority of the middle managers have experienced some flexibility in how they manage their daily activities indicating autonomy at scheduling and task level. They have exercised this autonomy in conjunction with their individual capabilities and available resources to attain achievement in many areas they consider to be important to optimal functioning. Although they value autonomy, the middle managers also recognise the importance of receiving support and clear direction from their senior managers and expect to be held accountable in their areas of responsibility. Support, direction and accountability are not always forthcoming, however, and are an aspect of the role over which some of the middle managers have experienced limited control.

It was noted by one manager that the autonomous nature of the role places pressure upon them to perform, and that this comes at a high personal cost to their well-being. While autonomy is considered to be one of the fundamental needs that shapes the motivation of an individual (Deci & Ryan, 1985), having autonomy without support is understood to intensify work effort to an unhealthy level (Kubicek et al., 2017). This is evidenced in the experience of many of the middle managers within this study, for whom working long hours to ensure the success of their departments has disrupted their work-life balance and their sense of well-being.

Although the middle managers in this study have autonomy in their role at the scheduling and task level, they have very limited decision-making latitude at the organisational level. Outside of their control are the systems, processes, and economic resources within the organisation, and they have found many of the decisions made around these areas to inhibit their ability to function optimally. At department level, they are expected to achieve goals set by senior management but have limited access to the resources required to achieve the goals. They experience micromanagement of purchases and have no opportunity for input into the systems that affect how they work. In addition, they are faced with constant change, which is understood to be driven by financial goals that do not take quality into consideration, and limited resource support.

An important observation made by some of the middle managers was that the senior manager they report to also has limited control over resource allocation. One manager noted that their senior manager, also restricted in terms of decision-making latitude, acts as more of an administrator than a leader. Many of the financial decisions seem to be made at the CE level in the case organisation. This top-down decision-making represents more of a managerial rather than collegial leadership approach and has resulted in a demand and control type of organisational culture which, although not uncommon in the higher education environment (see Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Cardno, 2014; Davis et al., 2016; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Marshall, 2012), is problematic for the individual middle managers and the organisation.

Unfortunately, limited control over systems, processes, and resources has restricted opportunities for the middle managers to advocate for their departments. This has resulted in an imbalance of job demands and resource availability and, therefore, has curbed their ability to function optimally. The effectiveness of higher education middle managers has been found in other research to be impaired by limits to financial decision-making capacity which consequently constrain resource availability and contribute to stress in the role (see Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Briggs, 2003b; Kruse, 2020; Santiago et al., 2006; Thornton et al., 2018). Trying to achieve more with fewer resources is a major challenge facing middle managers in

contemporary higher education institutions, where "stress-related illness is becoming increasingly common" (Bolden et al., 2008a, p. 70).

The culture of limited decision-making latitude and resource unavailability in the case organisation is a likely contributor to the negative sense of well-being experienced by the middle managers in this study. Limited decision-making latitude is known to negatively affect the satisfaction, motivation, and well-being of employees (Dhondt et al., 2014; Halbesleben et al., 2014; Sparks et al., 2001), and, along with limited resource availability, to undermine the satisfaction of inherent needs, which in turn limits optimal functioning in the workplace (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Although autonomy is associated with well-being in the workplace, this association is enhanced when decision-making latitude at the organisational level is also present (Dhondt et al., 2014). As such, to improve their well-being and effectiveness, the middle managers should be given more autonomy and decision-making latitude.

6.4.1.2 Systems and Processes. A majority of the middle managers agree that administration processes, information communication technology (ICT) systems, and the teaching workload allocation system inhibit their optimal functioning. Having limited control over the development or application of these systems has curtailed their ability to make improvements to their experience of this aspect of their role.

6.4.1.2.1 Administrative Processes. The middle managers indicated that, while they are able to achieve the administrative aspects of their role, they have limited control over the administrative processes used within the organisation. They described being faced with a high volume of repetitive, ineffective, and sometimes redundant administrative tasks that they consider to be inefficient. They noted that the use of hard copy rather than soft copy documentation adds to time constraints and slows down the resource approval process. In addition, they referred to conflicting administrative deadlines, and noted that, although meeting these deadlines is less important than other aspects of their role, such conflicts have the potential to create role-related pressure and could contribute to difficulties in managing well-being in the role, as Bess and Dee (2008) observed. The middle managers have found that the high administrative workload contributes to their already overburdened schedule

without adding value to it; because administrative tasks are not considered to enhance the experience and outcomes of their students, they are not deemed as vital as other aspects of the middle manager role. It is evident from comments made by the middle managers that making changes to the systems and processes associated with managing documentation and increased support from human resources could alleviate some of this workload.

Previous studies have also identified administration activities as time-consuming and contributing to role overload for the higher education middle manager (see Cardno, 2014; Deem, 2001; Smith, 2002; Yielder & Codling, 2004). This issue, as reported in other studies, is attributed in part to the impact of managerialism on the higher education environment, which has created an increase in compliance reporting requirements (Deem, 2010; Kenny & Fluck, 2019; Yielder & Codling, 2004). It has been observed in other studies that workload allocation models often do not appropriately represent the administrative demands on academic roles (Boncori et al., 2020; Kenny & Fluck, 2019; Vardi, 2009) and that higher education middle managers might benefit from receiving administrative support to alleviate some of the associated workload pressure (Cardno, 2014; Smith, 2002).

6.4.1.2.2 Information Communication Technology Systems. ICT systems are intended to support the teaching and learning, administration, performance reporting, communication, and financial management processes within the organisation. The findings reveal, however, that the middle managers have found these systems to be dysfunctional, inflexible, not fit for purpose, not streamlined, constantly changing, and said that they often do not work. In addition, they reported that the systems are not capable of producing the accurate data needed for the reporting requirements associated with the management role. Contributing to these problems is a lack of consultation with the middle managers at the development stage of new systems, which results in the implementation of systems that do not meet department needs.

Although there is evidence that the ICT team makes improvements to these systems, and that their effort is appreciated by the middle managers, significant issues remain. ICT systems have been experienced to be frustrating and time consuming, to create a heavier workload, and to present a barrier to optimal

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functioning. The middle managers reported that they have experienced very little or no control over the ICT systems they use, and some have found it necessary to develop their own more-functional systems for recording and retrieving required data. Adding to challenges with the systems themselves is the problem that most of the middle managers feel they have very little time to become familiar with newly implemented systems; being unfamiliar with new systems generated a sense of incompetence in one manager. It was made evident by some middle managers that being involved with the design and development of these systems could better align their functionality with the needs of the departments and, consequentially, improve the ability of the middle managers to function optimally in their role.

6.4.1.2.3 Workload Allocation System. Contributing to workplace stress for the middle managers in the case institution is the targeted teaching hour (TTH) system, which allocates teaching workload to middle managers and their team members. The system requires a teaching-hour target to be reached over the academic year, with abatements offered for research outputs and management responsibilities. The middle managers indicated that the workload allocation system does not realistically reflect the requirements of their role or of the roles of their team members. They also highlighted inconsistencies in how the system is applied across the organisation and across different programme levels. In the same way that they are not involved in the refinement of the other systems they are required to work with at the organisation, the middle managers do not have input into the development of this workload allocation system and have limited control over how it is applied within their departments.

Some of the problems associated with the TTH system stem from a lack of flexibility in the teaching hour allocation across different programme levels, which contributes to role overload for many middle managers and their team members. As a rule, lower-level programmes at the institution are allocated more teaching hours than higher level programmes. For example, a 15-credit paper at level 3 could have 90 teaching hours allocated to it and a 15-credit paper at level 8 could have 48 hours allocated to it. This allocation of teaching hours is based on the expectation that students undergoing lower-level programmes need more guidance with their learning. There are several ways in which the TTH system creates discrepancies in

workload allocation. Firstly, in order to meet their allocated teaching targets, those tutoring higher-level programmes are required to teach a greater number of papers than those tutoring the lower-level programmes. By way of illustration, in order to meet a 825-hour teaching target, those tutoring on level 8 programmes will be required to teach almost twice as many papers as those tutoring on level 3 programmes. Secondly, the marking workload for a level 8 paper is significantly higher than that of lower-level programmes, but no hours are allocated to marking. Thirdly, those tutoring on the higher-level programmes are expected to undertake research, which requires considerably more time than the associated abatement allows. Under the TTH system, the middle managers and their tutors are regularly not compensated for all the hours required to fulfil their teaching and other duties.

In addition, inconsistent application of the system results in some staff having higher workloads than others, which tends to generate a lack of trust and unrest between staff and was noted by one manager as being one of the "biggest inequities at the institution". Some departments have a larger number of management positions in place, which helps to spread the workload, and some middle managers receive a larger abatement than others. Some departments have had to adapt the TTH system to allow for programmes with low enrolment numbers to remain financially sustainable, while other departments have not had to apply any such changes. Also, some departments have been permitted to adapt the system to allow for high enrolment numbers while others have not. In addition, because it does not reflect the true volume of work associated with teaching and management roles, the TTH system contributes to task conflicts and role overload, and, as a result, inhibits the ability of middle managers and their team members to function optimally.

The literature confirms that issues associated with workload allocation systems are prevalent in the higher education sector (e.g., Boncori et al., 2020; Gregory & Lodge, 2015; Houston et al., 2006; Jensen et al., 2009; Thornton et al., 2018; Vardi, 2009). As has been highlighted in this study, such systems have been found to be based on unrealistic measurements which often do not account for the range and complexity of tasks perform or reflect the actual time it takes to complete the tasks, with role overload the observed consequence (e.g., Boncori et al., 2020; Gregory & Lodge, 2015; Griffith & Altinay, 2020; Houston et al., 2006; Jensen et

al., 2009; Kenny, 2017; Pace et al., 2019; Vardi, 2009). The resulting role overload has been demonstrated to negatively affect both the quality of teaching (Jensen et al., 2009) and opportunities for quality research outputs (Jensen & Morgan, 2009; Kenny, 2017; Thornton et al., 2018).

As also seen in this study, Barrett and Barrett (2007), Boncori et al. (2020), and Jensen et al. (2009) reported inconsistencies in workload allocations between institutions or amongst departments or schools within the same institution. Further, Briggs (2003b) found such inconsistencies to create confusion for those working across organisations and to be responsible for a lack of parity between middle managers within each faculty. Ensuring equity and transparency in such systems has been both recognised as essential to their effectiveness (Burgess et al., 2003) and considered to be related to academic staff commitment and organisational success (Houston et al., 2006).

Workload allocation models are a way of managing the increasing workloads in the higher education environment, and if managed appropriately and transparently, they are useful for distributing workload equitably (Vardi, 2009). They have not, however, been successful in shielding staff from role overload, as they do not increase the availability of organisation-wide resourcing (Vardi, 2009). As such, they are viewed by some in the higher education environment as tools middle managers can use to monitor and control the workplace (Boyd, 2014), tools which are thought to undermine trust, morale, integrity, and collegiality (Jensen & Morgan, 2009).

As seen within this and other studies, there are many issues associated with workload allocation models in the higher education environment. Within the case organisation, there is an evident need for the development of a model that realistically accounts for the wide variety of tasks associated with the roles of the middle managers and their team members. There is also a requirement for equity and transparency in the way that any workload allocation model is applied across the organisation. Although changes are necessary, such transformation is not expected to be easily accomplished in the current environment, due to constraints associated with funding challenges and the increased accountability and performativity placed on higher education institutions (Boncori et al., 2020; Kenny, 2017; Tolofari, 2005). There are, however, recommendations for approaches to work allocation offered in

the literature that can also apply within the case organisation which do not increase the financial burden on the organisation but can improve the experiences of these middle managers and their team members. Such approaches have the potential to increase the level of trust and the overall acceptance of workloads of middle managers within the case organisation. Recommendations around the development and implementation of these systems are presented in the following chapter.

6.4.1.3 **Economic Resources.** Economic resources are defined as assets at organisation and department level that are available to help the middle manager meet the demands of the role. Although they acknowledged the many economic resources available at department and organisational level, the middle managers have experienced many shortfalls in resourcing which have inhibited their ability to function optimally. The middle managers reiterated the importance of managing the economic resources within their scope of control and a majority believe this is an area in which they are achieving well, despite having very limited access to funds and lacking control over how funds are allocated.

In some departments, budgeted resources have been held back, blocking the availability of basic items needed for supporting the teaching and learning process. Restrictions on resources limit the ability of the middle managers to support students and tutors, manage health and safety well within their departments, and ensure quality through the change process. Although the middle managers said they understand that economic resources are finite and need to be managed well in order for their departments and the organisation to be financially sustainable, a majority of the middle managers have found the continual battle for resources contributes to the stress they experience in their role.

Limited classroom suitability and/or availability has been experienced by a majority of the middle managers and represents another resource over which they have limited control. They have struggled to find appropriately equipped or adequately sized classrooms for their classes to be taught in, to address limited computer lab availability, and to maintain classrooms to a level which would avoid them being described, as was by one manager, as "embarrassing". The middle managers stated that classroom issues inhibit their ability to function optimally, particularly because students are often disadvantaged by poor classroom

management. The middle managers also reported that difficulties with using the room booking system adds to the stress of limited classroom availability. They noted that they expect these problems with classrooms to increase as enrolment numbers grow. Fortunately, not all the middle managers have experienced such issues, as some departments have rooms specifically allocated to their programmes to accommodate the very specific technical requirements associated with their subject areas.

Staffing shortages also create issues for some middle managers. Department expenditure is expected to respond to enrolment numbers, so some middle managers rely on contracted part-time rather than tenured tutors for many of their teaching requirements. This situation creates high staff turnover and generates a larger workload for the middle managers, as they have the responsibility to train all new department staff. One manager noted, however, that the benefit of employing a tutor on a short-term contract is that there is no obligation to renew their contract if they are found to be unsuitable for the role. Although a reliance on casual staff allows for a less costly and more flexible workforce, it has also been found to increase the workload and stress levels of those responsible for the management and supervision of the casual employees (see Coates et al., 2009; Jensen et al., 2009). It is noteworthy that a high reliance on casual tutors is viewed as an internal risk indicator for higher education institutions (see TESQA, 2020).

The findings indicate that staffing shortages have also been evident in the marketing and student support departments due to high turnover along with ongoing insufficient resourcing within these departments. Further, middle managers talk of having to work through significant changes due to programme updates, new programme development and implementation, and new department initiatives without receiving any extra human resourcing. Their team members are expected to take on this extra work while also continuing to fulfil the responsibilities of their full-time role. Such staffing shortages clearly add to the high workloads experienced by the middle managers and their team members and put the quality of the service offered to stakeholders at risk.

From their responses to interview and questionnaire questions, it became clear that, with respect to economic resources, some of the middle managers operate

in departments that are resourced to a high standard and others in departments that are severely neglected financially. This can be attributed, in part, to strict monitoring by external stakeholders and the need for some departments to comply with industry standards, and to the fact that some subjects of study require specific physical resources due to their technical nature. Inconsistencies in resource allocation create unrest between middle managers, particularly in cases in which some are left with fewer resources and higher workloads as a result of their profits being distributed to other departments. Higher education middle managers elsewhere have experienced a lack of control over resource allocation and the unequal distribution of resources, both of which are understood to create a culture of competition between departments (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019). Problems like these undermine the collegiality which middle managers are known to rely on to achieve department outcomes in environments where resources are limited (Branson et al., 2016; Scott et al., 2008).

Although some departments within this study are better resourced than others, most of the middle managers believe that resource limitations inhibit their ability to function optimally, and those who lack control over this aspect of the role are restricted in their ability to make improvements where needed. Some of the middle managers spoke of being physically and mentally exhausted from the battle they have fought to run their departments well and to meet the needs of their stakeholders with inadequate economic resources, and some fear for the continuation of their programmes and their jobs. A study undertaken by Marsden and Moriconi (2009) also identified that attempts by higher education institutions to remain financially sustainable come at a cost to employee morale and health.

The literature indicates that higher education middle managers elsewhere experience similar resource limitations as factors that inhibit their ability to function optimally (e.g., Briggs, 2001b; Cardno, 2014; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Gonaim, 2016; Griffith, 2006; Lumby, 2012; Maniam, 2018; Marshall et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2008). As this researcher has also found among the participants in this study, other authors have observed that resource limitations contribute to time constraints, role overload, and role ambiguity, and, as such, contribute to role strain and consequently have a negative impact on the well-being of higher education middle managers. The

ability to lead is, in part, influenced by the control a leader has over resource allocation (Bolden et al., 2012), so limited control over resources also constrains optimal functioning. The middle managers in this study understand that resource limitations are expected in their field. However, better transparency in resource allocation between departments and some control over the allocation of department resources, as would be associated with a collective leadership approach (Marshall, 2012; Youngs, 2017), could improve the experiences of these middle managers and increase opportunities for optimal functioning.

6.4.1.4 Human Resources and Relationships. This section discusses aspects of human resources, including staffing within each department and the wider organisation and the relationships middle managers have experienced with internal and external stakeholders, which have had an impact on their ability to function in their role.

The middle managers recognised that building and maintaining relationships with internal and external stakeholders is essential to optimal functioning, and they feel they are able to draw from their own capabilities to influence the quality of most of these relationships. The small number of middle managers who have experienced limited control over these relationships attribute this to time constraints and, in some cases, the attitude of the other parties. The middle managers foster relationships with their team members through genuine care, honesty, and regular communication, and by valuing their team members, allowing team members autonomy in their role, and developing a team culture within their departments. They also work closely with the wider network of staff across the organisation to gain access to a wide range of expertise and develop a sense of camaraderie and support between departments. By making connections with industry partners, including individuals, businesses, and associations, the middle managers can create opportunities to promote programmes, positively influence teaching and learning practices, increase the quality and relevance of the programmes offered, and future-proof programmes of study by keeping them relevant to and valued by industry. By developing and maintaining these key relationships, the middle managers can increase their pool of resources without requiring financial input.

The middle managers also recognise the importance of having valuable staff within their departments. They value team members who are passionate about their jobs, self-sufficient, and skilled in self-direction. The middle managers acknowledge the high workload associated with the tutorial role and appreciate the dedication and strong work ethic of many of their team members. However, challenges associated with department and wider organisational staffing have been observed to inhibit the ability of some middle managers to function optimally. Shortfalls in the capabilities and attitudes of some tutors in their departments can result in ineffective teaching, which negatively affects student experience and achievement. Some department staff resist change, and prove unable or unwilling to adapt or put in the effort required to support the change process. Hancock and Hellawell (2003) noted that an unfortunate outcome of staff being resistant to change is that it demotivates middle managers from adopting a more effective collegial decision-making approach within their departments.

Negative attitudes from team members or from staff in the wider organisation can create unrest and divide within teams and can contribute to staff turnover. The negative attitude of even one staff member in a supporting role can contribute to the stress felt by a wide group of staff and can undermine team culture within departments and across the organisation. The amount of control middle managers feel they have over the quality of input from their team members is varied, with many experiencing some measure of control and a smaller number very little or no control.

Staff turnover is significant in some areas of the organisation and has increased the workload of some middle managers. One faculty had four different senior managers over a short period of time, which unsettled its middle managers, created considerable workload for them, and also contributed to the departure of a number of department staff. Middle managers in this particular faculty found they were having to educate each replacement senior manager about the needs of their department, and, during their period of settling in, the new senior managers were found to be unavailable or unsupportive, often not understanding the complexities of each department or programme.

Limited staffing and staff turnover in the marketing department has also contributed to the time constraints, conflicting priorities, and stress experienced by these middle managers. As well as being disadvantageous to the learning experience for students, low enrolment numbers for some programmes not only means the courses are unable to remain financially viable but also raises the question of who holds responsibility for ensuring optimal enrolment numbers. This would normally be the job of the marketing department, however, due to understaffing and high staff turnover within this department, some middle managers have been pressured by their senior managers to take on this extra responsibility.

Staffing issues have been reported elsewhere in the literature and are considered to be one of the most significant challenges faced by higher education middle managers (see Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Maniam, 2018; Smith, 2007; Thornton et al., 2018). Some of the staffing issues reported elsewhere include underperformance (Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2007), a lack of motivation (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Scott et al., 2008), unprofessional behaviour (Maniam, 2018), non-collegial attitudes (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015), resistance to change (Fullan & Scott, 2009; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001), intentionally disruptive behaviour (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001), and laziness and incompetence (Smith, 2007). Higher education middle managers have also been challenged to deal with conflict between staff members, support staff through their personal issues (Smith, 2007), and handle complex staff needs (Briggs, 2005).

Pepper and Giles (2015) found that higher education middle managers were having to deal with staff issues on a daily basis. In a study based in Aotearoa New Zealand, Thornton et al. (2018, p. 215) noted that middle managers found working with problematic staff to be "time-consuming and unpleasant". Smith (2007) and Scott et al. (2008) also emphasised the time-consuming nature of dealing with staff, particularly those that are underperforming and disengaged. While the middle managers within this study feel they can buffer the impact of staff-related issues on department outcomes, the extra effort this requires was said to contribute to job demands in an already time- and resource-constrained environment.

6.4.1.4.1 Managing Risk Through People. The management of risk, which they acknowledge requires the commitment from staff both within the department and organisation-wide, was identified by middle managers as essential to optimal functioning. The middle managers keep staff and students safe in the learning environment by employing effective risk management practices that promote the early identification and prevention of issues associated with their physical or emotional well-being. Risk management also involves supporting students who are considered at risk of not achieving their learning goals.

Changes to the Health and Safety at Work Act (2015) have placed more health and safety responsibility on the executive officers of organisations. This has driven the development of more robust policies around workplace health and safety in Aotearoa New Zealand (Pons, 2019). Benefits associated with these changes include the employment of a health and safety officer at the organisation, resulting in clearer policies and procedures, and the implementation of a code of conduct, bringing more rigour and a stronger sense of accountability to how physical risk is managed across the organisation. The middle managers have observed these benefits and highlighted the importance of staff and students taking on some of the risk management responsibility, particularly in the departments that are considered to have a higher level of physical risk associated with their programmes. Effective risk management requires careful planning to ensure no accidents happen while at the same time ensuring the health and safety management practices do not hinder the learning process. A majority of the middle managers experience a measure of control over this aspect of their role, but some noted that staff and student issues can be unpredictable, difficult to identify, and take significant energy to manage.

Another risk that the middle managers are mindful of is the risk of student failure, which affects both the prospects of the student and the reputation and financial viability of the organisation. Since the introduction of student achievement funding in the Aotearoa New Zealand tertiary education sector (Tertiary Education Commission, 2014), department performance has been measured by student performance. Student achievement is also essential for meeting the employment needs of local industry. The middle managers measure how well student needs have been met by their retention, completion, and employment outcomes, their personal

development, their satisfaction with their study experience, and their attainment of health and well-being in the learning environment. These needs are met by the organised and collaborative effort of middle managers, their team members, and, to a smaller extent, the student support service providers.

To manage risks associated with students struggling to achieve in the learning environment, the middle managers intervene early with support measures to increase opportunities for their success. They meet regularly with tutors and closely monitor student achievement to swiftly identify students who might benefit from extra support. Challenges with learning can be caused by factors such as mental health issues, learning disabilities, a lack of confidence in their learning ability, or the use of English as a second language. Once a learning challenge is identified, various targeted measures are put into place by the middle managers and their team to support the student. The middle managers also aim to develop quality relationships with students by being accessible to students, being honest, and building trust; being seen as approachable is another way the middle managers manage risk associated with student achievement.

Although learning support services are recognised as a valuable resource for these students, there is evidence of limitations in the scope of assistance available at the organisation, with many students not receiving the support they need. Unsurprisingly, as this service is not within their area of responsibility, a majority of the middle managers feel they have limited control over the quality or availability of support staff across the organisation. This lack of specialist resourcing places more pressure on the middle managers and their team members, who find that giving extra learning support to "at-risk" students adds to their already high workloads. One manager noted that they do not have the resources to support all students and, as a result, have to accept that some students will not achieve. In such cases, they do a calculation to decide on the number of students they need to support in order to fulfil department targets. They also note that the effort put in to assisting struggling students, which should be the responsibility of student support services, limits the time they would like to put into advancing their high-achieving students who, as a result of limited student support, also miss out on beneficial learning opportunities.

6.4.1.4.2 Senior Manager Relationship and Support. All middle managers who participated in this study identified the relationship they have with their senior manager as having a significant impact on their ability to function. The middle managers described varying experiences in this area, with some finding aspects of this key relationship to be enabling and some finding aspects to be inhibiting. Contrasts in their experiences are considerable, with some middle managers describing the relationship as supportive, effective, and mutually respectful, and others characterising it as disrespectful and lacking leadership and understanding. Analysis of their comments suggests the main reason for these varied experiences could be attributed to the leadership style of individual senior managers; one manager's statement, that their *"faculty does not have this problem"*, indicates that the personality of the individual senior manager influences the quality of this relationship.

Senior managers are viewed as the person to turn to for assistance, support, and guidance when issues arise, and some middle managers have found their senior manager to be responsive and efficient in offering such support, with one manager experiencing this even outside of working hours. The middle managers want to receive clear direction from their senior managers that demonstrates an awareness of department performance and is actively followed up. In addition, they rely on senior managers to understand the needs and potential of individual departments, as the people in this position are solely responsible for representing each programme at the decision-making level of the organisation. This requires a strong line of communication both up and down the levels of hierarchy, which is considered to be absolutely necessary to ensure department needs are met and barriers to optimal functioning are removed.

Shortfalls in senior manager ability or motivation to communicate through hierarchical levels are seen to be responsible, in particular, for some of the resource limitations the middle managers have experienced within their departments, because poor communication can leave the middle manager's department unrepresented at the chief executive level, where strategic and financial decisions are made. Some senior managers are viewed as being disconnected from the teaching and learning environment and having a limited understanding of the resources needed to achieve

the expected department outputs. This disconnect and lack of understanding, the middle managers believe, result in unrealistic and conflicting expectations being placed on them.

Another challenge experienced within this relationship is the unmet expectations of middle managers that they will receive positive interpersonal exchange and support from their senior manager. One manager spoke of their senior manager not responding to requests for help with managing the performance of team members. Another manager described this relationship as being based on a culture of disrespect for professional judgement and used the term "bullying" to describe the behaviour of their senior manager, stressing that this relationship undermines their well-being and therefore their ability to function optimally. Some middle managers feel left in the dark about wider organisational goals due to limited communication from their senior managers, who at times seem to lack clear direction themselves. Being in this situation has left middle managers feeling unsure of what they need to be achieving and therefore uncertain of their own performance. Kok and McDonald (2017) report that middle managers find some decisions difficult to understand or accept when senior managers do not offer clarity or rationale for them, and state that this is a known contributor to undermining the trust and respect that could otherwise improve the quality of this relationship. In addition, passive leadership, as attributed to some of the senior managers in this study, has been reported by Barling and Frone (2017) to contribute to workplace stress and psychological fatigue, and therefore is a likely contributor to the negative sense of well-being experienced by the middle managers within this study.

Given the findings from previous research (Bernerth et al., 2008; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; McClane, 1991), it was expected that experiences of relationships across the case organisation would vary due to the personal characteristics of the individuals in these relationships. However, the findings from this study suggest that not all issues within the leader-member exchange relationships in this case stem from shortfalls in senior or middle manager characteristics but instead some can be attributed to a wider issue embedded in the culture of the organisation. As noted by one middle manager, the workload of their senior manager has increased significantly over the last few years, and this might account for their lack of

availability. Also, the limited decision-making latitude of the senior managers in the organisation restricts the scope of flexibility they have in responding to requests presented by the middle managers. Some might argue that neither time constraints nor limited decision-making latitude can justify shortfalls in senior manager interpersonal communication conduct towards middle managers, however, role overload is recognised to be a contributing factor to relationship challenges. Kopperud et al. (2021) found that situational characteristics including role overload impact the ability of managers to develop high quality relationships with their subordinates.

These findings confirm the importance of the relationship middle managers have with their senior managers, which has been noted by others as one of the most significant relationships to influence an employee (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Literature suggests that middle managers elsewhere have experienced similar issues to those within this study. Senior managers have been reported to hold back information (Hancock & Hellawell, 2003), to be unresponsive to requests made by middle managers on behalf of their departments (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017), and to offer limited support with dealing with underperforming team members (Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Smith, 2007). Developing and maintaining relationships with senior managers is not always easy, and, without their support, the middle manager role has been experienced as lonely (Griffiths, 2009). As has been demonstrated within the case organisation, wider issues contribute to these challenges, such as the heavy workloads experienced by senior managers (Briggs, 2003b) and shortfalls in organisation-wide communication (Briggs, 2003a; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003).

As discussed in the literature review, the social exchange relationship between a leader and their team members is important for individual, team, and organisational performance (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Gregersen et al., 2016; Hobfoll et al., 2018). In addition, the quality of this relationship is considered to be one of the major influences on the psychological health of employees (Karanika-Murray et al., 2015). Support from senior managers could buffer workplace stressors and alleviate some of the undesirable effects of job demands on the well-being of these middle managers (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Gregersen et al., 2016). In order

to reduce work-related stress, employees should receive adequate information and support from their superiors, be given regular and constructive feedback, and know how to access the required resources in order to do their job (HSE, 2004). For a small number of middle managers in this study, the relationship with their senior manager has been experienced as supportive. However, for many, the support that might otherwise buffer the impact of job demands has not been available and instead this relationship has contributed negatively to their sense of well-being.

6.4.1.4.3 Importance of Relationships to Optimal Functioning. The importance of maintaining effective working relationships with team members and senior managers (Briggs, 2003b; Bryman, 2007; Thornton et al., 2018; Wisniewski, 2019) and with external stakeholders (van Ameijde et al., 2009) has been recognised by others as an essential aspect of the higher education middle management role. Relationships are considered vital for supporting the achievement of organisational objectives (Leader, 2004) and for the overall performance of an organisation (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Henderson et al., 2009). Branson et al. (2016, p. 3) highlight the importance of the relational aspects of the role, stating that building a culture of teamwork and collegiality should be viewed as more than just a part of the higher education middle manager role but rather the "very essence of their leadership".

Relationships are understood to be key to leadership ability and are the foundation from which trust and collegiality are built (Branson et al., 2016). The middle managers in this study acknowledged this. Quality workplace relationships are important for developing support structures (Pepper & Giles, 2015), are known to increase motivation (Deci et al., 2017), have been shown to increase leadership capabilities, and are understood to have a positive impact on well-being in the workplace (Deci et al., 2017; HSE, 2004). In addition, high-quality relationships between leaders and their team members are known to support the satisfaction of inherent needs (Graves & Luciano, 2013). It is evident that the middle managers within this study have drawn from their own capabilities to positively influence the relationships they have with internal and external stakeholders and to achieve in areas they consider to be important to optimal functioning. As well as resulting in beneficial outcomes for stakeholders, the ability of the middle managers to build and

maintain these relationships has increased opportunities for the satisfaction of competence and relatedness needs and, therefore, enhanced their ability to function optimally.

The ability of leaders to establish and maintain quality relationships with those they lead is an aspect of the role that takes time, effort, and resources (Henderson et al., 2009) and as such requires an organisational culture that supports relationship development and maintenance (Branson et al., 2016). Without supportive structures, policies, and procedures, the nature and credibility of these relationships is compromised (Branson et al., 2016). In this study, when middle managers have experienced barriers to developing relationships with stakeholders, this has been put down to either the attitude(s) of the other party or parties or to inhibiting workplace characteristics. Examples of such characteristics include inefficient policies, procedures, and systems that contribute to high workloads and time constraints which, in turn, have an adverse effect on relationship-building. Having limited decision-making latitude at the organisational level restricts the ability of the middle managers to remove many of these barriers; this should be addressed in the case organisation, if those managing from the middle are to have every opportunity to function optimally.

6.4.2 Middle Manager Capabilities

The middle managers have recognised that their own capabilities are a resource that they are able to draw from to meet the demands of their role. Having a good attitude towards their role, a strong sense of responsibility and a passion to see people succeed, as well as being personable and able to forward plan, problem solve, and deal with things efficiently and effectively have all been recognised as enablers to optimal functioning. With personal resources being an aspect of their role that they have a measure of control over, these have been instrumental to the middle managers in the development and fostering of quality relationships with their team members, senior managers, students, support staff, and external stakeholders, which has been identified as important to achieving in the role. Their capabilities have also been prized for the achievement of administrative responsibilities. These findings align with those of earlier studies which identified personal capabilities as valuable for managing aspects of the teaching and learning environment (Briggs, 2003b; Pepper

& Giles, 2015; Smith, 1997), particularly for fostering collegiality and gaining the support of team members (Briggs, 2003b; Bryman, 2007; Thornton et al., 2018; Wisniewski, 2019), and for managing administrative aspects of the role (Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Potgieter et al., 2011; Thornton et al., 2018).

Some middle managers, however, believe that the development of their personal capabilities to improve skills where there are gaps is restricted because the organisation offers limited training and also due to time constraints. This situation has been experienced as frustrating and has caused some middle managers to avoid completing certain tasks, which then deprives them of a chance to forge a sense of competence in the role. Shortages in training opportunities for middle managers are not uncommon in the higher education sector, and several authors have highlighted this as an area of concern (e.g., Corbett, 2020; Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Floyd, 2016; Inman, 2009; Krneta et al., 2012; Thornton et al., 2018). The higher education middle manager role is essential to the success of the organisation (Gmelch et al., 2017; Wisniewski, 2019) and a sense of competence in the role is important for optimal functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2017), therefore, training limitations are an area of concern (Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012) and should be addressed within the case organisation.

6.4.3 Role Characteristics

Role theory has been used to identify and examine the key influences on the middle manager role in the case organisation. As the role holders in this study, the middle managers are subject to expectations "sent" by others they work amongst and by their own expectations of themselves (Bess & Dee, 2008). The role sender's understanding of the expectations they send can differ from the role receiver's understanding of the expectations received; this presents the potential for the emergence of "impeding role characteristics" (Bess & Dee, 2008). Impeding role characteristics, such as role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload, are evident in the experiences of these middle managers and have been found to negatively affect their ability to function optimally in their role.

The middle managers spoke of receiving conflicting messages from multiple role senders and from individual role senders, which, as they described, has created

incompatibilities and inconsistencies in role expectations. An example of sent expectations are performance targets that are set internally by the senior management team and externally by funding and industry bodies. These targets represent job demands sent to middle managers via their senior manager. Middle managers require sufficient resources to meet these job demands but have found many of the resources necessary to be restricted or unavailable. For example, they have experienced limited student support services, limited classroom availability, time constraints, and task conflicts, all of which have been identified as having negative impacts on student experience. When the requests from the middle managers for the required resources are declined, this sends a message to the middle manager that the outcomes they needed the resources for were not understood by their senior manager as being legitimate to the role – even when the resources requested were to achieve performance target expectations sent by the same senior manager. Conflicting messages such as these show a misalignment between the sent expectations and the ability of middle managers to achieve these expectations, the result of which contributes to role ambiguity.

Also contributing to role ambiguity is the middle manager job description itself. The tasks and items included in job description documents for the PM and POM positions lack clear definition and as such have the capacity to encompass a very wide range of responsibilities. There is also no indication in the job descriptions as to the extent to which the middle managers have decision-making latitude over any aspect of their role. Interview findings indicate that middle managers identify their senior manager (Head of Faculty) as the person they are accountable to in the organisation. Industry associations have also been identified by some middle managers as their points of accountability, as these associations specifically oversee the quality of programmes of study. The interview and questionnaire findings have also clarified that middle managers see themselves as responsible for the tutors within their departments. This information is not, however, evident within the middle manager job descriptions, and there is an absence of any role below the Head of Faculty presented on the organisational structure chart. In addition to having insufficient documentation outlining the requirements of the role, the middle managers feel they do not receive adequate communication, direction, and accountability from their senior managers. As a result, their understanding of

organisational goals is limited and their expectations of their role is unclear. Limited performance feedback contributes further to the middle managers' experience of role ambiguity.

One of the most prevalent challenges these middle managers face is role overload caused by an imbalance between what they are asked to do and what they are able to achieve with the time and resources they have available. Although most of the middle managers affirmed that they are able to achieve well in the areas they consider to be important to optimal functioning, most also indicated that time constraints create task conflicts which limit their ability to function optimally in many of these same areas. Time constraints adversely affect the quality of their research outputs, are a barrier to implementing new initiatives in their departments, and have curbed their ability to keep up with the constant changes they experience in their role. Time constraints have beset the middle managers with conflicting priorities that get in the way of meeting both student needs (e.g., by limiting lesson preparation time and one-on-one time with students) and the needs of their team members (e.g., allowing less time for teaching, administration, and research guidance). They are caught between their strong commitment to meet the needs of the stakeholders and the constraints placed on them because they have limited control over many aspects of their role.

Due to role overload, a majority of the middle managers are not able to fit the tasks of the role into their working hours and find themselves working into the evenings and/or on the weekends. Not only do task conflicts require the middle managers to work longer hours than their contracts require, they also put the middle managers in a position of prioritising tasks based on their urgency or importance. This results in some jobs being left unachieved or achieved at a suboptimal level. Middle managers experience varying degrees of control over time constraints and over the impact of the resulting challenges on their ability to function in the role, however, questionnaire responses indicated that all the middle managers feel that they are not able to fit the required tasks into their working hours, which contributes to the stress they experience in their role. The middle managers indicated that much of this overload could be alleviated through increased staffing within each

department and the introduction of a workload allocation system that better reflects the demands of the middle manager role and the role of their team members.

Experiences of role conflict, ambiguity and overload are not uncommon for middle managers in the higher education environment. Many authors have identified role-related issues as an area of concern with respect to the effectiveness of those in the role (e.g., Bolden et al., 2008b; Branson et al., 2016; Briggs, 2005; Cardno, 2014; Corbett, 2020; Gonaim, 2016; Hancock & Hellawell, 2003; Maniam, 2018; Marshall et al., 2011). The causes of the role-related issues experienced by the middle managers in this study mirror those causes found in other studies, including unclear job descriptions (Branson et al., 2016), unsuitable workload allocation models (Vardi, 2009), limited communication from senior management (Briggs, 2005), high workloads due to time constraints (Briggs, 2001b; Floyd, 2016), competing demands from a wide range of stakeholders (Bolden et al., 2008b; Briggs, 2005; Griffith, 2006; Hotho, 2013; Thornton et al., 2018), and a misalignment of their responsibilities and their authority to act (Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001).

Role-related issues experienced by higher education middle managers elsewhere are considerable and have been identified as contributing to workplace stress and tension (see Briggs, 2005; Cardno, 2014; Marshall et al., 2011). Role-related workplace stressors such as heavy workloads and role overload have also been found to negatively affect the well-being and performance of individuals in the workplace (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Bess & Dee, 2008; HSE, 2004; Pace et al., 2019). As such, this study highlights the heavy workloads and role overload experienced by these middle managers as likely contributors to their negative sense of well-being and as aspects of their role in need of improvement in the case organisation.

6.5 Point B: Crafting the Role and Resource Gain Cycle

Despite having experienced the above workplace and role characteristics as barriers to optimal functioning, the middle managers in this study indicated that they are able to achieve in all but one aspect of their role that they consider important to optimal functioning. To explain their perception of achieving well in the face of

these adverse conditions, it is plausible to consider that they have adapted their understanding and enactment of the role through the process of job crafting (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). This process is understood to create opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014), with follow-on benefits of increased well-being, motivation, and performance which then drive a cycle of resource gain that encourages continued job crafting behaviour (Bakker, 2015), as depicted in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2

Resource Gain Cycle Generated by the Impact of Enabling Workplace and Middle Manager Characteristics and Job Crafting on Personal Well-Being and the Satisfaction of Inherent Needs
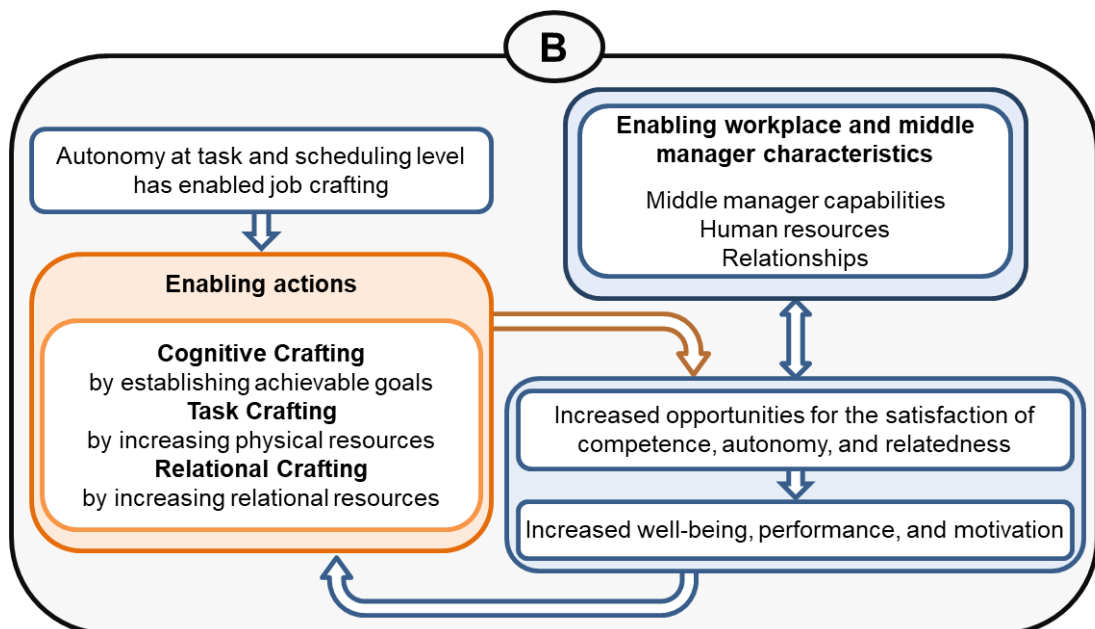
As previously discussed, job or role crafting is a process undertaken by employees to optimise their work environment by better aligning job demands with resource availability (Tims et al., 2013; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Job crafting is often motivated in response to the frustration of inherent needs satisfaction in the work environment (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The process of job crafting involves the employee making changes to their tasks, their relationships, and the way they understand their role and responsibilities (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The success of these changes consequently increases opportunities for the satisfaction of

inherent needs and, therefore, the ability of the employee to function optimally (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014).

A known precondition to job crafting (Kim et al., 2018; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), the autonomy at scheduling and task level experienced by the middle managers in this study has allowed them opportunities to undertake job crafting actions to increase physical resources in response to inefficient resourcing and dysfunctional systems. For example, some middle managers have addressed shortfalls in organisation-wide student support services to meet the needs of students who struggle to study in an English-medium education system by adapting the curriculum of some programmes to incorporate English language learning. Other shortfalls in student support have also required middle managers to focus department resourcing towards helping students who are at risk of failing. Although taking this action has increased the workloads of middle managers and their team members, it has successfully helped "at-risk" students achieve.

Another job crafting action described by the middle managers has been taken in response to deficiencies in the functionality of the ICT systems available at the organisation: the middle managers have created their own systems for recording the student enrolment and achievement data which is required for performance reporting. In addition to engendering in an employee a sense of competence in their role, task crafting, as exemplified here, has been found to enhance the perception of control individuals have over their job (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014) and as such has the potential to also facilitate the satisfaction of the inherent need for autonomy of these middle managers.

The middle managers described having limited decision-making latitude at organisational level, which they have found to restrict many of the resources that they believe, if present, would support achievement in their role. In response to this, they have undertaken relational crafting by focussing on building and maintaining relationships with internal and external stakeholders and by developing a team culture within their departments in order to increase their relational resources. These relationships have taken the place of the resources that might have otherwise helped middle managers to achieve in areas they consider to be important to optimal functioning. As well as increasing a sense of competence, establishing and

maintaining positive and sustainable relationships through relational crafting has been demonstrated to create opportunities for the satisfaction of the inherent need for relatedness (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014). This is evident in the experiences of these middle managers.

Often, many job demands are "given" requirements of workplace roles and are therefore unable to be changed through job/role or relational crafting (Tims et al., 2013). Where adjustments to the demands of the job are not possible, individuals are motivated to cognitively craft their understanding of their jobs in order to alter their own expectations of what it means to achieve in the job (Nielsen, 2013; Tims et al., 2013). The middle managers within this study experience many characteristics of their work environment that are seen as "givens" and cannot be changed; this is evidenced by the inhibiting factors over which they said they have limited control. Although cognitive crafting is more difficult to identify, because it is contained in the thoughts rather than the actions of an individual (Demerouti, 2014; Devotto & Wechsler, 2019), there is evidence within the findings of this study that the participants have cognitively crafted their understanding of their role.

Many of the inhibiting factors experienced by these middle managers create barriers to achieving the role expectations presented in their job descriptions against which their performance is measured. Instead of focussing on these unachievable expectations, middle managers have adapted their understanding of what is important to optimal functioning so that it aligns with what they are able to achieve. The findings suggest that this is done by conscious effort and that middle managers are aware of the sent expectations, what is required to achieve the sent expectations, and the changes they have made to their definitions of "achievement". This is evidenced throughout the data, particularly in cases in which the middle managers have little control over resources. For example, the middle managers are aware of the learning space requirements needed for their programmes to run effectively and to meet the expectations of students and staff, and also know that suitable learning space is not available for some programmes or departments. Instead of seeing this as representing their failure to meet the demands of the role, middle managers recognise this as an aspect of the role they are unable to control and therefore do not consider it to be a non-achievement when rating their ability to meet stakeholder needs.

Another example of having limited access to resources but still having the perception of achievement in an area considered to define optimal functioning is seen in the way the middle managers prioritise, which involves both task and cognitive crafting. The middle managers explained that they choose to place less emphasis on some of the sent expectations of the role that are in conflict with other tasks they consider to be more important. They put student needs, for example, before administrative deadlines, and put student and staff needs before their own teaching and research. This results in middle managers not achieving some of the sent expectations. However, they still rate their achievement as high because they have adapted their understanding of what it means to achieve in a way that aligns with their ability to achieve. Cognitive crafting, as exemplified here, is known to increase an employee's self-image by enhancing their awareness and appreciation of the value of their work to beneficiaries (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014), and as such facilitates the satisfaction of the inherent need for competence of the middle managers who engage in it.

Job crafting by higher education middle managers has been reported elsewhere, illustrated with actions and rationales similar to those presented in this study. Some examples describe middle managers adapting institutional procedures to align better with department needs (Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Davis et al., 2016), relying on communication and relationships to achieve department outcomes in a resource-constrained environment (Davis et al., 2016), and adapting attitudes towards the role to become more flexible in the workplace (Rudhumbu, 2015). As within the case organisation, taking these actions may have helped middle managers to achieve certain aspects of their role, however, they have not necessarily helped to address some of the wider issues within their institutions (Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Davis et al., 2016), nor have they resolved the issues the middle managers experience with role ambiguity (Smith, 1997). Other examples of job crafting which have been reported elsewhere but were not evident in this study include acting covertly to defend department revenue (Hancock & Hellawell, 2003), changing the role to be more stimulating (Smith, 1997), or changing the role to extend themselves in the workplace (Rudhumbu, 2015). Given the role overload the middle managers experience in the case organisation, it is unsurprising that the

findings of this study did not find any comments to suggest middle managers had attempted to create a more stimulating or challenging role for themselves.

As presented in this section, together with the enabling workplace and middle manager characteristics experienced by these middle managers, job crafting has increased opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs for competence, autonomy and relatedness. The satisfaction of these inherent needs enhances well-being, motivation, and performance (Deci et al., 2017). In addition, through a cycle of resource gain, job crafting is known to generate motivation, which can drive the attainment of higher levels of personal and job related resources, which in turn increases the motivation to continue crafting (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The findings of this study show that through task, relational, and cognitive crafting, these middle managers have increased their personal and job-related resources to achieve in an environment that presents many barriers to optimal functioning.

These findings suggest that further positive outcomes may result from explicitly incorporating job crafting within the middle manager training and development initiatives, or by implementing targeted job crafting interventions within the case organisation to allow more scope for those in the middle manager position to better align their understanding and enactment of their role with resource availability. Literature provides evidence that increases in employee motivation, well-being, and performance arising from job crafting interventions result in improved organisational performance in a wide range of industries (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2019; Devotto & Wechsler, 2019; Gordon et al., 2018; Knight et al., 2021; Oprea et al., 2019). Because job crafting interventions can be relatively inexpensive (Knight et al., 2021) and are therefore a cost-effective way to improve the well-being and performance of employees (Oprea et al., 2019), such interventions may be particularly beneficial in the case organisation, which is evidenced to be resource constrained.

6.6 Point C: Negative Sense of Well-Being and Resource Loss Cycle

The well-being of employees and the well-being of an organisation are understood to be "inextricably linked" and, as such, when the well-being of an employee is negatively affected, this can have an impact on their performance and in

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turn the performance of the organisation (Litchfield et al., 2016, p. 9). In addition, the well-being of those managing from the middle is known to directly impact the well-being and performance of their team members (Green, 2014), and problems associated with well-being can contribute to high employee turnover (Litchfield et al., 2016). These previous research findings affirm the importance of having a simultaneous focus on employee well-being and on their performance for the benefit of both the individual and the organisation (Cotton & Hart, 2003). As stated by Cotton and Hart (2003), the performance of an organisation should not be achieved at the expense of the well-being of its employees, and the findings of this study indicate that the performance of the case organisation is in part achieved at the expense of the well-being of those in the middle management position. This situation has the potential for follow-on issues, not only for the individual middle managers but also for internal and external stakeholders and the organisation as a whole.

As discussed in Point B, these middle managers have been motivated to craft their job in response to inhibiting workplace and role characteristics. Although crafting is known to increase opportunities for inherent needs satisfaction of competence, relatedness and autonomy (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014), and has helped these middle managers function in their role, they are still adversely affected by the inhibiting aspects of their work environment. During interviews, one manager stressed that they could no longer continue in the role without changes being made to their work environment. The questionnaire findings suggest that most middle managers within the case organisation are unable to craft their jobs to the extent required to overcome the negative impact of inhibiting workplace and role characteristics on their sense of well-being, which can be attributed to the frustration of the three aforementioned inherent needs (Deci et al., 2017).

By considering these findings through the lens of job demands-resources theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) it is possible to identify potential follow-on issues that result from inhibiting workplace and role characteristics. There is a reciprocal relationship between negative job characteristics and their outcomes which develop into a negative cycle of resource loss (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) that has been found to further inhibit the ability of these middle managers to function optimally. This cycle is presented in Figure 6.3.

Figure 6.3

Resource Loss Cycle Generated by the Impact of Inhibiting Workplace and Role Characteristics on Personal Well-Being and the Satisfaction of Inherent Needs
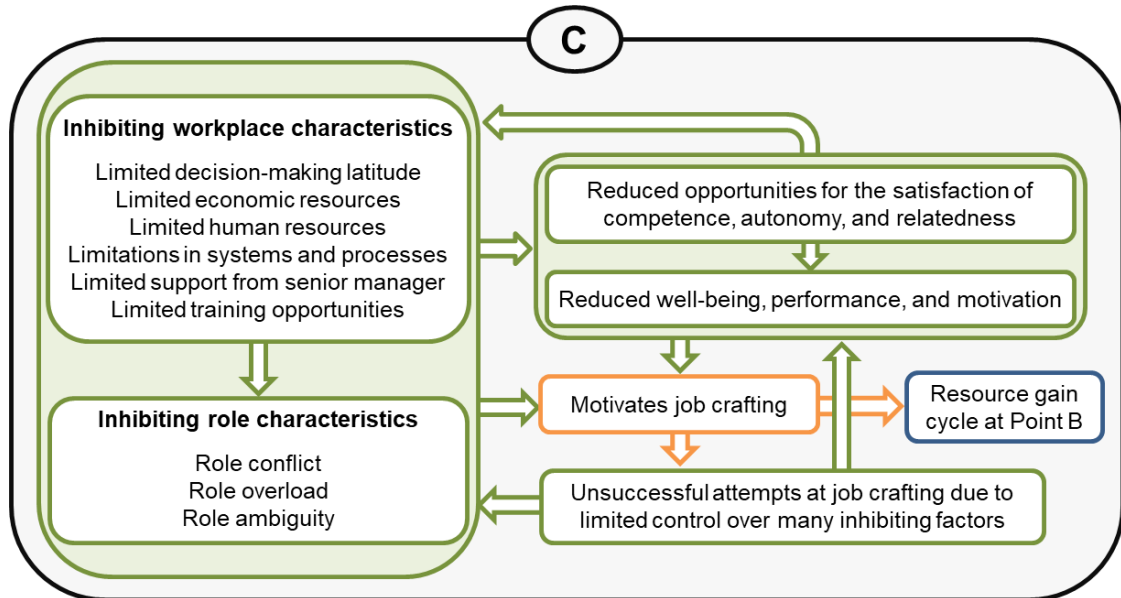
The inability of the middle managers to craft their role to the extent that they overcome the negative impact of workplace and role characteristics on their sense of well-being can be attributed to several causes. For one, any benefits to be gained from the autonomy they experience in their role can be limited by their level of decision-making latitude at the organisation level (Dhondt et al., 2014). This is evident in the lack of control middle managers reported having over many of the factors they consider to be inhibitors to optimal functioning. A majority of the middle managers indicated that limited resources, high workloads, time constraints, task conflicts, and the systems and processes used at the organisation inhibit their ability to function optimally. Although the middle managers have been able to craft their role to work around some of these barriers, they are still faced with role overload and role conflict due to the many given demands of their role that they are unable to adapt (Tims et al., 2013).

Unable to change given demands of the role and motivated by their strong commitment to meeting the needs of the stakeholders, the middle managers have turned to working hours in excess of the hours specified in their contracts. This is, in fact, an example of job crafting done with the aim of having a positive impact on

beneficiaries (Rai, 2018), and indicates that the middle managers have placed the needs of the stakeholders above their personal well-being. Working longer hours has allowed middle managers to achieve a sense of competence, however, the negative impact this has had on their well-being demonstrates that this level of functioning is unsustainable. Enduring high workloads over a long period of time is a known workplace stressor (Bakker, 2015) and workplace stress, experienced for a prolonged period, can result in burnout (Boyd, 2014). To avoid this, it is critical to address the issue of high workloads experienced by these middle managers.

Another reason that job crafting has not solved the ramifications of the inhibiting factors on the well-being of the middle managers is the cost associated with it, which has been found to counter some of the benefits gained from the process (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019). The considerable cognitive effort required to craft is known to drain an employee's energy resources and take time and energy away from their fulfilment of other tasks within the workplace (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Brouer et al., 2016). This is evident in the experiences of the middle managers, who reflected that, due to task conflicts created by time constraints, when they put their energies into the tasks they consider to be most urgent or important in an attempt at job crafting, some of their responsibilities are neglected. In such cases, job crafting can be seen to have failed. As well as contributing to role overload and role conflict, being unsuccessful at crafting their jobs to a level required for achieving their responsibilities leaves the inherent need for competence unsatisfied.

Inherent needs, as discussed previously, are also not met because many middle managers do not receive the communication and support they need from their senior manager to satisfy needs for relatedness and to buffer some of the negative outcomes resulting from their workplace conditions. Instead, for some middle managers, having limited communication, conflicting sent role expectations, and unclear role definitions from senior managers has contributed to role conflict and role ambiguity and has also meant that some middle managers are unable to gain clarity on their performance. These circumstances also limit opportunities for the satisfaction of competence.

The resource loss cycle that is generated by the above interconnected inhibitors is further activated by stress. Stress is known to occur when an employee puts effort into gaining key resources but is unsuccessful and, having expended that effort, is left with fewer resources to offset future resource losses (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

In alignment with JD-R theory, is a "fit" model which has been discussed in literature on stress and well-being in the workplace (Dewe et al., 2012). The fit concept is based on two main components: (a) the "demands-ability fit" which considers congruence between the demands an individual confronts at work and their ability to meet those demands; and (b) the "needs-supplies fit" which considers congruence between physical and psycho-social needs of an individual and the resources available to them (Dewe et al., 2012). In both cases, the level of fit is understood to have pronounced impact on stress levels and overall well-being (Dewe et al., 2012). Of note is that there is an emphasis on an individual's "preferred" levels in relation to "received" levels of resources, indicating that not all employees will need the same levels of resources for their needs to be met (Dewe et al., 2012). A match between preferred levels and received levels creates a low strain environment, and a mismatch between preferred levels and received levels creates a high strain environment (Dewe et al., 2012). Viewing the findings of this study through the "fit" theory, suggests that the working environment experienced by these middle managers has a low degree of fit and is therefore a "high strain" environment. Considering that a majority of the managers have a negative sense of well-being, it is evident that the environment is high strain regardless of the individual levels of need.

The middle managers in this study have experienced multiple failures to acquire workplace resources. While they have been able to craft their job to increase their personal and job-related resources, their negative sense of well-being indicates that success in that area has not countered the negative consequences resulting from resource limitations in the workplace. This may be attributed to the fact that resource loss tends to have more of an impact on individuals than resource gain does (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

6.7 Point D: Experiencing Opportunities for the Satisfaction of Inherent Needs

As discussed previously, workplace environments that allow for the satisfaction of the inherent needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness are understood to enhance the performance and well-being of individuals, and the development of such environments is therefore considered essential for the optimal functioning of employees and organisations (Deci et al., 2017). The previous sections have discussed workplace, role, and personal characteristics of the middle managers that have been experienced as either enabling or inhibiting their ability to function optimally. These characteristics have also been identified as either facilitating or obstructing opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs for the middle managers in the case organisation as they experience and enact their role.

A competence-supportive workplace is characterised by the existence of organisational policies and practices that allow employees to develop a sense of competence from their achievements (Deci et al., 2017). Such a workplace can be established and sustained when management ensures that tasks have significance and allow for optimal levels of challenge and stimulation, offers positive feedback in recognition of achievements, and employs compensation systems that reward without pressure or control (Deci et al., 2017). The findings of this study have identified that middle managers in the case organisation experience role overload and role conflict due to inefficient and dysfunctional systems and processes, limited resources, and unrealistic workloads, as well as role ambiguity and limited communication from their senior managers, all of which mark their work environment as one that is not competence supportive. The findings have also indicated that, through the process of job crafting, and by drawing from their own capabilities, these middle managers have been able to create a sense of competence in their role as evidenced by their sense of achievement in many areas they consider to define optimal functioning. Their negative sense of well-being, however, suggests that the effort required to meet job demands might not be supported with optimal resource availability (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) and is unlikely to be sustainable.

Workplace conditions that foster autonomy increase employee satisfaction and engagement and can support the individual and organisation to thrive (Deci et

al., 2017). In an autonomy-supportive environment, employees understand the worth and purpose of their role, have a sense of ownership, and feel their viewpoint is understood (Deci et al., 2017). In such an environment, employees enact their roles with a sense of willingness, volition, and choice in what they do, they are given rationale where choice is limited, and they receive non-controlling feedback and support (Deci et al., 1989; Deci et al., 2017). The middle managers in this study experience autonomy in their role at scheduling and task level, but have limited control over economic and human resources, which creates an environment that is not autonomy supportive. In such an environment, middle managers are faced with inhibiting workplace and role characteristics with no scope to make the changes that could otherwise improve their experiences and ability to function optimally.

A workplace that supports relatedness will allow opportunities to forge positive interpersonal connections with others and be a place where employees have a sense of belonging and significance and feel respected amongst their leaders and colleagues (Deci et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2017). The middle managers in this study have been able to draw from their own capabilities and make the most of some aspects of their work environment to create opportunities for the satisfaction of relatedness. They have, however, experienced characteristics of the organisation and role to create barriers to relationship building opportunities. This suggests that the case organisation is not a particularly relatedness-supportive environment. Role overload experienced by middle managers in the case organisation limits the time they can put in to building and maintaining relationships with internal and external stakeholders, and role ambiguity leaves middle managers unsure of who they are responsible for or accountable to within the organisation. These environmental factors work against the establishment and maintenance of quality relationships deemed important for achieving in the role.

6.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has analysed and discussed the findings of this study regarding the experience the middle managers have had with workplace characteristics, role characteristics, and their own characteristics which have either inhibited or enabled their ability to function optimally in their role. In alignment with the conceptual framework of the study, the chapter has explored the findings in relation to inherent

needs satisfaction within the middle manager role, as this is understood to impact the ability of an employee to function optimally (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Drawing from concepts within job-demands resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018) and role theory (Bess & Dee, 2008) has helped to pinpoint specific workplace stressors and potential buffers to those stressors and the resulting outcomes and actions that have influenced the understanding and enactment of the role by higher education middle managers in the case organisation.

As presented in this chapter, there are many factors that middle managers have identified to enable optimal functioning, which have contributed to a cycle of resource gain. They have also identified many factors that inhibit their ability to function optimally, which have contributed to a cycle of resource loss. The following chapter, the conclusion to this study, offers recommendations that are aimed at stimulating the gain cycle and moderating the loss cycle to increase opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs of middle managers in the case organisation.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

Using an interpretivist approach to research, this qualitative phenomenological case study took an in-depth look at how middle managers perceive their role within one higher education institution in Aotearoa New Zealand. The study focussed specifically on the factors middle managers consider to define optimal functioning and the factors that they understand to enable and inhibit optimal functioning within their role, along with their perceived level of control over the enabling and inhibiting factors. This chapter offers a conclusion to the study and considers its overarching research question:

> **What lessons can be learned from the experiences middle managers have within their role in an Aotearoa New Zealand higher education institution?**

The chapter begins by revisiting the context of this study, with a focus on a recent and significant change to the Aotearoa New Zealand polytechnic sector. This is followed by a discussion on the lessons learned, including the methodological applications, theoretical contributions, and practical implications. Practical implications are presented as training recommendations which are aimed at addressing specific aspects of the work environment to improve the experiences of these middle managers by increasing opportunities for the satisfaction of their inherent needs. The chapter concludes by discussing limitations of the study and offers some recommendations for further research.

7.2 Revisiting the Context of this Study

As discussed in chapter one, the Aotearoa New Zealand education sector offers several options for post-secondary study within the higher education and vocational training areas: universities, private training establishments, workplace training providers, wānanga, and institutes of technology and polytechnics (ITPs). In 2020, these tertiary institutions offered education and training to 380,255 students,

with nearly one third of those enrolled in ITPs (Education Counts, n.d.). This study was undertaken in one of the 16 ITPs.

Public management reforms in the late 1970s were aimed at increasing the efficiency and performance of public sector organisations in western countries, including higher education institutions (Corbett, 2020; Davis et al., 2016; Deem, 2001; Mughal et al., 2017). In Aotearoa New Zealand, those reforms have seen higher education employees experiencing higher workloads, longer working hours, and increased accountability for both student achievement and financial performance (Narayan, 2020; Sedgwick & Grey, 2018). Because higher education middle managers are in a key hierarchical position for translating organisational strategy into action while also maintaining academic quality within their departments (Briggs, 2005; Kallenberg, 2015), it is essential to the success of the organisation that the people in this position have every opportunity to function optimally. This is particularly important due to the increasing pressures evident in the current higher education environment. Meeting the demands of such a multi-faceted and multi-directional position requires a wide range of competencies (Branson et al., 2016; Corbett, 2020; Leader, 2004), and, with limited training made available, many taking on the role feel unprepared and overwhelmed (Gmelch et al., 2017; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012).

Very recently, in response to the financial challenges facing many of the polytechnics across the country, the Labour Government undertook a review of vocational education (RoVE) in Aotearoa New Zealand. In 2019, the outcome of this review saw the Minister of Education announce considerable changes to the operation of the Aotearoa New Zealand polytechnic sector involving the disestablishment and merging of all 18 individually-operated polytechnics into one government-led organisation intended to operate across the country (Ministry of Education, 2019b). The name of the organisation is Te Pūkenga, New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology. In relation to the timeline of this study, these changes happened post data gathering and during the period of writing the final two chapters of this thesis. This is a significant change to the sector and has been considered while developing the recommendations stemming from this study.

7.3 Lessons Learned and Contributions to Knowledge

Lessons learned from this study include theoretical contributions, practical applications aimed at improving the experiences of higher education middle managers and their ability to function optimally in the case organisation, and methodological applications.

7.3.1 Theoretical Contributions

The process of undertaking the literature review for this study highlighted a lack of research undertaken on the higher education middle manager role, as noted by several authors (e.g., Davis et al., 2016; Gmelch et al., 2017; Inman, 2009; Marshall, 2012; Rudhumbu, 2015; Wald & Golding, 2019), particularly in the Aotearoa New Zealand polytechnic sector (Cardno, 2014). Additionally, very little research has explored the experience middle managers have of the factors that enable and inhibit them within the role. This study presents a unique contribution to knowledge by offering an understanding from the viewpoint of middle managers within one higher education institution in Aotearoa New Zealand of how the higher education middle manager role is perceived and the factors that enable and inhibit those in the role from succeeding, coping, and functioning optimally.

The findings reveal that middle managers in the case organisation are faced with high job demands in a resource-constrained environment and show resilience by cognitively and physically adapting their understanding and enactment of their role to better align job demands with resource availability through the process of job crafting. Together with the enabling aspects of the role, job crafting contributes to a resource gain cycle (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) that results in increased opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs of competence, autonomy, and relatedness within the role. The findings also identified many inhibiting workplace and role characteristics experienced by these middle managers which limit opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs. The reciprocal relationship between negative job characteristics and their outcomes associated with these inhibiting factors results in a negative cycle of resource loss (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) that further inhibits the ability of the middle managers to function optimally. Both sets of characteristics, actions, and resulting cycles are presented in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1

Experiencing and Enacting the Higher Education Middle Manager Role
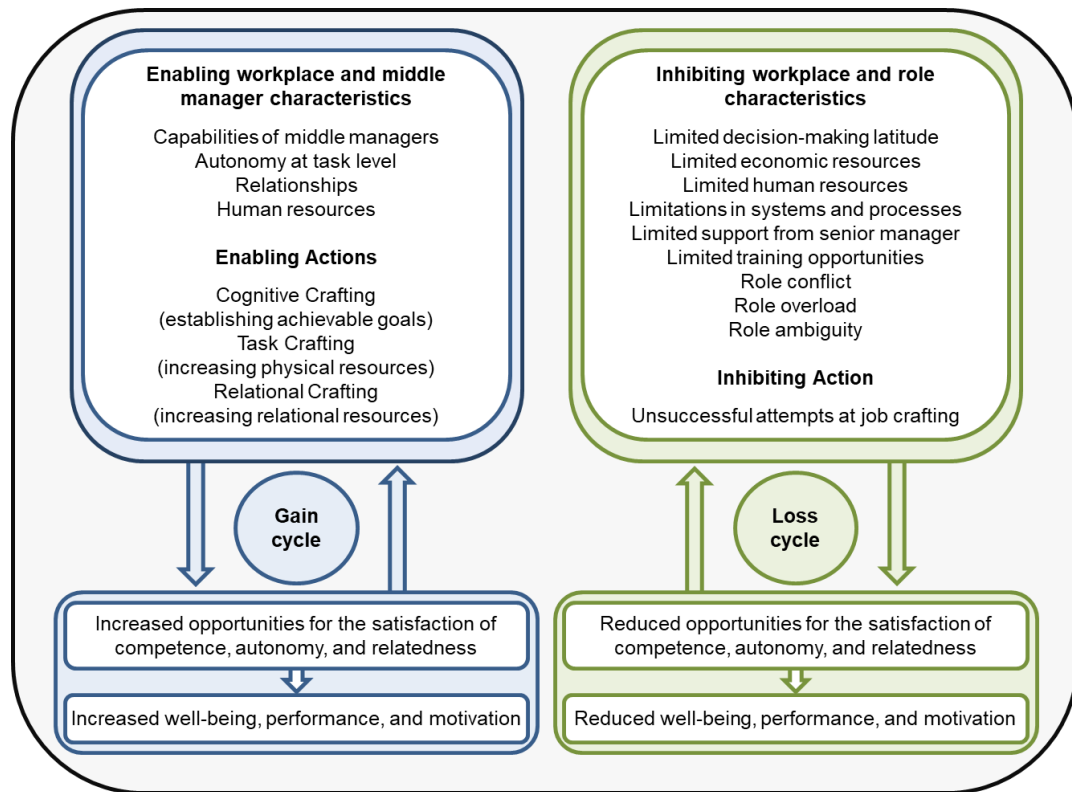
Although job crafting is understood to improve the experiences of individuals in the work environment (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014), the findings have highlighted that the middle managers in this case organisation are unable to craft their jobs to the extent required to overcome the negative impact of adverse workplace and role characteristics on their sense of well-being. As well as being a health and safety concern for the organisation and the middle managers themselves, their negative sense of well-being can have follow on issues by adversely affecting their performance, the well-being and performance of their team members, and the performance of the organisation (Green, 2014; Litchfield et al., 2016). Their negative sense of well-being is therefore an area of concern in need of addressing in the case organisation. As such, these findings have been applied to training recommendations which are presented and discussed in the following sections.

7.3.2 Practical Implications: Enhancing Opportunities for Optimal Functioning

Bringing the findings from phases one and two together, chapter six analysed and discussed the research results which carry important implications for the experiences of these middle managers if used to inform practical changes to their work environment. The findings and their resulting recommendations may also be transferrable, through the process of naturalistic generalisation (Mills et al., 2009), to the experiences of middle managers working in similar contexts. The practical implications are, therefore, presented here as recommendations for senior and middle managers and are aimed at making the role of the middle manager more effective and sustainable in the current higher education environment.

Due to the funding challenges facing higher education institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand (Rowe-Williams, 2018), it is not unexpected that for these organisations to remain financially sustainable, there will be shortfalls in economic resource availability that will continue to impact the ability of middle managers to function in their role. As such, an approach that focusses on improving their experiences while not requiring significant financial input has a greater likelihood of success in the current environment. The following recommendations are therefore aimed at increasing opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs for middle managers at an affordable cost to the organisation. If implemented, these changes can potentially have a significant positive impact on the experiences of middle managers and enhance their ability to function optimally in their role.

Salanova et al. (2010) sees benefits in stimulating each link in a gain spiral in order to initiate and maintain such positive gain spirals of work resources and work engagement over time. Taking this concept further, in addition to considering factors that contribute to the gain cycle, the recommendations resulting from this study, as presented in Figure 7.2, have been developed by also considering factors that contribute to the loss cycle. The process of stimulating the gain cycle and moderating the loss cycle is expected to increase opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs for middle managers, to enhance their personal well-being, to boost their motivation and performance, and to consequently have a positive impact on the performance of the organisation.

Figure 7.2

Recommendations for Increasing Opportunities for Optimal Functioning
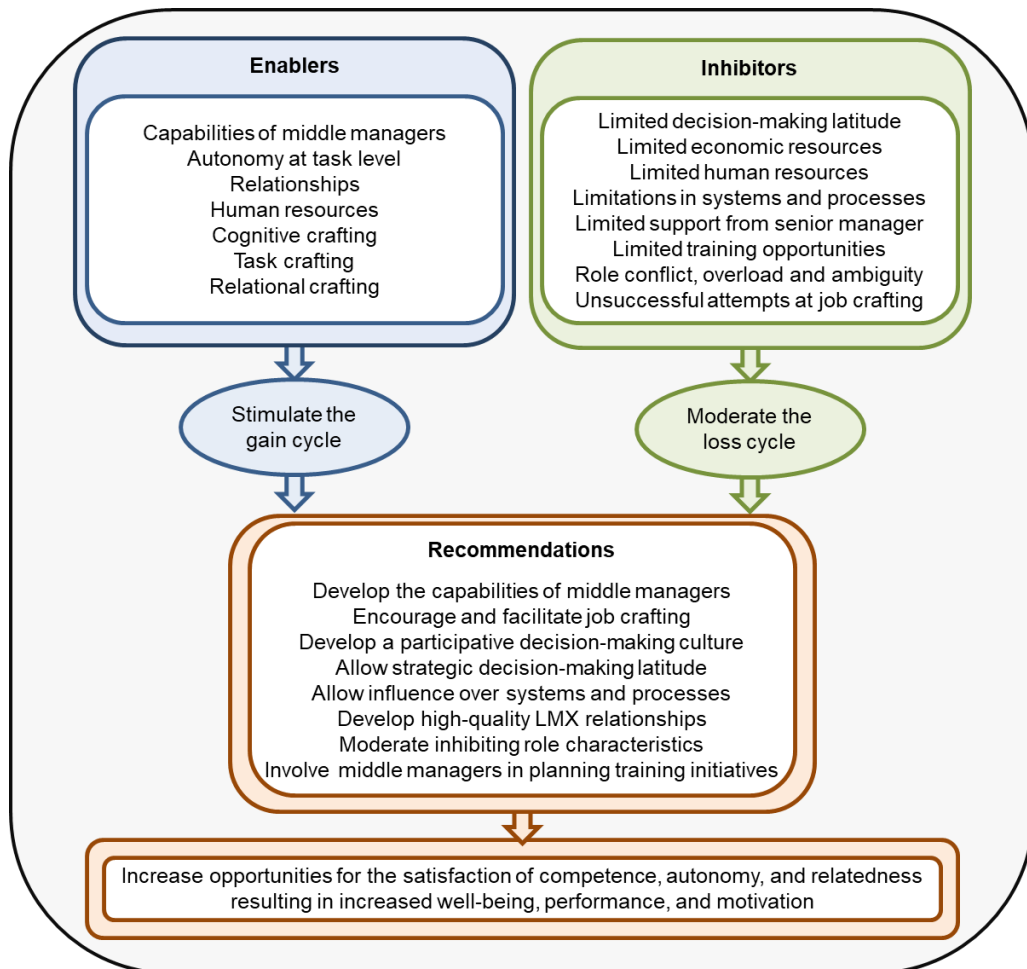
7.3.2.1 Stimulate Aspects of the Role that Contribute to the Gain Cycle.
As presented in Figure 7.2, there are many enabling workplace and middle manager
characteristics that contribute to the gain cycle as experienced by the middle
managers in study. It is expected that further support of some of these workplace
enablers will stimulate their contribution to the gain cycle. Increasing the capabilities
of higher education middle managers by offering appropriate training along with
encouraging and facilitating job crafting are two ways in which the gain cycle can be
stimulated without requiring significant financial input for higher education
organisations and, as such, inform the first two recommendations arising from this
study.

7.3.2.1.1 Develop the Capabilities of Middle Managers. Given the limited
availability of resources in this high-demand environment, middle managers rely on

building and maintaining strong relationships with internal and external stakeholders to achieve in many aspects of their role. Their own capabilities have been instrumental in managing these relationships and have also been instrumental in achieving other aspects of the role that they understand to be important to optimal functioning. Where middle managers have found shortcomings in their capabilities, they have indicated that there is limited training available to facilitate improvements highlighting a need to ensure appropriate professional development training is made available to those in the role. Literature has also highlighted limitations in training of higher education middle managers as an area of concern (e.g., Corbett, 2020; Creaton & Heard-Laureote, 2019; Floyd, 2016; Inman, 2009; Krneta et al., 2012; Thornton et al., 2018). These findings inform the first recommendation:

Recommendation 1

That higher education middle managers are provided with a range of appropriate professional development training opportunities to increase their capabilities and opportunities to function optimally in their role.

As well as offering training to middle managers, the following sections also present training recommendations for senior managers who have been recognised by middle managers in this study and elsewhere (e.g., Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017; Griffiths, 2009; Hellawell & Hancock, 2001; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2007) as having a considerable influence over how higher education middle managers experience their ability to function in their role.

7.3.2.1.2 Encourage and Facilitate Job Crafting. Job crafting is one of the actions taken by these middle managers in response to their experience of working in an environment that presents high job demands and offers limited resources. Although such actions are evidenced to enhance employee well-being (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014), job crafting has not sufficiently buffered the negative impact of inhibiting workplace and role characteristics on the personal well-being of these middle managers. Slemp and Vella-Brodrick (2014) state that the support of job crafting practices in the workplace has a direct link to the satisfaction of inherent needs making it a worthwhile employee well-being intervention. Crafting has also been shown to increase employee engagement (Mäkikangas, 2018), particularly

when personal goals are achieved and when employees are able to direct their behaviours towards this outcome (De Sousa Sabbagha et al., 2018; Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014). Therefore, encouraging job crafting strategies will increase the ability of higher education middle managers to actively craft their jobs to align with their goals and satisfy their inherent needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, all of which will result in an increased sense of well-being (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014).

There are, however, important factors to consider if higher education middle managers and organisations are to benefit from the practice of job crafting. Crafting is associated with work engagement particularly when an employee uses a crafting behaviours for a variety of purposes rather than to focus solely on reducing job demands (Mäkikangas, 2018). It is also important that crafting is aimed towards meeting organisational objectives (Petrou et al., 2012). Therefore, training middle managers in a range of job crafting strategies and implementing crafting interventions in the workplace are concrete and effective ways to increase crafting behaviours while aligning these behaviours to the needs of middle managers and the performance of the organisations in which they work (Mäkikangas, 2018; Petrou et al., 2012; van Wingerden et al., 2017b).

Leaders have a key role in either enabling or inhibiting proactive employee behaviours (Petrou et al., 2012), therefore encouraging and facilitating middle managers in successful job crafting can be achieved through empowerment provided by senior managers. Another consideration is that job crafting requires considerable effort which can deplete an employee's energy resources (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019). Therefore, as well as encouraging job crafting, it is important to also ensure there is support provided to reduce the associated unfavourable effects. To facilitate this practice in the workplace and enhance the benefits of job crafting to individual middle managers and to the performance of higher education organisations, the following recommendation is presented:

Recommendation 2

That middle managers and senior managers undertake professional development training with a focus on job crafting:

a) *to increase middle managers' knowledge and competencies in a range of job crafting techniques, empowering them to further implement this practice in the workplace; and*

b) *to increase senior managers' awareness of the benefits of job crafting so they are better able to support middle managers' crafting practice in the workplace.*

7.3.2.2 Moderate Aspects of the Role that Contribute to the Loss Cycle. As presented in Figure 7.2, there are many inhibiting workplace and role characteristics that contribute to the loss cycle experienced by these middle managers. It is expected that making improvements to these workplace stressors will moderate their contribution to the loss cycle, increase opportunities for intrinsic needs satisfaction, and consequently enhance the ability of higher education middle managers to function optimally. The following sections present and discuss recommendations for developing a participative decision-making culture, allowing middle managers strategic decision-making latitude, allowing middle managers influence over systems and processes, developing high-quality LMX relationships, moderating inhibiting role characteristics, and involving middle managers in planning training initiatives.

7.3.2.2.1 Develop a Participative Decision-Making Culture. The findings highlight that having limited control over many aspects of their role has prevented opportunities for the middle managers within this study to make improvements to the workplace and role characteristics that have inhibited their ability to function optimally. Limited perceived control is a known workplace stressor (Dhondt et al., 2014; Sparks et al., 2001), and an environment that restricts volition also curbs the satisfaction of inherent needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Therefore, it is very likely that the limited control these middle managers experience contributes to their negative sense of well-being.

Encouraging a more participative decision-making culture in organisations is one of the ways in which middle managers can feel a greater sense of control (Bolden et al., 2008a; Sparks et al., 2001), and it can also facilitate opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs in the role to support optimal function (Ryan & Deci, 2017). As such, the following recommendation is presented:

**Recommendation 3**

That chief executives commit to developing a culture of participative decision-making in the organisations they lead by training all employees who hold leadership positions to be autonomy-supportive of their team members:

> a) _by offering constructive feedback to their team members;_
> b) _by allowing team members to participate in work-related issues and decisions;_
> c) _by giving team members as much choice as possible; and_
> d) _by providing rationale when there is limited opportunity for choice._

Studies have shown that interventions focussed on training managers to be autonomy-supportive facilitates the satisfaction of inherent needs (Baard et al., 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2017) and can achieve positive outcomes such as increased performance, higher job satisfaction, and the increased well-being of employees (e.g., Deci et al., 1989; Hardré & Reeve, 2009).

**7.3.2.2.2 Allow Middle Managers Strategic Decision-Making Latitude.** The findings of this study reveal that strategic decision-making in the case organisation is situated at senior management level and limits middle management input. There are, however, benefits to be gained by offering middle management strategic decision-making latitude, which can expand their understanding of the wider organisational context (Kallenberg, 2015), and present opportunities to advocate for their departments at senior management level (Armstrong & Woloshyn, 2017).

Being involved in wider organisational decisions is also likely to increase the motivation of middle managers when they are implementing such decisions at department level (Griffiths, 2009), and can therefore facilitate successful alignment of department, faculty, and organisational objectives (Bolden et al., 2008a). In addition, increasing the organisational decision-making latitude of higher education middle managers is also expected to increase strategic innovation and, consequently, the ability of organisations to adapt to the rapidly changing higher education environment (Kallenberg, 2015). Valuable insight can also be gained by senior managers from the involvement of middle managers in strategic decision-making, as

those in the middle have a unique perspective on the impact of such decisions on department outcomes (Sparks et al., 2001). This is particularly important in the context of the current Aotearoa New Zealand higher education environment, where student performance directly affects organisation revenue (Tertiary Education Commission, 2014). As such, the following recommendation is presented:

Recommendation 4

That provisions are made by senior management to involve middle managers in the strategic decision-making processes of the organisation.

7.3.2.2.3 Allow Middle Managers Influence over Systems and Processes.
Middle managers in the case organisation have highlighted many shortfalls in the systems and processes used at the organisation which have inhibited their ability to function optimally. Those that have created particular frustration for these middle managers include the information communication technology (ICT) systems, the workload allocation system, and the high volume of repetitive and redundant administrative tasks they are required to perform. To improve the effectiveness of organisational systems and processes, the following recommendation is offered:

Recommendation 5

That provisions are made by senior management to facilitate the involvement of middle managers in system development and implementation to ensure system functionality aligns with the specific needs of individual departments.

The middle managers in this study would like to work with a more realistic teaching workload allocation model, the development of which requires input from those the workload affects (Griffith & Altinay, 2020; Houston et al., 2006). Given that middle managers and their team members are in a better position to understand the scope and nature of the tasks associated with their roles, it is essential that they are consulted during any development and application of the workload allocation model used in organisations (Boncori et al., 2020; Houston et al., 2006; Kenny & Fluck, 2019). As well as better aligning the model with job demands, such consultation also has the potential to reduce concerns associated with perceptions of unfairness and limited control, while increasing trust and buy-in (Boncori et al.,

2020), and enhancing job satisfaction for the middle managers and their team members (Houston et al., 2006).

When looking at the workload allocation practices of several universities, Barrett and Barrett (2007) found that, in a number of cases, although staff experienced work overload, they were resistant to changing current practices because they believed their academic autonomy would be at risk. This finding stands in contrast to the comments from the middle managers in this study, in which adjustments to workload allocation are found necessary; many suggested that their teaching workload be reduced in order to allow time for other important aspects of their role. Being involved in the development and application of a new workload allocation model has the potential to satisfy the autonomy and relatedness needs of these middle managers and therefore add to their sense of well-being and their ability to function optimally. Issues associated with role overload and role conflict might also be alleviated if the model applied within the organisation more accurately reflects the demands of the tutorial and middle management roles.

It is noted that, as well as being interested in how they work, those affected by the workload allocation models desire transparency in how they are applied (Burgess et al., 2003). Having access to the operational information of a given workload allocation model puts middle managers in a position to foster a climate of transparency within their departments (Houston et al., 2006), as is desired by the middle managers within this study. The findings of this research indicate that transparency in how the models are applied across the organisation is also necessary to increase trust and collegiality between departments. Transparency, therefore, needs to be embedded within the culture of the organisation through system development and application. This requires buy-in and direction from the senior management team, so the following recommendation is presented:

Recommendation 6

That senior management provide transparency in the application of the workload allocation system across the organisation.

Given the many frustrations the middle managers expressed regarding the ICT systems of the case organisation, there is a clear desire and need for access to

systems that are more effective, efficient, and functional. As with the workload allocation systems, the involvement of the middle managers in the development and implementation of ICT systems will help to better align the systems with the needs of the individual programmes and departments. This involvement can be achieved through formal two-way training which would see the staff who develop ICT systems that are used in organisations being trained by those using the systems, and also have the middle managers, as users of the systems, receiving training from the system developers. To encourage this, the following recommendation is presented:

Recommendation 7

That middle managers are involved in the development and application of the ICT systems of the organisation through a formal two-way training programme involving system developers and middle managers.

This two-way training would help those developing the systems to better understand the needs of individual programmes and departments while also increasing middle manager competencies in the use of the systems developed. Improvements to the ICT systems should have a follow-on positive impact on the administrative tasks by aligning the system outputs with the required administrative outputs. For this two-way training to be successful and have the desired results, it will be necessary to remove certain barriers to receiving training, such as high workloads and time constraints.

7.3.2.2.4 Develop High-Quality Leader-Member Exchange Relationships.

The quality of a leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship is understood to impact individual, team, and organisational performance (Dulebohn et al., 2012), and, as previously discussed, middle managers in the case organisation acknowledge the significant impact that their relationship with their senior manager has on their ability to function in the role. Whereas some middle managers have found aspects of this relationship to enable optimal functioning, others have found aspects inhibiting. Therefore, it is anticipated that improving the quality of this relationship will both stimulate the gain cycle and moderate the loss cycle, resulting in the satisfaction of inherent needs and optimal function (Graves & Luciano, 2013).

Leadership style is particularly important in an environment where time and resources are limited (Henderson et al., 2009), as in the case organisation, and it may be that the senior managers are unaware of the impact their leadership style has on those they lead in such an environment. Sparks et al. (2001) recommend training managers in leadership skills aimed at increasing their awareness of the consequences of their behaviour in order to reduce the stress that can result from difficult relationships between the manager and those both above and below in the hierarchy. Martin et al. (2016) also highlight the importance of training and suggest that it focus, in particular, on improving the LMX relationship.

The specific issues associated with their senior manager that have been identified by the middle managers in this study include restriction or micromanagement of economic resources, poor lines of communication through hierarchical levels, unclear direction, lack of respect, and limited support. Restrictions and micromanagement of economic resources can be alleviated by senior managers taking an autonomy-supportive leadership approach as described previously (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Other shortfalls in the LMX presented in this study can be improved by increasing the exchange of personal and job-related resources from senior manager to middle manager (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This can be achieved through appropriate training for both senior and middle managers.

With economic resources being restricted in the case organisation, and reported in higher education environments elsewhere (see Briggs, 2001b; Cardno, 2014; Cipriano & Riccardi, 2015; Gonaim, 2016; Griffith, 2006; Lumby, 2012; Maniam, 2018; Marshall et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2008), the emphasis of senior manager training should be on developing knowledge and skills in the practice of supportive social exchange behaviours such as trust, respect, obligation, reciprocal influence, and support, all of which are evidenced to facilitate the satisfaction of inherent needs (Graves & Luciano, 2013). Transformational leadership, which is associated with charisma, inspiration, stimulation, problem solving, and meeting the needs of individuals, has greater potential to facilitate the satisfaction of inherent needs than a leadership style which involves more elements of control, such as transactional leadership (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The qualities of a transformational

leader also align with the qualities considered to be associated with high-quality LMX (Bass, 1999; Krishnan, 2005).

The findings of this study suggest that the senior managers have a strong influence over the quality of the LMX relationship, with a majority of the middle managers in this study reporting having limited control over issues associated with their senior manager. The significance of the leader's influence on this relationship has been noted elsewhere (see Dulebohn et al., 2012), however, because followers have also been observed to influence the quality of the LMX relationship (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2016; Schyns, 2015) it is also important that they have the ability to positively influence the relationship they have with their leader. Additionally, increasing the middle managers' understanding of and skills for engaging in high quality LMX relationships is expected to strengthen their influence on the relationship they have with their senior manager while also improving their ability to lead and support their team members.

Because of the influence follower characteristics can have on their own LMX needs (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2016), no one leadership style will necessarily be effective in meeting the needs of all middle managers. This places importance on building awareness of appropriate timing and adaptation of behaviour to circumstance (Van Breukelen et al., 2006). For example, the receipt of clear direction may be welcome in some situations but may feel like an expression of control in others. It is therefore important that senior managers understand the importance of adapting their leadership style to the needs of individual middle managers.

Ryan and Deci (2017) suggest several key focus points for those planning training with an aim to increase opportunities for inherent needs satisfaction through leadership style. These focus points are based on the following actions that define transformational leadership and are also recognised as being autonomy-supportive: a) consideration of individual perspectives and understanding of feelings and beliefs; b) provision of choice and input into decision-making; c) sharing of informational positive feedback and acknowledgement of achievements; d) assistance to help individuals find meaningful solutions for improving underperformance; e)

encouragement of intrapreneurial behaviour; and f) consideration of the impact of communication on the motivation, performance and well-being of individuals.

In addition, while performance feedback and rewards can foster the satisfaction of inherent needs, and are therefore important motivational tools, they can often be maladaptive (Deci et al., 2017). As such, managers should be trained in taking care to ensure rewards are carefully planned and presented to middle managers so they are experienced as fair and equitable and contribute to both a high quality LMX relationship (Rosen et al., 2011) and the satisfaction of inherent needs for these middle managers (Deci et al., 2017). The following recommendation is expected to improve the LMX relationship between senior and middle managers while also assisting to develop a more participative decision-making culture.

Recommendation 8

That organisations undertake actions that are aimed at increasing the quality of the LMX relationships between senior and middle managers:

> a) *by senior managers receiving training aimed at developing their understanding and application of transformational leadership capabilities;*
>
> b) *by middle managers receiving training aimed at increasing their awareness of and competencies in developing and positively influencing high-quality LMX relationships;*
>
> c) *by providing training to both senior and middle managers aimed at establishing two-way feedback between individuals in these roles, with a focus on improving the appropriateness and timeliness of their interactions; and*
>
> d) *by senior management developing a reward system within the organisation that is aimed at contributing to high-quality LMX relationships through all levels of the organisation's hierarchy.*

Further benefits can be gained from improving the quality of the LMX between senior and middle managers. As well as augmenting the well-being and performance of middle managers (Graves & Luciano, 2013), elevating this LMX relationship is also expected to boost team and organisational performance (Graen &

Uhl-Bien, 1995), enhance job satisfaction and bolster the likelihood that middle managers will remain in their role (Daly & Dee, 2006; Dulebohn et al., 2012; Tse & Wing, 2008; Zhang et al., 2013). In addition, through a crossover process, an expansion of personal and job-related resources tends to result in renewed engagement and resilience within the workplace (Bakker et al., 2009; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Engagement is contagious, and through the crossover process is expected to spread from middle managers to team members, enriching both team and organisational culture in organisations (Bakker et al., 2009; Hobfoll et al., 2018).

By enhancing engagement and culture in the workplace, the crossover of personal and job-related resources can buffer the negative effects of any crossover of personal or workplace stressors (Bakker et al., 2009), so encouraging a high quality LMX between senior and middle managers, and between middle managers and their team members, is expected to stimulate aspects of the gain cycle while also moderating aspects of the loss cycle. Both senior and middle managers play an important role in fostering engagement and resilience amongst a wider network of individuals in organisations (Hobfoll et al., 2018; Salanova et al., 2010). It is therefore essential that organisations implement the training interventions suggested which are aimed at enhancing resource accumulation and promoting resource crossover at individual and leader level to enhance engagement and resilience within the workplace and work culture (Hobfoll et al., 2018).

7.3.2.2.5 Moderate Inhibiting Role Characteristics. Role characteristics such as role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload also contribute to the loss cycle experienced by the middle managers in this study and should be considered when developing training initiatives aimed at improving the experiences and ability of middle managers to function in their role. Building the awareness of senior and middle managers of the importance of role clarity, role congruence, and optimal workload is vital to addressing these role-related stressors. Managers at both levels who are well-versed in role theory concepts are likely to be more aware of external influences on the ways in which role expectations are understood and enacted by those with whom they work and may be better able to develop risk management strategies to reduce role-related stressors in the workplace. As such, the following training recommendation is given:

That professional development training is provided to senior and middle managers which is aimed at increasing their understanding of role theory concepts specifically as these concepts relate to the experience of middle managers.

The training recommendations discussed previously are expected to contribute to alleviating some of these role-related issues. For example, high quality LMX relationships have been shown to stimulate role clarity through improved communication (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Kauppila, 2014). Encouragement and support from senior managers for job crafting can increase the decision-making latitude of middle managers, which enables them to better align the demands of the role with resource availability (Tims et al., 2013; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Improving systems and processes can also help to streamline tasks and alleviate role overload and role conflict. Taking these actions within the organisation could help to alleviate some of the role conflict experienced by the middle managers in this study.

Having a high quality LMX relationship with their senior managers can also offer the middle managers personal and job-related resources that can buffer the negative impact of the restrictions on economic resources that limit opportunities for them to address role overload. Improving communication between senior and middle managers through a high-quality LMX relationship will also increase awareness of the impact of conflicting sent role expectations and encourage the discussion of and negotiation around this workplace stressor.

7.3.2.2.6 Involve Middle Managers in Planning Training Initiatives. As previously noted, the involvement of middle managers in the planning of training initiatives will help to ensure these middle managers receive the training they require. Several authors have noted that training needs can be unique to any one organisation, department, or individual (see Aziz et al., 2005; Corbett, 2020; Floyd, 2016; Inman, 2009; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012; Mughal et al., 2017; Nguyen, 2012; Wisniewski, 2019). This observation is mirrored in the findings of this study. The participating middle managers have varied experiences in the aspects of their role, as well as differences in their capabilities, which indicates the need to offer a

tailored approach to training to complement the overarching training recommendations presented. Involving them in planning the content of the training programmes will increase content effectiveness and align the training to the unique needs of individual middle managers. Therefore, the following recommendation is offered:

Recommendation 10

That senior managers involve middle managers in planning the content of overarching and tailored training programmes to ensure the training aligns with the unique and specific needs of middle managers.

The practical implications that have stemmed from this study and inform the recommendations presented in this section are aimed at stimulating aspects of the role that contribute to the gain cycle and moderating aspects of the role that contribute to the loss cycle, in order to increase opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs for those managing from the middle. The training recommendations presented are based on the understanding that it is possible to train managers to improve their leadership abilities (see Bass, 1999; Hardré & Reeve, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

7.3.3 Methodological Applications

The conceptual framework for this study, as presented in chapter two, was developed to explore the experiences of higher education middle managers in the case organisation by considering literature on the higher education middle manager role along with theories that offer valuable lenses with which to view the experiences of individuals in the workplace. The concept of optimal functioning was informed by self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017) and based on whether the experiences higher education middle managers have had in their role have allowed opportunities for the satisfaction of their inherent needs for competency, autonomy, and relatedness. Workplace and role characteristics were considered in relation to job demands-resources theory (Bakker, 2011) and role theory (Bess & Dee, 2008). Outcomes and actions taken in response to their experiences were considered in relation to job crafting (Demerouti, 2014), role theory (Bess & Dee, 2008), and the concept of loss and gain spirals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). The conceptual

framework allowed for exploration into the lessons that can be learned from the experiences of higher education middle managers in the case organisation and helped to identify areas that can be improved to enhance their experience of and performance in the role.

Previous studies that have applied these theories to research have done so deductively, whereby the established theories are employed as a framework to gather, interpret, and analyse data using pre-developed tools (e.g., Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Deci et al., 2017; Gagné et al., 2015; Joseph et al., 2011; Martin et al., 2016). In contrast to the deductive approach, and in alignment with an interpretivist approach to research, this case study considered the underlying concepts of these theories and their associated outcomes after data collection and during analysis and discussion of the findings. The benefits of this methodological approach were twofold. Firstly, using an inductive approach to data gathering and analysis ensured the participants' voices guided the categories and factors that emerged during analysis as presented in chapters four and five. Secondly, the established theories offered valuable insights into the relationships between factors and the potential follow-on implications and actions that result from the workplace and role characteristics these middle managers have experienced as enabling and inhibiting their ability to function optimally. Drawing from concepts within such established theories during analysis and discussion helped to make sense of the findings.

Another distinctive methodological approach used within this study was to undertake two phases of data collection sequentially. This allowed for further exploration of the interview data with a qualitative questionnaire, as presented in chapters four and five, respectively. Whilst the low participant numbers and the use of ordinal rating scales within the qualitative questionnaire prevented the gathering of statistical data, the questionnaire, as a tool, offered participants an opportunity to consider and rate the categories and factors that emerged from the interviews and provided the means for an exploration of similarities and differences in the experiences of middle managers within the participant group. This method of triangulation ensured the data represented the voices of most middle managers in the

case organisation and increased internal validity by moderating the researcher's subjective influence on the data.

Applying both data-gathering techniques allowed for rich data to be collected through the interviews and the open-ended questions in the questionnaire while also offering clarity on whether or not the experiences middle managers have with workplace and role characteristics signified common themes within the case organisation. As presented in chapter five, Figure 5.1, the questionnaire highlighted many aspects of the role in which middle managers had shared experiences and some aspects of the role in which their experiences differ. Having this data helped to identify workplace and role characteristics that could be improved upon to make a significant difference to the ability of a majority of the middle managers in the case organisation to function optimally in their role.

7.4 Limitations of the Study

The scope of this interpretivist case study is limited to the experiences of the middle managers who manage programmes of study within one higher education institution in Aotearoa New Zealand and has a specific focus on their experiences in relation to optimal functioning in the role. Being focussed on the specific phenomenon under study, the findings were not intended to be generalisable to wider organisational settings (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2012) and were instead aimed at informing professional development training recommendations within the case organisation. Some authors, however, suggest that interpretive research findings can be applicable in similar situations (Rowlands, 2005; Silverman, 2005). Therefore, the reader may consider certain aspects of the findings and recommendations presented in this study as relevant to similar situations where applicable and only with careful consideration of the context of the study and the research methodology and design that has been applied. For the purpose of such consideration, the research process has been clearly detailed in chapter three of this thesis.

7.5 Recommendations for Further Research

Given the limited amount of research undertaken on the higher education middle manager role, particularly in Aotearoa New Zealand, there is ample scope for

further research. Because, as discussed previously, a significant change is coming to the Aotearoa New Zealand polytechnic sector, it seems pertinent to focus recommendations for future studies on the population of Te Pūkenga academic middle managers who will be working through the merging period and beyond in order to inform wider organisational decision-making through the change process.

While taking an interpretivist approach to research within this study achieved the desired outcome of developing an understanding the role from the voices of the participants within the case organisation, approaching the wider population for future research will increase generalisability A wider study will be particularly useful if the findings are aimed at informing the scope, responsibilities, and decision-making latitude of the middle manager role in the newly established Te Pūkenga polytechnic. The use of pre-existing tools for measuring the concepts referred to within this study, such as well-being, quality of leader-member exchange, and opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs within the workplace, will offer data that can be compared between institutions, within institutions, and over time, to track the impact of ongoing changes and inform future decision-making. As such, the following recommendation is presented:

Further research recommendation 1

That a Te Pūkenga-wide study on the middle manager role be undertaken to inform the scope, responsibilities and decision-making latitude of their role.

The experiences of middle managers are significantly influenced by those hierarchically positioned above and below them, as evidenced in the findings of this study and also reported elsewhere (e.g., Branson et al., 2016; Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Kallenberg, 2015; Leader, 2004; Thornton et al., 2018). As such, it is recommended that studies be undertaken to explore the impact of the workplace characteristics of Te Pūkenga on the experiences of not only middle managers but also senior managers and the middle managers' team members. Taking multiple lenses will allow for a wide view into the impact of job demands, resource availability, and decision-making latitude on others who have a significant impact on the ability of middle managers to function optimally in their role. Additionally, the newly established Te Pūkenga polytechnic has promised to develop a learner-centred

vocational education system (Te Pūkenga, 2021), therefore, undertaking research that focusses specifically on workplace characteristics that enable and impede the optimal functioning of those who have a significant impact on the student experience (i.e., middle managers and their team members) can support the development of valuable resources for informing practice aimed at delivering on their promise. To that end, the following further research recommendation is offered:

Further research recommendation 2

That a Te Pūkenga-wide study be undertaken which focusses specifically on workplace and role characteristics that enable and impede the optimal functioning of those who have a significant impact on the student experience, including the middle managers and their team members.

The middle managers who participated in this research were managing programmes of study offered in the face-to-face mode of delivery. It is evident, however, that the demand for blended and online education is steadily growing as a result of the global adoption of developing technologies and on-demand education (Palvia et al., 2018) and has recently intensified due to the recent global COVID-19 pandemic (Cameron-Standerford et al., 2020; Mishra et al., 2020; Pather et al., 2020). Of note is that those managing programmes of study in the face-to-face delivery mode would have experienced a sudden move to managing the online delivery of learning during the recent countrywide lockdowns in Aotearoa New Zealand implemented in response to the pandemic (Ewing, 2021; Pather et al., 2020). Clearly, there is value to be gained from undertaking similar research on those who manage programmes of study offered in alternative modes of delivery in order to understand and respond to the unique set of challenges they face. Therefore, the following recommendation is made:

Further research recommendation 3

That middle managers of distance learning programmes be included in a Te Pūkenga-wide study to gain an understanding of the factors that enable and inhibit their ability to function optimally in their role.

7.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has offered a conclusion to the study by revisiting the context in which the research was undertaken and the theoretical contributions, practical implications, and methodological applications of the study, along with its limitations and recommendations for further research.

The findings of this study contribute further to our knowledge of middle management in the tertiary sector by offering an understanding of the factors that enable an inhibit them to function optimally in their role and also give valuable insight into the functions of their role. While these findings are most relevant to those managing from the middle, they can inform a range of stakeholders. A better understanding of the importance of the middle manager role and the workplace and role characteristics that enable and inhibit middle managers from succeeding in their role can create opportunities for making improvements to benefit specific staff and the wider organisation. These findings can arm senior managers with the knowledge required to inform changes to the work environment to help those managing from the middle to function optimally in their role. Understanding the challenges, restrictions, and follow-on issues faced by middle managers may help team members be more accepting of the restrictions they themselves also experience as a result of these inhibiting workplace and role characteristics. Additionally, the training recommendations resulting from this study offer specific and applicable suggestions to higher education human resource teams for senior and mid-level management training and professional development programmes.

Previous studies have shown that training needs are context specific (see Aziz et al., 2005; Corbett, 2020; Floyd, 2016; Inman, 2009; Ladyshewsky & Flavell, 2012; Mughal et al., 2017; Nguyen, 2012; Wisniewski, 2019). Therefore, applying the findings of this study to training recommendations for the case organisation allows for the better alignment of training to the specific needs of the middle managers who work there. The recommendations presented in this chapter are intended to continue to be applicable when the newly merged organisation, Te Pūkenga, is fully operational. However, to ensure the training developed within the case organisation remains relevant, it is recommended that staff needs are revisited on a regular basis.

Improving some of the inhibiting aspects of the role, for example the limited staffing within departments and the support services of the organisation, would require significant financial input; such improvements have not been targeted in these recommendations due to financial challenges evident in the Aotearoa New Zealand polytechnic sector (Kōrero Mātauranga, 2019). Instead, the recommendations have focussed on aspects of the role that are less costly to improve and therefore are more likely to be successfully carried out. It is not expected that implementing the training recommendations presented in this chapter will completely neutralise the loss cycle experienced by these middle managers, but it is believed that the impact of those losses will be reduced due to the buffering effects of the increased personal and job-related resources that will result from the development and use of these recommended training initiatives (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

The encouragement and facilitation of job crafting through crafting interventions instigated by senior management can enhance the benefits of training undertaken, particularly if the crafting is aimed at meeting the organisational objectives while also meeting the needs of the middle managers (Mäkikangas, 2018; Petrou et al., 2012; van Wingerden et al., 2017b). To achieve this, the senior managers of the case organisation need to gain knowledge of job crafting theory and become skilled in strategies to support and enable this practice in the workplace. The middle managers also require training in various forms of crafting behaviours and the opportunity to find ways to align the emerging actions, crafted to increase their ability to function optimally in the workplace, with the objectives of the organisation.

Senior managers should also increase the decision-making latitude of middle managers to enable optimal function. This can be achieved through the adoption by senior managers of an autonomy-supportive management style which will see middle managers being involved in strategic decision-making and in the development of systems and processes used within the organisation. The benefits of this include increased opportunities for the satisfaction of inherent needs for middle managers (Baard et al., 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2017) which is known to result in an increase in their motivation, job satisfaction, and well-being (e.g., Deci et al., 1989; Griffiths, 2009; Hardré & Reeve, 2009). Involving middle managers in decision-making also better aligns department outcomes with organisational objectives (Bolden et al.,

2008a), increases innovation within the organisation, and improves the ability of the organisation to adapt (Kallenberg, 2015).

In an environment where job demands are high and resources are limited, such as experienced in the case organisation, it is essential to build leadership competencies (Henderson et al., 2009). It is particularly vital for senior and middle managers to develop and maintain high quality leader-member exchange relationships (Martin et al., 2016). By building the awareness of senior managers of the impact of their leadership style on middle managers, an organisation can take an important step towards increasing the quality of this relationship (Sparks et al., 2001). This should be followed by training to develop transformational leadership qualities in senior managers, as such qualities are understood to help build supportive social exchange behaviours and facilitate the satisfaction of inherent needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

It is important to note, however, that making these improvements requires commitment from those in the organisation who influence or control organisational systems, processes, and policies. Therefore, to allow for the application of these recommendations in the case organisation, three elements need to be present. The first element is the recognition by the senior management team of the importance of the middle manager role to the success of the organisation. The second element is their acknowledgement of flaws in the current systems, processes, and culture of the organisation that contribute to the challenges these middle managers experience. The third element is the motivation of everyone involved to make changes in order to improve the current situation.

At the conclusion of this study, the findings presented in Figure 7.2 and the resulting recommendations will be communicated to the senior management team in the case organisation. It is anticipated that the recommendations presented will inform the key decision makers of the organisation and be a catalyst for change.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Information Sheet and Consent Form

Participant Information for USQ Research Project Interview

Project Details	
Title of Project:	Lessons Learned from the Experiences of Middle Managers in Higher Education: An Aotearoa New Zealand Case Study
Human Research Ethics Approval Number:	H17REA175

Research Team Contact Details	

Principal Investigator Details	**Supervisor Details**
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Description

This project is being undertaken as part of a Doctor of Education study, the purpose of which is to see what can be learned from the experiences higher education middle managers have within their role in the context of one New Zealand higher education institution. It is anticipated that there are factors that influence how the middle managers perceive their role within the organisation. It is also anticipated that there are factors that enable and inhibit them to function optimally in their role. Exploring the lessons that can be learned from the experiences of those in the role offers an opportunity to gain insight, from their various perspectives, into what they understand could enhance their role performance. The findings of this research will be presented as a model of factors that enable and inhibit those in the role to function optimally.

Your assistance is being requested because you have experience as a middle manager in the chosen higher education institution and it is anticipated that your knowledge will contribute to emerging understandings of the role. You are one of approximately 20 higher education middle managers being invited to participate in this research project.

Participation

Your participation will involve participating in an interview that will take approximately one hour of your time. The interview will take place at a time and venue that is convenient to you.

Some of the questions will include:
- What does your role as a higher education middle manager involve?
- What do you consider optimal functioning in the role?
- What do you consider as factors that enable you to achieve in the role?
- What do you consider as factors that inhibit you to achieve in the role?

The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed for analysis of the data.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage. You may also request that any data collected from you be destroyed. If you do wish to withdraw from this project or withdraw data collected from you, please contact the researcher (contact details at the top of this form).

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of Southern Queensland or the XXXX.

Expected Benefits

There are a variety of stakeholders that may benefit from the findings of this study. Your senior management team may gain a better understanding of the challenges experienced by the middle manager, in turn recognising areas in need of extra provision to support you in your role. Another group that may benefit are your teams such as teaching and support staff. By understanding the challenges faced by the middle manager, they may appreciate your situation and find the expectations placed on them easier to accept, and in turn become supportive in the role. The findings of this study may also offer higher education human resource teams ideas for middle management induction and training programmes. It is also anticipated that you, as a higher education middle manager, will benefit directly from this study as you seek to optimise your skills and experience in the higher education environment and benefit directly from having those you work amongst understand the factors that enable and inhibit you from succeeding in your role.

Risks

There are minimal risks associated with your participation in this project. It is understood that being identified may cause discomfort or distress. The researcher has processes in place to ensure you will not be identified as outlined in the privacy and confidentiality section below.

It is unlikely that the interview discussion will cause any stress, however if you need to talk to someone as an outcome of the interview, please contact the XXXX's counseling service on XXXX extension XXXX.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law. The following processes will be in place to ensure your confidentiality:

- During data analysis and reporting, the researcher will ensure you as an individual participant, your department, and the organisation, are unidentifiable.
- Your privacy will be respected by the use of a pseudonym in place of your real name and the organisation will also be given a pseudonym.
- You will be given an opportunity to member check your own data and changes will be made if necessary to ensure you are not identified.
- The transcription service used will be a professional commercial one with robust security policies in place.
- Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per University of Southern Queensland's Research Data Management policy.
- The data will not be used for any other purposes.

Consent to Participate

You are requested to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate in this project. Please return your signed consent form to the researcher prior to participating in your interview.

Questions or Further Information about the Project

You may request a summary of the research results by contacting the researcher directly. Please refer to the researcher's contact details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email ethics@usq.edu.au. The Ethics Coordinator is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

Consent Form for USQ Research Project Interview

Project Details	

Title of Project:	Lessons Learned from the Experiences of Middle Managers in Higher Education: An Aotearoa New Zealand Case Study
Human Research Ethics Approval Number:	H17REA175

Research Team Contact Details	

Principal Investigator Details	**Supervisor Details**
Paulette Halstead	Dr Marian Lewis
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Telephone: XXXX extension XXXX	Telephone: 0061 7 4631 2330
Mobile: 0274 874 871	

Statement of Consent	

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- Have read and understood the information document regarding this project.
- Have had any questions answered to your satisfaction.
- Understand that if you have any additional questions, you can contact the research team.
- Understand that the interview will be audio recorded.
- Understand that I will be provided with a copy of the transcript of the interview for my perusal and endorsement prior to inclusion of this data in the project.
- Understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty.
- Understand that you can contact the University of Southern Queensland Ethics Coordinator on (07) 4631 2690 or email ethics@usq.edu.au if you do have any concern or complaint about the ethical conduct of this project.
- Are over 18 years of age.
- Agree to participate in the project.

Participant Name	
Participant Signature	
Date	

Please return this sheet to the researcher prior to undertaking the interview.

Appendix B: Questionnaire Introduction and Questions

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important questionnaire regarding your experiences in the role of a middle manager in an Aotearoa higher education institution. The questions asked are directly related to the factors that emerged from one-on-one interviews with people in a role similar to yours. The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out what your experiences are regarding those factors. You are one of approximately 20 higher education middle managers being invited to participate in this research project which is being undertaken as part of a Doctor of Education study.

The questionnaire contains both closed and open-ended questions and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your responses are completely anonymous and any information you offer will be treated as confidential. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part you are not obliged to. Clicking on the 'Submit' button at the conclusion of the questionnaire is accepted as an indication of your consent to participate in the study.

If you have any questions, please contact me on 0274874871 or paulette.halstead@XXXX

One-on-one interviews revealed the following factors to be considered as enablers or inhibitors to optimal functioning in the middle management role.

This qualitative questionnaire is to find out the following:

A. How important the participants think each of the defining factors are
B. How middle managers rate their achievement in each of the factors
C. Whether the middle managers consider the individual factors to be enablers or inhibitors
D. Whether the middle managers believe they have control over the enabling and inhibiting factors

Part One of the Questionnaire

Factors that you might consider to _define_ optimal functioning in your middle management role

Rating options for part one of the questionnaire:

Please rate how important you consider the following factors in relation to optimal functioning in your management role:

- *Of extreme importance*
- *Of high importance*
- *Of average importance*
- *Of low importance*
- *Of no importance*

Please rate what you consider to be your level of achievement in each of the factors:

- *Very high*
- *High*

- *Moderate*
- *Low*
- *Very low*
- *Not applicable or not relevant*

Questions for part one of the questionnaire:

Stakeholders

- Meeting the needs of the stakeholders
- Meeting the needs of the students
- Having good retention, completion and employment outcomes
- Students developing their personal skills (for example: confidence, time management, intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills)
- Ensuring student satisfaction
- Ensuring student health and wellbeing
- Meeting the needs of industry
- Meeting industry demand
- Satisfying external stakeholders
- Meeting the needs of tutorial staff
- Having a teamwork culture in the department
- Having productive and happy staff
- Staff undertaking professional development
- Ensuring quality and value in the service offered to stakeholders
- ***Please offer any comments relating to meeting the needs of the stakeholders***

Administration

- Applying good administration and resource management practices
- Offering administrative support to the tutors
- Managing the finances well
- Meeting administrative deadlines
- ***Please offer any comments relating to administration***

Health and Safety

- Applying good health and safety practices within the department
- Being accountable for the health and safety practices within the department
- Having the staff and students in the department aware of the health and safety requirements
- Ensuring a safe environment without hindering the students' ability to learn the subject related skills
- Managing your own personal wellbeing in your management role
- ***Please offer any comments relating to health and safety***

Part Two of the Questionnaire

Factors that may *enable* you to achieve optimally in your management role

Rating options for part two of the questionnaire:

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement:
- *Strongly Agree*
- *Agree*
- *Neutral*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly Disagree*

How much control do you have over this factor?
- *Complete control*
- *Quite a lot of control*
- *Some control*
- *Very little control*
- *No control*
- *Don't know or opt out*

Questions for part two of the questionnaire:

Relationships

- Having good relationships with students is an enabling factor
- It is important that I build trust with the students in my department
- It is important that I am honest with the students in my department
- It is important for me to be approachable to students in my department
- Having good relationships with external stakeholders is an enabling factor
- It is important for me to make industry connections
- Having good relationships with the staff in my department is an enabling factor
- It is important that I develop a team culture in the department
- It is important that I have regular meetings with the staff in my department
- It is important that the staff in my department have autonomy
- It is important that I genuinely care for the staff in my department
- It is important to be honest with the staff in my department
- Having a good relationship with my senior manager is an enabling factor
- It is important to get clear direction from my senior manager
- It is important that my senior manager holds me accountable for my responsibilities
- It is important that my senior manager supports me
- It is important that I have autonomy in my role
- It is important that senior management remove barriers to support initiatives
- Having good relationships with the staff across the organisation is an enabling factor
- It is important that I communicate well with other staff across the organisation
- ***Please offer any comments relating to relationships***

Capabilities

- My own capabilities is an enabling factor
- My own attitude helps me in my role
- My own skills and experience help me in my role
- *Please offer any comments relating to your own attitude and skills*

Staff

- Having valuable staff/team members in my department is an enabling factor
- Having team members who are passionate about their job is important
- Having team members who are good at self-direction is important
- Having team members who are good at supporting students is important
- Having good support staff across the organisation is important
- *Please offer any comments relating to staff*

Risk Management

- Managing risk in the department is an enabling factor
- Having good health and safety practices in the department is important
- Identifying and preventing issues with students is important
- Identifying and preventing issues with staff is important
- *Please offer any comments relating to risk management*

Part Three of the Questionnaire

Factors that may *inhibit* you to achieve optimally in your management role

Rating options for part three of the questionnaire:

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement:

- *Strongly Agree*
- *Agree*
- *Neutral*
- *Disagree*
- *Strongly Disagree*

How much control do you have over this factor?

- *Complete control*
- *Quite a lot of control*
- *Some control*
- *Very little control*
- *No control*
- *Don't know or opt out*

Questions for part three of the questionnaire:

Time Constraints

- Time constraints inhibit my ability to function optimally
- I do not have enough time to fit all of my tasks into the expected working hours
- I do not have enough time to implement new initiatives within the department
- Students are negatively impacted by my time constraints
- I do not have enough time to produce quality research outputs
- I do not have enough time to become familiar with newly introduced information technology systems
- I have conflicting priorities due to time constraints
- I do not have enough time to keep up with the constant changes in my role
- *Please offer any comments relating to time constraints*

Resources

- Limited resources inhibit my ability to function optimally
- Limited resources creates stress for me in my role
- There are not enough resources to manage health and safety well in the department
- There are not enough resources to support new initiatives within the department
- There are not enough resources to run the programmes optimally
- There are not enough resources to support students
- There are not enough resources to support tutors
- *Please offer any comments relating to resources*

Conflicting Tasks

- Task conflicts inhibit my ability to function optimally
- Task conflicts create student related ethical issues
- Task conflicts create staff related ethical issues
- *Please offer any comments relating to conflicting tasks*

Targeted Teaching Hour (TTH) System

- The targeted teaching hour (TTH) system inhibits my ability to function optimally
- The TTH system does not work for all programme levels
- The TTH system has a negative impact on the quality of teaching
- The TTH system has a negative impact on the quality of the department's research outputs
- *Please offer any comments relating to the targeted teaching hour (TTH) system*

Information Communication Technology Systems

- Some of the information technology (IT) systems used by the organisation inhibit my ability to function optimally
- Some of the IT systems used by the organisation are dysfunctional
- Some of the IT systems used by the organisation are not streamlined
- Information IT systems often don't work correctly in the classrooms
- Some of the IT systems used in the organisation are not fit for purpose

- I have to keep my own spreadsheets because the IT systems do not serve the required purposes
- *Please offer any comments relating to information technology systems*

Classrooms

- Issues related to classrooms space inhibit my ability to function optimally
- I have trouble finding enough classroom space for the classes to be taught in
- There are not enough appropriately sized classrooms available
- There are not enough appropriately equipped classrooms available
- The classroom booking system is difficult to use
- *Please offer any comments relating to classrooms*

Other

- Inefficient processes inhibit my ability to function optimally
- The high volume of documentation to complete inhibits optimal functioning
- The process of managing documentation is inefficient
- Low student numbers inhibits optimal functioning
- Low student numbers has a negative impact on the student experience in the classroom
- Low student numbers has a negative impact on the ability to meet student needs
- *Please offer any comments relating to processes and/or student numbers*

Staff/Team Members

- Issues with staff/team members in my department inhibits optimal functioning
- When a team member in my department has a negative attitude, my job is more difficult
- When one of my team members does not have the required skills, my job is more difficult
- Team members who resist change make my job more difficult
- If my team are divided and not working towards a shared goal, my job is more difficult
- Unrest between team members creates dysfunction in the department
- High staff turnover inhibits optimal functioning
- *Please offer any comments relating to staff/team members*

Senior Manager

- Issues with my senior manager inhibits optimal functioning
- Lack of respect from my senior manager makes my role more difficult
- Lack of leadership from my senior manager makes my role more difficult
- Poor lines of communication through the chain of command, via my senior manager, makes my role more difficult
- Resources being restricted by my senior manager makes my role more difficult
- *Please offer any comments relating to senior management*

Does your role involve any teaching? Yes/No