

**Cranfield University**

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**Exploring Shared Leadership in a  
UK Public Sector Programme**

**School of Management**

**MSc by Research in  
Leading Learning and Change**

**Thesis**



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**Simon Bates**

**Exploring Shared Leadership in a  
UK Public Sector Programme**

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## Abstract

This thesis considers shared leadership in a UK public sector programme.

Many UK public sector change initiatives are delivered through programmes. In recent years, the practice and academic domain of programme management have developed from within the established discipline of project management. The leadership of projects has been widely studied, both conceptually and empirically, but programmes are substantively different. Shared leadership is a relatively new conceptualisation of leadership which may be valuable for the study of leadership of programmes.

The thesis uses a case study of one programme to explore shared leadership in this environment, primarily based on 15 interviews and observation of meetings and events. In particular, it focuses on the leadership tasks of setting the vision and establishing and structuring the programme.

The study helps to improve the characterisation of the emerging theoretical concept of shared leadership by adding empirical evidence. It supports the conceptualisation of shared leadership as a plural, processual, diagonal and lateral influence-based phenomenon by unpacking the above leadership tasks into their constituent activities and interactions. It provides evidence for the mechanism of “numerical action” through the seamless transfer of leadership and contributes to the discussion on the nature of “concertive action”. It also highlights the propensity of organisational actors to attribute artefacts of leadership to individuals. It supports the conceptualisation of leadership in such an environment as hybrid or integrated, combining traditional vertical with shared leadership. In light of this, it proposes a dual processual and artefactual approach to the study of leadership. It does not support defined, complementary roles and structures as important for effective programme leadership. It provides useful guidance to programme management practitioners and stakeholders from seeing their own experiences and environments through the lens of shared leadership.



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## Glossary of Abbreviations

Becta	British Educational Communications and Technology Agency
CIO	Chief Information Officer
CO	Cabinet Office
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
GES	Gateway to Educational Services Programme
HCC	Hertfordshire County Council
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LA	Local Authority
MSP	Managing Successful Programmes (programme management methodology)
MLQ	Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire
OFSM	Online Free School Meals
OGC	Office of Government Commerce
OSA	Online School Admissions (also referred to as “e-Admissions”)
PRINCE2	Projects in Controlled Environments (project management methodology)
PTM	Programme Team Member
RAG	Red/Amber/Green (report format)
SGM	Sponsoring Group Member
SRO	Senior Responsible Owner
TMLQ	Team-based Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

This thesis explores shared leadership in UK public sector programme management using a case study. Shared leadership is a relatively new conceptualisation of leadership and has not yet been widely studied. Many UK public sector change initiatives are delivered through programmes. In recent years, the practice and academic domain of programme management have developed from within the established discipline of project management. The leadership of projects has been widely studied, both conceptually and empirically.

As programmes are substantively different to projects, they may require a revised conceptualisation of leadership, and the emerging paradigm of shared leadership may be valuable for programme management practice and theory. Therefore, this study explores the phenomenon of shared leadership within the business context of UK public sector programme management.

This study:

- helps to improve the characterisation of the emerging theoretical concept of shared leadership by adding empirical evidence
- provides useful guidance to programme management practitioners and stakeholders from seeing their own experiences and environments through the lens of shared leadership
- points to further research as shared leadership develops as a paradigm

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter One outlines the nature of the business issue to be explored through the lens of shared leadership and the relevant UK public sector programme management business context. Chapter Two reviews the literature on shared leadership and on leadership in both project and programme management. The

chapter ends with the research questions for the empirical study, which focus on two important functions of leadership appropriate to programme management: first, setting the vision for the programme and second, establishing and structuring the programme. Chapter Three describes the methodological background for the empirical study, reviews choices for the method, describes the chosen case study method design, and describes the particular programme that forms the case study. Chapter Four presents findings from analysis of the data gathered through the case study. Chapter Five discusses the analysis of findings from the previous chapter in relation to the key literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Chapter Six summarises the conclusions from the research, discusses their contribution, limitations, and makes suggestions for future research directions.

## **1.2 The Business Issue**

### **1.2.1 Transformational Government Change Programmes**

In recent years, the UK public sector has deployed enormous managerial and technical resources to develop new public services and to improve existing ones. Much of this effort has been organised into information and communications technology (ICT) and business change programmes. Since 2006, many programmes have been set up under the banner of 'Transformational Government' (Cabinet Office, 2006) to develop innovative ways to improve public services, notably by working across traditional government organisational silos. Such change programmes are inherently more complex and challenging to manage than traditional public sector change projects, which often involve introducing a single new technology, improving a single process or service and operate within a single organisation. The case study programme, Gateway to Educational Services (GES), is an example of a complex cross-organisational business change programme.

## 1.2.2 Project and Programme Management

Project management is a well established domain of theory and practice, used ubiquitously in Government initiatives such as those described above, as it is across the public and private sectors. In recent years, programme management has evolved from within the field of project management to become a cohesive domain of business management practice and theory. As an organisational model and as a set of management practices, programme management is now widely used across the UK public sector, where a significant amount of human, financial and technical assets are organised and managed through programmes. Thus programme management is an increasingly important domain for academic study.

The use of bespoke Government-sponsored management methodologies, such as Projects in Controlled Environments (PRINCE2) (OGC, 2005) and Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) (OGC, 2007) is encouraged or mandated in many instances. These methodologies provide an explicit, dedicated managerial framework, complementing more established, generic and often implicit managerial frameworks, such as professional civil service practices, procurement, financial and contractual rules, engineering and ICT disciplines and standards.

Projects and programmes provide an organisational and managerial context in which to effect business change. For many practitioners, the disciplines overlap and programmes and projects generally operate together, not least because most programmes contain projects as sub-structures. However, there are substantive differences between them (Pellegrinelli and Partington, 2006).

In this thesis, I argue that it is partly in these differences that an acute need for leadership arises, and the different nature of the required leadership suggests shared leadership as a valuable lens through which to study phenomena within the domain of programme management.

### **1.2.3 The Nature of Leadership Required for Change Programmes**

Projects are created to deliver a specific, tangible output or product, such as a building or a computer system; whereas programmes are created to deal with complex, strategic and adaptive changes (Pellegrinelli and Partington, 2006), often working across disciplines such as technology and business operations, and across organisation and authority boundaries. Programmes deliver changes in process and people aspects of businesses, as well as in physical and technological assets.

The more strategic and complex, less tangible, and often sensitive nature of programmes substantively differentiates them from projects and was in itself a key driver for the development of the separate programme methodology MSP (OGC, 2007). Both projects and programmes are generally thought of as being “managed” rather than “led”. However, as the literature review describes, leadership is important for both. The differences between projects and programmes suggest programmes have an acute need for effective leadership, which may not be the same type of leadership as is needed in projects (OGC, 2005, 2007; Partington, Pellegrinelli and Young, 2005).

Traditional paradigms of leadership describe leadership in terms of a single individual and his or her attributes and behaviours, and in terms of specific roles. MSP (OGC, 2007) is prescriptive around specific programme roles in which leadership is vested.

Yet as described above, programmes often span organisational disciplines. Leadership on technology issues may be required on one day, and on financial and operational issues on another. Similarly, complex decision-making may be required as well as an ability to lead on the human level. In the public sector, different organisations, teams, individuals and budgets may be co-opted into a programme, often with a holistic and complex end-outcome in mind. For example, meeting a Government objective to improve child safety might involve

educationalists, social workers, police, health, local government officials, information technologists, and so on. Thus in such programmes, there may be a need for more than one leader. Indeed, many individuals may need or desire to lead in different times, ways and styles.

Moreover, the fact that a programme may span diverse and distant (in geographic, managerial and cultural terms) organisations, and will go through phases of political/strategic leadership through to hands-on operational leadership, means that a simple individualised and role-based conception of leadership may be inadequate to explain the nature of programme leadership and to assist practitioners in such environments.

Leadership is also characterised as a set of processes ‘that creates organisations in the first place or adapts them to significantly changing circumstances’, whereas management is a set of processes that can keep them ‘running smoothly’ (Kotter, 1996, p.25). For Handy (1999, p.115), ‘managers are people who do things right whereas leaders are people who do the right thing’. Or as Gregory (1996, p.48) puts it, management is about ‘order and procedures necessary to cope with organizational complexity’ and leadership is about ‘coping with change.’

Therefore, building on the idea that more than one leader may be required in a programme, and on the different role-based and activity-based views of leadership, this study explores the notion that in the programme environment, leadership is a plural phenomenon. In other words, it is shared or distributed in some way within the organisation; that is, it is not attributed only to an individual in a specific role, and that many individuals may enact leadership through their activities. The nature of the leadership, and in what ways it can be considered as shared or distributed, are explored.

### **1.2.4 Articulating the Business Issue to be Explored**

The specific business issue this thesis explores can be articulated as follows:  
Can a programme's vision be set through shared leadership? Can a programme be established and structured through shared leadership?

In positioning this study, I have so far enumerated two distinctions: programmes as distinct from projects, and leadership as distinct from management. Drawing these distinctions focuses the discussion on leadership (as opposed simply to management) in the specific programme environment. This idea is especially relevant for important tasks which scholars such as Kotter (1996) associate more with leadership than with management in organisations. Thus the empirical study focuses on two such important leadership functions in the programme management context: first, setting the vision for the programme, and second, establishing and structuring the programme.

As the literature review confirms, management alone is not enough on projects and programmes. The literature also demonstrates the pitfalls in applying project management thinking to programmes, and characterises the need for leadership in programmes. The distinction between the management and the leadership of a programme brings into focus the nature of leadership as related to tasks such as the two identified above for the programme context.

In summary, this study considers the nature of leadership in programme management. Specifically, it explores the idea that the theoretical conceptualisation of shared leadership may be descriptive of, and valuable for, the programme management environment. To explore this idea, it uses an in-depth case study of one such environment, the GES Programme.

Thus at its core, the study focuses on a third distinction: shared leadership as opposed to traditional leadership of a programme. The definition of programme management as separate from project management has led to powerful methodologies, techniques and behaviours, which offer practitioners a valuable

resource for implementing strategic organisational change. Yet, at the same time it may demand a different conceptualisation of how leadership can and must respond to the challenges of the programme context. The emerging concept of shared leadership may offer both a description of this difference and clues to success for practitioners.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Scoping Study and Systematic Review**

#### **2.1.1 The Process Undertaken**

The literature review was conducted through a two step process, which served both as a personal learning tool and as a mechanism to refine the literature review in parallel with the precise definition of the real-world business issue.

The first step was a scoping study. At this stage the questions posed of the literature related generally to the leadership of programmes (that is, without yet focusing on the concept of shared leadership). The scoping study was a valuable personal learning exercise, and paved the way for the more formal part of the literature review in the second step. The second step was a systematic review of literature (Tranfield, Denyer and Smart, 2003). For this, I had refined the questions posed of the literature more precisely towards shared leadership and project and programme management. This led to a set of search terms accessed through selected databases (see Appendix A). In accordance with Tranfield, Denyer and Smart (2003), the search terms and procedures around them ensured the review was systematic, and whilst there are inevitably judgements to make on inclusion/exclusion, I retained clear criteria (see Appendix A). In effect, this led to two domains of literature being the focus of the literature review, which are described next.

#### **2.1.2 Domains of Literature**

The main part of this chapter is organised according to the two broadly defined domains of literature reviewed:

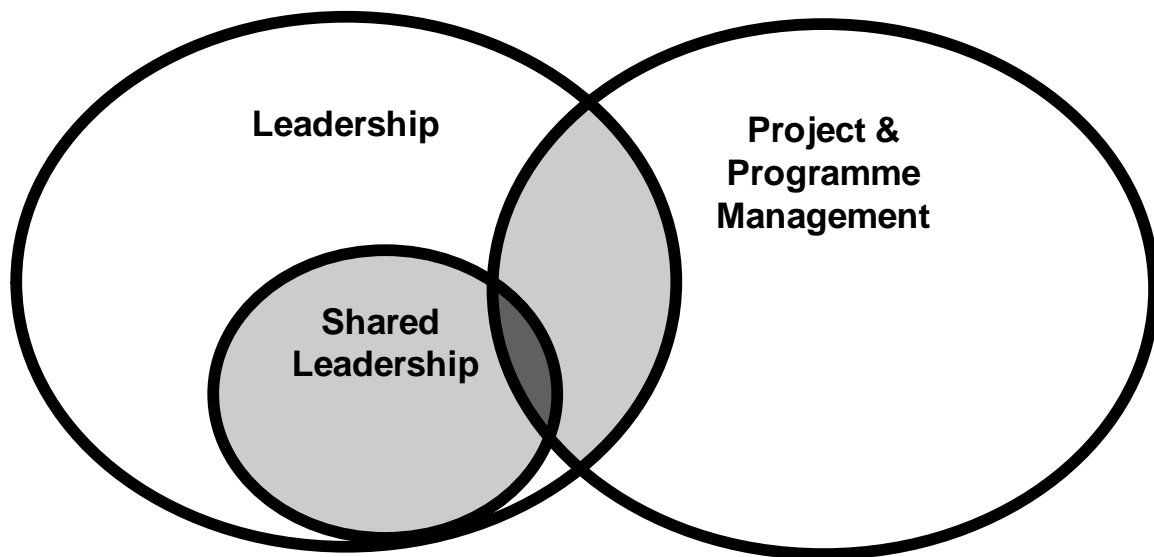
- Literature on shared leadership. This is the novel conceptual phenomenon of interest, thus the section uses literature to define and characterise the phenomenon as appropriate to this study, discusses



how others have researched it, and considers its relevance to UK public sector programmes

- Literature on leadership in project and programme management. This reviews primarily academic literature, but also reviews the two dominant works of practitioner literature (PRINCE2 and MSP bodies of knowledge)

Figure 1: Domains of Literature



In Figure 1, the light grey area represents the domains of literature reviewed and the dark grey area represents the subject of the empirical study.

Due to the nature of the pertinent literature domains, I start by explaining why I have reviewed them as I have in this chapter.

The first argument relates to “why review all shared leadership literature?” There is as yet no literature dealing with shared leadership specifically in either a project or programme management environment. This is not surprising as shared leadership is itself an emerging field of study. For this reason it is useful to consider any relevant shared leadership literature, subject to the search terms and criteria of the review.

In contrast, a systematic review of all literature on leadership would not prove beneficial due to its size and to the extremely broad definitions of leadership (Handy, 1999). Nevertheless, before introducing the more specific domain of shared leadership, I present a brief summary of how the seminal traditional schools of thought on leadership inform project and programme management, and how they lead to the concept of shared leadership as a new paradigm.

The complex and multi-organisational nature of most programmes, and especially of those such as the case study here, may lend themselves to thinking about leadership as a shared phenomenon. Given the recent rapid emergence of literature on shared leadership, a distinct and relevant body of literature was identifiable and could be reviewed. This literature is mostly conceptual in nature and not related to any specific business contexts.

The second argument relates to “why review literature on leadership in both project and programme management?” As described in the previous section, the business context for this study is a UK public sector programme, which operates according to both programme and project management principles. Over many years a distinct and sizeable literature on projects and project management has developed. Within this literature domain, the leadership of projects has developed as a theme of study.

Over the last few years, a body of literature specifically on programme management has evolved. Given the distinction drawn earlier between projects and programmes, an argument could be made for excluding literature on leadership in projects (as distinct from programmes). However, the structured searches of literature databases quickly revealed that project leadership literature would offer relevant background and interesting insights to inform thinking on leadership in programmes. Searches also revealed that no substantive literature exists on leadership specifically in programme management.

Thus, it is appropriate to consider the more established literature on leadership in project management. In practice, the project and programme literatures generally overlap. Indeed, there is evidence that in practice many programme managers' mindsets are strongly influenced by project thinking (Pellegrinelli and Partington, 2006).

## **2.2 Shared Leadership**

This section discusses the academic literature on shared leadership, which is mostly conceptual, with only a limited number of empirical and domain-specific studies. There are no studies in the domain of UK public sector project and programme management.

I start by briefly reviewing traditional paradigms of leadership, which sets the scene for the emergence of shared leadership as a concept. (Traditional paradigms are picked up again later when discussing leadership specifically in projects and programmes). I then discuss in more detail what shared leadership means, based on theoretical work so far. I briefly review how the concept has been empirically studied so far, then consider how this may apply to the UK public sector programme context.

### **2.2.1 Traditional Paradigms of Leadership**

Leadership has traditionally been conceptualised around a single individual in a specialised role, that individual's attributes, the relationship of that individual to subordinates or followers, and that individual's activities and behaviours (Handy, 1999).

Scholars categorise up to four major paradigms of leadership. First, there is the traits or great man paradigm; second, the skills and styles paradigm; third, the situational and contingency paradigm; fourth, the transformational and charismatic paradigm (Northouse, 2007; Bass, 1990; Handy, 1999).

The common features of all these paradigms, and of the extensive conceptual and empirical studies supporting them, are the conception of the leader as an individual, and of leadership being enacted as a vertical, top-down influence process from one leader to more than one follower. In other words, leadership has been about the solo, stand-alone, heroic leader (Gronn, 2002).

### **2.2.2 Post-heroic Leadership**

In recent years, scholars have begun to consider forms of leadership that go beyond the individual, referred to as 'post-heroic leadership' (Fletcher and Käufer, 2003, p.21) or 'post-traditional leadership' (Turnbull James, Bowman and Kwiatkowski, 2008, p.73).

Based on the search terms used for this review (see Appendix A), scholars deploy a range of adjectives to qualify such plural forms of leadership. Yet from a definitional perspective, there are no clear and widely acknowledged differentiating definitions for each of the terms. In the literature included in this review, terms such as collaborative, collective, democratic, dispersed and participative are frequently used as adjectives describing scenarios, events, styles and behaviours. Such terms do not represent consistently applied typologies of leadership, subject to a precise taxonomy.

Two terms that do represent a more cohesive and broadly consistent concept are shared leadership and distributed leadership.

### **2.2.3 Shared and Distributed Leadership**

Perhaps recognising the infancy of the conceptual, taxonomic and empirical landscape, most authors have opted to use one or other of these terms, or to use them interchangeably. It is unclear from this early stage of literature development whether the two terms should be used separately for different concepts. Overall, there is no evident exhaustive and definitive segmentation between the two. In this regard, I draw two tentative distinctions, which are:

- Shared often implies a smaller number of perhaps three to seven individuals, perhaps peers in a formally defined team, or a discrete management team operating together and collaborating; whereas distributed often suggests a much larger group operating at different hierarchical levels, including many individuals with no management role or aspiration, even to the extent of everyone in an organisation leading in some way
- Shared may imply a purposeful, whether conscious or not, enactment of leadership by more than one individual, perhaps by policy, perhaps as an outcome of organizational culture; whereas distributed may imply an entirely emergent, unplanned phenomenon

Alternatively, whilst there cannot be said to be seminal authors as yet, Peter Gronn appears to lead the field from a UK and Australian, educational management perspective, and typically uses the term distributed; whilst Craig Pearce and Jay Conger lead the field from a US, business management perspective, and typically use the term shared. As a programme, I consider the GES (Gateway to Educational Services) case study as more related to the business field (its educational connotation being largely incidental for this study).

Therefore, in this thesis I use the term shared leadership, with the definitions and descriptions below in mind, as appropriate for the specific business issue that will be explored here. Nevertheless, it follows from the above that literature using either term, shared leadership or distributed leadership, is incorporated.

#### **2.2.4 The Recent Emergence of the Concept of Shared Leadership**

In recent years, the concept of shared leadership has emerged. Indeed some writers feel it is an 'idea whose time has come' as a focus for thought about leadership (Gronn, 2008, p.142).

Cox, Pearce and Perry (2003, p.48) conceptualise shared leadership as:

‘a dynamic exchange of lateral influence among peers rather than simply relying on vertical, downward influence by an appointed leader’

One immediately apparent potential pitfall of such a conceptualisation is that it may lack clear separation from other theoretical domains, such as power and influence, teams, social exchange, followership and empowerment and so on, thereby losing its value as a specific lens for exploring organisational phenomena as a type of leadership (Gronn, 2008). This can be overcome by retaining the core idea that leadership concerns activities linked to setting a direction and achieving a business objective. So shared leadership can be regarded as:

‘a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both’ (Pearce and Conger, 2003, p.1)

For some scholars, the value of shared leadership is in its recognition of the important reality of inter-relationships among colleagues seeking the same objective. Thus it is:

‘a more relational process, a shared or distributed phenomenon occurring at different levels and dependent on social interactions and networks of influence’ (Fletcher and Käufer, 2003, p.21)

Whilst the above descriptions provide a starting point, as yet there is a dearth of extended, analytical discussions of the concept of shared leadership (Gronn, 2002) and limited empirical research.

Such a concern is further exacerbated by the paradoxes contained within the conceptualisation itself. How can an organisation appoint a leader who will want to and know how to share that leadership? How to prevent corporate memory, with its preference for iconic, masculine culture, from causing subtle enactments of shared leadership to ‘get disappeared’ (Fletcher and Käufer, 2003, p.25)?

Nevertheless, conceptual models of what shared leadership is and how it might work are beginning to emerge (Gronn, 2002; Cox, Pearce and Perry, 2003; Seers, Keller and Wilkerson, 2003; Burke, Fiore and Salas, 2003). The rest of this chapter builds on the descriptions above and these initial conceptual models to discuss the literature on shared leadership in more depth, to derive some relevant attributes, to consider how it might work and to focus on its relevance to the business issue and context that are the subject of this study.

### **2.2.5 Further Defining Shared Leadership**

Having thus narrowed the discussion and provided an initial description for shared leadership (albeit with the caveat that it is not described in detail in literature and is acknowledged as potentially elusive in empirical study), the rest of this section provides further definition for the phenomenon from the literature.

The selected literature base contains sufficient cross-referencing to point to shared leadership (incorporating distributed leadership) representing a cohesive literature domain, and, presumably, an objectifiable concept.

The definitions provided in the previous section can be enhanced by exploring four essential attributes of the emergent concept of shared leadership.

#### **Leadership as Plural**

The first defining attribute of shared leadership is that it involves more than one person enacting leadership. It is a plural phenomenon, which can operate at the team, group or organizational level (Gronn, 2002; Cox, Pearce and Perry, 2003; Seers, Keller and Wilkerson, 2003; Burke, Fiore and Salas, 2003). At this point, we do not consider how many people are enacting leadership. Simply, by definition, it is enacted by more than one person within any given organisational setting. This marks an essential distinction from the traditional paradigms of leadership.

The most cogent strand of explanation from the literature of what shared leadership may look like in practical terms is the idea of the seamless and regular transfer of the functions or activities of leadership within the sharing parties. Leadership is transferred according to, for example, topic, need, skill set or simply availability; whereby individuals or sub-sets of the sharing leader group step forward and step back as required (Yukl, 1999; Pearce and Conger, 2003).

Barry (1991, p.34) conceptualised shared leadership as 'a collection of roles and behaviors that can be split apart, shared, rotated, and used sequentially and concomitantly', with multiple, complementary leaders in the team at any time. This idea of the leadership functions, processes and tasks transferring between individuals is central to the shared leadership concept.

### **Leadership as Processual**

The second defining attribute considers leadership in terms of the various functions, processes and tasks of leadership which are undertaken by more than one individual (Cox, Pearce and Perry, 2003; Hartley and Allison, 2000; Pearce, Conger and Locke, 2007; Gronn, 2002). In other words, leadership is considered as a processual phenomenon.

Behavioural notions also apply for shared leadership, just as they have done traditionally for individualised leadership (Houghton, Neck and Manz, 2003). This may represent no more than a distinction in the terms used, as the difference between the behaviours that enact leadership and the processes or tasks of leadership may be of minor import for this study. For example, in exploring whether leadership operates as a shared phenomenon, leaders behaving in a motivational manner can be considered as conceptually the same as leaders enacting the leadership task of motivating others.

Whilst processual and behavioural approaches may be two sides of the same coin, in the shared leadership literature the personal attribute school of leadership (a dominant theme across traditional leadership paradigms), is not



evident. This is a logical result of separating the concept of leadership as a process or set of processes from the concept of the leader as a person or role, which shared leadership inevitably does. Examining leadership in the UK public sector in the light of a decade of pressure for 'strong, visible and accountable leadership' to bolster performance, Hartley and Allison (2000, p.35) explored the distinction between the person, the position and the process, arguing for the last as the appropriate focus, in order to understand and promote the distribution of leadership across the organisation.

Thus it is clear from its plural and processual attributes that shared leadership represents a departure from ideas of leadership based around the individual, of the individual's interactions with those who are led, and of the individual's responses to situational stimuli.

Whilst not examining leadership per se, but enumerating the specific competences for programme managers as opposed to project managers, Partington, Pellegrinelli and Young's (2005) required competences for a programme manager allude strongly to leadership rather than management. Recasting these competences from "must haves" into "must dos" aligns them with the processual and behavioural aspect of the above definition.

### **Leadership as Reciprocal, Lateral Influence**

Closely linked to the above two themes of leadership as more than one person enacting the processes of leadership is the notion that shared leadership is about individuals acting in a reciprocal, lateral influencing manner (Pearce and Conger, 2003; Solansky, 2008; Vas and Wilson-Evered, 2008). From a leadership perspective, influencing is the process whereby one individual causes another individual to contribute to achieving a particular aim in the absence of any form of authority.

For leadership to exist, others have to follow, thus all leadership is in a sense a group-level phenomenon, with some kind of transaction between individuals. The

traditional view of leadership sees this transaction as a vertical phenomenon, that is, influence from one leader down to many followers. Cox, Pearce and Perry (2003, p.48) use the phrase 'lateral influence' when exploring what shared leadership may mean in practice. On the basis of such influence, the property of leadership is then voluntarily

'ascribed to one individual, an aggregate of separate individuals, sets of small numbers of individuals acting in concert or larger plural-member organizational units' (Gronn, 2002, p.428).

Thus in seeking empirical evidence and in attempting to theorize about shared leadership, it is these instances of lateral influence and their attributions by actors as leadership that are of particular interest.

This mutual influencing is itself a feature of the high skill, high knowledge needs of much modern work, including project and programme management, where essential intellectual and social capital assets are inevitably dispersed across individuals (van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry and van Meurs, 2008).

### **Leadership as Goal Seeking**

The fourth key aspect is the intent or purpose of the leadership that is being shared or distributed – individuals acting in this way lead each other, and other colleagues, towards a specific, meaningful shared goal, which is beyond the specific immediate task upon which influence is being exercised (Pearce and Conger, 2003).

This goal-seeking aspect forms part of the definition, not least because it distinguishes shared leadership from a multitude of other team and group phenomena where transactions of influence take place between co-workers on a daily basis without necessarily constituting shared leadership.

## **2.2.6 Summary – Shared Leadership Defined by its Attributes**

If a single definition from the literature represents the best fit for most scholars' views, Pearce and Conger's (2003, p.1) is the most appropriate:

'A dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both'

From this definition, I draw four key attributes of shared leadership (plural, processual, reciprocally lateral influence, and goal-seeking) which together complete the description of shared leadership. In other words, it is characterised as more than one person carrying out tasks of leadership by using reciprocal, lateral influence to achieve goals. This notion constitutes the dominant central theme of the developing paradigm of shared leadership.

The above essential attributes represent most scholars' views on shared leadership's essential departure from mainstream traditional leadership literature. Shared leadership can be understood as what happens between individuals, when more than one is enacting leadership. But in order to further distinguish it from other organisational phenomena, such as team dynamics, power, social exchange, influence, collective decision-making, other attributes need to contribute to the description, and the four attributes described above represent my synthesis of what the literature offers in this regard.

## **2.2.7 Mechanisms of Shared Leadership**

We should also consider how shared leadership actually works. Before characterizing the key studies, it is appropriate to note that conceptual literature focussing on the mechanisms of shared leadership is extremely limited and immature and, overall, does not yet appear to offer the set of coherent and compelling formal and substantive theories or models one might expect to underpin such a concept (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

## **Numerical and Concertive Action**

Gronn (2002) differentiates between numerical action, which is the aggregation of individuals' acts of leadership through the seamless transfer of the leadership function from one individual to another, and concertive action or conjoint agency. This latter phenomenon arises as the result of three processes - spontaneous collaboration, intuitive working relations and institutionalised practices. However, there is as yet limited explanation of what may lie behind these terms.

Gronn posits concertive action as shared leadership's defining attribute, and from their review of literature, Woods, Bennett, Harvey and Wise (2004, p.441) consider it to be one of shared leadership's distinctive elements. The idea of concertive action mechanisms does point to the potentially unique practical value of shared leadership as a phenomenon – that it offers more than the sum of its parts. This is what Gronn is attempting to describe in differentiating concertive action or conjoint agency from numerical action. Indeed, it may be that only instances of conjoint agency truly constitute shared leadership, though it is not evident if other authors implicitly adopt this distinction in their understanding of the concept. Barry (1991) attempts to offer one example of such a scenario, where no one individual possesses the requisite skill or training to solve an emergent issue, thus members work together to fill the particular gap, which could not otherwise be filled. However, there appears to be a dearth of exemplification or explanation of Gronn's mechanisms in the literature.

## **Other Mechanisms**

Other authors have described one or more cognitive, affective and relational mechanisms in attempting to explain how shared leadership works, and how it may lead to improved outcomes (Burke, Fiore and Salas, 2003; Solansky, 2008). Some see the mechanism of shared leadership in terms of naturally task-oriented and naturally relation-oriented leaders working together in a complementary fashion, with different emphases at different phases of a change programme (Waldersee and Eagleson, 2002).

Day, Gronn and Salas (2004) consider shared leadership as either (or both) an input and output of processes such as teamwork and team learning. Although this approach potentially lends itself to modelling of the actual mechanisms at work, there is as yet little in the way of measured cause and effect descriptions that might become possible with an input-process-output model.

Where studies have attempted empirical testing, they often posit an inputs–mechanisms/moderators–outputs model incorporating shared leadership, often working alongside vertical leadership, and with other factors such as team characteristics (e.g. size and maturity) and environmental factors (e.g. task complexity). Perry, Pearce and Sims (1999) and Burke, Fiore and Salas (2003) developed new models to test these ideas. Avolio, Sivasubramaniam, Murry, Jung and Garger (2003), Yang and Shao (1996) and Vas and Wilson-Evered (2008) adapted and integrated existing role and behavioural models from sociological and psychological disciplines to explain how these mechanisms and moderators work.

In summary, attempts to describe and exemplify the mechanisms through which shared leadership may work, and by which we might recognise it, appear under-developed at this early stage of theorisation. As Gronn (2008, p.154) puts it, 'important conceptual surgery still needs to be performed'. This is a pre-requisite to turning a greater understanding of leadership as a shared phenomenon into a useful device for practitioners.

### **2.2.8 Challenges to Shared Leadership**

It is evident from the above that the scholars referenced believe that shared leadership exists as a phenomenon, and that it is, at least to some degree, objectifiable. Given the concept's newness, it is appropriate to mention briefly those authors that have expressed views which challenge shared leadership.

The challenges take two forms: the concept of leadership is itself meaningless and shared leadership is not necessarily a valuable phenomenon.

Some scholars question leadership in any form as an objectifiable and valuable concept worthy of study (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003). Lakomski (2008, p.159) dismisses the specific concept of shared leadership from a neuroscientific and empirical perspective:

‘there is little basis in fact about the existence of (distributed) leadership as an ontological category. Talk of leadership is a conventional, commonsense label for vastly more complex and fine-grained causal physiological and neuronic activities within certain societal contexts.’

Whilst much of the recent focus is fuelled by hypotheses and investigations (or implicit assumptions) that shared leadership is a good thing, even authors promoting the concept of shared leadership balance their enthusiasm by pointing out potential inefficiencies, limitations and constraints from sharing and distributing leadership (Harris, 2008; Locke, 2003; Gronn, 2008).

Ultimately, a precise objectification of shared leadership may, as with leadership more generally (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003), prove elusive or even unhelpful. It may be better to proceed to study it as an interpretive device (Lawler 2008), even accepting the methodological avenues this forces us down. Nevertheless, exploratory studies such as this one can contribute to the enhanced description of the concept.

Perhaps, within the domain of leadership itself, the ‘heroic leader impulse’ may be the aberrant development (Gronn, 2008, p.142), especially in the highly complex, empowered and knowledge-rich environment of many modern organisations. Notwithstanding, any such demarcation disputes will be best served by continuing to consider what shared leadership may be, rather than what it is not.

### **2.2.9 Integrating Shared and Traditional Leadership**

Locke (2003), whilst a proponent of shared leadership's existence and value, doubts whether it can operate without traditional vertical leadership and suggests that only an integrated model, with leadership flowing vertically, laterally and diagonally is meaningful.

Indeed, there is a broad consensus that shared leadership does not replace vertical leadership but complements it (Pearce, Conger and Locke, 2007; Pearce and Manz, 2005; Laskow, 2003; Woods, Bennett, Harvey and Wise, 2004).

From both the US-based business management domain (Pearce, Conger and Locke, 2007) and the UK/Australian-based education management domain (Gronn, 2008), there is support for the idea of an integrated or hybrid enactment being the most likely in practice. Gronn (2008, p.155) has come to consider 'the potential for "hybrid" as a more accurate representation of diverse patterns of practice which fuse or coalesce hierarchical and heterarchical elements of emergent activities'.

The hybrid model appears to be the most compelling argument from the literature reviewed, given the embedded nature of traditional vertical conceptions and the complexity of the dynamics in the social systems in which shared leadership may be found.

### **2.2.10 Leadership Functions and Tasks that Can Be Shared**

Several studies categorise the functions, processes and tasks of leadership that may or may not be shared, with authors attempting to arrive at a set of, typically, 3-5 clusters for the functions of leadership. However, these tend to remain at the level of generic descriptors rather than identifiable, every day activities, and none stands out as having gained traction with other authors. Examples are Barry's (1991, p.36) 'envisioning, organizing, spanning and social'; and Cox, Pearce and Perry's (2003) 'transactional and transformational, directive and empowering'.

Within the clusters, examples of specific tasks or actions are often provided, but these can vary in both language and underlying meaning. As well as the above type of clustering, several authors believe that the duality of task-oriented and relation-oriented functions of leadership as shared or distributed is insightful.

At the more detailed level, a prototypical list of leadership tasks (adapted from Locke, 2003, pp.276-7) includes:

- setting the vision, establishing core values
- setting the structure and managing boundaries
- selecting, training and team building
- motivating and communicating
- promoting and supporting change

A core leadership task is setting the vision. Authors such as Locke (2003) believe that this cannot be shared, and, similarly, Turnbull James, Bowman and Kwiatkowski (2008, p.79) believe that 'Creating the "Main Idea" is one of the leadership tasks that cannot be distributed or shared'.

Others, such as Perry, Pearce and Sims (1999) and Dunoon (2002) consider that the team can and should collectively develop the vision. Van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry and van Meurs (2008) found that, in a reciprocal fashion, having a clearly-defined goal influenced distributed patterns of leadership.

Shamir and Lapidot (2003) found that in a military setting, establishing group boundaries and behavioural values, including making difficult decisions on them, was best achieved by the team itself, while others believe these processes cannot be shared because the risk is too great e.g. Locke (2003).

Burke, Fiore and Salas (2003) believe the key leadership functions of clarifying the mission and goals, melding members to the team, developing group norms and efficacy through shared attitudes, as well as through developing skills, efficacy and knowledge, are all sharable functions of leadership.



Similarly, Dunoon (2002) believes that leading learning is a shared leadership activity, whereas Locke (2003) believes training, motivating, communicating and team building can only be partially shared e.g. for lower level staff.

Pearce and Conger (2003) and Dunoon (2002) echo Kotter (1996) in believing change is a function of leadership that many people should lead. Locke disagrees, considering that promoting change is the preserve of the top leader (Locke, 2003; Pearce, Conger and Locke, 2007).

Denis, Langley and Cazale's (1996) view of shared leadership's role as crucial in stimulating and supporting change led to their focus on complementary roles, tactics and the cyclic progress of such change, as actors in a collaborative mode transitioned between making substantive change and political consolidation within the organisation.

Barry (1991), Perry, Pearce and Sims (1999), and Yang and Shao (1996) take a wider view of the scope for shared leadership, and consider all of the tasks described above as sharable. Gronn (2008) remains cautious on such an inclusive stance, warning of the danger of thinking of virtually every team-based initiative as shared leadership.

The conceptual ordering of task-level descriptions into higher level categories will perhaps in future lead to improved formal theories around singular and shared leadership, but for now they appear unconvincing, at least in terms of any valuable distinction from traditional leadership, or from traditional team-based activities. Nor will they prove valuable for an exploratory empirical investigation.

The list of detailed tasks, as exemplified in the list derived from Locke (2003) appears more valuable from the current research perspective, not least because some of its items resonate strongly with the programme environment. However, taking the tasks at the individual level, it is apparent that there is no consensus on what can and cannot be shared. As will be described later, it is the two vital

programme management tasks of setting the vision and establishing and structuring the programme that will be the focus of the empirical study.

### **2.2.11 Methods Used to Study Shared Leadership**

As the empirical study focuses on the phenomenon of shared leadership, it is useful to present a brief synopsis of the literature as relates to methods used so far to study this phenomenon empirically.

I noted earlier that as a defined concept, shared leadership is too new to have received extensive empirical investigation (Harris, 2008; Cox, Pearce and Perry 2003; Conger and Peace, 2003). This section reviews the limited number of approaches used so far and considers their applicability to shared leadership in the programme environment.

Of the papers on shared leadership studied in full in the systematic review, the majority were purely conceptual and theoretical. Where a paper did contain an empirical element, this was usually qualitative and exploratory, mostly using single and multiple case studies (some of which were of long duration), with a few using interviews and participant observation. Those few using quantitative methods were largely based around leadership measurement instruments such as Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) and small scale surveys.

A significant body of work comes from the educational (specifically primary and secondary schools) management environment, where splitting the role of headmaster/principal and empowering teachers to innovate in order to improve school performance have been major strategies in the UK, US and Australia. This is an environment characterised by a 'dual system of hierarchy and collegium' (Gregory, 1996, p.49), and the generalisability of such studies outside the educational domain must be in question.

Methods used and suggested by authors include quantitative surveys e.g. MLQ on the group as a whole or in part, adaptations of Team-based MLQ, social

network analysis, and qualitative observation-based methods e.g. leadership sociograms, ethnographic approaches (Conger and Pearce, 2003). For an analysis at both individual and team/group level, Avolio, Sivasubramaniam, Murry, Jung and Garger (2003, p.167) used a five factor model for team leadership style, but were 'not sure what the target of reference was in each rater's mind when they completed the TMLQ'.

This highlights a key risk for the present stage of development of knowledge on shared leadership, which is that the underlying concepts are insufficiently formed to merit testing and measurement without spurious results and returning with more questions than answers. As Avolio, Sivasubramaniam, Murry, Jung and Garger (2003, p.167) put it,

'We now must develop a deeper understanding of what constitutes "shared" leadership, and how it can be developed in teams using multiple methods to assess shared leadership.'

This suggests exploratory, qualitative approaches to empirical studies, at least initially.

Some of the difficulties with studying shared leadership relate to its emergent nature, but also to its intrinsic paradoxes and limitations. Fletcher and Käufer (2003, p.25) refer to its tendency to 'get disappeared' by informants whose mindset is dominated both by traditional models of leadership and aspirations or pressures to individualize and heroicise events. For example:

'Once activated, the leadership schema may cause individuals to selectively attend to, encode and retrieve schema-consistent information as well as misremember schema-consistent information' (Seers, Keller and Wilkerson, 2003, p.91)

Woods, Bennett, Harvey and Wise (2004) and Conger and Pearce (2003) suggest that in-depth and perhaps longitudinal anthropological and ethnographic techniques are needed to overcome these difficulties.

Linking causes to effects is also problematic, not least because success is not readily objectively quantifiable (especially so in programmes, which may deliver strategic, intangible benefits over long timeframes). Thus proxies such as measures of self-efficacy and potency are used (Seibert, Sparrow and Liden, 2003), but here again the exploratory nature of researching shared leadership in a business context such as programmes strongly suggests such an approach might only be appropriate much further downstream, once exploratory studies have enriched the conceptual understanding.

Mayo, Meindl and Pastor (2003) recommend a social network approach – not least because the relational entity is the most valid unit of analysis for shared leadership.

An assessment of the body of literature in this regard is limited by the fact that the majority of papers are conceptual, thus do not have a readily identifiable unit of analysis from an empirical, methodological stance. Nevertheless, by undertaking a simple coding based on the single “primary unit of scrutiny” in each paper, clear themes emerge. As described in section 2.2.5, one of the defining attributes of many authors’ conceptions of shared leadership is that it takes as its unit of analysis the functions, processes and tasks of leadership, which represent one-third of the units of scrutiny (analysis). The multi-person focus also dominates with one-third focusing on the team or group, with the remainder on the whole organisation or on the individual. It is recognized that this analysis has limited validity, but it offers a useful insight into the literature.

Gronn (2002) makes the point that only by setting the unit of analysis as the patterns of processes will it be possible to investigate the phenomenon of shared

leadership further, and this is reflected in the majority of those papers that do proceed to some form of empirical analysis.

Finally, Harris (2008, p.172) considers that ‘personal accounts of leadership practice are good proxies for empirical data’, and this is perhaps the most salient view, suggesting that whatever methods are chosen, an interpretivist or social constructionist epistemology will be appropriate.

### **2.3 Project/Programme Management and Leadership**

This section reviews literature on leadership in project and programme management.

As a discipline, project management has, over its 50 year history, established a universal model of success: to cost, to budget, to specification - the iron triangle, as it is sometimes described. One of its underlying assumptions is that the organisation’s objectives and strategy are known in advance, and the project exists to create defined, tangible changes within the strategy’s broad context – that is, to manage pre-defined changes with authority, using well understood analytical, planning and decision-making methods (Bourne and Walker, 2004). At a practitioner level, this has led to projects being considered as needing effective management, rather than effective leadership, which supports Handy’s (1999), Kotter’s (1996) and Gregory’s (1996) views, as described in Chapter One. Thus procedural, rational and authority-based methods dominate the execution and training of project management (Pellegrinelli and Partington, 2006) and, indeed, provide the very language of “project manager”. Few practitioners would instinctively describe themselves as “project leaders”.

Nevertheless, within the wide project and programme management domain, extensive literature on leadership exists. Thus, for the current purpose, I consider project leadership literature as a narrowly and precisely defined subset of project management literature. This is reviewed first, followed by directly relevant practitioner literature.

## **2.4 Academic Literature on Leadership in Projects and Programmes**

This section reviews the academic literature on leadership in project and programme management. It discusses leadership's importance in projects and programmes; functions, competences and styles of leadership; and relevant aspects of competences for a project/programme management professional. As noted earlier, most of this literature refers to projects rather than programmes.

### **2.4.1 The Importance of Project Leadership (as Opposed to Project Management)**

Within the literature discussing leadership in projects, there is consensus among scholars that leadership is important for success. Ammeter and Dukerich (2002) found that leader behaviour was a significant predictor of objective project performance and perceptions of project and team performance. Smith (1999, p.88) similarly found that 'projects often fall short of achieving their anticipated results, not due to a lack of project management, but rather from a lack of project leadership'.

Turner and Müller (2005) initially found that within the project management literature, there is only limited acknowledgement or discussion of project managers' leadership competence and style as project success factors. However, their own empirical research later demonstrated that leadership style, described in intellectual, emotional and managerial competency terms, does indeed correlate with project success, and that different styles are appropriate for different types of project (Müller and Turner, 2007).

So, if leadership is important, we need to explore what it means and what form it takes in this environment – or more specifically, how leadership of projects and programmes is different to management of projects and programmes.

For Thamhain (2004, p.543), effective project managers are:

‘social architects who understand the interaction of organizational and behavioural variables and can foster a climate of active participation, accountability and result-orientation. This requires sophisticated skills in leadership’.

Norrie and Walker (2004, p.48) draw a clear distinction between the management of a project as ‘the day-to-day operations of a project plan in pursuit of an agreed set of outcomes – on-time and within budget’ and project leadership as:

‘the higher pursuit of the project team’s creating purposeful, strategic action that will augment the organisation’s business strategy and achieve results within the norms and values of the organisation.’

This accords with characterisations of leadership envisioning, creating, adapting and inspiring organisations (Kotter, 1996, p.25). This is an interesting perspective, in that by augmenting the strategy, it potentially questions the underlying assumption of a pre-existing, higher order strategy above the project. This alludes perhaps to the conceptualisation of a programme relevant to this study, as substantively different to a project, and acutely needing leadership.

The next stage of elaboration of these ideas is to take a stipulative perspective, and I start by unpacking what may be meant by leadership in projects and programmes.

#### **2.4.2 Functions, Competences and Styles of Project Leadership**

A major theme of academic literature has been the widely-researched paradigm of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) in the project environment.

Prabhakar (2005, p.57) found that transformational leadership, and especially one aspect – ‘idealised influence’ (role-modelling behaviour, instilling faith, respect, transmitting a sense of vision) – has an important impact on project success. He also found that project managers exercise ‘switch leadership’ – the flexible use of both transformational and transactional styles. The concept of

switch leadership accords with Norrie and Walker's (2004) view that exception-based or situational leadership is widely practised, and with Thite's (2000) finding that in IT projects, a combination of transformational leadership and technical leadership led to high project success.

On the other hand, Keegan and Den Hartog (2004) found that in the project context a transformational leadership style did not correlate significantly with the specific outcomes of employee motivation and commitment, which they held to be amongst the functions of leadership.

Wang, Chou and Jiang (2005, p.173) suggested that on large complex IT system projects 'leaders should demonstrate more charismatic behaviors to establish...team members' cohesiveness and, thus, improve team performance'.

Norrie and Walker (2004) see the problem not as one of leaders needing to motivate, but one of leaders needing to offer clarity and vision. Barber and Warn (2005, p.1034) argue that project success depends on future oriented and emotionally competent (as well as cognitively competent) leadership. They adopt the language of 'firefighter' for the traditional project manager who executes rationally, albeit reactively, and 'firelighter' for the project manager who evokes passion for a vision and inspires proactive interventions to ensure well-rounded successes. Building on Bass, Jung, Avolio and Berson (2003), Barber and Warn (2005) posit that there are four types of leadership behaviour in a project environment – transformational and maintenance (the realm of the firelighter), and reactive and avoidant (the realm of the firefighter).

An alternative model to such transformational and charismatic models is offered by Bourne and Walker (2004, p.226), which they call 'tapping into the power lines'. Rather than as a leadership style, they see this as a third skill set or competence, beyond hard/intellectual and soft/emotional skills. The notion of tapping into the power lines denotes an ability to influence in subtle and complex



ways within the organisation, based on awareness of unstated or implicit rules and mores.

Gehring (2007) and Loo (2003) argue that leadership does form an intrinsic part of management in the project world. They seek to explain the interactions of the leader/manager and the project's outcomes. Their belief in leadership as an intrinsic aspect of management contrasts their work with others, who take the view that leadership may not be sufficiently demonstrated in project management today. Loo (2003) considers that skills (both technical and people/leadership) and organisational factors (which either facilitate or inhibit), determine good practice or poor practice, thereby directly determining performance. Gehring (2007) focuses on identifying the particular traits or competences that may make someone a successful project manager. He believes that applying general theories of leadership (such as transformational, charismatic, path-goal or behavioural) to project management is flawed, because project managers may have become project managers on the basis of abilities other than leadership.

The previous two sections demonstrate two key points: first, that where leadership of projects has been studied, it is considered as important to project success; second, the functions, competences and styles of project leadership follow the traditional paradigms of leadership, particularly the transformational / charismatic paradigm. Next I discuss how the nature of programmes may differentiate them from projects, specifically relating to leadership.

#### **2.4.3 Differentiating Programmes from Projects in terms of Leadership**

One way to frame the business problem that programmes, as opposed to projects, are intended to address is to adopt Heifetz and Laurie's (2001) adaptive problem and technical problem distinction. This leads directly to conceptions of different expertise requirements and styles.

In differentiating a programme from a project, a common theme is of a different level of complexity and uncertainty (Pellegrinelli and Partington, 2006). Much of this complexity is linked to the fact that the “to cost, to time, to specification” model no longer applies, and a more balanced view of success, coupled to a wider set of approaches and competences will be necessary. Pellegrinelli and Partington (2006, p.5) stress the pitfalls for managers in taking a project based view of programmes: ‘typically they seek to impose degrees of order, control, stability and predictability that are untenable in the circumstances’.

Partington, Pellegrinelli and Young (2005) investigated programme managers’ interpretation of what their work involves and how they perform it. From this they developed a competence framework based on four levels of conception of 17 attributes. A higher level of conception generally includes the lower level and can be considered as more sophisticated. From the nature of the conceptions and implied activities (and referencing back to Thamhain (2004), Prabhakar (2005), and others who differentiate what leadership means in this environment), it can be argued that individuals with a higher level conception of programme management would demonstrate more leadership than those with a lower level conception, where activities are more procedural, rational, mechanistic and reactive. For example, under the attribute ‘Relationship with Team’, the lowest conception is described as ‘Supportive and responsive to requests for help’, which is suggestive of rational, mechanical and authority-based management, whereas the highest conception is described as a ‘Confidence-inspiring leader with charisma and credibility who can get people to modify their natural behaviour’ (Partington, Pellegrinelli and Young, 2005, p.91). Achieving the highest level conception in all 17 attributes would suggest an extremely high performing, and probably rare, individual. Partington, Pellegrinelli and Young do not introduce the idea that a number of people leading a programme might collectively hold the highest levels of all attributes, though they do not exclude it.

Pellegrinelli, Stenning, Partington, Hemingway, Mohdzain and Shah (2006) used the model to investigate organisational factors. They grouped these into helpful

and hindering factors, by perceptions common to informants with higher or lower order conceptions, and by perceptions where higher and lower order informants differed in opinion. The results suggest higher order informants are linked to organisational environments where leadership is likely to be privileged over management. Even in the five competences grouped as 'Relationship between self and others', no conceptualisation of leadership as a shared phenomenon is apparent, although again, this is not excluded.

#### **2.4.4 Summary – Academic Literature on Leadership in Projects and Programme**

The review of academic literature on leadership in projects and programmes suggests there is a broad spectrum of ways in which project managers exercise leadership, in keeping with the various ways in which theorists characterise leadership generally. Whilst the detail of what it involves and how it is enacted varies, leadership in projects is generally conceived as linked to the human, behavioural and relationship aspects of projects and to envisioning and motivating tasks, as opposed to the rational, transactional task-oriented aspects that often dominate traditional thinking about projects. There is broad agreement among scholars that leadership is important in projects and programmes, and that one important aspect of enacting leadership is to complement the technical or procedural competences with emotional and people-oriented competences. Thus the over-riding consensus is that a breadth of competences are desirable, spanning the technical, executive and rational (broadly, management), to the human and organisationally adept, visionary and inspiring (broadly, leadership). Such a breadth of competences is more acutely needed in programmes than in projects, and there is evidence that the more a programme practitioner conceptualises a programme as different to a project, the more that conception will manifest in leadership-type behaviours.

## **2.5 Practitioner Literature on Leadership in Projects and Programmes**

### **2.5.1 PRINCE2 and MSP**

Today, the majority of UK public sector projects and programmes are executed within a managerial framework derived from two bodies of knowledge: Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2 (OGC, 2005) and Managing Successful Programmes (OGC, 2007). Originally developed by the UK Office of Government Commerce (OGC), they are, to a greater or lesser extent, used for most UK public sector funded projects and programmes.

These two reference manuals, consisting of techniques, processes, principles, rules, themes and guidance, have come to dominate the practice of project and programme management in the UK public sector. Highly normative, they are considered by many to constitute best practice in the project and programme field.

Projects have perhaps traditionally been best understood in the context of specification-led change activities, such as for engineering, construction and IT systems. When the UK Government undertook a major and sustained package of public service delivery reforms in the 1990s, utilising project thinking for policy-led service and business changes, OGC developed Managing Successful Programmes (OGC, 2007). The 'adaptive work' (Heifetz and Laurie, 2001, p.132) inherent in such complex initiatives is of a more ambiguous and strategic nature compared to the projects that PRINCE2 had been designed to manage.

The OGC defines projects and programmes as follows:

'Project: (1) A management environment that is created for the purpose of delivering one or more business products according to a specified business case; (2) A temporary organisation that is needed

to produce a unique and predefined outcome or result at a specified time using predetermined resources' (OGC, 2005, p.7)

'Programme: A temporary, flexible organisation created to coordinate, direct and oversee the implementation of a set of related projects and activities in order to deliver outcomes and benefits related to the organisation's strategic objectives' (OGC, 2007, p.4)

The techniques, processes, principles, rules, themes and guidance in both PRINCE2 and MSP concentrate on the procedural, rational and analytical aspects of project and programme management. Nevertheless, they touch on project and programme leadership, as described below.

## **2.5.2 PRINCE2 and MSP on Leadership**

PRINCE2 is a 'structured method for effective project management' (OGC, 2005, p.1). Its main artefact is a 457 page manual. None of the Processes, Components or Techniques in the PRINCE2 manual refers to the terms leader or leadership. These two terms do not appear even once in the index or glossary of the manual, nor in its 169 chapter, section or appendix headings. In the list of specific roles defined as part of the method, none uses the term leader, and there are no leadership-related products or deliverables.

From this, I infer that PRINCE2 does not consider leadership as an important concept for 'effective project management' (OGC, 2005, p.1). This supports the view that in the practitioner world it is management that is considered important for projects, and contrasts with the academic literature described previously.

MSP (OGC, 2007) does feature leadership as an important concept, with its Principle of 'Leading Change' and its 'Governance Theme' of 'Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement'. MSP's seven Principles ('Leading Change, Envisioning and communicating a better future, Focusing on benefits and threats to them, Adding Value, Designing and delivering a coherent capability, Learning

from experience, Remaining aligned with corporate strategy’) are dealt with, as a whole, relatively briefly, in one chapter comprising four pages (of the 258 pages in the MSP manual). Within these, ‘Leading Change’ comprises one and a half pages.

From this, I infer that MSP considers the leadership of change programmes as important, yet has limited guidance to offer as part of the codified body of knowledge.

Nevertheless, the limited text does describe briefly the kind of leadership required: ‘clear direction, engendering trust, active engagement, appointing people, living with uncertainty, innovative problem solving, supporting transition’ and provides three anonymous mini-case studies to exemplify leadership (OGC, 2007, p.14).

The chapter on ‘Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement’ occupies 11 pages of the 87 pages on the nine Governance Themes. There are two key sections of interest. The first is a summary of Partington, Pellegrinelli and Young (2005), described earlier. The second is an attempt to differentiate between management and leadership for the programme context, provided below.

Table 1: Leadership and Management (OGC, 2007, p.48)

<b>Leadership is...</b>	<b>Management is...</b>
Particularly required in a context of change. It clarifies the “as is”, the vision of the future, and thrives in the tension between the two	Always required, particularly in business-as-usual contexts, and focuses more on evolutionary or continual improvement
Inclined to clarify the “what” and the “why”	Focuses on the “how” and the “when”
More concerned with direction, effectiveness and purpose	Concerned with speed, efficiency and quality
Most effective when influencing people by communicating in face-to-face situations	Most effective when controlling tasks against specifications or plans
Focused on meaning, purpose and realised value	Focused on tasks, delivery and progress

### 2.5.3 Leadership Roles in PRINCE2 and MSP

Both PRINCE2 and MSP contain sections on Organisation. These are illuminating for their normative approach to role definition, which is closely linked to analyses of leadership. PRINCE2 takes a traditional, hierarchical, person-centred view whereby two key individual roles are defined – Project Manager and Project Executive, and discusses these in accountability and responsibility terms:

‘PRINCE2 provides for a single focus for day-to-day management of the project, namely the Project Manager, who has well-defined responsibilities and accountabilities’ (OGC, 2005, p.212)

The Project Manager reports to the Project Board which consists of three roles (Executive, Senior User and Senior Supplier), but:

‘The Project Board is not a democracy controlled by votes. The Executive is the key decision maker because he/she is ultimately responsible to the business’ (OGC, 2005, p.209)

Programmes run under MSP are quite different. MSP hints strongly at the need for leadership beyond responsibility and accountability, and at the relevance of a conceptualisation of leadership as a necessarily plural phenomenon, albeit primarily within the programme board structure:

‘The key principles for effective leadership of a programme (which fall primarily to the members of the Programme Board including the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), Programme Manager and Business Change Manager)’ (OGC, 2007, p.28)

It further defines these principles as ‘vision-creating...empowered decision-making...visible commitment and authority’ (OGC, 2007, p.28). The normative, formally constituted triumvirate of leadership roles forming the Programme Board is generally operational in nature. It sits below a Sponsoring Group, which

appoints the SRO (generally a peer of the other Sponsoring Group members). The SRO then sits on both the Sponsoring Group and the Programme Board. This model is widely adopted in practice in the public sector, albeit titles may differ and there are numerous variations on the theme. The SRO is usually a senior public servant who retains accountability and reporting to the one or two highest layers of the civil service, and directly or indirectly to ministers, and whose ownership of the business issue may often pre- and post-date the programme as a defined organisation. The Programme Manager is often the technical expert in programme delivery, bringing managerial and leadership qualities, may or may not be familiar with the functions of the business-as-usual environment, and may often be a temporary or external appointment.

The Business Change Manager is theoretically drawn from the business-as-usual function, and amongst other things, acts as the voice of front line staff, liaises with business-as-usual functions, and ensures benefits will ensue to the organisations involved after the programme has closed.

#### **2.5.4 Summary – Practitioner Literature on Leadership in Projects and Programmes**

PRINCE2 is entirely silent on leadership in projects. MSP considers it a key concept that is distinct from management in programmes, though MSP itself offers very limited guidance. MSP does present a pointed difference from PRINCE2's singularity of role, in that MSP contains an inherently multi-person leadership perspective.

### **2.6 Combining the Phenomenon and the Context**

This section draws together the literature on the phenomenon of interest (shared leadership) with the literature on the context of interest (leadership of UK public sector programmes).



By its very nature, shared leadership will depend heavily on local context. The mechanisms must be both agential (people-dependent) and structural, in which context figures large (Woods, Bennett, Harvey and Wise, 2004).

For van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry and van Meurs (2008, p.223),

‘this emerging area of distributed leadership is particularly relevant in present day organisations which increasingly rely on cross-functional self-managing project teams.’

Vas and Wilson-Evered (2008) found positive correlations between shared leadership and multi-disciplinary healthcare team effectiveness, and they consider this as relevant for other multi-disciplinary teams, such as project teams. We can reasonably extrapolate the above views on shared leadership’s relevance from projects to programmes.

A clear implication of the role differentiation process is that various members of a group can and do simultaneously contribute influence to activities within the work group (Seers, Keller and Wilkerson, 2003). In the programme management environment, specified senior roles, such as Senior Responsible Owner, Programme Manager, Business Change Manager and Project Manager (OGC, 2005, 2007), may be complementary, and the complexity and interdependence of their tasks may make them suited to, and demanding of, shared leadership.

Two functions of leadership from the list in section 2.2.10 derived from Locke (2003) appear especially interesting for the UK public sector programme management context, not least because they are extremely important pre-requisites for programmes to exist and succeed, and they are inherently goal-seeking. These are setting the vision and establishing and structuring the programme. Programmes are often vision-led, and this vision is often complex and multi-faceted, and difficult to achieve (hence why it is a programme not a project). It also requires managers to define and allocate resources to a new structure, and to operate in a cross-functional and cross-organisational mode in

order to effect change. Programmes are set up and structured specifically around the goal, and influenced to a greater or lesser degree by prevailing organisational constraints, and by the individuals brought in to deliver them. Thus these two functions of leadership are both likely places to find the phenomenon of shared leadership, and may potentially benefit from the exercise of leadership in a shared mode. It should also be noted that these two functions are closely linked to the goal-seeking nature of shared leadership, which is one way in which shared leadership can be differentiated from other team-based interactions.

A further relevant feature of public sector programmes may be the frequent occurrence of senior teams made up of a mix of backgrounds and professional disciplines e.g. senior civil servants as Senior Responsible Owner and Programme Director, a consultant, interim or secondee as Programme Manager, a line manager civil servant as Business Change Manager. These strategically pluralist organizations feature in studies from other sectors, such as healthcare (Lawler, 2008; Denis, Lamothe and Langley, 2001) and education (Gregory, 1996; Robinson, 2008).

As described in section 2.2.9, a relevant key theme to emerge from literature is the broad consensus that shared leadership does not replace vertical leadership. In UK public sector projects and programmes, the emphasis has been on individual accountability (e.g. the Senior Responsible Owner role) in an attempt to improve success (Lupson, 2007), albeit, as Lupson demonstrates, conceptions of individual accountability vary.

Whilst the need for or benefit of shared leadership in UK public sector programmes has not emerged per se from the academic literature, MSP does define and prescribe three individual roles in which leadership is vested, and in describing the activities for these roles, it alludes to leadership as shared (OGC, 2007, p.14-15). Shared leadership may thus have a place alongside established vertical conceptions of leadership in UK public sector programmes. Indeed, Lawler (2008, p.22) considers that it is as important for modernising the public

sector in the 21st century, as 'managerialism' was to professionalising the public sector in the latter part of the last century.

Therefore, the question arises as to whether shared leadership has a place in the programme environment and whether it may contribute to programme success. The inherent complexity and cross-functional, cross-organisational nature of programmes, allied to the cross-disciplinary, role-differentiated senior teams that lead them, make shared leadership highly relevant to the programme environment. As described above, two important functions of leadership where these drivers for shared leadership may be most acute are setting the vision and establishing and structuring the programme.

## **2.7 Research Questions**

In the section above I have characterised the UK public sector programme environment as potentially susceptible to shared leadership, and have described two selected functions of leadership where shared leadership may take place. In the literature chapter, I drew out four relevant attributes of shared leadership – plural, processual, lateral influencing and goal-seeking. Thus the Research Questions that result from the Business Issue and the Literature Review are:

In a UK public sector programme, with regard to setting the vision and establishing and structuring the programme:

- Are two or more people involved in leading these functions, and if, so, how?
- Is leadership enacted through lateral and diagonal influence as well as vertical influence to accomplish them, and if so how?

## **3 Methodology and Method**

### **3.1 Methodology and Research Philosophy**

By answering the research questions posed in section 2.7, this research aims to explore the phenomenon of shared leadership in the UK public sector programme context. Inherent in this aim is a quest to establish whether examples of shared leadership, as conceptualised in literature, can be identified; what form such shared leadership takes in this business context; and actors' own perceptions and descriptions of the phenomena.

Any form of leadership is by nature a human construct. Certainly for a relatively new paradigm with the apparently elusive characteristics of shared leadership (Fletcher and Käufer, 2003), its recognisable presence in praxis and its scholarly definition are highly dependent upon the perspectives of the individuals and groups involved in it, which emanate from their own experiences. Therefore its study should be largely phenomenological in nature (Chia, 2002).

This immediately suggests an epistemological position towards interpretivism and social constructionism. Individuals and groups in the empirical research study are influenced by their specific organisational and cultural situations. The value of the empirical research at this juncture is in providing richness to the meanings and nuances of the phenomena as experienced by the actors (Saunders, Thornhill and Lewis, 2006), and in contributing to the further elaboration of theories (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), which are acknowledged by key shared leadership theorists as immature (Gronn, 2002).

As the literature review demonstrates, theorisation and the limited empirical studies have not provided a dominant or detailed model to explain what shared leadership may look like in practice, or how it may operate.

A primarily qualitative methodology is appropriate given the emergent and human nature of the phenomenon and the exploratory nature of the study. Whilst not a

grounded approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) per se, the approach is informed by Partington's (2003) pragmatic emphasis on interweaving theory and data. It combines induction and deduction, involving a close interlinking between the theories emerging from shared leadership and project and programme management literature, and the data gathered.

It is clear from the literature review that the unit of analysis should be selected functions, processes or tasks of leadership (Gronn, 2002). The locus of the research is the individuals, the group and the business situation, acknowledging that different participants display different understandings of their subjective realities, as relate to these functions, processes and tasks. The focus of the research lies partly in exploring these different understandings, with the purpose being to explore whether the underlying patterns which may be revealed can offer insights into better practice or theory. Individuals' own sense-making (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfield, 2005), and the level that it is in practical terms possible for a researcher to get close to this sense-making, and perhaps the extent to which shared professional experiences and the environment permit assumptions of commonality in verbalising meaning, influence whether the research may be said to be closer to a classical interpretivist, or a more social constructionist stance.

My own position, as researcher, similarly impacts this interpretivist or social constructionist epistemology, as it does both the ontological and axiological dimensions. As a researcher into this subject, my ontological stance incorporates a conception that effective leadership is a material success factor in the UK public sector programme context, and of shared leadership as a possible theoretical and practical construct worthy of research. Shared leadership is potentially a valuable success factor in a domain of practice in which I hold a professional interest, offering a complementary perspective to the public sector's dominant accountable management understanding of programmes (Partington, Pellegrinelli and Young, 2005; Lupson, 2007). These considerations entail bias.

Most importantly, they risk accusations of finding what one wants to find and of interpreting phenomena unduly selectively.

This stance is inherently value-laden and I acknowledge this in collecting, interpreting and presenting the data. In particular, I do not make a positivistic claim that the study has “discovered shared leadership in the field”. Rather, findings describe and interpret empirical phenomena through the theoretical lens of shared leadership and allow the reader to accept them *prima facie*, or to interpret them through other lenses, which is entirely possible, and acknowledged. Limitations on the validity and generalisability of the findings are discussed in Chapter Six.

## **3.2 Method - Empirical Design**

### **3.2.1 Preferred and Alternative Design Options**

As van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry and van Meurs (2008) suggest, project teams are appropriate for the study of shared leadership, and programme teams will be at least as valid as project teams. A primary consideration for designing the method is to build it around the programme team itself. The literature review and the resulting research questions reinforce the perspective that the empirical study needs to be flexible and exploratory in nature, and these have been the major factors in deciding the overall design.

Choices considered for the research method ranged from single or multiple in-depth case studies, with elements of ethnographic approaches, participant observation, to a wider set of semi-structured, but less in-depth, interviews, or even the use of an instrument, such as a Team-based Multi-Factor Leadership Questionnaire, to conduct a quantitative or mixed-methods study. These were dismissed as inappropriate based on the desire to get close to this subtle and as yet insufficiently explicated phenomenon of shared leadership, in order to achieve a rich and multi-faceted understanding of it in one scenario.

One closely considered option was to use a multiple in-depth case study method, say of 2-3 typical or similar programmes, and this would certainly be an option for further research. It is arguable, however, whether it is truly possible to find programmes that are genuinely typical or similar. It would no doubt be possible to find some that are superficially similar, in terms of scope, organisational background, scale and so on, and to posit that these are in turn typical of a larger set. However, the phenomena of interest lie in the people aspects, in the nuances of their cognitive and behavioural responses to complex tasks, and in their complex, multi-faceted mutual interactions, for which attempting to demonstrate an appropriate degree of similarity may be invalid.

The selected design is a case study of one UK public sector programme. I am involved professionally with the programme, through business dealings with some of the actors and with the programme itself, though I do not hold a formal executive role on the programme. My involvement is through my company's consultancy assignments, for which I am ultimately responsible. First, I am myself contracted to provide occasional ad hoc strategic advice to the programme manager. Second, I am responsible for two separate teams of consultants: one working on the programme itself and integrated with the other programme team members; the other a self-contained consultancy team delivering one of the projects within the programme on an end-to-end basis. Third, I am responsible for a set of consultancy assignments for the sponsoring agencies, assignments which, though separate to this programme, report to and are funded by the same accountable civil servants as the programme.

Given this involvement, an obvious alternative approach to an academic study of shared leadership in UK public sector programmes would have been to select a different setting and participants, to ensure full separation and reduce some forms of potential bias to near zero. However, given the business-problem oriented nature of this research, that might be a redundant or detrimental design criterion. On balance, it is more desirable to embrace, and where appropriate mitigate and describe explicitly, the degree of involvement and any associated

bias, in order to secure the most valuable sources of richness (James and Vinnicombe, 2002).

A key challenge in designing this type of exploratory, qualitative research is to focus on the topics of interest in a way which still provides sufficient flexibility and freedom to explore them in some depth (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The chosen method allows this, with the rigour and structure of case study interviews, and the flexibility of observation, including casual dialogue.

An overly focused and structured approach might have lacked the necessary flexibility; risking, on the one hand, biasing the research through the selection of, *a priori*, interesting or comparable/contrasting subjects; or on the other hand, selecting an unproductive case; and further risk severely limiting the analytic generalisability (Yin, 2009, p.15), which should extend at least to public sector programmes of a similar nature, where similarity can be judged as appropriate by different readers.

Methods such as semi-structured interviews mitigate some risks and offer a broader reach for generalisability, but risk constraining opportunities to orient discussions around real events and to get at true meanings through effective probing. Given the emerging nature of shared leadership theory, the emphasis of the overall study is on expanding, generalising and refining these theories as the more desirable outcome, rather than on any attempts at statistical generalisability (Yin, 2009, p.15).

Ultimately, the choice of method is always one of balance; in this case, the desired choice was towards depth, richness and flexibility of investigation to inform the emerging theorisations of shared leadership, at the expense of statistical generalisability.

The preferred method is therefore a case study, combining a set of semi-structured interviews, observation of key meetings, casual discussions, scrutiny



of selected relevant documentation, and a final validating focus group of selected actors.

The case study method is well-adapted to this research as it permits in-depth deliberations and discussions, helping to uncover the latent and possibly elusive nuances of shared leadership, and to provide powerful conceptual insights into this novel phenomenon (Harrison, 2002; Siggelkow, 2007). The research is exploratory, therefore both the data gathering and its interpretation and analysis were flexible and adaptive. As James and Vinnicombe (2002) recommend, my own personal insights from observation and discussions, as captured in a journal, were used to complement directly gathered data.

### **3.2.2 Overview of the Case Study Programme**

The setting for this case study is a programme entitled the Gateway to Educational Services (GES) Programme. The programme is jointly sponsored, funded and resourced. The main funding body, and the prime sponsor, is the UK Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) also formally sponsors GES, providing the key staff resources and other assets. A form of non-executive - yet nonetheless powerful - sponsorship is also provided by Cabinet Office, as GES forms part of a portfolio of programmes across Government, under the broad heading of the Transformational Government Strategy (Cabinet Office, 2006), a major initiative to improve public services. It is also noteworthy that within DCSF, two separate organisational units provide sponsorship in different ways. The Chief Information Officer's Group provide funding and senior personnel support; and a policy unit, Families Division, provide senior support, including the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO).

GES is in its early stages, thus in keeping with the nature of programmes rather than projects, its scope and deliverables remain, to an extent, fluid. The following excerpt from GES's Terms of Reference describes its vision:

‘GES is a framework for delivery of joined-up and universally available web-based services for parents/carers, delivered with a consistent “look and feel” between central government, schools and local authorities’.

The initiatives now constituting GES began operating formally as the GES Programme in early 2009. However, these activities had been underway, through ad hoc mandates and funding, for approximately one year prior to that. Moreover, the roots of GES can be traced back further, inasmuch as the same core group of individuals have been working on various related projects and initiatives for three to four years.

Currently, GES contains workstreams (sets of related activities and deliverables) that can be described as operating at the programme level, such as Marketing and Communications, Technology Strategy, Process Analysis, Change Management. Two projects within the programme had been formally constituted as of early 2009. These are Online Free School Meals (OFSM) and Online School Admissions (OSA). In the same way as GES traces its origin back well before the formal creation of the current programme, both these projects build on substantial work done prior to GES, and indeed in many cases the key people involved have remained constant over the last three to four years.

### **3.2.3 Operationalising the Empirical Design**

#### **Case Study Protocol**

A case study protocol was developed prior to collecting any data and the key contact, the programme manager, was offered the opportunity to review this in order to achieve clarity on the planned interventions and procedures. The protocol firstly provides the overview of the case study, including a brief description of the case itself. It then describes the procedures and general rules to be used in the study, the instruments for collecting data, and an overview of

the case study report. Such a protocol facilitates the execution of the study and enhances reliability (Yin, 2009).

### **Meetings with Actors and Site Visits**

The primary sites visited were the offices of the organisations involved in the case study programme. These were HCC, where the programme's base office and administrative staff are located; DCSF and Cabinet Office, where most sponsoring group members and some programme team members are located. I attended a two-day residential session with the programme team and members of the sponsoring group (held at the National School of Government). However, the core group of staff operates to a large extent virtually and indeed many of the interviews were conducted in interviewees' houses and in hotels, and ad hoc discussions took place in offices, corridors, cafeterias and on the phone. It was important to ensure sufficient time to meet with the key individuals wherever was convenient, and to review materials held electronically or on paper. In addition, I had approximately 6-8 face-to-face and telephone conversations (primarily business rather than research focused), with key respondents, most notably the programme manager, during the course of the data gathering and analysis. Where applicable to the research, I made journal entries from these. Finally, as well as staff considered as respondents on the basis of being specifically interviewed for the research, I had various levels of business contact with other programme actors (i.e. those not specifically interviewed). Actors and Respondents are denoted as A1-A25 and R1-15.

### **Timing**

The main data collection activity took place between May and August 2009. I studied some documentation in advance of interviews and direct observation, and others between interviews. I had a degree of familiarity with some of this material prior to re-reading it for this specific research. Interviews occurred

interspersed between formal direct observation sessions, and informal sessions such as ad hoc discussions.

## **Permissions and Privacy**

The programme manager formally gave permission for the case study and for the programme and its sponsoring and stakeholder organisations to be named (the programme's sponsorship, governance and resourcing across central government departments, agencies and a local authority are contextually relevant). Individual interviewees each gave specific permission and privacy/confidentiality arrangements were agreed. In the text, respondents are pseudonymised as R1 to R15, and actors cited in quotations as A1 to A25 (R1 to R15 being the same individuals as A1 to A15, A16 to A25 being other actors cited by respondents, who were not themselves respondents). Providing specific job or role titles would invalidate the pseudonymisation, but there is interpretive value in denoting each respondent as either a programme team member (PTM) or sponsoring group member (SGM). Thus, quotations from respondents are denoted as "R1(PTM)", "R9(SGM)" etc.

## **Sources of Evidence**

Of Yin's (2009) potential sources of evidence in a case study, three were determined at the outset to be of primary use given the nature of the phenomenon and context – interviews, direct observation and documentation. Data collection was oriented around these.

## **Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with all those actors in the programme considered as relevant to the research questions (those interviewed being denoted as both Actors and Respondents). The respondents included managers within the programme team, functional and administrative staff within the programme team, sponsoring group members and other senior stakeholders.

Most interviews were focused, semi-structured interviews of approximately 45 minutes to one hour duration. More in-depth interviews of one and a half to two hours duration were conducted with selected key actors, and for two key actors (the programme manager and another programme team member) two such interviews took place with each, because the lines of discussion were particularly fruitful and both agreed to meet again to explore them further. As well as questions pertaining to the 'verbal line of inquiry' (Yin, 2009, p.87), some respondents were exposed to the 'mental line of inquiry', especially based around guided conversations on what key decisions, events, relationships and interesting artefacts might reveal about the research questions.

A short interview protocol (see Appendix B) was used to orient the verbal line of questioning. This was built both on the results of the literature review and on a small pilot study of four interviews conducted separately from this case study (which served primarily as a personal learning device). The protocol underwent slight revision after the first set of interviews in the case study itself. It was used flexibly as an interview guide rather than as a set of questions to be asked in the same manner and order to all interviewees. Given the nature of the subjective realities and interpretations of leadership, the interviews needed to flow, and I, as the interviewer, needed consciously to allow and support this, seeking opportunities to explore areas of interest as the interviews proceeded, whilst maintaining sensitivity and reflexivity (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

15 one-to-one interviews were conducted. All interviewees gave permission for the interviews to be tape-recorded and transcribed. As described in Chapter Four, the staffing and contributions to GES have evolved, and during the period of this case study, could be considered relatively amorphous. The selection of the 15 interviewees covers all key roles on the programme team, and the main actors within the sponsoring group.

The table in Appendix C provides information on Respondents R1-15 and Actors A1 - A25 (those mentioned by respondents in interviews, and who may also have been subject to direct observation or who authored documents scrutinised).

A final focus group interview was held with a sub-group of respondents at a programme team meeting, when early draft findings were presented, discussed, critically appraised and corroborated. This allowed respondents to reflect on the tenor of some of the data and allowed me to reflect on my early analysis. This technique further enhances validity in case study research (Yin, 2009).

### **Supplementary Interview Technique**

One supplementary technique (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002) was included in the design of the semi-structured interviews. The Critical Incident Technique was pioneered by Flanagan (1954) and has been extensively used in its original and adapted forms (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002), including to study project leadership (Kaulio, 2008). The intention here was not to adopt it as the core of the method, but to use aspects of it to supplement a more traditional semi-structured interview. It relies on asking an interviewee to consider in-depth, and to probe where appropriate, an important incident 'that deviates from the expectation of the actor' (Kaulio, 2008, p.341). The logic is to identify these and by analysing them as part of the discussion, to unfold themes, in this case instances of shared leadership in setting the programme vision, and establishing and structuring the programme (which have elements of criticality about them, in that they are amongst the more important, complex and difficult tasks in programme management). Whilst eschewing benefits associated with a more rigorous application of this method, it nevertheless proved a powerful device in focusing and probing specific instances, rather than focusing solely on generic discussions, which might otherwise be unduly influenced by the interviewee's conceptions of leadership and programme management generally. Two critical incidents were identified and pursued. These were the securing of

funding for the programme, and activities to set the internal structure for the programme.

## **Direct Observation**

This source of data consisted of informal and casual episodes, for example, ad hoc discussions with actors, as I met with them on non-research business relating to the programme or other matters. Notably, I have regular contact with the programme manager and occasional discussions ensued which I considered pertinent to the research, and which occasionally led to us reflecting jointly on the nature of leadership in the programme.

There were also two semi-formal in-depth observation sessions. These sessions were not tape-recorded. Rather I used field notes and a journal.

- A programme team monthly meeting
- A programme team and sponsoring group two-day residential away-day.

## **Documentation**

I scrutinized finished and draft documents relating to the programme. These included technical products (outputs of the programme) and management products (documents used to manage progress) (OGC, 2005). Examples are Programme Brief, Vision Statement, Stakeholder Engagement & Marcomms Plan, Board papers. Normal day-to-day correspondence, which is mostly in email form, was not scrutinized, because requesting unfettered access to such would cause informants legitimate privacy concerns. Copies of relevant documents were stored in the case study database. The key question in considering what documentation to study was: what will provide evidence for the research questions posed? Ultimately, of the three principal sources, documentation proved to be the least useful source of evidence.

In evidencing findings, it is mostly respondents' quotations from interviews that are used. During the analysis phase, a key test I imposed was whether my findings from journalised direct observations could be complemented in every case by direct quotations, and this almost universally proved to be the case.

## **Case Study Database**

Yin's (2009) recommended approach, whereby all the material generated through the above data collection activities are held in a case study database was adopted, partially through using NVivo.

## **Analysis**

I conducted qualitative analysis of the evidence, and again I used NVivo to assist in the coding, and re-coding, albeit NVivo served more as a repository for interim versions of the analysis structure, which unfolded as much using my head, paper, post-its and MS-Word as it did using NVivo. The analysis involved firstly correcting the interviews as transcribed by a third-party bureau, which was useful as a mechanism to enforce a slow and deliberate first pass of understanding the meaning and nuances of the text; then reading, re-reading and annotating the transcripts, along with journal entries, to arrive at the analytical codes.

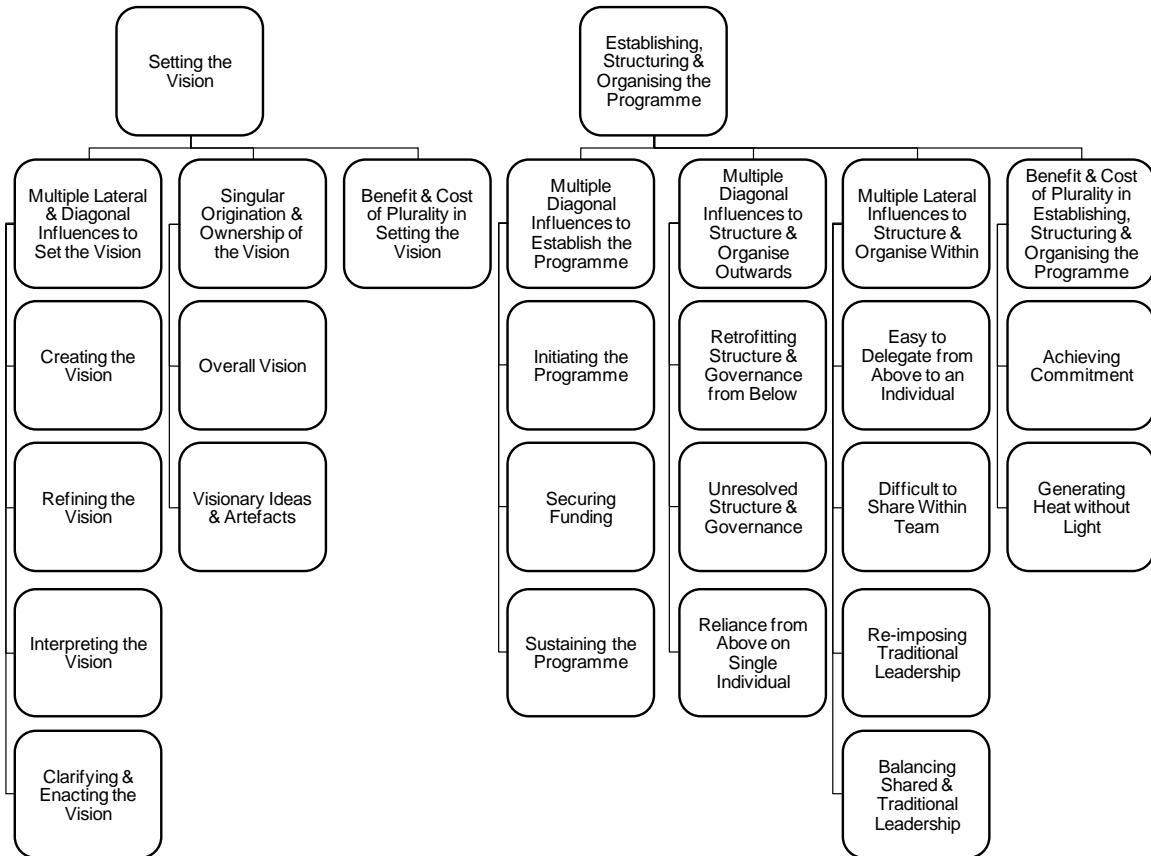
I developed numerous versions of the analytical structure for the findings, with three major iterations stored in NVivo. Given the nature of the research, several self-evident, external, high level codes could be adopted e.g. separating vision from establishing and structuring, separating shared from non-shared, separating programme team from sponsoring group, separating shared leadership attributes from mechanisms.

The final overall coding structure is presented below, and consists of three levels of coding. The first level is a simple division between the two functions of leadership studied. The second level consisting of seven codes is the key line and creates the basis for the structure of the Findings chapter, sections 4.1 to



4.7. The third level of coding provides the structure for the sub-sections within each section. The relevant segment of the overall structure is repeated for orientation at the beginning of each section in Chapter Four.

Figure 2: Final Coding Structure

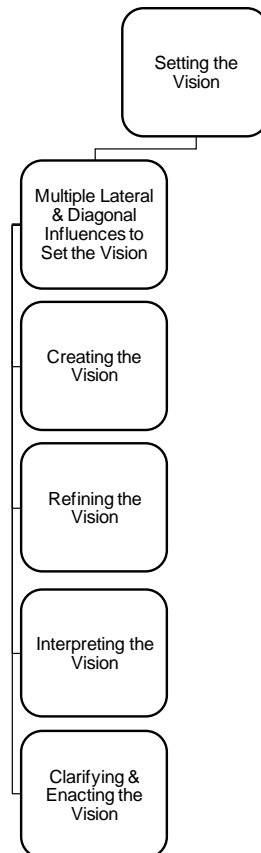


As with any relatively in-depth exploratory case study, much data was collected that does not, based on analysis, relate to the findings presented here for the specific research questions. Thus there were numerous interim codes that do not appear in the final coding structure. Once I had settled on this coding structure as the most appropriate, I undertook a detailed further pass through all other data coded separately, to assess whether codes and data should be added back into the structure, and whether they contradicted the final structure. It will be noted from the Findings and Discussions chapters that analysed data supports both

shared and non-shared (described as traditional) leadership. Thus relevant contradictory data is included within the analysis and presented as part of the structure.

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 Setting the Vision



The overall leadership function of setting the vision was characterised by a plurality of activities, inputs and influence. GES is a complex, cross-organisational, Transformational Government (Cabinet Office, 2006) initiative. Its central vision is for an entirely new way for a disparate set of public services across the education and children's services sector to be presented to citizens through online channels (see section 3.2.2 for the succinct vision statement from the programme's Terms of Reference). This vision was widely supported in principle, yet at the same time it was considered by many stakeholders as difficult to grasp, a challenge to the status quo, and hard to implement. The leadership task of setting this vision was far from a singular, discrete activity, decision or event. Rather, it was a complex, iterative process with involvement, input and

influence from numerous individuals and groups over an extended period. The process of setting the vision can be deconstructed into four sub-activities which differed from the perspective of shared leadership.

#### **4.1.1 Creating the Vision**

The initial activities during the early phases of the process of setting the vision were characterised by involvements from a large number of actors, in a relatively unstructured manner, taking place over an extended period of time.

The actual number of people who were involved is hard to quantify, but was in excess of 30-40 people. This included individuals who had previously worked together on related activities, and who would later come together again to form the kernel of the new programme team once established. It included individuals from various organisations, such as officials from central government departments, who would gradually coalesce to form the senior sponsoring group for the nascent programme. It included a much wider group of people from other organisations, such as representatives from many local authorities and informal parent groups, who can be described as interested stakeholders.

Given the overlapping nature of many of these activities, events and decisions, it is not possible to identify a precise multi-step process, or a chronology, for how the vision was arrived at. However, it is clear that for an extended period, perhaps up to a year, there were numerous on-going inputs to it from these various parties and large and small, formal and informal events, where people worked together on the underlying business issues, and shared ideas on how to address them. The overall picture is of a rather diffuse set of activities and inputs.

‘We had the workshop for the vision back in the Admissions days, so it was just before the previous programme finished. We had a workshop which included DCSF, local authorities, the e-Admissions team, the London e-Admissions team, Cabinet Office, Becta and, we did that as a standard all day workshop, and out of that came a vision statement

which we probably use. I think that probably was still the vision statement that was used right through.’ R1(PTM)

‘It was quite big, 40 odd people, and I think we set the vision for...it wasn't GES then but we were sort of setting this vision for...And then, we had that workshop, where we brought in - I think there were even representatives of schools there. There was someone that had some sort of parent responsibility, National Parents Society or something. I can't remember the exact name of the organisation. But it was a bit blue sky thinking, what should parental services look like? And we came up with a vision out of that workshop. And it went into some paper, I can't remember. I think that was the sort of, the early beginnings of what is now GES.’ R2(PTM)

‘Well I think it evolved as sort of part and parcel of our kind of a broader agenda.’ R10(SGM)

#### **4.1.2 Refining the Vision**

Following the initial stage of distributed, ad hoc inputs and involvements from any interested stakeholders to the elaboration of the vision, a narrower grouping was involved in filtering and synthesising the ideas into a clearer and more compelling form. This group contained the kernel of the eventual programme team, one or two of the most committed senior sponsors, and a few other individuals from stakeholder organisations who also felt committed, and whose ideas appeared consistent with those of the driving members of the core group. No formal or individual-led selection process for this initial narrower grouping occurred; rather it was essentially self-selecting. At this stage, no one was in a defined position with authority or management responsibility.

‘To sell the potential of a new programme they needed a vision to take to the people, the DCSF or whoever in order to get funding...and that

was where we saw the opportunity of helping all these local authorities.’ R5(PTM)

‘The first couple of months was defining what on earth we were actually going to try to put together... There was some discussion about what on earth was the vision and how were we going to realise it? There were loads of kind of strategy meetings, etc to decide what needed to be done.’ R7(PTM)

‘There was A1, myself. I mean the outputs came from that workshop. I think it was A1, me and ultimately it went to A8. I think I wrote it, for her then to...there may have been other...I think actually A22 helped me.’ R2(PTM)

‘And I remember there was some work that I think that A17 did with A1 at the time...to say “Well how can we put this into a bigger, a broader context?” And at that point, we presented some stuff to that group that had talked...so we tried to grow it from what we had into something that would be more joined up. And everyone agreed that we needed a more holistic approach and it was a matter of working through, “Well how do we get there? How do we scope it? How do we not try and boil the sea here?” And at that point we came up with the concept called Gateway to Educational Services.’ R8(SGM)

### **4.1.3 Interpreting the Vision**

During these crucial first phases of the iterative process of setting the vision, there remained a significant level of variation in individuals’ own interpretation of the overall vision. This applied even to the inner core of people who had worked together previously on related business issues, and who were the driving force in this new initiative. Within the overall scope of the business issues being addressed, each had particular areas of experience and interest. These formed a melting pot from which the key ideas that ultimately constituted the vision and the

activities of the programme emerged. Individuals also challenged each other's ideas in this process.

'So it was really a question of going up these avenues, looking at them and quite often moving back down to where we were looking at. But I concentrated on...that area...so I didn't have such an issue as perhaps other people in the team, for example, A3 had because her role or her vision would have been much more open.' R7(PTM)

Later, once the programme had been established around a documented and published vision, the vision itself continued to evolve. In summary form, the documented and published high level vision engaged senior stakeholders. In detailed form, it helped overcome important procedural and administrative hurdles (described below in section 4.4). However, the phrase setting the vision denotes a great deal more than authoring a vision statement for GES.

A number of tangible, compelling artefacts of the vision were important for external communication of the vision at a high level of abstraction. But for the core team to establish a set of shared values around the vision, and to move into an execution phase, it was important to go beyond the high level vision into more detailed messages, and to interpret the vision at a more granular level, through an individual and collective sense-making process.

This led to the newly-formed, close-knit team working together to challenge further and enhance their own understanding of the subtleties and implications of their vision, and, over time, to revise it. This ongoing personal and collective process of developing a deeper understanding occurred largely within the close-knit programme team, although once again it also included a small number of the most active members of the more diffuse sponsoring group, where they chose to become involved.

This is the first stage where actors associate this intellectually and emotionally challenging activity with leadership, and remember different people leading on it.

'The mission statement certainly changed many times sometimes as a result of meetings in which we realised that we needed to change it slightly...So it evolved, I think mainly through discussions, meetings. I mean we did have quite a lot of meetings in those days. We had two day meetings, etc where things were evolved...There were elements of leadership in there...not always the same people.' R7(PTM)

'We're not talking about a vision statement. We're talking about the shared understanding bit. Well, slowly and painfully, I would say. So, I think believing very strongly in it and still believing in it and thinking it's a sensible...It's not sexy or in fantasyland or anything like that. Well, I think people have come round to it as they've understood it and also as they've seen some of the difficulties of maybe some of the more fancifully suggested alternatives.' A1(PTM)

'When we first all got back together as a team, we had several team meetings, where I said we had to get some key messages and we sat down to try and talk about key messages and realised we didn't actually know what the programme was doing, so we couldn't do our key messages...So I think we realised at that point that, actually, we didn't have a collective understanding of what the vision was. And to be fair to A1, we then had a series of meetings where we had brainstorming sessions with everybody involved and flipcharts up on the wall and so on.' R4(PTM)

'Part of what makes it successful is the fact that there is that kind of constant learning interaction between the project and the people that are doing it on the ground, so that the vision of what you're trying to create is being influenced by the progress and the successes of the people right at the bottom of the chain...there is actually more of a feedback loop and a sort of leadership role. As well as them acting as leaders among their peers.' R9(SGM)



‘Has it evolved or has it just been honed down? I think there’s been a, probably a refining, is possibly the better word...It’s evolved naturally that way, you have to kind of bring it back to the do-able.’ R3(PTM)

‘Possibly a variety of people at different...I mean, we’ve had a couple of discussions at various times, with a meeting, and I can’t pinpoint when or where, but certainly over the last six months or something we have had discussions about, “Here’s a vision. Does anybody think this is right?”...We had chats about it.’ R3(PTM)

#### **4.1.4 Continuing to Clarify in Parallel with Enacting the Vision**

The GES Programme is acknowledged as having a powerful vision, yet this vision is also complex, due not least to its many sponsors. Moreover, the vision continually evolves due to internal and external forces.

These led to a further feature of the leadership task of setting the vision, which is to provide vital clarity on it to co-workers when required at any given point in time. Only members of the programme team (not sponsoring group members) commented on this aspect and they referenced a more traditional hierarchical model of leadership based around the programme manager and her three to four next tier managers. However, respondents’ language here appears to avoid the concept of tiers of management. For example, the terms workstream leads and strategy group are used in preference to phrases denoting traditional people management.

The sense here is of a collective recognition that there must be an essential level of clarity to allow work to proceed on a day-to-day basis, within the shifting parameters of individuals’ visions and sponsoring group interests. There is recognition that the full group cannot participate ad infinitum in the process of establishing this clarity. Rather, an informal or semi-formal sub-set within the team establishes the clarity, and sets appropriate boundaries between debate and action for the immediate term.

‘We've got a strategy group which is basically A1 and the three workstream leads...so when we get together and we're all focused on the same thing, it works really well. When, a change of direction is brought about when somebody's... when a lot of effort and time has been put into something, then it doesn't work really well.’ R4(PTM)

‘And that's been set through discussions with the team, in seeking views from the team, and then making decisions at a more strategic level within the strategic leadership group.’ R6(PTM)

‘So that there's already a group of people who are saying this is a good way forward, rather than having ten different opinions in one place.’ R4(PTM)

‘And that has had an impact on, on what, what is the, the vision of GES has changed, the objectives of GES has changed. And I think that leadership, there is, is needed in terms of making sure that that, that doesn't happen, without people noticing. That we don't suddenly look up one day and say “Gosh, you know, we've all been going along this way, and in fact, you know, GES ought to have been going this way because the world outside that changes.” So that's part of, that's at higher level leadership, of making sure that that vision is understood by everyone at all times and, and where adjustments do occur that the whole team understands what they are and what the implications are for the work that any individual work stream and then people under that work stream are undertaking. So it's that constant realignment.’ R3(PTM)

‘So there is a level of leadership which is about making sure that everyone's kind of aligned to producing something which keeps meeting the immediate objectives of GES. And I think, that's not that kind of more high level leadership involvement in steering the ship as it were, it's more about ensuring that all the pieces that are happening

underneath are constantly the right pieces of the jigsaw being put into place.’ R3(PTM)

‘So I think leadership, what does it mean? I think it’s sort of aligning all of those different resources... team members need to know what they need to take ownership of, what they’re responsible for. How they align with the overall direction of travel, if you like, or direction of work. How they, the leaders on the team need to make sure that everyone is sort of aligned to the vision.’ R2(PTM)

Individual programme team members also welcomed this clarifying aspect in terms of their own daily activities where they are working with each other across the internal boundaries of workstreams or projects. In this aspect, they, in effect, take turns at being in charge of each other, when required or helpful to deliver specific outputs. There is also a sense that this can help to resolve tensions where there are overlaps or requirements for close joint-working.

The previous phases involving the wider group are described by respondents in terms of plural, shared activities and inputs rather than influence. Nevertheless, a distributed network of influence is clearly at play through the various discussions, events and meetings. It was during the phase of clarifying and enacting the vision that the beginnings of a more explicit, strong influence-based form of leadership appear. Or perhaps more accurately, in the absence of formal lines of authority, networks of informal authority based on influence took hold within the programme team when necessary to make progress.

‘And I think then there’s leadership at the more kind of localised level, the leadership on, specific work areas of pieces of work where you are looking to someone to give you some direction.’ R3(PTM)

‘There’s a sense of relief, I suppose, that somebody’s doing that. That you don’t have, they’re not saying “I’m managing this but it’s up to you to make sure that everything is there and is on time.” It’s a little bit of a

burden taken off of you, if you know that somebody else has actually got that on their agenda, and all you have to do is listen to the instructions that they're giving you! That's actually a good part of this, that you know there are some clear areas where you can just do as you're told.' R3(PTM)

An example of this was a major local authority event hosted by the programme team, where for a short period during the preparation phase, one person re-set everyone's priorities, and on the day, the key note speech and chairperson role were not undertaken by the programme manager but undertaken by a team member. Journal Entry

'Just from a personal perspective, I find things easier if I know exactly what it is I'm doing, and I just like to do it, to have that clarity. But having said that, it doesn't always work like that, and certainly on this programme, we have a lot of change and I think the change sometimes is because there's that open discussion between people, and the opportunity to have that input.' R6(PTM)

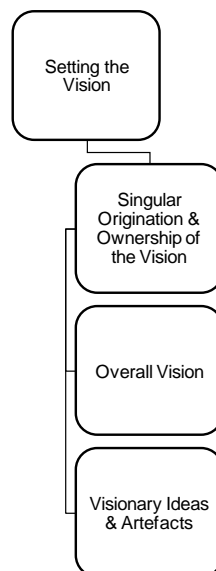
'I think without a leader you will get mixed messages within the programme because everybody has a slightly different perception of what the programme does...and that's why you need key messages so that everybody is saying the same thing and everybody sees the programme in the same way...it's about needing...being clear about what you're delivering and leading on the delivery of that.' R5(PTM)

This aspect of leadership equates to a collective and continual re-assessment and exercise of judgement about the interplay between the strategic vision and day-to-day operational realities.

'But in the end we need to have some high priorities that everyone focuses on...Where it might be to do with a process, or to do with

some political thing that's going on, either within DCSF or within Hertfordshire. And in the end those things are important, they need to be done, but are they really the priority? There might be a means to an end in there, but they may not be actually our priority. They might take a lot of our time, but I think the leaders of the programme, especially with a virtual team, and therefore where you're not all sitting together and sort of assimilating things, and sort of getting things by osmosis almost. When you're virtual I think the leaders need to make sure that everyone is clear about what the priorities are.' R2(PTM)

## 4.2 Origin and Ownership of the Vision



Whilst the activities or processes that went towards creating the vision are verbalised by respondents as involving numerous people, the vision itself and its key artefacts are most frequently verbalised by respondents as having a singular, individual ownership or origination.

### 4.2.1 The Overall Vision

As illustrated in section 4.1, respondents readily describe the collaborative activities, inputs and influences which created the overall vision, and which subsequently refined, interpreted, clarified and enacted it at a summary and detailed level.

However, in parallel with these descriptions of shared activities, inputs and influences, many respondents describe the overall vision as having a more identifiably individual origin or ownership. Typically, they attribute the vision to one or two individuals from across the programme team and sponsoring group.

‘In terms of how the whole strategic vision of GES came about...I think it was maybe an unnatural kind of creation in that it was me and a chap from Tameside. And then somehow, I managed to win over DCSF. I cannot remotely remember how I first engaged A1. So, it was a germ of an idea that was in my head and then I sowed the seed, and then tried to step back really quickly.’ R11(SGM)

‘A23 will tell me that he had the idea in 2001.’ R1(PTM)

Where attributed to a single individual, ownership or origination was most frequently attributed to one particular actor, A1, who was later to become the programme manager. It is also noticeable that the language respondents used here was often precise and firm.

‘The vision belonged to one person, before the team got back together, and that was A1.’ R4(PTM)

‘It would certainly...definitely have come from A1 to my knowledge.’ R7(PTM)

## 4.2.2 Visionary Ideas and Artefacts

In attributing the origin or ownership of the overall vision to individuals, respondents identified it with, and attributed it to, individuals from within the programme team and sponsoring group, who then took it forward. Respondents considered that a small number of high quality ideas, made tangible in documentary form, were vital in encapsulating the vision in ways that were appropriate at the various stages for the various audiences.

These key ideas (and thus the enactment of leadership in setting the vision) are attributed to a wide variety of people, irrespective of whether they form part of any previous or current leadership group. Indeed, most participants remember one key conceptual artefact that came to define the vision, which was created by an individual who was not part of the programme team or sponsoring group at all.

In other words, in parallel with remembering plural activities and attributing singular ownership of the vision as an overall construct, respondents attribute key ideas and artefacts that make up the overall vision to individual actors, who are not necessarily the same as the people to whom the overall construct is attributed.

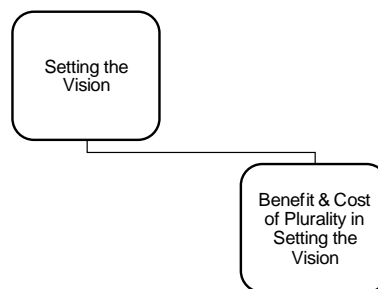
‘I mean A17 had done his funnel and it was after that. It was sort of following up on the funnel, which was highly successful. It's still around now. But you know, so A17 had done his funnel about “e-Admissions is this gateway”.’ R2(PTM)

‘The funnel was developed fairly soon after that, A17’s funnel...It’s significant because it’s something that actually captured a message, that was quite difficult to explain...And straightaway they really got it, they got the idea...I can’t remember exactly when he drew that diagram, but it wasn’t too long after the workshop and we were sort of playing around with writing up what was it that we were trying to do.’ R3(PTM)

‘The most powerful, if you put one slide up, it’s that funnel. You know, that funnel convinced A20, it convinced A21, it convinced A9, that this was a good thing to do.’ R8(SGM)

‘The whole broadening it out of a kind of package of things that people going to school age would like, that certainly didn't come out of my head at all. So that was definitely a kind of DCSF thing.’ R11(SGM)

### 4.3 Benefit and Cost in Setting the Vision



The plural nature of the extended vision-setting process was an important factor in creating commitment to the vision, as the actors synthesised the vision (or their individual interpretation of it) from numerous inputs. There was a strong sense, from the programme team members, that this was a vital mechanism in them developing as an effective team.

‘From an individual ownership point of view, it was important because people came around to understanding a collective vision their own route, therefore voluntarily, rather than just being told, no, you're wrong, this is what it's going to be.’ R4(PTM)

‘And it was interesting because, today, in this meeting I had this morning, A5 was talking about the vision for the programme and she was one of the people who always wanted it to be much wider. And she said it exactly as I would have said it, this morning. I thought, ah-ha, we're there.’ R4(PTM)

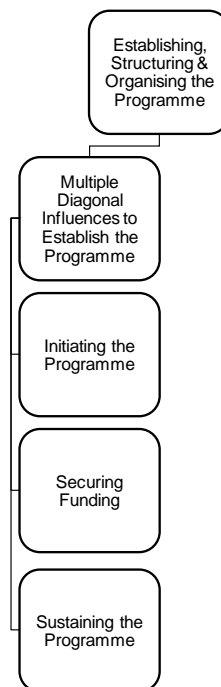


For sponsoring group members, this represented a deliberate, laissez-faire attitude on their behalf, which might be characterised as leading by stepping back.

‘When you’re leading it, you actually have to have a sort of relaxed attitude about not feeling that you’re the only person that’s in charge, as it were. Because part of the power for how these things get driven forward is being able to find ways of finding the common ground between lots of different people’s visions and actually harnessing that as a collective force, to drive things forward.’ R9(SGM)

‘A germ of an idea that was in my head and then I sowed the seed, and then tried to step back really quickly.’ R11(SGM)

#### 4.4 Establishing the Programme



The programme was established through plural, upwards diagonal influence. The leadership task of establishing, structuring and organising the GES programme broke down into a set of overlapping but identifiable processes (as with setting

the vision). These are to a large extent common to many public sector programmes, and conform partially to phases in the MSP guidance (OGC, 2007), though this is coincidental to the analysis. They may not be relevant to other more permanent organisations. In the following sections, they are divided into two sub-groups: first, establishing the programme, which consists of initiating the programme, securing funding, and sustaining the programme; second, structuring and organising the programme at the outward-facing programme-level, and structuring and organising within the programme team.

#### **4.4.1 Initiating the Programme**

During the early stages of a vision-led programme such as GES, the origination, distilling into artefacts, and communication of ideas may be seen as the most visible enactment of the leadership function of setting the vision.

However, as with most modern organisations, GES would have remained no more than a good idea, unless a series of important activities had successfully begun to enact the vision. These first steps are often less visionary than procedural. Although procedural in nature, as there are as yet no formal roles or authority in place, it is influence that dominates the cross-organisational activities and decisions of this leadership task.

For GES, this meant formally initiating the programme itself through securing the required mandate, governance arrangements and funding. As GES did not reside in any single organisation, with traditional top-down, hierarchical authority, it was only possible to secure this mandate, governance and funding using influence. Indeed, the leading actors in this activity were not from DCSF, the organisation which would provide overall governance and funding. Moreover, decisions relating to the establishment of the programme would typically happen at a seniority level above that of the individuals advocating the creation of the GES programme. Thus those actors from within the programme team who led this activity needed to deploy sometimes subtle, and sometimes strong and dogged

influence, in a diagonally upwards direction. Once again, respondents characterise these activities as having been undertaken by several members of the team.

‘Rather more applies to what happens next and how you then go from vision to reality. Because people who can get ownership, bring people with them, who have sort of what I call stickability skills to keep going when people aren't necessarily all applying the same line, are quite rare. And they're the people who make the difference, rather than the big sort of vision strategic thinkers.’ R12(SGM)

‘We had the idea...we just needed people to actually buy into it and take responsibility and ownership for it and that was a hard slog for people like A1 and A2 to keep banging their heads on the wall.’  
R5(PTM)

‘So I suppose the major activity would have been about trying to get a better idea of what it was we were planning to do...So it was learning my way round DCSF, learning who the important people were, trying to articulate ideas to, on the whole, a very deaf set of ears, and also trying to obtain sufficient money to do anything to make it possible to do any more. So I suppose one big activity that year was trying to write the business case, which is obviously when A18 and A17 did some work with us on that...So there was quite a lot of detailed stuff in order to try and get some ideas together, but meanwhile as well, trying to be in DCSF, trying to understand how DCSF worked.’ R1(PTM)

‘The last two months was putting it all together into a business plan for DCSF to approve funding on really...I mean one could put too much onus on a mission statement, but it was important for the business case and I mean that's what was at least communicated. We all realised that no matter how much we knew what the job that was needed to be done, a business case doesn't necessarily fit into

that...into your own vision of what needs to be done. It's just something you have to process, a hoop you have to go through, particularly dealing with other government departments.' R7(PTM)

This influence flowed from several sources and in several directions. Influence was based on a rich mixture of skills, experience, personal style and relationships. There were also scenarios where one actor would exercise influence on a second, in order to influence a third. In other words, influence was sometimes exercised vicariously.

'I think it's just a matter of kind of chipping away at different people and coming from different angles as well in that, A2 had the technical expertise and he could say, "I've already got this relationship with suppliers that are dealing with local authorities," and also he'd been working in Becta so he had a completely different set of skills, if you like, to come to the table to what A1 had. A1 just had what we've already got with e-admissions and we've got these contacts in local authorities that we can just build on...So there were two good cases of working and moving forward...A2 had got good relations with the Cabinet Office and the Cabinet Office although they're not delivering on anything, they can influence departments in delivery, so that helped as well.' R5(PTM)

#### **4.4.2 Securing Funding**

One particular event related to securing funding has the character of a critical incident (Flanagan, 1954). Activities and behaviours in this incident were particularly remarkable through a shared leadership lens. Without anything approaching an explicit mandate or accepted remit, the individual who would later become programme manager exerted significant - and in the organisational context of the public sector exceptional - pressure on the main sponsoring body to sign off funding.

'I don't think there was anything to do with influencing. I think it was just blinking pigheadedness. I said this is what we're going to do.'

R1(PTM)

The two main sponsoring agencies, DCSF and HCC, which would be required to make significant commitments to the programme, each had to follow its own non-trivial administrative and governance procedures (the third key organisation, Cabinet Office, provided a form of political, managerial and intellectual sponsorship, but did not provide funding, human or technical resources). A year-end deadline for financial commitment from DCSF was agreed. Due to a miscommunication, there then arose a situation whereby the funding had still not been signed off in the run-up to the self-imposed year-end deadline, which happened to coincide with an extended period of leave for the individual who would later become programme manager.

At that point, one programme team member stepped in to use his, and vicariously the programme manager's, influence to secure the funding, including negotiating decisions on trade-offs between scale of funding and certainty of immediate sign-off. What is noticeable here is the recognition of different styles and the way this most sensitive of leadership tasks could be rotated.

'That was actually a really good example of shared leadership because what I said to A2 was – and actually, he probably found it easier to do this – I said, "Well..." A2 said he would try and do it while I was away skiing and, basically, it was easier for A2 because he said, "Oh, A1's away skiing. I can't do anything about it. I can't speak to her. But all I know is she's absolutely clear on the one point that it has to be done before Christmas, otherwise it won't work." So, if you like, there was no discussion whatsoever on it. So every day he went in, he repeated the same story. He spoke to A24 and said where were they? She rang procurement, or whoever it was, again. So he just went in there with the "A1's adamant. I'm just coming in to check.

What's the situation now? What's the situation?" I think he did it morning and afternoon every time he saw A8. In the end, it came through. Do you know, I don't even think it's influencing. Well, I suppose it's actually standing over somebody to make them do it. That's what it was. Is that influencing?' R1(PTM)

'There was various discussions, I think, that A2 and A8 had held over where it was being positioned for funding. It was when A1 went (on leave) and I was up here, I'd had a conversation with A2, he wanted to talk through and it was kind of, "Here's the situation, what do you think we should go for?"' R3(PTM)

'A1 had been going at this, sort of working behind the scenes in DCSF, trying to get the funding agreed. And so she basically said to me "Right well, I think that's it, I think it's over, we're not gonna get the funding". So I suggested to A1 that I would just come into DCSF every day whilst she was away and just...I think my exact words, just stretch every sinew. I would do everything that I could in that week that she was away to try and push it through. So it was just like getting here at eight o'clock, seeing A8, "hello A8, how's it going?" And then you're just writing business case after business case. I think A1 had got to the end of her tether with it. And I don't think probably that was helping just at that point. So I think me coming in, I had a lot more patience probably and I would accept what A8 said, whereas I suppose A1 was a bit like "Well, you've said this before A8"...As far as A1 was concerned, it was like, "Is it happening or isn't it, because I've been arguing for this long enough now?" Whereas me coming in, I was more like right, "Okay A8 what do you need? What do you need me to do, to make this happen?" So I think me coming in, someone afresh, someone new to the situation, is what helped. I had plenty of patience. I am an eternal optimist and I just thought this can happen.

But I think probably A1 had done all the work that was needed, but it was just that final push over the line really.’ R2(PTM)

As well as funding, senior sponsorship and other hurdles needed to be overcome, again, using influence rather than an explicit mandate or remit, and there is a sense that not everyone appreciated the complexity of those hurdles, or the level of effort required to overcome them. This led to people exercising the necessary influence in different places and in different ways, and the picture that emerges is of a complex network of influence.

‘I’d call it the sort of driving partner, because there is a partnership approach here between local authorities and between Cabinet Office, and people within the department, policy teams. So it’s about bringing a whole range of those stakeholders together, to agree an approach, or broadly agree an approach. And then to do what’s needed to make it happen...The two major issues were legal, the legalities around it, which is cross governmental, and money. So somebody somewhere has to take the lead on, on sorting out...Well, and sorry, and the governance really, governance and legal, to get together. Because somebody needs to take the lead, and in any ... and I found with all cross-government projects, unless somebody takes the lead and brings people with them, it ain’t going to happen...I’d put a little, we’d put a little bit of money into it.’ R8(SGM)

‘So it was essentially A1’s driving through, she then started to do, come up to DCSF a lot of the time to, to drive through...And of course there was A11 as well from the Cabinet Office...It was something that A11 was very passionate about and very driven, was this sort of transformation of the free school meals service. So there was sort of drive coming from her but A11 couldn’t have driven through on her own, in the way it did, had it not been for A1. Because what it took in terms of leadership for that was literally, just ... having the balls to go

in to people and say no to people and arguing with people. A1's got that, she's got the courage to do that. And to kind of not let something go, not to be put off, because, when I think back to that time, a lot of the barriers that were coming up were to do with the legal issues, the questions which were coming up about "Is it legal to do this? And would it be better to do that way? And what would be the issues?" And I think between A11 and A1 it was getting through to the right, the right group of people, talking to the right groups of people. And it took drive to do that because it was just, false start after false start after false start with that. The legal people not being allowed to talk to legal people, except through other legal people, and also doing it at a distance. So it would have been quite easy to give it, it would have been very easy to just say "This is, this is just too hard." Oh, well A8 in terms of getting us funding! And he would say, presumably, his bosses in terms of giving him funding. So there's a bit of a chain of events there.' R3(PTM)

'At the end of the day we had to commit money and we had to agree a contract. And while A2 helped to smooth the process of that, I mean at the end of the day it was up to A20, A21, Finance, our Finance, to commit money.' R8(SGM)

#### **4.4.3 Sustaining the Programme**

GES does not reside in the business-as-usual arrangements for any permanent organisation, given its multi-partite governance and funding. Thus some of its actors have from the outset appreciated that they would need to use influence proactively to sustain the vision and the programme. In other words, they would need to step forward into a temporary leadership role.

'One needs to be doing the influencing and thinking and the whatever now if one wants to be in the right position to be doing anything after



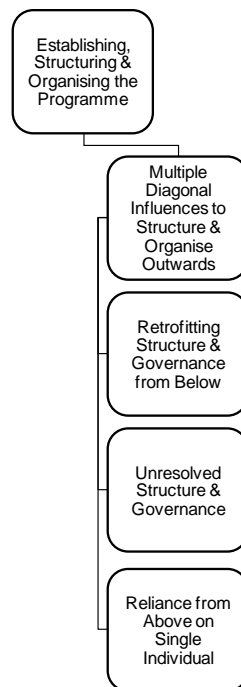
March 2011, which I don't think is the same as doing programme delivery.' R1(PTM)

'And also I'm conscious that one of the things we agreed at the Away Day was that me, A8 and A1 need to meet reasonably, relatively frequently, or certainly initially to get, one to get to know one another, but another to get, to get a mutual understanding of where the programme's going. But more importantly, we need to already be talking about sustainability, what happens beyond 2011? I mean, and what would that look like?' R14(SGM)

'So I can take a more overview on it. And to be honest, my focus now, with A1 and with A14, is about the future. Is about what happens in two years time. And I think I see my role now as saying "Well what's the vision going forward?" So it's more that I see my role now more as looking to sustain it for the future, rather than just get it up and running.' R8(PTM)

'Now we are...well we have been for two years now, the Department for Children, Schools and Families, we do explicitly have a brief which is about how to improve outcomes and services for children and families, and I think that's why A9 who's in the Families Group chairs the sponsorship group because I think it must be felt that it's Families Group who have the biggest policy interest in GES and because they're doing a lot of customer insight research into what it is that families want and they are more likely to have the ideas for how GES should evolve.' R10(SGM)

## 4.5 Structuring and Organising at Outward-Facing Programme-Level



At the outward-facing programme level, the structure and organisation was arrived at through upwards diagonal influence.

### 4.5.1 Structure and Governance Retro-Fitted by Lower-Level Team

According to the orthodoxy of methods such as MSP (OGC, 2007), one or more of the various formal, high level programme entities, such as the SRO, sponsoring group or programme board, should select and appoint a lower level programme team.

On GES, these formal, high level entities did not exist in true form for quite some time into the programme's life. Rather, involvement from individuals who might be expected to play such formal roles was ad hoc. This led to some confusion and anxiety among programme team members. The entities were themselves arrived at (i.e. the appointment of individuals to formal authority roles and the creation of

board structures), in a post hoc fashion. They were, in effect, designed and retro-fitted through shared influence by the lower-level programme team itself.

‘The SRO and the board members have come after. I know it’s very peculiar. We have a programme, but we didn’t have an SRO and a board until the programme set it up. And I think that’s been one of our sources of frustration, is that normally in a programme or a project you have somebody else who has the vision and somebody else who forms ... who takes ownership of it and has the governance and we’ve had to work backwards.’ R5(PTM)

‘Because of the fact that we didn’t know who was going to be our leader at DCSF...waiting for somebody to decide that they actually want to be the lead for the programme. In fact, I think we still haven’t had a meeting of the sponsoring group, or programme board, or whatever you want to call it, for quite some time now, which is slightly worrying...I think that the whole thing... I think it was really hard for her...But because she was getting no support from the people who needed to agree what the governance would be, I think she was really struggling with it. And she ended up bringing it to the team and saying, what do you think our governance should be?...And we talked around it a lot and didn’t get anywhere, actually, for quite a long time... so we went through the process of, instead of just talking around it all the time, actually putting down on paper the people that were supportive, the people that weren’t, the people that would be helpful to us that would support the programme, what they’d bring to the programme, and so on. And then developed that idea of who we wanted.’ R4(PTM)

‘I don’t think the way the whole thing was resourced was kind of thought through...I’m not sure that the policy directorates were kind of engaged at the right level at the right time to ensure that it was

properly supported and resourced. It's kind of survived and...the support structures have developed in a rather kind of ad hoc way...it wasn't some brilliant master plan that's been played out.' R10(SGM)

This lack of clarity extended to the eventual organisation and roles for members of the informal sponsoring group, as well as the core programme team.

'Really we have got quite a strange structure to it in that we (Hertfordshire County Council) have the contract to deliver it, in terms of the overall programme, so therefore we employ A1, but then I've got a secondment agreement with A1 back into (DCSF) CIO, which is a real...so if it's seconding her back why isn't it CIO's job to make sure it delivers? Even though actually it's ours...And that, if I'm absolutely honest, I've not really got my head round yet in terms of what that really means.' R14(SGM)

'In our desire to be seen to be being collaborative, there is sometimes a tendency to allow far more people into the party, without checking very carefully about whether or not they really are on the same page as you in what they're trying to achieve. And it's very difficult to put a firm structure around something if you've allowed it to sort of evolve in an incredibly vague way in the first place.' R9(SGM)

'I think there's a fair degree of serendipity about the way that the programme is structured. And this is one of the biggest challenges about doing these sorts of projects, in that they don't sit neatly within somebody's area of responsibility. And so the involvement of many people is both its blessing and its curse. So having a lot of people involved means that you get lots of perspectives and therefore you probably get a better project, and a better product and better capacity to sort of drive change through the system. But on the other hand you really struggle to get those people that are involved to have enough

space to be able to think about it in a sustained enough way.’  
R9(SGM)

#### 4.5.2 Unresolved Programme-Level Structures and Governance

There remained ambiguities in the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities between the programme’s sponsors, and between structures such as the programme itself and its constituent projects, some of which are at least as high profile for some sponsors as the programme itself.

‘It’s A25’s (a director at Hertfordshire County Council) name that’s on the contract for the (budget). You know, so it’s HCC’s name and reputation that’s on the line for whether or not it happens. And yet A1’s seconded back into DCSF. So actually, therefore by default, she’d be doing whatever A8 asks her to do, as a line manager from that perspective, but I’m A1’s line manager from HCC’s perspective. I’m not sure how she squares that triangle.’ R14(SGM)

‘But that’s the way I feel, certainly talking to A8, that was his concept, that he wanted, we’ve got a, the hybrid that we’ve got that is actually neither one thing nor the other, in reality, but it allows the DCSF to dress it up as authorities doing it to themselves. But actually they still have significant control and influence over the whole process.’  
R14(SGM)

‘And interesting, the sort of culmination of that subtle shift has been the proposal that was made to me, would I approve if, instead of DCSF reporting (to Cabinet Office) monthly – they do RAG reports on online free school meals – would it be more strategically appropriate that they did a monthly report on GES. And I thought, yeah, that’s completely right. ...There’s been a bit of to-ing and fro-ing, I think. I’m not sure their kind of programme boards and project boards have been entirely good. And that seems to have undergone a bit of a subtle

change as well, in that I am now sitting, I think, on the GES programme board. So, again, that seemed to have the more strategic overarching relevance and I'm not now on the OFSM. I think that's a project board, not a programme board. I don't know. I could be wrong. But, sort of getting their sort of strategic alignment right, which has been an interesting thing to watch.' R11(SGM)

'But it's definitely GES and it's programme level. Before...they had an online free school meals...I think it was a programme board, and I was on that. And then they had just a single GES programme board, which was a complete and utter disaster. It was just chaotic...And then they scrapped all the others. And so I, as a kind of stakeholder, I got a whole load of confused messages because I thought, I thought OFSM was part of the GES programme. But there's no programme board and there appeared to be real confusion... Before, there wasn't any visible ownership...A1 in particular, has had real problems getting kind of senior level championing.' R11(SGM)

The same ambiguity applies to other established governance mechanisms, such as the OGC Gateway process (OGC, 2009), a mandatory, high profile governance intervention consistently deployed across central government.

'It's seeming to exist outside some of the more traditional structures that exist for assuring project success. Like the OGC Gatewaying process and those kinds of things. And I think it's partly because...they can't get their head around a project that runs in this kind of way. So I think it's one of those sorts of issues that, it seems to me that this has the potential to be a model on which a lot of future projects work, but our sort of assurance systems and ability to help people to make such things successful isn't actually catching up with the context in which we're trying to work... and it means that I feel exposed to considerably more risk in this project.' R9(SGM)

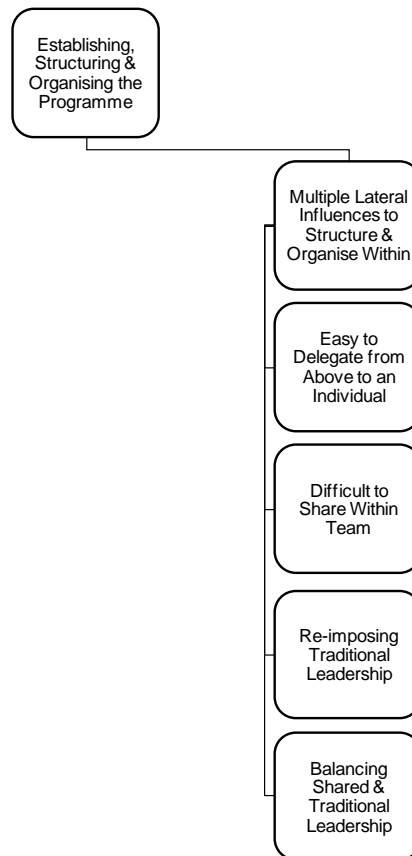
### 4.5.3 Reliance from Above on Single Individual

For senior members of the sponsoring group, the only way they could live with these ambiguities was to rely on a single individual below them, the programme manager. Thus from the perspective of downward vertical or diagonal influence, they focused on a single individual. Whether they thought of this in terms of classical management, authority and accountability, or in terms of a single empowered leader who could resolve the ambiguities caused by the absence of the classical model, cannot be determined.

‘We’re all pivoting around A1.’ R14(SGM)

‘This is something that was just tacked onto the side of my existing job...Somebody said oh that links to your thing, why don't you take it on? And you take it on and you make your best fist of it. But I suspect that large numbers of people in this programme are in a similar position to the one that I'm in. And being able to have individuals like A1 and the few other people who are dedicated to the project or programme full time is essential to make that work.’ R9(SGM)

## 4.6 Structuring and Organising Within the Programme Team



Within the programme team, the structure and organisation were arrived at through lateral influence within the peer group.

### 4.6.1 A Leadership Task that was Easy for Sponsors to Delegate

This reliance from the sponsoring group on the programme manager extended to full and deliberate delegation of the leadership task of internal structuring, organising and resourcing, that is, determining the scope of the programme's activities, who should perform these activities and how they should be structured, contracted and so on.

The sponsoring group included individuals who were accountable for the overall success according to traditional models, who had used personal influence to secure the funding, who had openly stated that they felt exposed to their seniors,



and who considered themselves strong at organisational design and governance. Yet, the group took little or no involvement in how the programme was organised, structured or resourced internally, in terms of projects, workstreams, allocation of funds and resources, role definitions and appointments. Sponsoring group members considered such decisions as belonging to the programme manager, even though she was not accountable for the budget, nor an employee of the principal funding organisation, nor a member of the same hierarchy as the SRO.

‘It sounds incredibly complicated, but I don't need to know about it.’

R12(SGM)

‘I've left that more to A1. As to how it's organised within the team, I recognise A1's role, I recognise her abilities, and there's no point me double guessing what she's doing. That's why it's more a management sort of oversight role really, on behalf of the programme board. But how it's organised to meet those I've really left as a bit of a black box.’ R8(SGM)

‘A1's always keen to get sign off for things like structures and things like that. So they are always signed off at that level, and agreed. And, you know what it's like, you spend loads of time, don't you, agreeing where the lines go. But those things are always agreed, but I do think it's us that's pushing it. If we didn't push that, would it happen?

Probably not, is the honest answer.’ R2(PTM)

#### **4.6.2 A Leadership Task that was Difficult for the Team to Share**

Decisions on structure, organisation and resourcing within the programme had a powerful impact on the members of the programme team. Just as the phrase “setting the vision” meant more than authoring a brief vision statement, “structuring the programme” would determine the nature of the roles and outputs for the team for the foreseeable future. Their passion for the business issues themselves led them to become involved in the first place, and they were bound

to be equally passionate about their own professional and financial futures, not least because many were not career civil servants or permanent employees, but on short term contracts. Structure is, in effect, a short hand, as it describes not only how the team's jobs would be defined, and who they would work to and with, but also the nature of the projects that would be incorporated in the programme, and the programme's boundaries. Thus it was a complex and challenging task.

Whilst the sponsoring group were content to delegate such decisions to the programme manager, she, on the other hand, considered this as a task that could and should be shared with the team. This led the core team, who had previously worked together, to attempt to determine how to arrange their scope, structures, boundaries, roles and activities.

'Making most of the skills within the team because GES is a very different setup to most programmes...I think, in traditional terms, you look at your programme and you say, right, this is the work I want to do, these are the skills I need, therefore I'll go out and find those people. Because of the way GES has come about, it's been more a case of we like these people...let's see if we can make them fit into this, into the programme...So it's sort of evolved in a bit of a weird way.' R4(PTM)

The definition of an internal organisation and team structure, including the individual job roles that such a structure specifies (or at least responsibilities / areas of activities that are implied), was the subject of a specific instance of sharing of this task of leadership. This represents a second critical incident (Flanagan, 1954) in the analysis of the programme. The sharing of this task proved only partially successful, and led to tensions within the group.

'I think A1 led those discussions. Although, no actually, no she actually pushed that out to A4 and A5 to facilitate to begin with. I think she set them the task actually of coming up with an initial structure... and then

it was a series of us challenging that to get to the final version...I think she was keen to involve the sort of core team in the decision making and contributing to the thinking around what the structure should be. I think it also actually wasn't an easy thing to do. So it probably needed a number of us contributing to the thinking around that.' R2(PTM)

'We went through an exercise of looking at pieces of work and trying to figure out which work would influence which people and have an impact on which people.' R4(PTM)

'We had several team meetings about how we were going to structure the programme. And at that point, the projects sort of came into discussion as well...Everybody on the team at that point was involved in this process. We had things on the wall and we were placing cards with different things up and trying to work out how the structure could work.' R6(PTM)

'And then, when everybody came back, it was to try and set up an organisation structure, to try and work out the programme portfolio, to manage the team, to try and put linkages in place. I mean, it's still a work in progress now really...I suppose I've always built it around the people. And this is certainly not always proved successful ...So, if you like, the structure of the programme has, in some cases, been devised around the people that we've got.' R1(PTM)

'We had a session on it...and we'd got to a stage where it was clear it wasn't going to be resolved within a group discussion.' R7(PTM)

'I can remember very well the discussions and I have to say that it was getting to the stage where it was turning me completely off.' R7(PTM)

'There was a couple of different structures put forward...But again I think it just came down to, at the end of the day, there was no, I think 100% consensus on what would be the best approach.' R3(PTM)

‘We had a series of three sessions on this, led by A4 and A5. That’s right. Thinking about the, what would be the, the way forward for GES, on a number of different things, and one of those things was the, the structure. And this was, I think by this time it was the third session we’d had, so we’d resolved a number of other things like who were our major stakeholders and how were we going to address various communications. A few other sort of things had already been discussed, agreed, ticked off, and whatever, and I think this was kind of the last major piece of work to be covered. So that’s what I think, A5 and A4 put forward a thing and there was discussion about it, and disagreement and whatever.’ R3(PTM)

#### **4.6.3 Re-imposing Traditional Top-Down Leadership**

In the end, the difficulty to agree a new scope and structure for the programme led to the re-emergence of a more traditional form of top-down leadership, whereby the programme manager exercised authority to make a decision in the absence of collective agreement, and used her own influence and relationship with team members to secure buy-in to the decision. On this point, all programme team members have a clear recollection of the incident and relate it in similar ways. They fully respected the need to make the decision, and believed that all team members agreed on this point.

‘So it was at the third one, I’d said...I had clearly said before, at the start of it, that no matter what happens we’ve got to come to a decision. We just can’t afford the time to keep doing this.’ R1(PTM)

‘I think A1 did have to say this is what we’re doing, in the end. Because we probably would have carried on a lot longer, talking around the team, what it would have, what it should have been. So I think in the end, she had to say right okay, thanks everybody, I’m gonna go with this for these reasons...but everyone agreed...I mean, I think if somebody had really objected, then she would have listened.

But then, I think you're never gonna achieve that anyway probably, because it's difficult isn't it by committee?' R2(PTM)

'Well, from my perspective, I don't think you benefit from talking and talking and talking. I think it was a good exercise to do and I think A1 was right to bring it to a close when she did...I mean, I think it was good to do but you have to get to a point where, whoever is the ultimate leader, which is A1, she's the programme manager, I think it is right for that person then to say thank you everybody for your input, this is what we're gonna do.' R2(PTM)

'At the end of the day it just had to stop and there had to be some decision made.' R7(PTM)

'You can't prevaricate for too long, we can't spend months and months debating what would be the best way forward. You have to make a decision about "Let's just do it this way.'" R3(PTM)

#### **4.6.4 Balancing Traditional and Shared Leadership**

The traditional, singular, top-down leadership is most vividly evident in its enactment by the programme manager. As described earlier, she is considered a pivotal leadership figure, by both the sponsoring group and the programme team

'We're very, very, very dependent on A1 for driving forward the work.'  
R10(SGM)

'Ultimate leader, which is A1.' R2(PTM)

The incident described in the previous section was not the only instance where a more traditional enactment of leadership occurred. Overall, it is clear that both traditional and shared leadership takes place on GES. Actively sharing the tasks of leadership was a deliberate policy of the programme manager.

‘Genuinely because I actually think it is a good idea for different people to lead things and do different things...I thought they'd be interested in doing it. So I let them do it.’ R1(PTM)

‘I was deliberately trying to sort of be quiet and not lead too much.’  
R1(PTM)

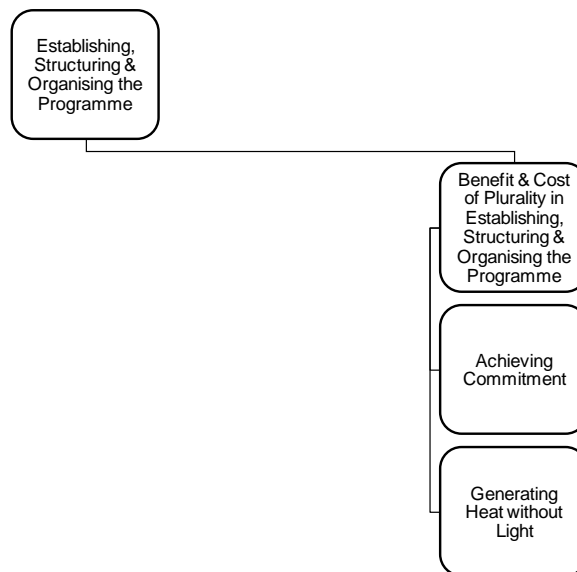
A further example of a traditional, hierarchical approach is the creation of a strategy group within the programme team, which for some respondents, comes as close as GES ever does to a formal operational management team, without formally labelling it as such.

‘We don't have a management team. I mean, we've never had an established management team that meets and discusses certain things.’ R4(PTM)

The creation of the strategy group represented a further rebalancing between debate and action. It was proposed and designed by the programme manager. However, it was deliberately designed with a mechanism that can be considered as an enabler of shared leadership, a rotating chair, and the team were asked to sanction it.

‘We'd been talking around the fact that we needed more organisation. And A1 came up with the concept of the strategy group and the weekly teleconference and the rotating chair and she actually wrote the terms of reference for it. So, at the first meeting, we all agreed those.’  
R4(PTM)

## 4.7 Benefit and Cost in Establishing, Structuring and Organising the Programme



### 4.7.1 Achieving Commitment to the Structure

The team reacted positively to the problematic attempt to share the task of structuring the programme, and indeed felt that the contributions they made achieved a level of buy-in to the subsequently imposed result. This is also interesting in comparison to the singular ownership of the vision.

‘The programme was structured through a series of events that we had and planning really...that was a really useful process because it gave us all some buy-in. It wasn’t inflicted on us; we were all responsible for putting it together.’ R5(PTM)

‘But at least we had our chance to put our two-penn’orth in.’ R7(PTM)

‘They were quite excited about leading something.’ R1(PTM)

## 4.7.2 The Risk of Generating Heat without Light

For the programme manager, however, this was a mixed experience. She considered the result to be the right one, that is, broadly the one she had in mind beforehand. But the process proved difficult for some members emotionally, wasted time and resource, and with hindsight was unnecessary. It also meant that a compromise over re-considering it in future was made, which might not have been necessary had the decision been imposed prior to sharing the abortive task of arriving at the decision.

‘There were some really quite heated arguments and, in fact, in the end, the only way I got it through in the end, the way it is now, was to say that we could all look at it again. I said “This is the structure for stage one and if it doesn't work...”’ R1(PTM)

‘There has to be a balance between allowing the full team to have some discussion, but not...allowing them to make decisions on everything because, otherwise, you never get anything done.’  
R1(PTM)

‘I suppose there is a difference, isn't there, between leading something and being led... So I suppose my learning point from it was it's probably not a good idea to give people...If you've already got a fairly clear idea of the only way you think something will work (a) with the people you've got and (b) with the situation, it's probably not a good idea.’ R1(PTM)

‘I didn't deliberately imply that it was completely free for all and we could start from anywhere, but I think that was the message they got and they put quite a lot of planning into it. So I think that's where the very strong feelings came up because they had this idea it was going to be a level playing field, which it obviously wasn't.’ R1(PTM)



‘It was something that I should have more produced as a *fait accompli* and then allow people to argue it...instead of which I said...we were trying to do team bonding. We were trying to get ideas.’ R1(PTM)

‘The outcome was the one we wanted in the end, yes. We got the outcome. We got the structure that we've now got. But what I'm saying was that maybe it wasn't the most appropriate thing to give other people a...I don't think that's a very sensible thing really, to have given...them to spend quite a lot of time, quite a lot of energy, quite a lot of planning about it and they weren't people who were in full possession. They just couldn't be. They didn't know all the background stuff.’ R1(PTM)

## 4.8 Summary of Findings

The leadership function of setting the vision for GES broke down into four constituent tasks: creating the vision, refining the vision, interpreting the vision, and clarifying whilst enacting the vision. Each task was conducted with multiple contributions from a range of actors across the programme and beyond, with the earliest task receiving the widest number (i.e. it was the most distributed), and the last task being performed within the close-knit programme team (i.e. it was actively shared within a group). In the absence of any evident authority, these contributions were based on influence, which manifested itself at the high level, such as the overall vision, and most evidently on operational matters such as detailed interpretation of the vision and setting of immediate work priorities. In parallel with the acknowledgement of multiple contributions and influence, respondents verbalise both the overall vision and key artefacts as having a more singular origination or ownership. Nevertheless, respondents considered that the multiple contributions to the vision achieved powerful commitment to it.

The leadership function of establishing the programme broke down into three constituent tasks: initiating the programme, securing funding and sustaining the

programme. Several people led different aspects of these tasks, swapping roles seamlessly when appropriate, and applying evident upwards diagonal influence. In other words, a group of people influenced more senior colleagues from different organisations, resulting in a network of influence.

The leadership function of structuring the programme occurred in a similar way, with aspects of structure and governance, including the sponsoring group, being retro-fitted through influence from the lower-level programme team members. This left some governance elements incomplete and unresolved.

Senior members of the sponsoring group were comfortable relying on one individual, the programme manager, for structure and organisation decisions. Although these tasks were easy to delegate from a senior group to an individual, when shared within the operational team they proved difficult to deliver through networks of influence. This led to the programme manager re-imposing traditional leadership, by exercising authority to make decisions without a consensus.

Beyond this decision, there was a balance between traditional and shared leadership within the programme team. Whilst respondents noted the benefit of commitment from setting structure through shared influence, downsides in the form of wasted effort and emotional strain were also noted.

## 5 Discussion

The Research Questions were:

In a UK public sector programme, with regard to setting the vision and establishing and structuring the programme:

- Are two or more people involved in leading these functions, and if, so, how?
- Is leadership enacted through lateral and diagonal influence as well as vertical influence to accomplish them, and if so how?

### 5.1 The Presence of Shared Leadership on GES

The first research question related to whether shared leadership is present on GES and the previous chapter described the evidence for its presence. Within this discussion chapter, the first two sections build on the findings by discussing the presence of shared leadership in terms of first, its attributes as derived from literature and second, the two selected functions of leadership. The rest of the chapter considers the nature of that shared leadership, through a more in-depth discussion of the relevant and important themes that emerged.

#### 5.1.1 Recognising Shared Leadership by its Defining Attributes

Respondents' characterisations of the identified activities of leadership are consistent with theoretical descriptions of shared leadership, of which four key characteristics were enumerated through the literature review: plural; processual; lateral, reciprocal; and goal-seeking.

The findings from GES confirm shared leadership as a plural and processual phenomenon, and as operating through lateral and diagonal influence (Pearce and Conger, 2003). It is clear from the findings that many people were involved in the constituent processes and activities of the two selected functions of leadership. For example,

‘There were elements of leadership in there...not always the same people.’ R7(PTM).

These leadership tasks were enacted through ‘networks of influence’ (Fletcher and Käufer, 2003, p.21) operating across numerous individuals and organisations, and visibly across the two levels of the programme team and the sponsoring group. For example,

‘Set through discussions with the team...then making decisions...within the strategic leadership group.’ R6(PTM)

Many of the actors exercising influence to enact leadership on GES are perhaps not best described as ‘peers’ (Cox, Pearce and Perry, 2003, p.48). They span several civil service and local government grades and private sector contractors (some of whom had only brief involvements in the programme), which is contextually important in determining how the actors behaved. They also span separate policy and support directorates within the key sponsoring department, a local authority, and another influential central government department. Within the sponsoring group, many members were not even acquainted with each other at the time they were individually exercising their influence. Whilst there was strong evidence that influence was being exercised in many directions, this was not necessarily reciprocal at any given transaction or point in time. Thus shared leadership was more than reciprocal, lateral influence within a peer group. In that respect, it may be considered as both shared and distributed (see section 2.2.3).

These subtle but important differences suggest that for the majority of leadership activities on GES at least, “lateral and diagonal influence” is perhaps a better description than “lateral, reciprocal influence” (Pearce and Conger, 2003; Solansky, 2008; Vas and Wilson-Evered, 2008).

The fourth defining attribute, goal-seeking, was perhaps self-evident, in that the two selected leadership functions of setting the vision and establishing and structuring the programme, were both by nature intrinsically and demonstrably

goal-seeking. This had been a criterion in selecting them as activities to study in the first place, rather than, say, a function of leadership such as motivation, which is less directly and evidently linked to a shared individual and collective goal.

To summarise what the case study of GES demonstrates pertaining to the four definitional attributes arrived at through literature: for two goal-seeking activities of leadership (setting the vision, and establishing and structuring the programme), these activities proceed through more than one actor conducting their constituent processes, and they do so by exercising influence in different directions, including lateral and diagonal.

Thus the high level characterisation of the phenomenon of shared leadership from the literature review, based on four defining attributes which build on Pearce and Conger's (2003) and Gronn's (2002) descriptions, is supported by this exploratory study.

### **5.1.2 Recognising Shared Leadership in Specific Tasks**

Both the identified tasks of leadership (setting the vision and establishing and structuring the programme) were shared on GES.

#### **Setting the Vision**

Based on the plurality of activities and inputs to its constituent processes, the findings from GES support the view that setting the vision for a programme can be a shared, team-based task (Perry, Pearce and Sims, 1999; Dunoon, 2002), as opposed to Locke's (2003) and Turnbull James, Bowman and Kwiatkowski's (2008) view that setting the vision is a task that cannot be shared.

Setting the vision for GES provides a rich perspective on the idea of leadership as, on the one hand, shared within a small team of, say, three to seven (Pearce and Conger, 2003), and, on the other hand, distributed much more widely within a large group or strategically pluralist organisation (Gronn, 2002; Denis, Lamothe and Langley, 2001). Both occurred on GES, where the vision was initially created through a complex and iterative process, with early inputs from a wide group, and

then a narrower team refined and interpreted the vision, and continued to clarify it for their own specific goal-seeking purposes. Inasmuch as there may be a distinction between shared and distributed leadership, this supports the idea of leadership as both shared and distributed (Pearce and Conger, 2003; Turnbull James, Bowman and Kwiatkowski, 2008). For example,

‘It was quite big, 40 odd people, and I think we set the vision’ R2(PTM)

‘Set through discussions with the team’ R6(PTM)

It should be noted here that none of the studies cited in the literature review focused on programmes per se (as opposed to other forms of business organisation), and I have not attempted to isolate the specific attributes of programme vision-setting from other organisational vision-setting. Setting the vision for a programme is not self-evidently the same as setting the vision for any other form of organisation or initiative.

### **Establishing and Structuring the Programme**

On the basis of GES, the establishment and structuring of a programme would seem to be sharable tasks of leadership, albeit there were difficulties associated with the internal structuring aspects of this task.

A sense emerges from respondents that the very nature of GES, with its strong vision and support from different organisations, but without a natural organisational home, meant that the depth and breadth of influence required to successfully establish, govern and sustain it called for shared forms of leadership. For example,

‘We just needed people to actually buy into it...and that was a hard slog for people like A1 and A2 to keep banging their heads on the wall.’  
R5(PTM)

For the instance of securing funding, sharing the task proved highly effective. It appeared relatively easy for senior staff in the sponsoring group to allow these

leadership tasks to take place through lateral and diagonal influence, including readily accepting upwards diagonal influence on such issues as funding and governance. For example,

'Me coming in, someone afresh, someone new to the situation, is what helped...A1 had done all the work that was needed, but it was just that final push over the line really.' R2(PTM)

Conversely, the deliberate initiative to share the internal structuring aspects of this leadership function was only partially successful, and in the end, a decision needed to be made by one individual invoking a form of authority. The difficulty the tightly knit programme team consistently experienced in sharing this task, which resulted in the re-emergence of traditional top-down leadership, perhaps supports Locke's (2003) view that to share such functions of leadership can be risky.

### **5.1.3 Summary – The Presence of Shared Leadership on GES**

In relation to the Research Questions, for the two functions of leadership described, the findings demonstrate that more than one person is involved in leading these processes on GES, and that this leadership is enacted through lateral and diagonal influence. Breaking down the leadership functions into their constituent processes helps identify how and where influence takes place. Thus, the case study supports shared leadership as theorised by authors such as Gronn (2002, 2008), and Pearce and Conger (2003). The characteristics of at least one UK public sector programme, with its 'cross-functional self-managing project teams' (van Ameijde, Nelson, Billsberry and van Meurs, 2008, p.223) suggest these are environments where the phenomenon of shared leadership can occur.

Respondents verbalise the enactment of leadership in terms of activities, in terms of one or more individuals acting as leaders; and in terms of the leader as a specific role, as well as a specific person, supporting Hartley and Allison's (2000)

separation of the process, the person and the role. As Gronn (2002) recommends, scholars of shared leadership should focus on the process.

Findings show that the selected functions of leadership, when broken down into constituent parts, can be shared by and attributed to many individuals, but that this can conflict with the need to make decisions, and with the attribution by actors of the origin or ownership of ideas and artefacts (see section 5.2.6).

Table 2: Summary Discussion - Shared Leadership Attributes

Conceptualised Attribute from Literature	Empirical Evidence...	Comments
Plural	Supports conceptualisation	See sections 4.1, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6.
Processual	Supports conceptualisation	See sections 4.1, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6. However, also note the singular attribution of artefacts and decisions (see section 5.2.6).
Reciprocal, Lateral Influencing	Partially supports conceptualisation (and enriches it)	See sections 4.1, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6, However, "diagonal" across boundaries of grade and organisation was at least as evident as "lateral" within a peer group. Also, there was no direct evidence that the influence exercised is reciprocal in any given instance. A influences B and on another occasion B may influence A, but there was no direct evidence this occurs on the same task.
Goal-Seeking	Supports conceptualisation (OR may be considered as not applicable)	See sections 4.1, 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6. However, a valid alternative view is that, because the nature of both the selected leadership tasks is inherently goal-seeking (to have a vision and then to create the programme to deliver it), this attribute should be considered as not applicable or not an outcome of the findings.



Table 3: Summary Discussion - Specific Leadership Tasks

Leadership Task	Empirical Evidence...	Comments
Setting the Vision	Supports conceptualisation of task as sharable	See sections 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.
Establishing and Structuring the Programme	Supports conceptualisation of task as sharable, though with challenges to implementation	See sections 4.4, 4.5, 4.6 and 4.7. However, it was also noted that doing so brought particular difficulties, such as unresolved structures and emotionally difficult decisions.

## 5.2 The Nature of Shared Leadership on GES

The second of the research questions in chapter two related to how more than one person is involved, and how leadership is enacted through lateral and diagonal influence. This is discussed in this section.

### 5.2.1 Turn-Taking as Numerical Action

On GES, the most prevalent, or at least the most visible, mechanism of shared leadership appears to be the taking of turns at leadership, or the seamless transfer of leadership (Gronn, 2002; Yukl, 1999; Pearce and Conger, 2003; Barry, 1991) between members of the team or group. Gronn (2002, p.425) calls this 'numerical action'. Respondents' experiences of this on the tasks of vision setting and establishing and structuring the programme are discussed by respondents in language related to more than one person 'sequentially or concomitantly' (Barry, 1991, p.34) performing the actual functions and tasks. This supports the processual view of sharing leadership where different people can carry out a process.

Through their use of language, respondents also readily acknowledge their colleagues' acts, as, specifically, taking turns at leadership. This occurs most frequently within the programme team. For example,

'A2 took very strong leadership of which local authorities were at risk...we just accepted...' R1(PTM)

'There are multiple leaders...coming from within this organisation'  
R3(PTM)

'Leadership can come from any one person within the team' R7(PTM)

'A19's trying to show leadership, isn't he?' R1(PTM)

Similarly, there is acknowledgement of such instances within the sponsoring group and, even more widely, from the overall stakeholder group.

'A11 is not strictly GES but she certainly has led on free school meals'  
R1(PTM)

'A22 came in and did do some very clear leadership...a lot of arguments with people like A17 and A2...he changed the direction in which we were going' R1(PTM)

### **5.2.2 Seamless Transfers and Stepping Forward and Backward**

There were on GES specific instances where two or more individuals actively decided to switch the leadership role. For example, there were deliberate attempts to share the leadership within the programme team.

'We do a rotating chair' R4(PTM)

'I try...to say to people, okay, well you lead this meeting or you lead this or you chair it' R1(PTM)

This occurred when one skill set was needed more than others, when a particular personal style was required, and perhaps most frequently, when a collaborative activity required contributions from many but the clarity and drive of one individual, as with the Local Authority Event example. Similarly, there was recognition in the critical incident relating to the funding deadline, that, aside from the question of availability, A2's more measured and diplomatic style might be more effective in this high stress situation than A1's demonstrably driven style.

This ability to switch the leadership role supports descriptions of the rounded competences and styles of effective project leaders (e.g. Müller and Turner, 2007; Thite, 2000). The difference between these views from the project leadership literature and the shared leadership present on GES is that these authors' frame of reference was to consider that one effective leader would have all the necessary qualities. Whereas under a shared leadership frame of reference, the key is that the group must collectively hold the competences, and be able to switch the role of leader to meet circumstances. In other words, where one person does not have all the desired attributes, the leadership role is shared, split or rotated (Barry, 1991). This is supported by the findings from GES.

There is less evidence of a deliberate transfer of leadership role from one member of the sponsoring group to another, which is perhaps to be expected given that the individuals do not work closely together and in many cases hardly know each other. Overall, each believes they have a separate and distinct role to play in the 'leadership role constellation' (Denis, Lamothe and Langley, 2001, p.816), which has more to do with position than comparative competences or styles. In this sense, the two separate entities are in stark juxtaposition – the programme team working seamlessly together as a unit on leadership functions, and the sponsoring group consisting of members each with a distinct channel for their leadership contribution.

On GES, leadership was sometimes enacted through the influence of one or other particular individual. At one extreme, this was simply due to someone's

position. For example, on an issue where there was disagreement, and no clear line of authority or accountability, the very presence at a senior cross-organisational meeting of a sponsoring group member from Cabinet Office wielded strong influence in the programme team's favour. In a more novel example, subtle understanding of complex political-organisational dynamics placed particular individuals in a position to lead:

'A1 had been going at this, sort of working behind the scenes in DCSF'  
R2(PTM)

A further example is when at different times and using their different styles, A2 and A8 orchestrated inputs and influences to secure funding.

This is strongly reminiscent of 'tapping into the power lines' (Bourne and Walker, 2004), with the difference to the original conception that when there are many 'power lines', as there are so often in modern organisations across the public sector, there is likely to be shared leadership of the 'tapping into' them.

There is on GES a tangible sense that individual actors deliberately put themselves in a leadership mode when they feel it appropriate to do so, based on factors such as skills for the particular issue requiring leadership, availability, an appropriate style or positional power. The reverse also holds, in that leaders recognise when they can and should step back from positions of leadership. For example,

'We've now got the funding, we've now got the governance, and to be honest, I can probably draw back a bit' R8(SGM)

### **5.2.3 Intra-Boundary and Inter-Boundary Sharing**

Given the clear distinction between the programme team and the sponsoring group, a further interesting perspective relates to sharing across these as organisational boundaries of the GES programme.

Interviews and discussions with programme team members are characterised by an intrinsic assumption of continued, seamless joint-working. Many of the activities, such as meetings and workshops, and deliverables, such as technical and programme documentation, are created through joint working across the workstreams and, often, across constituent projects. Inasmuch as people are working closely together without authority over each other, and take on board each other's ideas, as well as feeding off each other in a more subliminal way, then there is 'a dynamic exchange of lateral influence' (Cox, Pearce and Perry, 2003, p.48).

This might be expected in almost any knowledge-based team environment. However, it is pertinent that it occurred in the defined leadership tasks of setting the vision and establishing and structuring the programme. Where such processes occur within the cohesive unit that is the programme team, such influence can be considered intra-boundary shared leadership. This close working relationship (which is discussed further below as a possible source of concertive action (Gronn, 2002, p.429)) was evident in the programme team, but not the sponsoring group.

The sponsoring group is much more disparate, and can not readily be characterised as a team. Overall, there was much less deliberate seamless transfer of leadership from one sponsoring group member to another compared to the programme team. Influence flowing across the sponsoring group is perhaps less evident, though there are examples of specific instances in respondents' observations. This type of lateral or diagonal influence can be considered inter-boundary.

#### **5.2.4 What is Concertive Action or Conjoint Agency?**

The turn-taking and seamless transfers described above are certainly clear examples of 'numerical action' (Gronn, 2002, p.429). The extent to which GES presents Gronn's more subtle mechanism of 'concertive action' (Gronn, 2002, p.429), whereby the three processes of 'intuitive working relations, spontaneous

collaboration and institutionalised practices' create the emergent property of 'conjoint agency', (Gronn, 2002, p.430) is open to discussion. Indeed, it is perhaps the crucial discussion in an exploration of shared leadership as posited by Gronn and others.

From within the programme team, there emerges a strong sense that for this close-knit, self-selecting and high-performing team, there is a valued but intangible quality, which they consider as distinct from their individual qualities. More than in any other avenue of dialogue with programme team members, this is articulated consistently, and passionately.

'It becomes an entity within the whole group so we're all leaders in a certain way' R7(PTM)

'I'm trying to think of the words really. It's like an electricity. We all work very closely together' R5(PTM)

'We do have this sort of shared ownership, or shared...A1 would talk about seamless working, and I do think that's part of our success'  
R2(PTM)

'It has created certainly in terms of some of the people that I work most closely with, the situation where you generally both think exactly the same. I mean it's an uncanny situation for a working environment where you tend to be thinking very much along the same lines'  
R7(PTM)

'A2 and I both suddenly thought, "God, you know, that's what we've got to do," and he may have come up with it first or I may have done and I'd say, "I was just thinking that."' R7(PTM)

'And she said it exactly as I would have said it' R4(PTM)

'Matching of ways of working, matching of personalities... it's almost like they're of the same minds' R3(PTM)

This has been observed by the sponsoring group:

'What I've found is I think there's a lot of energy in there, and I think that acts almost like a bit of a gel for the team' R14(SGM)

Collectively, these are suggestive of Gronn's three processes of concertive action, and may be what he had in mind. In this case, there may be a correlation between the nature of the tight-knit programme team and the existence of concertive action or conjoint agency. Moreover, it can be argued that it did not occur in the more diffuse sponsoring group, which then only operates in a shared leadership mode through numerical action.

However, the problem with making a claim for the presence on GES of concertive action or conjoint agency is that it is not at all clear what these concepts would look like in practice, or what they contribute to leadership in its shared form.

Beyond the 'energy' described by respondents, there does not appear to be an equivalent of the tangible, or at least, more intuitive benefit of two people each leading at different times when appropriate, as there is for numerical action. Numerical action seems to make sense as a meaningful descriptor for shared leadership, whereas concertive action appears elusive as a property of shared leadership. Or perhaps the inputs to it are as described in terms of energy, and we need to find a way to identify and measure the outputs that this energy creates.

Alternatively, perhaps it is the case that the seamless transfer mechanism of numerical action can only occur because of the high level of familiarity and trust within the team. This would not be an argument for conjoint agency or concertive action as a separate mechanism, but as an enabler of shared leadership through numerical action.

If numerical action is considered as the sum of its parts, then shared leadership's value perhaps equates to the sum of those parts. Conjoint agency is posited as 'a product or energy which is greater than the sum of their individual actions'

(Woods, Bennett, Harvey and Wise, 2004), and from GES, I have not seen a tangible manifestation of what the greater product or energy is, or what the energy or gel contributes to leadership of the programme, beyond a powerful sense of a high performing team.

Thus, on the basis of GES, it was difficult to establish Gronn's ideas of concertive action or conjoint agency and to develop models or chains of causality which lead to it as an emergent property or outcome. Greater conceptual definition would be required before it would be possible to present the findings from GES in this light. In reality, it is likely that other methods for data collection and analysis might be required once the concepts have been defined and explicated further. Gronn (2008, p.154) perhaps recognises this himself when he says 'important conceptual surgery still needs to be performed'.

The foregoing should not suggest that concertive action is not an attractive concept, especially if it helps to explain the dichotomy of process and artefact discussed later. However, based on GES, it remains unclear how we should proceed to describe and analyse it.

### **5.2.5 Are Defined Complementary Roles and Structures Important for Shared Leadership on a Programme?**

Role complementarity, which is suggestive of a clear, up-front delineation of duties, does not appear to have played a significant part on GES. The formal definition of the three member roles of an MSP-compliant programme board (OGC, 2007) did not exist on GES (at least during the phase of data gathering for this study). To a large extent, the SRO operated only as a member of the sponsoring group, delegating most operational leadership tasks to the programme manager, and providing a non-executive style of leadership. No Business Change Manager existed, rather this function was shared or distributed across many roles.

The programme team structure and the projects which sit under the programme were essentially designed around known people with respected talents and



similar aims. The sponsoring group was, in effect, an invited list of stakeholders, and several ad hoc governance appointments. For example,

I know it's very peculiar. We have a programme, but we didn't have an SRO and a board until the programme set it up.' R5(PTM)

Within the programme team, leadership rotated flexibly more on the basis of a shared understanding of individual skills and styles, and of the task at hand, rather than on an up-front separation of duties or complementarity of roles. Other stakeholders volunteered to be involved in an operational-type board, akin to a programme board, further supporting the idea that it was personal and shared capability and ambition, rather than formally constituted roles, that gave people the platform to enact leadership. As has been described, formal governance structures such as boards do not play a major factor in the leadership of GES.

Thus, findings from GES suggest that a defined set of complementary roles and formal structures are not necessarily enablers of shared leadership.

Whilst MSP's prescription of leadership roles and structures does not appear apt for GES, the five descriptions of what 'leadership is' (OGC, 2007; p.48; see ) resonate with the shared leadership enacted collectively by members of the GES programme team and sponsoring group. Thus the difference between the accepted model and that suggested by the experience of GES lies not in "what leadership is" but in "who leads and how". Perhaps the practical challenge here is for the authors of MSP to clarify that any and all stakeholders of a programme should be encouraged and expected to enact the kind of leadership prescribed in the guidance.

### **5.2.6 Why do Respondents Attribute Ownership of the Vision Singularly?**

A striking aspect of the findings was that, when discussing leadership tasks in activity, input and influence terms, respondents characterise setting the vision as

a shared task, but this contrasted strongly with comments relating to the vision and its constituent ideas as having a singular ownership or genesis.

‘a standard all day workshop, and out of that came a vision ...that was used right through.’ R1(PTM)

‘The vision belonged to one person’ R4(PTM)

This resonates strongly with authors who consider shared leadership as a subtle phenomenon apt to ‘get disappeared’ (Fletcher and Käufer, 2003, p.25), or for which actors have a tendency to misremember or ‘selectively attend to, encode, and retrieve schema-consistent information’ (Seers, Keller and Wilkerson, 2003, p.91).

Of value here perhaps is the finding that setting a vision was not a simple discrete activity, but a complex set of processes that necessarily take place across times and settings, which is not well explored in the literature reviewed.

What emerges is a flow of activities such as meetings and events, which generate and expose ideas and decisions, which consolidate as artefacts such as documents and speeches, which through influence, decision processes and perhaps embedding activities, then become defined as a “vision”.

As Gronn (2002) proposes, leadership can be seen through actions. The question that arises is: what does it mean to ascribe ownership or origination of the vision? But in attempting to answer this question, we do not have a definition for the point in the activity flow described previously at which ownership or origination occurs. Shared leadership takes a processual view of leadership. Perhaps the above question can be reframed as to whether, in addition, there is, or should be, an artefactual view. Similarly, perhaps a decision, such as the one on the structure of the programme, can constitute an artefact of leadership, separate from the processes which surround it.

Another facet of this debate is to challenge an implicit framing of leadership as linear and sequential, in the form “I lead, and then you all follow”. On the basis of the activities and attribution of ownership of the vision and structuring decision in GES, the reverse could be argued to be true: “you all contributed to our shared activities under the given leadership task, and then later I was seen to have led us to an output, idea or decision”.

If an artefactual view of leadership is valid, can this work in tandem with a processual view? Perhaps this takes us back to an irreducible basic, ‘main idea’ (Turnbull James, Bowman and Kwiatkowski, 2008, p.70), which although (processually) contributed to in advance, and (processually) refined, enacted and committed to afterwards, is (artefactually) attributed at a single point in space and time to one individual. Whether it is attributed correctly or justifiably given the activity flow around it is perhaps beside the point.

### **5.2.7 Is Achieving Commitment More Important than Attributing Ownership?**

A further distinction, which may be of real value for practitioners, is between, on the one hand, perceptions of who originated or owned a vision or a decision, and, on the other, how others came to understand and buy into it.

On GES, the plural nature of the activities had important implications for perceptions of actors’ involvements in the tasks of leadership, and thus whether tasks can be considered as singular or shared. The conflict between effort and attribution of ownership was stark. However, there did not appear to be any negative impact in terms of people feeling they had not received credit for their contribution. Rather, the breadth of contribution was felt to have been significant in achieving commitment. As one respondent puts it:

‘Is a vision something that everybody has to own, or is a vision something that everybody has to be able to sign up to?...You want them to feel that they’ve got some ownership. One way of doing that is having a consultative approach, for want of a better word, in terms of

what the business plan is and what the vision is, what the values of the organisation might be' R14(SGM)

This applied also to programme team members feeling that, although the decision on structure was ultimately made by one person, they appreciated having been afforded an opportunity to give their 'two-penn'orth' R7(PTM).

### **5.3 Traditional Leadership on GES**

Up to now the discussion has focussed on shared leadership, but it is important to acknowledge the undoubted presence of traditional leadership on GES. Evident both through respondents' discourse and through the other data collection method of observations recorded through journal entries, a clear sense emerges on GES of at least one charismatic, transformational, firelighting leader (Bass, 1985; Barber and Warn, 2005) in the person of the programme manager.

Many respondents experience and verbalise their interactions with this most visible leader through the traditional, charismatic paradigm

'Ultimate leader, which is A1' R2(PTM)

'A1 definitely is the key leader' R7(PTM)

'We have a very, very strong leader' R4(PTM)

'Obviously a much stronger, very obvious leadership material person'  
R3(PTM)

Whilst GES is too early in its lifecycle to judge any correlation with success, team members and sponsors appreciate the idealised influence (Bass, 1985; Prabhakar, 2005), charismatic behaviours (Wang, Chou and Jiang, 2005) and clarity (Norrie and Walker, 2004) offered by the programme manager.

Specific instances of her ability to switch to a more task-focused and transactional style (Prabhakar, 2005; Norrie and Walker, 2004; Thite, 2000) also appear, such as the decision to end debate over potential programme structures.

The programme manager was not the only traditional leader operating through top-down influence. Respondents' descriptions of their involvement in bringing the right people together and in thinking ahead to sustain the programme allude to Norrie and Walker (2004)'s higher pursuit and to Thamhain (2004)'s social architect conceptions of project/programme leadership in its singular guise.

Thus the experience of traditional leadership by a single leader on GES is congruent with authors' views on the traditional form of project leadership from the literature review.

#### **5.4 The Hybrid or Integrated Model**

The above discussion highlights the presence of both shared leadership and traditional leadership on GES. Thus whilst there is evidence of shared leadership from GES, in no sense should this be seen as replacing traditional forms of leadership. Rather the two appear to co-exist well (Locke, 2003; Pearce and Conger, 2007).

This appears to offer strong support for the hybrid, integrated model, where influence flows in all directions: the traditional vertical flow from one leader to many followers, and lateral and diagonal flows between co-workers (Locke, 2003; Pearce and Conger, 2007).

Actors describe different levels of leadership, different types of leadership, including relationship-oriented such as engaging senior stakeholders, and task-oriented leadership, such as leadership of individual products and projects and focusing on short term priorities. They relate different styles of leadership. They characterise numerous people as leaders and numerous individual and collective acts as acts of leadership. Meanwhile, they attribute some outcomes of leadership as individual.

Overall, what emerges is that leadership on GES does not conform exclusively to a shared leadership model, nor does it conform exclusively to any one of the

traditional paradigms of leadership. Rather, it takes a variety of forms and there appears to be an abundance of different types of leadership.

## **5.5 Evaluating Shared Leadership**

From a practical perspective, this abundance of leadership must be positive, reducing the chance of the programme falling short through a lack of leadership (Smith, 1999), and strongly reflecting the ethos of leadership prescribed by MSP (OGC, 2007).

As to the value of the shared form of leadership, this appears to lie partly in being able to deploy the skills and talent of any number of leaders when required for a given circumstance, and partly in the commitment engendered through plural contributions. Even the painful experience of the structuring task itself resulted in a sense of ownership of the structure and organisation of the programme and its constituent projects. For any organisation, these are input measures of success.

The possibility of some value greater than the parts, deriving from conjoint agency, has been discussed. Output measures, or the performance results, of the various episodes of numerical action through turn-taking and seamless transfer can perhaps only be hypothesised at this stage of the GES programme's lifecycle, but there is evidence that actors strongly perceive these to have had a positive effect.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the downsides of shared leadership on GES, which accord with literature (Harris, 2008; Locke, 2003). Sharing the leadership did, in certain episodes, generate negative emotions and stress within the programme team, and there was anxiety at the lack of formal roles and governance entities.

GES is deemed by its sponsors as successful, but it is not possible based on this research to suggest causality in either direction, or to suggest that other programmes can copy GES's leadership. Each circumstance is unique.

'There can be lots of different ways of doing things. I don't think one is necessarily right. The consensual method may be really good if you're tossing really new, challenging ideas around to just see what happens. If you've got a really clear vision that someone personally wants to champion, well yeah, you just stick it in that department and they will drive it because, maybe to dilute that, would be too risky' R11(SGM)

Table 4: Summary Discussion - The Nature of Shared Leadership

Shared Leadership Aspect	Empirical Evidence...	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numerical Action</li> <li>• Turn-taking</li> <li>• Seamless Transfer of Leader Role</li> <li>• Intra-Boundary and Inter-Boundary</li> </ul>	Supports aspects as mechanisms of shared leadership	See sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concertive Action</li> </ul>	May partially support aspect as mechanism of shared leadership	See section 5.2.4. Perhaps the turn-taking and seamless transfers within the programme team (see sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3) link to the presence of the three enablers of 'intuitive working relations, spontaneous collaboration and institutionalised practices' (Gronn, 2002). Respondents speak of an 'energy' between them. This phenomenon on GES could be interpreted as concertive action. On the other hand, there is no tangible evidence of concertive action/conjoint agency as an emergent property, where shared leadership is more than the sum of its parts.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defined Role Complementarity</li> <li>• Defined Structures</li> </ul>	Does not support aspects as mechanisms of shared leadership on programmes	See section 5.2.5. Suggests not necessarily important for shared leadership to occur on programmes. Defined roles, and complementarity between them, had little effect. Such formal roles did not exist in true form. Rather, an ability for individuals to exercise influence irrespective of role appeared more important. Thus the effect was more agential than structural. The nature of leadership, as opposed to management, as described by MSP, appears apposite – albeit leadership can come from any or all actors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attributing Ownership as Singular</li> <li>• Commitment versus Ownership</li> </ul>	Supports aspects of shared leadership	See sections 5.2.6 and 5.2.7. Underlines the potential contradiction in shared leadership, and suggests processual and artefactual views of leadership. Suggests positive practical impact of shared leadership.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hybrid or Integrated Model of Leadership (including traditional leadership)</li> </ul>	Supports model of leadership	See sections 5.3 and 5.4.



## 6 Conclusions

### 6.1 Summary of Thesis

The conclusions from the thesis can be summarised as follows:

#### The Presence of Shared Leadership

- Shared leadership is present on GES, evident in both the tasks of leadership: first, setting the vision and second, establishing and structuring the programme. If considered distinct from shared leadership (on the basis of involving more actors and being more emergent than planned), distributed leadership is also present
- Findings support the four defining attributes of the concept of shared leadership derived from literature: plural, processual, influencing and goal-seeking

#### The Nature of Shared Leadership

- Both diagonal and lateral influence, or networks of influence, take place between the actors enacting leadership
- Numerical action, through seamless turn-taking and transfer of the leader role, is the most evident mechanism of shared leadership. This occurs within and across the boundaries of the programme.
- Intuitive working relations, spontaneous collaboration and institutionalised practices appear to be present. However, GES has not provided evidence of how such concertive action mechanisms constitute conjoint agency (i.e. a property of shared leadership which is more than the sum of its parts)
- Findings from GES do not support defined, complementary roles and structures as important for shared leadership on a programme

- Whilst GES supports the existence of shared leadership, it suggests that actors continue to attribute the artefacts or outputs of acts of leadership to individuals. The reasons for this are not clear from the GES case study
- Traditional leadership, in terms of vertical downward influence and use of authority, takes place alongside shared leadership
- Thus, from a conceptual standpoint, GES supports the view that leadership is neither purely shared nor traditional, but a hybrid, integrated phenomenon

### **The Practical Value of Shared Leadership**

- GES suggests that irrespective of attributed ownership, involvement in the leadership task of setting the programme vision increases commitment to it
- Similarly, involvement in establishing and structuring a programme has benefits in terms of commitment, but can be difficult and has emotional costs associated with it

## **6.2 Implications for Theory**

In this thesis I have unpacked the leadership task of setting the vision into its constituent processes to demonstrate the involvement of many parties in these activities, and the operation of 'networks of influence' (Fletcher and Käufer, 2003, p.21) in this task. For the leadership task of establishing and structuring an organisation (in this case a programme), influence was seen to operate laterally, and particularly diagonally, between the programme team and individuals in the various sponsoring organisations.

Analysing leadership at this relatively mundane level of specifically-defined tasks and influences is inherently different to traditional perspectives, which tend to consider leadership through heroic paradigms, global strategies and momentous decisions. The idea of a vision and a structure as single products or deliverables that can be created by an individual leader is not supported by findings from

GES. Rather, these were arrived at through multi-faceted, subtle and nuanced activities, with numerous flows of influence, and the outputs themselves continued to evolve through further contributions. Perhaps such an operational, processual perspective will inevitably lead to a finding that many people contribute to such acts of leadership.

In contrast, the study also found that in parallel with describing multi-partite activities and acts of influence, respondents attribute specific artefacts of leadership, such as the overall vision, key ideas within it, and decisions on structure, to individuals. This resonates strongly with scholars' characterisations of individuals' persistent propensity to encode their experiences according to an individualistic schema (Fletcher and Käufer, 2003; Seers, Keller and Wilkerson, 2003). Analysing and resolving this apparent contradiction through further theory building would be valuable. Nevertheless, from a pragmatic perspective, involvement in these acts of leadership led to high commitment among team members.

On GES, the most evident mechanism of shared leadership is the taking of turns at the functions of leadership, through seamless and regular transfer of the leadership role (Pearce and Conger, 2003). Findings from GES appear to provide only limited direct support or further characterisation of 'concertive action' (Gronn, 2002, p.430), albeit the three mechanisms of intuitive working relations, spontaneous collaboration and institutionalised practices provide an accurate description of the dynamics within the programme team which shares leadership most effectively. Further theoretical work to describe these mechanisms so that they can be empirically studied will be valuable.

Traditional leadership certainly exists in parallel with shared leadership on GES. Indeed, the traditional leadership on GES supports the descriptions in academic literature on project leadership. Traditional leadership, through singular vertical influence, operated on GES when shared leadership of the task of reaching a

decision on the structure had stalled. Hence the two forms appear complementary.

The co-existence of traditional and shared leadership, and in particular, the re-emergence of the traditional form when required, strongly supports the hybrid form of leadership, which scholars have increasingly converged on (Locke, 2003; Pearce, Conger and Locke, 2007; Gronn, 2008). The hybrid form of leadership is perhaps the most compelling. It is also less contradictory of traditional paradigms, complementing them with the new paradigm of shared leadership, which is apt for a complex, cross-functional, cross-organisational environment such as the GES programme.

Starting out on such an exploratory journey is rarely done without any idea of the possible results (Yin, 2009, p.29), and therefore it is unsurprising from a personal perspective that this case study of GES, which focused on shared leadership, should lend credence to the integrated, hybrid form.

Findings from GES further suggest that the integrated and hybrid paradigm should be interpreted as widely as possible. Leadership is experienced and verbalised in many different ways, levels and styles by actors across GES. Deliberate and active shared leadership occurred within a small group, but there also occurred a more distributed (even accidental) form within the sponsoring group and wider stakeholders.

If the hybrid model is the right one, and we seek to resolve the inconsistency between plural activities and singular origination/ownership, perhaps a dual processual and artefactual perspective on leadership is appropriate to study it further.

The findings from the GES programme do not in themselves elucidate the specific differences between leadership of a project as opposed to leadership of a programme. GES does suggest that as the practice and theory of programme

management develop, it will be beneficial to consider leadership in such an environment in the hybrid form, rather than solely through traditional paradigms.

For leading scholars such as Gronn (2002) and Pearce and Conger (2003), it is the ascription of acts or processes wielding influence, which determines the presence or not of shared leadership. In this regard, findings from GES suggest that aspects of the leadership tasks of setting the vision and establishing and structuring the programme are shared, and moreover that they are shared both within the narrowly defined programme team and within the wider sponsoring and stakeholder group. Perhaps it is the parallel ascription of leadership outcomes - artefacts or decisions - to individuals, which presents an apparent contradiction (Fletcher and Käufer, 2003), and is the key issue for shared leadership theory to investigate further.

### **6.3 Implications for Practice**

For practitioners, embracing strategically pluralist organisations (Lawler, 2008; Denis, Lamothe and Langley, 2001; Gregory, 1996; Robinson, 2008), and allowing leadership to take place in many different guises and forms, is likely to be beneficial in terms of skills deployment and commitment to the vision and structure.

The prescribed form of leadership from the dominant practitioner guidance, MSP (OGC, 2007), also aligns with the enactments of both traditional and shared leadership experienced. However, MSP's formally prescribed leadership roles bear little resemblance to the reality of GES.

Interpreting and enacting MSP's (OGC, 2007, p.48) prescription of 'what leadership is' should be done by considering and promoting the idea that any and all team members can exercise leadership, and that defining a role, or assigning someone a title, may have little impact on the enactment of leadership.

Yet as the difficulties in structuring the programme demonstrate, shared or hybrid leadership is by no means a panacea. As one respondent puts it:

‘The involvement of many people is both its blessing and its curse’  
R9(SGM)

Many workers today are familiar with organisational discussions on dotted reporting lines, matrices of overlapping teams and expectations for contributions outside direct responsibilities. Programmes are increasingly used as an organisational form in the UK public sector, often spanning traditional internal divisional silos and across agencies. Shared leadership is a potentially valuable theoretical concept to explain how leadership can operate in such complex environments. GES provides a powerful insight into how leadership operates when such cross-government programmes are conceived and established.

In summary, the study’s main contributions are:

- It uses empirical evidence to support shared leadership’s occurrence in one business environment, in particular lending support to the hybrid, integrated model of leadership
- It supports and enhances the emerging conceptual description of shared leadership, and provides input to further theorisation on at least three aspects of the concept:
  - the nature of non-vertical influence, suggesting diagonal influence (across boundaries of seniority, position and organisation) is at least as important as lateral influence among a group of peers
  - numerical action through seamless turn-taking as the dominant mechanism, whilst leaving open the question of whether concertive action or conjoint agency can be evidenced as more than the sum of its parts
  - proposing an artefactual perspective as well as a processual perspective, to account for people’s tendency to attribute activity plurally but artefacts singularly

- It offers programme practitioners a perspective on their and their colleagues' involvement in two important tasks of programme leadership

## 6.4 Validity and Generalisability

I make no attempt to suggest that GES is typical and any possible generalisation is intended to be analytical rather than statistical (Yin, 2009, p.39). These findings are nonetheless a valuable contribution to the emerging literature on shared leadership, not least relating to the elucidation of numerical and concertive action and the dichotomy between processual and artefactual views of leadership.

The study also contributes to the developing theory and practice of programme management, through a perspective on how hybrid traditional and shared leadership roles and behaviours contribute to the vision, establishment and structuring of a complex programme.

The case study used a relatively formal and structured approach, including a protocol, and multiple sources of evidence. A journal, particularly for numerous ad hoc conversations over several months, and to a lesser extent documentation, formed a key part of the analytical work to arrive at themes and codings of data. In presenting these results, 125 respondent quotations, from 14 of the 15 respondents, were used to elaborate and support the findings and discussion, plus a small number of journal entries and excerpts from case study documentation. The richness, breadth and depth of these quotations across all the codes in the findings enhance reliability and internal validity (Yin, 2009, p.41). In the Discussion chapter, concepts from literature are described as supported, partially, possibly or not supported by the empirical data. External validity should be considered in light of the interaction between the data and the emergent literature, and the exploratory nature of the discussion and conclusions.

Given the nature of the study and the relationship between myself, as both researcher and practitioner, and the subject matter (as discussed in Chapter Three), the finding that shared leadership is operating in GES is not a surprise.

The value of this relatively in-depth exploration of one business scenario resides rather in how shared leadership in GES is characterised, including its emerging descriptions, inconsistencies and unanswered questions (Siggelkow, 2007).

## **6.5 Limitations**

From the methodology and method, not least the choice of a single case, the need to manage researcher bias and objectivity, and the emergent and human nature of shared leadership, the results are acknowledged as being limited. They are of an exploratory and interpretative nature.

Certainly, caution should be exercised before declaring that this study has found shared leadership to exist – this is by no means a ‘talking pig’ scenario (Siggelkow, 2007, p.20). There are undoubtedly numerous ‘plausible rival hypotheses’ (Yin, 2009, p.vii) for the findings, which may not even adopt a leadership lens at all. I have been explicit that this study deliberately uses the lens of shared leadership for the empirical investigation.

Moreover, there are numerous specific attributes of the phenomenon and context that limit these results. GES and its actors may even be untypical, and perhaps it should be interpreted as an extreme or unique case (Yin, 2009, p.49).

Shared leadership remains a phenomenon best interpreted through the perceptions and experiences of those involved with it (Harris, 2008) and this study has demonstrated that on GES, actors’ experience of the defined tasks of leadership support the shared leadership concept emerging from literature, whilst at the same time offering refinements and challenges to those theories.

## **6.6 Further Research**

There are numerous avenues for further research into the phenomenon of shared leadership, within and without programme management. One obvious area suggested by the findings is to investigate the relationship between shared leadership as phenomenon, and programme or other business setting as context. A second is to investigate the mechanism and outputs of concertive action, to



ascertain whether this can be evidenced as 'more than the mere sum of their parts' (Gronn, 2008, p.150). For this, a systems thinking approach might be valuable, whereby concertive action could be considered in terms of emergence resulting from a shared leadership system.

Perhaps the most interesting line of study would be to pursue the idea of the parallel processual and artefactual perspectives on leadership. Linked to this is a further investigation of the relationship between respondents' use of language pertaining to functional activities and influence, their personal conceptions of leadership per se, and their conceptions of specific enactments and outcomes of leadership.

To advance beyond this exploratory study, more quantitative methods may be required, though this presents difficulties, at least until instruments that offer the requisite construct validity, reliability and generalisability for quantification and theory testing can be developed. For example, a team-based multi-factor leadership questionnaire would need to resolve the emergent nature and inconsistencies in the underlying phenomena of shared leadership.

To elaborate on the description and characterisations of the phenomena explored in this study, a multiple case method, and longitudinal and ethnographic methods may be valuable.

One approach that may offer considerable value in the short term is social network analysis, as suggested by Mayo, Meindl and Pastor (2003). This would support the quantitative study of relationships and influence as the units of analysis, span teams of individuals as well as cooperating organisations, and permit an appropriate level of measurement whilst offering further characterisation of the phenomena at hand.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Systematic Review Information

#### Search Terms

Keyword	Grouping Shorthand
Shared Leadership Distributed Leadership Dispersed Leadership Collaborative Leadership Collective Leadership Post-heroic / post heroic / postheroic Leadership Co-Leadership	SDL
Lead* Leader* Leadership Co-Lead* Co-led* Self-Lead* Self-led	Lead
Project Manage* Program* Manage*	PPM
Public Sector Government Education Health	PS
Change Manage* Business Change Transformation	Change

#### Databases/Other Sources

Two academic database search engines were used for the full set of keyword searches: ABI and EBSCO. The keywords were searched for in citations and abstracts, and the scholarly journals only criterion applied.

A subset of keyword searches were used in Web of Science, Google Scholar and Wikipedia, though these proved less fruitful.

In addition, two specific journals, the International Journal of Project Management and Project Management Journal were searched directly against a subset of the keywords (those relating to Leadership), and against known authors.

Using the MIMAS ZETEC alerts service, several other relevant titles and abstracts from a selection of relevant journals and papers were attained. This led to one conference paper being included.

Cross-referencing from papers highlighted through the above searches was also performed, leading to a small number of additional papers being included, but perhaps also importantly suggesting which papers and authors have been most influential in establishing the current domain of literature. Panel members also pointed out several papers and book chapters.

Several books were included. The first, Pearce and Conger's Shared Leadership (2003) is an edited collection of highly relevant articles dealing with the phenomenon of interest, and is regarded as the best current anthology and distillation of key ideas, particularly from the business management perspective (other books deal with shared leadership of schools, for example). The articles in this book proved a valuable source of material.

Other books provided context and background reading. Northouse's Leadership (2007) provided the most comprehensive and up-to-date anthology of thinking on leadership in general terms. Kotter's seminal Leading Change (1996) was also re-read with the systematic review questions in mind, simply because Kotter's models and ideas are known to privilege the idea of leadership as opposed to management in effecting change, and in my experience are cited or reflected in the thinking of many successful programme practitioners in the specific UK Public Sector context (i.e. on the business issue under scrutiny here). Having these books in the background allowed me to avoid very wide searches on generic leadership and change, as it was apparent that such a wide search would entail an enormous amount of hits for very little incremental relevant material.

To shed light on the business issue and context (as a complement to my own experience), prior to reading the academic literature through the lenses described above, documented practitioner-focused management approaches, good practice guides and lessons learned from the Office of Government Commerce (2005, 2007) and National Audit Office (2006) (this latter recommended by a panel member) were reviewed.

### Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria (with explanations)

Inclusion	Exclusion
<p><b>1. SDL def, ops re PPM/Change</b> Specifically describes what Shared Leadership is and how it might operate in the Project / Programme or Business Change / Transformation / Change Management context OR</p> <p><b>2. SDL + PPM</b> Specifically relates to both Shared Leadership and Project / Programme Management OR</p> <p><b>3. SDL + PS</b> Specifically relates to both Shared Leadership and Public Sector</p> <p><b>4. SDL + Change</b> Specifically relates to both Shared Leadership and defined Business Change / Transformation / Change Management OR</p> <p><b>5. SDL + team UoA</b> Specifically relates to Shared Leadership in a context suggesting analogies with the unit of analysis – a small formal team leading a defined or undefined change initiative OR</p> <p><b>6. SDL + Pg vs Pj</b> Specifically relates to Shared Leadership in a context suggesting insights into the</p>	<p><b>A. Too specific field</b> Specifically relates to a field, domain or organizational context which is rich in local flavour e.g. education / healthcare (note also that there is relatively extensive literature on Shared Leadership in these two domains), new product development, television directors; which is likely to make any commentary or findings hard to validly extrapolate to the area of review OR</p> <p><b>B. Operational management</b> Specifically relates to day-to-day management (as opposed to Project / Programme Management) OR</p> <p><b>C. Non-explicit environment</b> Generally relates to Shared Leadership in a general or non-explicit environment OR</p> <p><b>D. Learning</b> Specific focus on learning, as a related phenomenon to leadership OR</p> <p><b>E. Team</b> Specific focus on self-managing or empowered team dynamics</p> <p><b>F. Old</b> Very old (pre-1985) as would pre-date current conceptions of both Programmes and Shared Leadership</p>

<p>micro-context distinguishing a Programme from a Project, that is the dilution of the single point of responsibility and accountability</p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>7. SDL + rel env</b> Specifically relates to Shared Leadership in a general management environment where there is evidence of potential relevance e.g. public sector or ICT project or where change is expressed / implied</p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>8. SDL + author</b> Generally relates to Shared Leadership and is authored by one of a small group of known relevant authors on Shared Leadership</p>	<p>OR</p> <p><b>G. Gender</b> Specific focus on Shared Leadership in the exploration of Gender</p>
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## Results

Keyword Groupings	Number of Hits
SDL	365
Lead	n/a – too large
PPM	18,899
PS	n/a – too large
Change	59,961
<b>Strings</b>	
SDL + PPM	9
SDL + PS	156
SDL + Change	22
Lead + Program* Manag*	141 (3,831 when Lead + PPM were used)
Lead + PS	n/a
Lead + Change	11,514

Searches in IJPM and PMJ resulted in a further 68 articles.

Overall, accounting for overlaps between sources and miscellaneous errors, this stage led to approximately 500 title and abstracts being read and considered, and around 100 full articles being read and considered, of which approximately 50 were documented in the Extraction Table.

## Appendix B: Interview Protocol

I am currently researching the subject of **leadership** in public sector programmes, based on who is involved in leading the activities which a) **set the vision for the programme**, and b) **structure and organize the programme**.

The interview I would like to do with you is to explore this based on your own experiences of GES. The interview is not overly structured, though I have a few questions to orient the discussion, and I am really looking for an open conversation around your opinions and relevant experiences. I would like to focus it on your experience of actual events within GES wherever possible. It should take around 45 minutes, and I'd like to tape-record it **if you agree**. This is only to help me transcribe and analyse the topics covered. It is under "Chatham House rules", whereby I would like to use quotations in the report I will write, but these will not be attributed and any specific organisations or individuals you mention will be completely anonymised.

1. Describe your role in GES? What are the main activities?
2. For you, what does leadership mean in a programme like GES? (***"What it is"*** - *people, role, activities, influence/authority, difference to management/teamwork*).
3. Who exercises leadership on GES?

### Setting the Vision

4. How was the vision for GES set? Who was involved? What leadership did you see taking place? ***"What it does"*** - *What actual activities or tasks constituted leadership in this activity? Can you offer an instance? Were there instances where you could see people sharing the tasks (of setting the vision or leadership relating to it)? Were there instances where you could see people influencing each other beyond normal hierarchies (for example laterally / diagonally?) Probe contradictions between 4. and 1/2/3 [Use Critical Incident Technique at this point if appropriate]*

### 4b. Structuring/Organizing (Repeat Questions in 4.)



## Appendix C: Information on Respondents

Respondent Ref	Actor Ref	Role on GES	Status	Sex	Programme Leadership Experience *	No of quotes used
R1	A1	Programme Manager	Local Authority Employee	F	Medium	22
R2	A2	Programme Team Member	Local Authority Contractor	M	Medium	14
R3	A3	Programme Team Member	Local Authority Contractor	F	Low	16
R4	A4	Programme Team Member	Local Authority Contractor	F	Low	14
R5	A5	Programme Team Member	Local Authority Employee	F	Low	7
R6	A6	Programme Team Member	Local Authority Contractor	F	Low	3
R7	A7	Programme Team Member	Local Authority Employee	M	Low	15
R8	A8	Steering Group Member	Civil Servant	M	High	7
R9	A9	Steering Group Member	Senior Civil Servant	F	High	6
R10	A10	Steering Group Member	Senior Civil Servant	F	High	4
R11	A11	Steering Group Member	Senior Civil Servant	F	High	5
R12	A12	Steering Group Member	Local Authority Senior Employee	F	High	2
R13	A13	Programme Team Member	Consultant	M	High	0

Respondent Ref	Actor Ref	Role on GES	Status	Sex	Programme Leadership Experience *	No of quotes used
R14	A14	Steering Group Member	Local Authority Senior Employee	M	High	7
R15	A15	Steering Group Member	Consultant	F	Low	0
R16	A16	Focus Group	Members of Programme Team	n/a	n/a	
	A17	None	Consultant	M	High	
	A18	Programme Team Member	Consultant	F	Low	
	A19	Programme Team Member	Consultant	M	Low	
	A20	Steering Group Member	Senior Civil Servant	M	High	
	A21	Steering Group Member	Senior Civil Servant	M	High	
	A22	None	Local Authority Contractor	M	n/k	
	A23	None	Civil Servant	M	Medium	
	A24	None	Civil Servant	F	Low	
	A25	None	Senior Local Authority Employee	M	n/k	

\* The relative experience column in the table is my own assessment.