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**Female Heads of Department in Saudi Higher Education: Role,
Challenges and Leadership Development**

By:

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy**

The University of Warwick

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALC	Academic Leadership Centre
CCTV	Closed-circuit Television System
DDSA	Deanship of Development and Skills Advancement
HE	Higher Education
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HoD	Head of Department
HoDs	Heads of Department
INSEAD	European Institute of Business Administration
IPA	Institution of Public Administration
KSAs	The Knowledge, Skills and Abilities
KSU	King Saud University
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
NCAAA	National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment
SCHE	Supreme Council of Higher Education
UK	The United Kingdom
US	United States

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, my husband and my children for their love, prayers, patience, and endless support throughout my PhD journey.

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Declaration

I confirm that this thesis is my own work and it has not been submitted for a degree at another university or institution.

Abstract

Rapid and significant changes have occurred in the higher education (HE) sector worldwide and Saudi Arabia is no exception. As a result of these changes, the role of academic heads of department (HoDs) is also changing. Academic leaders must be capable of leading change and meeting the growing challenges. Therefore, investment in the development of academic leaders becomes a necessity. However, little attention has been paid, until quite recently, to preparing them for their management positions and developing leadership capabilities. This study therefore aimed to analyse the perceptions of female HoDs, in a female-only university, regarding their roles. More specifically, it sought to explore HoDs most important tasks and the key challenges they encounter. The research also aimed to investigate what constitutes effective leadership development for this group. A mixed-methods approach was employed to implement this investigation. In the first phase, data were gathered from 36 HoDs through an online questionnaire; and in the second phase, individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 HoDs who had completed the questionnaire.

The role of HoD was perceived to be multifaceted with participants emphasising that they played multiple simultaneous roles as managers, leaders, representatives and academics. However, the study revealed a mismatch between the tasks that HoDs believed to be important aspects of their role and what they actually did in practice. HoDs were immersed in routine daily operational tasks rather than participating in strategic leadership. The centralised decision-making system limits the ability of HoDs to effectively lead their departments due to having to consult with such an extensive organisational hierarchy.

The study identified several key challenges that HoDs encountered such as work overload, managing people, lack of power and authority, and being stuck in the middle. The findings also

showed that there is no single effective approach to leadership development. Rather, this can happen at three different but complementary levels: personal, departmental, and organisational. Therefore, the study has proposed a model for leadership development which contains a mixture of effective strategies to develop leadership skills. The study also presents a picture of what leadership looks like at a female-only university, which should be of value to policy makers in HE in Saudi Arabia in their efforts towards empowering women.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the last 30 years, rapid and significant changes have occurred in the higher education (HE) sector worldwide. There has been a huge increase in student numbers; new systems of accountability in relation to teaching and research quality; a focus on partnerships with business, community, and commercial organisations; changes in technology and funding; and an increase in stakeholders' expectations. All these developments have had a huge impact on leadership and management practices at the institutional and departmental levels (Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling, 2008; Hare and Hare, 2002; Mercer, 2009; Riley and Russell, 2013; Scott, Coates, and Anderson, 2008; Taylor and Baines, 2012; Thomas-Gregory, 2014).

The changing HE landscape is leading institutions to review their governance structures and management systems (Bolden et al., 2008; Preston and Price, 2012). The roles of academic leaders are also changing. Many management responsibilities are now being delegated to middle-level leaders, those at the level of dean, associate dean, and head of department (HoD) or its equivalent. This is particularly true of entrepreneurial activities (Johnson, 2002; Sotriakou, 2004) and some middle leaders enjoy controlling budgets and resources (Bolden et al., 2008). Accordingly, it has been argued that the role of HoD has evolved from being an administrative post concerned with the maintenance of the daily routine to a strategic post as the incumbent has more influence, participates in decision-making, provides leadership to the department and supports leaders at the senior level in implementing changes introduced in the sector (Bolden et al., 2008; De Boer and Goedegebuure, 2009; Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Riley and Russell, 2013; Scott et al., 2008). In contrast, others claim that in reality the role still requires heads to perform more operational and daily administrative tasks at the expense of practising strategic leadership or actual participation in policy and strategy formation and that

the power awarded does not match the huge scale of responsibilities associated with the role (Marshall, 2012; Pepper and Giles, 2015; Preston and Price, 2012; Sotirakou, 2004).

The growing interest in the role of HoD is due to the fact that they occupy one of the most complex positions in the management structure of higher education institutions (HEIs) (Boyko and Jones, 2010; Clegg and McAulley, 2005; Hellowell and Hancock, 2001; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2002; Sotirakou, 2004). Heads of department (HoDs) play a dual role, as a manager and an academic (Brown, 2001; Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Mercer, 2009; Smith, 2002; Sotirakou, 2004; Thomas-Gregory, 2014), making them vulnerable to identity schism (Winter, 2009). In addition, they represent the interface between the university's senior administration and faculty members and must mediate between their demands and expectations if they conflict (Bolden et al., 2008; Bryman and Lilley, 2009; Gemelch, 2004; Marshall, 2012; Preston and Price, 2012). The importance of their role stems from the fact that academic departments are responsible for the university's core business, namely research and teaching, where most of the daily academic decisions concerning curriculum development, and academic staff recruitment, promotion and tenure take place (Berdrow, 2010; Bryman, 2007; Carroll and Wolverton, 2004).

Although HoDs have been widely investigated in western countries (Berdrow, 2010; Hancock, 2007; Pepper and Giles, 2015; Preston and Price, 2012; Riley and Russell, 2013; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2002, 2005; Sotirakou, 2004; Thomas-Gregory, 2014; Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, and Sarros, 1999), ambiguity still surrounds their roles. There is still a gap in understanding the role because it is subject to change. Over time, researchers have identified several lists of the tasks and responsibilities that fall to HoDs. However, the literature shows that it is difficult to produce a single unified list that includes all the duties of the role. This is

because the role of the HoD and the tasks and responsibilities associated with the role are greatly influenced by the type of institution, its culture, and governance system (Bolden et al., 2008; Seagren, Creswell, and Wheeler, 1993). Academic departments occupy different positions in the organisational structure of the institution based on the size of the institution and its orientation, that is, whether it focuses more on research or more on teaching (Johnson, 2002). In addition, the requirements of the role and the responsibilities of the HoD differ in their details and are also shaped by the nature of the academic discipline (Johnson, 2002). Therefore, even though the tasks of the HoDs are similar in general, the importance of each task, the level of the head's involvement in accomplishing that task and the demands being put on HoDs will vary and will be affected by departmental, institutional and even national contexts (Bolden et al., 2008, Inman, 2009; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2005).

Moreover, the method and criteria used for appointing and selecting academic leaders to the headship position add an extra layer of complexity. The majority of HoDs are chosen as a result of achieving excellence in research and/or teaching rather than demonstrating managerial capabilities (Hempsall, 2014; Johnson, 2002). However, Bolden et al. (2008) argue that academic excellence is no longer the only criterion for selecting individuals for leadership roles, because more attention is now being paid to other criteria such as management and leadership experience. Academic credibility is no longer confined to the narrow concept of research excellence, but it has been extended to include credibility with colleagues within and beyond the institution; managerial capabilities in operational and strategic matters, and personal attributes such as integrity and interpersonal skills. Over and above this, the post of HoD requires knowledge, skills and abilities that an academic leader might not necessarily obtain through his/her previous experience as a faculty member (Bolton, 2000; Johnson, 2002; Knight and Trowler, 2001; Mercer, 2009; Rily and Russell, 2013). All these factors make it

necessary to provide HoDs with more learning opportunities in order for them to be effective in performing their role and to be a future change leader.

Despite the substantial challenges that HoDs face, little attention has been paid, until quite recently, to preparing them for their management positions and developing leadership capabilities (Aziz et al., 2005; Johnson, 2002; Smith, 2002; Smith, 2007). Although the need for professional development to enable academic leaders to perform their role is becoming more and more pressing, little is known about what constitutes effective leadership development (Inman, 2009). Few studies have investigated the appropriate methods by which, and the contexts in which, academic leaders can improve their leadership learning (Bolden et al., 2008; Inman, 2009; Preston and Floyd, 2016; Scott et al., 2008).

To some extent, HE in Saudi Arabia faces similar challenges to those faced by its global counterparts, such as the proliferation of HE providers, the increase in student numbers, the need to ensure quality, and changes in the funding mechanism. In response to these challenges, considerable efforts have been made to reform HE in an attempt to give more autonomy to universities and increase the delegation of decision-making powers to institutions so that they can compete globally (Chapter 2 addresses this in more detail). To achieve this global competitiveness, academic leaders must be capable of leading change and meeting these growing challenges. Therefore, investment in the development of academic leaders becomes a necessity. This is because bringing about the required change needs effective leaders not only at a senior level but also at all organizational levels (Rowley, 1997, as cited in Inman, 2009). Accordingly, there is a need for further research to investigate the role of Saudi academic leaders and the ways through which they can develop their leadership skills.

Furthermore, my personal experience as a lecturer at King Saud University (KSU), which has gender-segregated campuses, gave me the opportunity to work under the management of many male HoDs and their female deputies. This enabled me to observe the differences in their roles and the difficulties that female leaders faced due to a lack of authority. These observations led to my interest in carrying out this research in another context, that is a female-only university characterised by an independent organisational structure in which women assume all leadership positions, to find out whether the role and the responsibilities of female HoDs, the power granted to them and the challenges they face would differ in the absence of a male section (further details about my positionality can be found in Section 4.3). The majority of studies addressing academic middle leaders, especially HoDs, have been conducted in developed countries and there has been only limited research to explore the role in developing countries (see Chapter 3). There continues to be a gap in our knowledge in this area, particularly in gender-segregated Arab/Islamic countries. Thus, I argue further research is needed to explore the role of the HoD and effective leadership development methods, in more centralised and less autonomous systems like Saudi Arabia, as this topic has not been adequately addressed. The following section outlines the research objectives and questions.

1.1 The Research Aims

This study aims to analyse the perceptions of female HoDs, in a female-only university, regarding their roles. For the purposes of this study, the university has been given the pseudonym, Tala University. More specifically, the study seeks to explore the most important tasks and responsibilities that these HoDs carry out and the key challenges they encounter. The research also aims to investigate what constitutes effective leadership development for this group, as well as the factors which could help HoDs enhance their leadership skills.

1.2 The Research Questions

The following research questions have been formulated to address the above aims:

- How do HoDs perceive their role, and what are their main duties and responsibilities?
- What are the key challenges that HoDs face in carrying out their role?
- What are the most effective approaches to improve leadership and management capabilities, and what makes them effective?
- How can learning opportunities and leadership development for HoDs be enhanced within the Saudi Arabian HE sector?

1.3 Significance of the Study

Although the role of middle leaders in HE, especially the role of HoDs, has been extensively researched, most of the studies are western-based. Therefore, the importance of this study stems from the fact that it aims to analyse the role of HoDs in a centrally-controlled country such as Saudi Arabia, where HEIs do not enjoy significant autonomy and a gender-segregation policy is in place. It will add new insight to the academic leadership literature by clarifying whether the role and responsibilities of the HoD in this particular context differ from those found in western literature. This research comes in response to Smith and Abouammoh's (2013) appeal, which pointed to a noticeable lack of research in the theories and practices of leadership in Saudi Arabia. This study highlights an area that has not received much attention in the academic leadership literature, namely, exploring the role of academic leaders and the difficulties they encounter in a single-sex institution or a male-free environment.

A review of the previous literature about HoDs (see Chapter 3) shows that a significant number of studies focus on analysing and understanding the role and the experience of HoDs across different universities (for example, Bolden et al., 2008; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2002, 2005;

Sotirakou, 2004; Wolverson et al., 1999). In contrast, this study aims to analyse the perceptions of HoDs regarding their role at one specific women-only university in Saudi Arabia. This, in turn, may provide a great opportunity to discover whether there is a difference in the role depending on the departmental culture, the importance given to research and the individual differences between heads in terms of their skills and experience. Moreover, those studies that have explored the role of HoDs in a single institution have tended to be qualitative (for example Hancock and Hellowell, 2003; Hellowell and Hancock, 2001; Mercer and Pogosain, 2013; Preston and Price, 2012). A few studies (see for example Hancock, 2007; Thomas-Gregory, 2014) have used mixed methods, integrating qualitative and quantitative data in order to explore the perceptions of the HoDs about their role and the difficulties they face.

Despite the existence of many studies about HoDs, the focus is usually their role, tasks and responsibilities (Berdrow, 2010; Clegg and McAuley, 2005; Hare and Hare, 2002; Smith, 2002, 2005), the key challenges encountered (Deem et al., 2003; Hancock and Hellowell, 2003; Preston and Price, 2012; Sotriakou, 2004), the motivation to accept the role and their career trajectory (Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Floyd, 2012) and the change in professional identity (Thomas-Gregory, 2014; Winter, 2009). Inman (2009, p. 418) argues that "what has been written tends to focus on what leaders do, rather than why they have become leaders and how they have learnt to lead". This view is further supported by Floyd (2016, p. 167), who states that "research on how academic middle managers are supported in their roles is surprisingly sparse". In the current HE environment and with the increasing challenges facing academic leaders, the importance of leadership development has become more urgent. This study is valuable because it will identify some methods to improve the leadership capabilities of HoDs.

The research is important because it was conducted at a female-only university, distinguished

by its female leadership at all organisational levels, which may therefore provide an excellent opportunity to understand the role played by female leaders, the challenges they encounter and the level of power granted to them in the absence of male authority. Consequently, the results may be useful for HE policy makers in Saudi Arabia to better understand whether female-only universities offer greater opportunities for women's leadership and the extent to which such an arrangement aligns with the government's efforts to support women's empowerment. The findings may therefore contribute to informing the decision whether or not it is appropriate to reform the organisational structures of HEIs. Moreover, most studies dealing with female leadership in different government sectors or in the academy in Saudi Arabia have focused on the obstacles that prevent women from reaching leadership positions (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; AlDoubi, 2014; Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013), rather than on how to support, prepare, and develop their leadership skills and abilities. Therefore, this study will shed light on a subject that has not been sufficiently addressed in Saudi Arabia.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will be used by universities and leadership development providers to aid the design of appropriate training programmes. The results may help the Deanship of Development and Skills Advancement (DDSA) provide learning opportunities tailored to the specific needs of HoDs and provide guidance on any modifications to their current training plan, on the topics to be covered, or methods of support. Moreover, the findings are likely to be valuable to current and potential HoDs by providing them with a better understanding of the complexity of the role thereby helping potential candidates to make a more informed decision. It is hoped that this study will add to the knowledge base in middle academic leadership in higher education, leadership development and female leadership and to further inform the research agenda in these areas.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis comprises seven chapters organised as follows:

The first chapter presents a brief background to the study and its rationale. It also presents the aims of the research and the research questions, as well as the significance of the study.

Chapter two describes the context of the research by providing an overview of HE in Saudi Arabia, and the organisational structure and governance system of HEIs. It also reviews the status of women in HE and describes Tala University, the focus of this study, and also highlights the status of HoDs at this university.

Chapter three reviews the literature in this field. It begins by outlining changes in the HE environment and their impact on the role of HoDs. This is followed by an analysis of the complex role that HoDs play and the most important tasks and responsibilities they carry out. The chapter then discusses the key challenges facing HoDs and highlights the need for professional development. Thereafter, the knowledge and skills required for effective leadership and the ways in which HoDs develop their skills and leadership abilities, including both formal leadership training programmes and informal learning methods, are discussed. Finally, as this study is concerned with female leadership, the challenges encountered by women in their progression toward leadership positions are explored.

Chapter four provides a detailed description of the research design. It outlines and justifies the research approach, the data collection methods and the sampling strategy. It also discusses the methods of quantitative and qualitative data analysis and the ethical considerations pertaining to the research.

Chapter five presents an analysis of the research findings based on both the quantitative and qualitative data.

Chapter six discusses the results of the research by comparing and contrasting them with previous studies and provides a proposed model for leadership development.

Chapter seven provides answers to the research questions, discusses the limitations and the recommendations of the study, and highlights areas for further research.

Chapter 2: Context of the Study

This chapter discusses the context in which this study was conducted. It is divided into five sections as follows: a brief overview of HE in Saudi Arabia; the structure of Saudi HE and the governance system; the status of females in HE; information about Tala University, the focus of the study; the status of HoDs at Tala University.

2.1 An Overview of HE in Saudi Arabia

The educational system in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has some distinctive features. The focus is on the teaching of the Islamic religion; it is a bureaucratic centralised system that relies heavily on government funding and support; there are no tuition fees for Saudi students; government policy requires gender segregation at all educational levels with some exceptions in kindergartens, some private primary schools, and some medical schools within universities (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013).

Three agencies are responsible for supervising the implementation of educational policies. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is concerned with the general education sector, which has three levels: primary, intermediate and secondary. The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) was established in 1975, to take charge of planning and supervising the HE sector and to oversee universities. The General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training is responsible for overseeing technical colleges and vocational training (Alkazim, 2003; Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). In 2015, MoHE merged with MoE to form a single body responsible for managing both compulsory and HE. It retained the name Ministry of Education.

HE in Saudi Arabia is fairly new. The first university, KSU, was founded in 1957, after which the sector witnessed rapid development (Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013). Currently, there are 26

public and 11 private universities under the supervision and control of the MoE; many of the public universities and all of the private ones were created in the past decade, reflecting the huge government spending on HE in recent years (Ministry of Education, 2018a). Many new universities were established via amalgamations of former technical colleges with the addition of new colleges and programmes whose mission is to respond to the local needs of the region they serve (Onsman, 2011). They can be classified as teaching institutions with limited research activity as they lack the necessary infrastructure. Therefore, Saudi academics preferred to join older universities that retain a prestigious position (Mazi and Altbach, 2013). According to the latest statistics of the MoE, the number of students enrolled in HEIs is 1,622,441. The vast majority of them were enrolled on bachelor programmes (1,397,677) and degree level diplomas (167,608) while 57,156 students were registered on graduate programmes (Ministry of Education, 2018b).

Nearly all public universities accept both male and female students. However, they have two separate campuses, one for male students and the other for female students, and each campus has its own administrative and teaching staff in accordance with Islamic teachings and Saudi culture (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). The female sections are considered as sub-units attached to the main unit of the male sections. There are a handful of single-sex institutions, some for men and some for women. Tala is one such institution. Saudi universities can be divided into five main categories according to their different missions and objectives: comprehensive (i.e. teaching a broad range of subjects) with a research focus; subject specialised with a research focus; comprehensive; specialised; and teaching only universities (Mazi and Altbach, 2013).

HEIs in Saudi Arabia rely heavily on government funding and this partly explains the strong control that the government exerts over them (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). The government pays a monthly living allowance to students enrolled in public universities (Alamri, 2011) and it provides generous scholarships to students at the private universities. Recently, the private sector in the Kingdom has contributed to the expansion of research in public universities through the funding of university endowment projects and research chairs in various disciplines (Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013).

The MoE manages and operates in a centralised manner and is supported by a number of specialised centres: a) the National Centre for Assessment in Higher Education (NCAHE) which is responsible for overseeing university entrance tests, b) the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) which is authorised to accredit quality standards in Saudi universities, c) the Centre for Higher Education Statistics (CHES) which is responsible for collecting and analysing data related to the HE sector and d) the Centre for Higher Education Research and Studies (CHERS) which is mainly in charge of conducting research in order to improve policies and practices at the system level (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013).

2.2 The Structure of Saudi HE

As mentioned earlier, HE in Saudi Arabia is a centralised system and all universities work under the control of the government; therefore, the decision-making process operates within a hierarchical system (Alamri, 2011; Alkhazim, 2003; Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). The Supreme Council of Higher Education (SCHE) is the highest authority responsible for the regulation and supervision of the HE system. It is chaired by the King to reflect the importance of this sector in the eyes of the government. A number of ministers join the Council as well as all university rectors. This Council is responsible for setting the regulations of HE and is also

concerned with the establishment of new educational institutions and the development of new programmes. The second level of governance is represented by the MoE which oversees all universities and implements the policies and decisions of the SCHE (Alkazim, 2003).

The next level of authority is the university council which is in charge of running the university on a daily basis. The university council oversees issues relating to the appointment of new academic staff, the expansion of academic programmes, curriculum review and admission policies. This council is chaired by the university rector and involves all the university vice-rectors, the deans of the colleges and the deans of the support units as members (Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013). The university rector is responsible for managing operational matters, but issues related to academic and strategic affairs require the participation of different university committees. In each university, there is a scientific committee which is considered the equivalent of the academic board at western institutions; one of its main tasks is to determine the eligibility of academic members for promotion and reward, and it is headed by the vice-rector for graduate studies and research affairs. The following levels of institutional governance are the college councils, then the departmental councils which are predominantly concerned with students, staff and the academic programmes at the departmental level (Al-Eisa and Smith, 2013). The decisions issued by the departmental councils take the form of recommendations that have to be approved by the university council or the scientific committee. The acceptable level of enrolment in the departments, and the admission criteria for students, are examples of decisions taken by this board. In gender-segregated campuses, departmental board meetings are held with the participation of both male and female academic members through the use of closed-circuit television system (CCTV) because direct contact is prohibited due to religious and cultural factors.

The King appoints the university rectors at the rank of Minister for a period of four years. The deans of the colleges in universities are appointed by the Minister of Higher Education for a two-year period, subject to extension, while the rectors of universities appoint the HoDs for a two-year period which is subject to renewal (Alkazim, 2003). It is impossible to dismiss underperforming Saudi academics because they are guaranteed tenure once they are appointed (Altbach, 2011).

The government has recognised that the traditional academic governance, and the strict direct control of the MoE over all administrative and educational aspects of universities may be inappropriate to meet the new challenges faced by Saudi universities. Thus, in 2005, the MoHE commenced a project aimed at developing a future plan for Saudi HE. This project is called *Horizons* and sets out a long-term plan for the next 25 years (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). The management and leadership of HE is a key element of this project. Several attempts have been made to reform the management of HE at both the system and institutional levels, to increase institutional autonomy, especially in managing their financial resources, and to give greater decision-making powers at the university level (AlEisa and Smith, 2013). However, both the government and the HE community lack experience in these matters due to the dominant prevailing culture in Saudi society that accepts centralised control and compliance. Thus, despite the increased delegation of authority to the institutional level, there is still a growing tendency for central control to ensure the proper exercise of power (Smith and Abouammoh, 2013). Such initiatives to increase institutional self-governance require the development of strategic leaders at all institutional levels. That is why investment in leadership development has become a priority in order to achieve the required change for Saudi HE, which is the focus of the current research.

In 2009, the Academic Leadership Centre (ALC) was established in order to develop the skills and capabilities necessary to lead Saudi universities. The Centre aims to prepare potential leaders and support the professional development of current university leaders at both senior and middle levels (Alswailem and Elliott, 2013). The Centre provides workshops and training programmes for both current and future leaders, and organises conferences to exchange experience and discuss recent trends in leadership. It also maintains partnerships with external institutions and cooperates with international experts and trainers in order to benefit from the best practices and successful experience of leadership development elsewhere in the world. Alongside this, every university now has a Deanship of Skills Development to provide an inspiring environment for professional development for both academic leaders and faculty members.

Since this study is concerned with female leadership in HE, this will be discussed in the following section.

2.3 Saudi Females in HE

According to Islamic law, seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim, both men and women (Kauser and Tlaiss, 2011). Despite this, in the past, Saudi women's responsibilities were limited to child-rearing and running the home. Their access to learning was limited. However, in the late 20th century, more attention was given to women's education and it was seen as a strategic investment due to the active role that women play in educating the next generation of citizens.

Saudi Arabia's former ruler, King Abdullah, spared no effort to promote women's education. A great many policies have been put in place to enable women to play an active role in the

country's cultural, social and economic development. Among these initiatives to enhance women's access to HE was the establishment of Tala University a large female-only university. Such endeavours have contributed to a significant increase in the number of women enrolled in Saudi universities. According to the Ministry of Education Statistics Centre, women account for 49% of the total number of students in HE institution, 52% of bachelor degree students and 45% of postgraduate students (Ministry of Education, 2018b).

A similar increase has been seen in the number of female academics. This has increased from 8,403 in 2003-2004 to 32,739 in 2015-2016, whereas the number of their male counterparts has risen from 16,764 to 47,054 during the same period (Ministry of Education, 2018b). However, female academic staff occupy lower positions than their male counterparts (Al-Ohali and Al-Mehrej, 2012; Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013). This situation is similar to other countries where the increase in the number of female faculty members does not correspond to an increase in the number of female leaders. However, the establishment of Tala University is a milestone for female leadership in HE.

In addition, many recent initiatives reflect the government's commitment to the advancement of women in leadership positions. A notable example is the appointment of 30 women as members of the Shura Council in 2015 (Alsubaie and Jones, 2017), as well as new initiatives such as 'Saudi Vision 2030' and 'Saudi Women Leaders', launched by the President of the Economic and Development Affairs Council in 2016, and which include the National Transformation Plan. This plan aims to increase the proportion of women in senior leadership positions to 5% by 2020 (Saudi Vision, 2017). In light of this, this research will help to understand the current state of female leadership in HE. Specifically, it will explore the role of HoDs and how they benefit from various interventions to develop their leadership skills. This

could help to establish whether the Saudi vision regarding women's empowerment is being accomplished.

2.4 Tala University

I have deliberately tried to mask the identity of the research site and have occasionally changed some incidental factual details to make it harder to identify. Tala University was formed in the last ten years by the merging of eight female colleges of education some of which were more than 40 years old (Ministry of Education, 2018c). It now comprises 16 colleges offering qualifications from diplomas to PhDs in many subject areas which are classified under four main headings: health and medical colleges, humanitarian colleges, scientific colleges and community service colleges.

The university is one of a small number of female-only universities that have a predominantly female leadership and independent administrative structure (Almansour and Kempner, 2016). Although Saudi female academics have previously worked as deans and HoDs and as supervisors of units, they worked under the direct supervision of the male authority as only men are allowed to fill the position of rector and other senior leadership positions in gender-segregated campuses (Bubshait, 2012). The organisational structure of Tala University includes the university council and rector as well as many branches, units, colleges and academic departments. The university council comprises 32 women and 3 men; 6 of the vice-rectors are females and one male, and all but one of the deans at the university are female (Almansour and Kempner, 2016).

The campus covers a large geographical area albeit within a single site and it includes a central library and a medical centre (Almansour and Kempner, 2015). The latest statistics of the MoE

show that there are nearly 50,000 students and just over 2,000 academic staff at Tala University. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the academic staff in terms of their academic rank (Ministry of Education, 2018b). Non-Saudi academics are employed in universities on a fixed contract in accordance with the SCHE regulations. They are more likely to be highly qualified individuals or specialists in subject areas where it is hard to recruit Saudi nationals.

	Professor	Associate professor	Assistant professor	Lecturer	Teacher assistant	Total
Saudi	39	146	440	585	533	1,743
Non-Saudi	38	37	211	68	0	354

Table 1: The distribution of academic staff according to their academic rank.

The university has been keen to invest in developing its staff. Consequently, it established the DDSA which offers training and professional development opportunities to both the academic and administrative staff within the university. The Deanship offers a number of workshops, training sessions and special programmes, through partnership with several local and international agencies to provide outstanding training, that aims to empower female leaders to meet the challenges of the future and to develop their leadership skills (Tala University, 2018).

2.5 The Status of HoDs at Tala University

HoDs are very often assistant professors, not even associate professors, let alone professors (see the demographic information of the participants on pages 111 and 129). This picture corresponds with the distribution of academic staff according to their academic rank within the university (see Table 1). HoDs are appointed for a two-year period subject to renewal. When the term of the current HoD is about to end, there is an announcement on the college website inviting nominations. The department might nominate one of its members (i.e. the academic staff are asked to give their opinions and suggest a name) or an individual might nominate herself after obtaining recommendations from some of her departmental colleagues. Thus,

there may be more than one candidate. After the end of the nomination period, candidates will be interviewed by the selection committee constituted at the college level and the new head will be selected according to specific criteria (Almanea. M, personal communication, Sep 10, 2018). The selected individual will be then formally appointed by the university administration. HoDs are appointed only a short while before the existing HoD steps down. They are mostly existing faculty members and do not come from different HEIs. Saudi HoDs may have long-term experience in HE and are still low-ranking academics, in contrast to their counterparts in the United Kingdom (UK) or the United States (US).

2.6 Summary

The information provided in this chapter demonstrates the growth of HEIs in Saudi Arabia and the efforts made to reform the system, and to provide more autonomy to the universities, in order to compete internationally. Globalisation has affected HE systems throughout the world and the Kingdom is no exception. This has made it necessary to develop effective leaders at all organisational levels capable of leading change. In light of this, exploring the perspectives and experiences of the HoDs is necessary as they are responsible for the core work of university teaching and research, and the starting point for any change. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the role of HoDs, their most important responsibilities, and the main difficulties facing them that limit their effectiveness in their leadership role. It also aims to identify those things that help them to develop their leadership skills. The results of this study will help to improve Saudi HE.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature related to middle leadership in HE. Although some elements were written before the fieldwork and data collection, the data analysis revealed new issues, which led to many elements being modified and updated and new parts being included during the writing of the thesis. This reflects the fact that research is an iterative rather than a linear process.

This chapter highlights the changing HE environment and how this affects the role of HoDs. This is followed by a discussion of the role of HoDs and their most important tasks and responsibilities. Thereafter, the challenges facing HoDs while carrying out their roles are described. Then I discuss the knowledge and skills required for effective leadership and the different approaches to leadership development. Although the study did not adopt a feminist perspective, it deals with women's leadership and was conducted at a female-only university, so it was important to highlight those studies which address the challenges that prevent women from taking on leadership positions. Finally, a snapshot of the status of female leaders in Saudi Arabia is provided.

It is important to note that most of the studies reviewed are Western studies. Some international studies are also included, specifically those that share some characteristics with the context of research, that is, studies conducted in Islamic countries or in those that adopt central educational systems. Some Arabic and Saudi studies are reviewed, particularly those that deal with women leaders.

3.2 Change in the HE Landscape and its Impact on the HoD Role

Rapid and significant change has occurred in the UK HE sector and elsewhere in response to external pressures from governments and markets, resulting in the promotion of the values, principles and management practices of the private sector in managing universities. This phenomenon is usually termed “new managerialism” or “new public management” (Bolden et al., 2008; Bolton, 2000; Boyko and Jones, 2010; Deem et al., 2003; Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Floyd, 2016; Hare and Hare, 2002; Preston and Price, 2012; Scott et al., 2008; Sotirakou, 2004; Thomas-Gregory, 2014; Winters, 2009). This movement towards new managerialism has led to increased accountability, increased competition, a focus on efficiency and marketisation (Mercer, 2009).

Accountability has been increased through the introduction of performance indicators and staff appraisal, and more emphasis has been given to auditing the quality of teaching and research. Universities have been required to compete in order to achieve a high position in the global rankings and to attract the largest number of students. The expansion of HEIs is not offset by an increase in spending by the government. Thus, institutions are expected to improve their efficiency in light of the lack of resources. More attention is being paid to entrepreneurial activities. Hence, universities are expected to establish partnerships with business, trade and industry. Such partnerships aim to generate profit, not simply to prepare students qualified for the labour market (Bolden et al., 2008; Mercer, 2009; Sotirakou, 2004; Thomas-Gregory, 2014).

The application of new managerialism in HE remains a controversial topic in the literature (Hare and Hare, 2002), because some of the values of this new management approach are at odds with the traditional values of academia (Bolden et al., 2008). This means abandoning

some of the values inherent in academic society such as fellowship and participation in decision-making and adopting more bureaucratic (Hancock and Hellowell, 2003; Sotirakou, 2004) and entrepreneurial approaches (Bolden et al., 2008); that is why it tends to be unwelcome amongst academics, in particular, at older, more traditional universities (Deem et al., 2003; Preston and Price, 2012; Smith, 2002). Implementing this model of management changes the organisational culture and structure (Bolden et al., 2008; Clegg and McAuley, 2005; Deem et al., 2003) which in turn has a huge impact on leadership and management practices at both institutional and departmental levels (De Boer, Goedegebuure, and Meek, 2010; Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2002; Sotirakou, 2004).

Therefore, more tasks are being delegated from top levels to middle leaders (Riley and Russell, 2013) in particular, those related to leadership and entrepreneurialism (Johnson, 2002; Sotirakou, 2004). As a consequence, some researchers argue that the middle leadership role has evolved to be more strategic (Bolden et al., 2008; De Boer and Goedegebuure, 2009; Scott et al., 2008) and more influential in decision making, particularly for those who have control over financial resources (Bolden et al., 2008). In contrast, other researchers claim that in reality the work required to carry out the increased administrative and operational responsibilities leaves little time to contribute to strategies or developing policy (Pepper and Giles, 2015; Preston and Price, 2012). Hence, Sotirakou (2004) argues that the power of the departments and their academic staff has declined in the face of the authority of the organisation.

HoDs represent a crucial part of the university management team since departments conduct a university's core business of teaching and research (Bryman, 2007). The majority of daily decisions on these issues are taken within the department (Carroll and Wolverson, 2004). HoDs hold a unique position as the buffer between a university's senior management and the faculty

(Boyko and Jones, 2010; Bryman and Lilley, 2009; Smith, 2005; Sotirakou, 2004). They have to translate the interests of central administration to the academic community, convey faculty and student concerns to the university administration, and manage any conflicts that might arise if the demands and the expectations of those stakeholders differ, in addition to maintaining their academic identity (Hancock, 2007; Smith, 2002; Riley and Russell, 2013).

HoDs are responsible for translating institutions' missions and visions into practice, implementing policies and changes introduced to the sector, and providing guidance and leadership to faculty members (Preston and Price, 2012; Sotirakou, 2004). In fulfilling their role, HoDs try to balance the demands for quality, efficiency, and accountability imposed by university senior management with the needs of their academics (Marshall, 2012; Sotirakou, 2004). While they execute the strategies of senior leadership, they also advocate for their department (Riley and Russell, 2013). Thus, the sandwich metaphor seems to apply here as middle level managers are stuck between senior management and staff (Marshall, 2012; Mercer, 2009; Scott et al., 2008) and they have to manage both up and down and to look in two directions, which increases the role's challenges. Marshall (2012) affirms that the complexity of the role is derived from the need to harmonise three requirements: being a subordinate, a peer and a superior.

As a result of the changes highlighted above, universities have been forced to become more service-oriented (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Sotirakou, 2004). Thus, managing external relations has become more critical. HoDs are expected to not only link the senior leadership and their academic colleagues but also make strategic decisions on matters within their area of responsibility, transcend boundaries through interaction with those both inside and outside their own organisation, engage effectively in community activities, build partnerships with

businesses and industry, and communicate with external partners such as schools, governments, and employers (Hancock and Hellowell, 2003; Gemelch, 2004; Sotirakou, 2004). This requires middle leaders to acquire financial and entrepreneurial expertise that was not needed in their previous positions (Hellowell and Hancock, 2001; Sotirakou, 2004).

3.3 HoD Roles, Tasks and Responsibilities

HoDs occupy one of the most complex and demanding position in the organizational structure (Sotirakou, 2004) and their role has been well-documented. Some researchers examined the nature of the role and/or the inherent challenges (Boyko and Jones, 2010; Hancock, 2007; Marshall, 2012; Mercer and Pogolian, 2013; Nguyen, 2013; Riley and Russell, 2013; Smith, 2002, 2005; Thomas-Gregory, 2014). Other studies produced lists of duties and responsibilities and tended to group HoD's tasks under categories, each of which represents a dimension of the role (Berdrow, 2010; Cardno, 2014; Marshall et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2008; Sotirakou, 2004; Wolverton et al., 1999). These studies will be discussed below.

3.3.1 Studies Classifying the Role of HoD into Dimensions

In a longitudinal study, Wolverton et al. (1999) compare the roles of HoDs in the US and Australia. 1680 HoDs at 40 Australian universities and 800 heads in the US were surveyed about the most important functions of their role. The role was conceptualised as comprising six dimensions: administrative tasks, management of resources, leadership, scholarship, faculty development, and resource development. Administrative tasks included organising and coordinating daily departmental activities, planning meetings, and assigning tasks. Managing resources involved managing non-academic staff and keeping records. Leadership tasks involved creating department goals, sustaining a productive work environment, encouraging faculty publication and supporting their professional development. Scholarship meant being

active in one's own research. Faculty development encompassed staff recruitment, promotion, and performance review. Finally, resource development tasks, according to Australian heads, meant representing the department to external bodies and obtaining external funding whereas, for American heads, it meant supervising students and securing funding.

The study revealed similarities between HoDs in their understanding of their role, irrespective of their country (Wolverton et al., 1999). However, the main difference was that Australian heads were better able to sustain their research activities whilst performing their administrative functions than their American counterparts. The reason was that Australian heads tend to have departmental managers who are in charge of carrying out many administrative duties, thus freeing up more time for the head to concentrate on research activities. Furthermore, Australian heads block out a period of time in their schedule for personal scholarship activity (Wolverton et al., 1999).

The changes in the HE sector in the UK and their expected impact on the role of HoDs was explored by Sotirakou (2004) through a questionnaire distributed to 142 HoDs at both old chartered and new statutory universities. Old or traditional universities, according to Smith (2002), are those with a research focus whereas new universities, those which were previously technical colleges and polytechnics and were granted university status, focus on teaching. Participants described their role in four distinct categories: managerial, instructional, leadership and scholarship. The managerial aspect of the head's role involved running departmental activities efficiently such as enhancing the department's reputation, communicating with external agencies, and managing facilities and budget. The instructional dimension included selecting and consulting students, scheduling classes, and developing curricula. The leadership aspect included developing a long-term strategic plan and managing

staff activities such as selecting staff and allocating responsibilities. The scholarship dimension was connected with managing personal academic activities such as teaching, research, and consulting services.

In a large-scale study, 513 academic leaders holding different positions within 20 HEIs in Australia were surveyed to describe their role and their main tasks (Scott et al., 2008). The role of academic leaders was encapsulated in five major areas of responsibility: management and administration, staff management, planning and policy development, internal and external networking, and academic activities. However, these leaders assigned different levels of importance to each area. For instance, most of the HoDs surveyed engaged more in the execution of two of the five roles of academic leaders namely "staff management" and "planning and policy development". Participants were also asked to rank 25 activities according to their importance to their role as a HoD and they identified managing other staff, managing relationships with senior staff, identifying new opportunities, strategic planning, budget management, staff development, and evaluating staff performance as the most important.

At a private business American university, the roles of department chairs were analysed from the perspectives of stakeholders who affected and were affected by the chair (Berdrow, 2010). Twenty-one HoDs, previous heads, senior academic administrators, academic and administrative staff participated in the study. Data were gathered from individual and focus group interviews and an email survey. The study concluded by proposing a model of the HoD role that captures the uniqueness of this particular context (Figure 1).

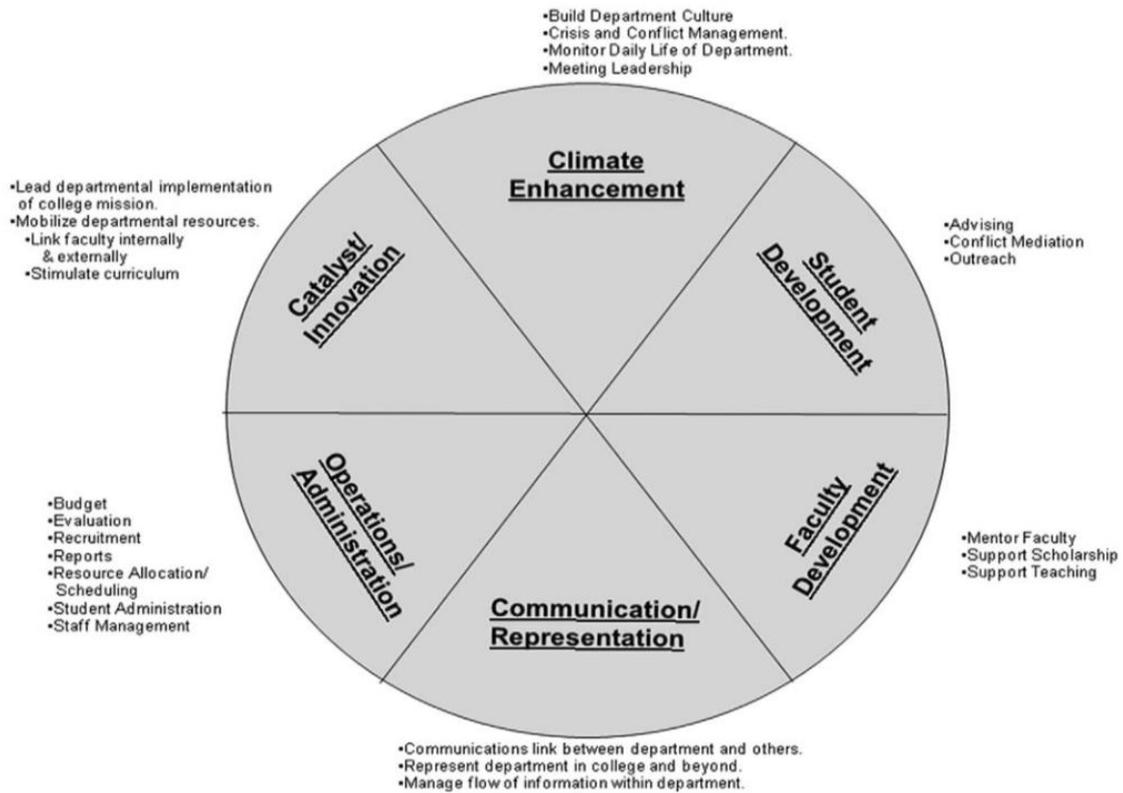


Figure 1: Role of department chair (Berdrow, 2010, p. 505).

HoDs were seen to play multiple roles grouped under six main categories: faculty development, student development, communication, administration, climate enhancement, and catalyst for innovation. Within each role many responsibilities and duties fall on the shoulders of the HoDs. Berdrow (2010) claims that the first four groups represent the managerial dimension of a head's role whereas the last two groups are considered to be the leadership aspects of the role. Thus, HoDs have to demonstrate effective management and leadership.

As a faculty developer, heads work to ensure that faculty members understand their role and provide them with support and resources. In student development tasks, heads facilitate communication between students, faculty and administration; this includes managing any conflict occurring between students and faculty and trying to solve student complaints before

processing them formally. The communication role refers to representing the department and transferring information within and outside the department. The administration role includes managing non-academic staff, budgets and resources, organising course schedules, and assigning tasks to faculty (Berdrow, 2010).

With regards to the leadership dimension of the HoD role, the climate enhancement role means providing a healthy work environment through encouraging trusting relationships and resolving conflict. The last leadership role, catalyst for innovation, is achieved through motivating faculty members to work creatively in a way that is in line with senior management imperatives such as developing new educational programmes. However, heads did not have time to perform this aspect of their role and so it was considered as the last item on the to-do list (Berdrow, 2010). The study revealed different expectations regarding the department head role when considering the different perspectives (Berdrow, 2010). For instance, senior academic administrators believed being a catalyst for innovation should be given a higher priority among heads' duties. In contrast, heads spend their time focusing on performing routine day-to-day tasks such as handling the demands of the administration.

The roles of the leaders and managers of learning and teaching were examined at six Australian universities (Marshall et al., 2011). Thirty-six academic staff holding different positions were interviewed and documents were analysed to provide basic information. Participants believed that leadership is more concerned with creating the vision, communicating it to stakeholders and motivating them to ensure adherence to it, whereas management focuses more on budget control, organising, monitoring and problem solving (Marshall et al., 2011). The study concluded that leadership and management in HE are integrated, which is consistent with Middlehurst's (1993) claim that the two components are closely linked at the departmental

level in a way that does not exist at other levels within HEIs. However, leadership and management in HE differs from those in other contexts because the emphasis was placed on four domains: curriculum, staff, students, and organisation (Marshall et al., 2011). Managing and leading the curricula refers to developing the curriculum, academic programmes and enhancing the learning environment. Managing and leading staff includes responsibilities related to selecting, motivating, evaluating performance and developing academic staff. Managing and leading students is concerned with supporting students during their learning journey. The final domain refers to managing and leading the organisational culture and taking care of quality issues and resources.

In the same vein, a qualitative study was conducted in four New Zealand polytechnics to uncover academic leaders' perceptions regarding their role, main functions and the challenges encountered (Cardno, 2014). In total, 15 academic leaders were interviewed, 12 of whom were middle leaders while the other three were senior leaders; in addition, documents related to their role were analysed. Participants stressed the multidimensional aspects of their role and the documents revealed a similarity in the way to which the role was conceptualised. The academic leaders' roles were classified into four major dimensions: organisational leadership, curriculum leadership, academic management and academic currency.

Organisational leadership refers to academic leaders' role in shaping the vision for their units and guiding staff towards achieving the unit's objectives in a way that is consistent with the organisation's strategies as well as their role interacting with other departments on behalf of their units (Cardno, 2014). The second role of academic leaders, curriculum leadership, is demonstrated through their role in developing and promoting the academic programmes, enhancing the quality of teaching and research, dealing with quality assurance issues and their

efforts to publicise their programmes. The academic management role is related to managing staff, evaluating their performance, managing the budget and dealing with student matters. The last component of the academic leaders' role was academic currency which means that middle leaders have to be active in conducting teaching and research and to pay attention to their own professional development. Although the study was conducted in a different setting (polytechnics), the role of middle leaders in Cardno's (2014) study broadly matches the four roles that HoDs play in Sotirakou's (2004) study despite the variation in the research methodology.

Although the literature reviewed above identified multiple duties and responsibilities of HoDs, they are classified and categorised differently under different roles. For instance, HoDs' duties in managing and developing academic staff were discussed as a distinctive feature of the role and labeled as a separate category in some studies (Berdrow, 2010; Cardno, 2014; Marshall et al., 2011; Scott et al., 2008; Wolverton et al., 1999), whereas Sotriakou (2004) included this task in her leadership role. Sometimes the labels given for certain tasks are different despite referring to a similar role. For instance, the terms *networking*, *communication* and *representation* are used to describe the unique role of being the interface between the university's senior management and the faculty and for external contacts too. Thus, it is difficult to generate a single list that includes all the duties. A summary of these studies is presented in Table 2 to facilitate comparison between the main dimensions of the HoD role.

Dimension	The studies					
	Wolverton et al. (1999)	Sotirakou (2004)	*Scott et al. (2008)	Berdrow (2010)	*Marshall et al. (2011)	*Cardno (2014)
Management and administration	Department administrative tasks Resource management tasks	Manager role	Management and administration	Operations/ administration	Managing and leading the organizational culture	Academic management
Leadership	Leadership tasks	Leader role	Planning and policy development	Climate enhancement Catalyst for innovation	Under managing and leading the curricula	Organizational leadership
Scholarship	Personal scholarship tasks	Scholar role	Academic activities			Academic currency
Faculty development	Faculty development tasks	Under leader role	Managing staff	Faculty development	Managing and leading staff	Academic management
Communication/ liaison	Resource development tasks	Under manager role	Networking	Communication/ representation		Under organizational leadership
Instructional	Under administration dimension	Instructional role	Under academic dimension	Under catalyst for innovation	Managing and leading curricula/students	Curriculum leadership

Table 2: A comparison between studies that discussed the multifaceted roles of academic leaders.

* The study describes the role of academic leaders occupying different positions, not only the HoDs

Another difference was that some research does not include the scholarly dimension of the HoDs' role (Berdrow, 2010; Marshall et al., 2011). Many HoDs in Berdrow's study considered scholarship activities unattainable, given other more demanding responsibilities while Marshall et al. (2011) depicted the role of academic leaders at different organisational levels; thus the academic scholarship activities might not be an important aspect of the role particularly for senior leaders.

The multiple definitions and interpretations of the two concepts, leadership and management, make it difficult to classify HoDs' duties under these dimensions as they are sometimes used interchangeably within the literature. However, they have different meanings and require different skills (Kanter, Stein, and Jick, 2005). In theory the managerial operational role of the HoD concerns supervising daily activity to ensure the smooth running of the academic unit, whereas the leadership role is related to creating a departmental vision and long term plan and is more strategic in nature (Bennis and Nanus, 2005; Scott et al., 2008; Wolverson et al., 1999). However, it is difficult to distinguish between leadership and management in practice (Bryman, 2007). What constitutes a leadership activity might be seen as an administrative function by others. For example, assigning tasks to faculty members was seen as a management duty by Wolverson et al., (1999) and Berdrow (2010) whereas it was considered a leadership element by Sotirakou (2004). The extent to which this task requires leadership or management, according to Heifetz and Laurie (2001), depends on the issue that individuals are dealing with and their skills.

In conclusion, the studies were similar in that they all agreed that HoDs have to fulfil multiple roles, and that there is an overlap between these multiple roles and the tasks included in each. However, no consensus emerged regarding which dimension is most important. The HoD

position requires an individual to be an academic, a leader, a faculty developer and a manager all at the same time. The head has to manage his/her colleagues and is considered a part of the academic community.

Although the functions and responsibilities of HoDs seems somewhat similar, many scholars argue that the role is largely influenced by the institutional and the departmental contexts and cultures such as the organisational focus, whether more emphasis is given to teaching or research, the academic discipline, subject area and the department size (Johnson, 2002; Seagren et al., 1993; Smith, 2005). Inman (2009) supports this view and claims that the importance and the emphasis given to each task, the extent to which HoDs participate in a particular role and the objectives they seek to achieve are different according to their personal interests and their department's unique contexts.

3.3.2 Studies which Explored the Nature of the Role

Smith (2002) explored whether there was a difference in HoDs' perception of their roles depending on whether they worked in an older, chartered or a newer, statutory university. In total, 40 heads were surveyed and the findings confirmed that the majority of heads at both types of university thought being an academic leader and a line manager were equally important, and that this was the main cause of tension for heads in chartered universities. Participants were asked to rate eight aspects of the role according to how time-consuming they were (Smith, 2002). Heads in both institutions were similar in that the most time-consuming elements, in order, were managing people, governing the department, and managing resources. The main difference was that the amount of time spent doing research ranked more highly in the chartered university which reflects the stronger research culture at this type of institution. Heads were also asked to identify the three most time-consuming activities. These were

revealed as paperwork and bureaucracy, personnel issues, and meetings although paperwork/bureaucracy and meetings were considered the least important aspects of the role (Smith, 2002).

In the same vein, Hancock (2007) analysed the role of department chair at a major public university in the US. The main focus was to identify the most time-consuming duties and whether they required academic expertise. The empirical data was gathered via a questionnaire distributed to 60 department chairs, via interviews and from budget data. The study aligns with the findings of Smith (2002) and illustrates that HoDs spent 26 % of their time in governing the department and office management, followed by faculty matters, and managing budget and facilities which took up to 22% and 15% of their time respectively. However, participants believed that two of the most time-consuming duties (department governance and budget management) did not require an academic background. The reality of a HoD's work is that a significant amount of time is taken up with meetings and bureaucracy, 3.5 of the 5 working days are spent on administrative responsibilities (Hancock, 2007).

The role of HoD was also investigated in a school of healthcare at one chartered UK university (Thomas-Gregory, 2014). Data were gathered via a combination of questionnaires and 14 interviews with middle leaders; the results correspond with those of previous studies (Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2002) and confirmed the hybrid character of middle leaders acting as both an operational manager and academic member. The study confirmed the findings of Preston and Price (2012) and Pepper and Giles (2015) by revealing a mismatch between the expectation of the role and the reality of participants' work, where they spent most of their time managing conflicts rather than engaging in leadership tasks.

The roles and the duties of the HoD and the faculty dean at Canadian universities were investigated by analysing institutional documents to establish whether new managerialism has changed the status of these roles (Boyko and Jones, 2010). Seventy-six public universities in Canada were selected as a representative sample based on criteria that included diversity in size and classification, the type of the programmes offered, the language of the university and its geographical location. The study found that a formal job description for HoDs tends to exist in the majority of the universities, in which the role is portrayed as technical but involving elements of leadership, research, initiative, communication and representation. The main responsibilities of HoDs were associated with staff management, financial and budgetary management, developing the academic programmes, managing student affairs and many other administrative duties to ensure the execution of university policies.

The study concluded that the nature of the post has not changed significantly a finding that contrasts with much of the literature (Bolden et al., 2008; Hancock and Hellawell, 2003; Scott et al., 2008; Sotirakou, 2004). Despite the increasing pressure on the HoD to participate in the creation of new sources of income and to participate in business activities and entrepreneurship, these responsibilities and roles were rarely mentioned when describing this position; few universities noted the external role that the HoD is expected to play (Boyko and Jones, 2010). The job description did not provide detailed duties, which leaves it open to interpretation regarding the extent of the HoD should be involved in executing certain duties, decision making and interaction with external organisations or bodies.

The role of middle leaders in leading change was explored by Marshall (2012) through interviewing 10 middle leaders in New Zealand HE. Participants believed that management and leadership are complementary elements at a time of change and they perceived their role

in relation to leading a team of colleagues in collective decision-making, and to respond to the demands and mandates of senior management. They were primarily responsible for reconciling the vision of senior management with individuals in their units. Their role matches the classic role of middle leaders highlighted in much of the literature (Mercer, 2009; Preston and Price, 2012; Scott et al., 2008; Sotirakou, 2004). Although middle leaders described their organisations as favouring participative decision-making and limited hierarchy, they indicated organisational structure as a possible obstacle to their leadership role because their status and authority did not correspond to the amount of responsibility they had. The study concludes that leaders who are seen as insiders within their units receive a positive response and their staff are more accepting of change than those whose heads are considered outsiders. Hence, those considered ‘outsiders’ need to use effective communication to be able to persuade others (Marshall, 2012).

Similarly, 23 HoDs at one American university were surveyed regarding their perceptions of the main functions of a HoD (Riley and Russell, 2013). The results showed that effective heads are not only managers who supervise tasks but also leaders of people, which is in agreement with much of the literature (Marshall, 2012; Smith, 2002). The HoDs were asked to rank 26 HoD duties according to their importance. The most important tasks were: evaluating faculty performance and assessing their eligibility for promotion; communicating department needs to the university’s senior management; empowering faculty and supporting improvement and creativity in teaching and research; and mentoring novice faculty.

The role of middle leaders was examined through a case study conducted at an elite university in Russia (Mercer and Pogolian, 2013). Focus groups interviews were conducted with 11 academic managers and lecturers, and official documents were analysed. The role was mainly

seen as acting as a bridge between senior leaders and academic units. In this respect, the study concurs with much of the literature (Bryman and Lilley, 2009; Marshall, 2012; Preston and Price, 2012; Sotirakou, 2004). HoDs agreed that they act as an interpreter of the organisational strategy; however, they lack control over the financial resources, which is in clear contrast with the studies of Bolden et al. (2008) and Scott et al. (2008). In terms of the extent to which the middle leaders could contribute to the departmental vision, little agreement exists among participants. While some saw little scope for such a contribution, others believed there is an opportunity to participate in shaping the vision. Nevertheless, participants stressed the importance of making sure any departmental vision matched the capabilities of the staff.

Likewise, another case study was conducted in a developing country and sought to investigate the role of HoD at a newly established university in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2013). From 24 interviews with eight HoDs, nine deputy heads, and others who held administrative positions either on the university council or in other service units, and via document analysis, the results endorse the findings of Pepper and Giles (2015) i.e. that the main responsibilities of HoDs are associated with managing operational daily tasks instead of being involved in strategic leadership activities. The HoDs' role included management in three domains: managing the academic programmes, managing academic staff and managing the departmental facilities. In agreement with Mercer and Pogolian's (2013) study, HoDs did not have any responsibilities to generate income because budget management was dealt with centrally; thus, HoDs had to seek approval from the rector to make any financial decisions. HoDs rarely interacted with external bodies, which is in contrast with much of the literature (Bolden et al., 2008; Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Scott et al., 2008; Sotirakou, 2004). If this happened, it was only in relation to finding internship/placements for students. Since there is a lack of Saudi literature exploring the role of HoDs, the literature discussed above will provide the base on which the role of female HoDs in this study will be analysed.

3.4 Challenges Faced by HoDs

The changes in the HE environment such as the emphasis on accountability, measuring quality and the need to liaise with external bodies, have all led to an increase in the managerial responsibilities of HoDs and the creation of new challenges (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001; Henkel, 2002). The main difficulties faced by HoDs are grouped under five headings: the classic middle level conflict, responsibility without power, a heavy workload, trying to achieve a balance between academic and management responsibilities, and human resource management; these will be discussed in the following sections.

3.4.1 The Classic Middle Level Conflict

HoDs hold a unique position, being directly responsible for promoting the interests of faculty and students, representing their departments to external bodies, defending their departments against external threats, while at the same time serving as leaders within the university to implement the policies and strategies of senior management (Hancock, 2007; Hellwell and Hancock, 2003; Riley and Russell, 2013; Smith, 2005). Hence, the requirement to balance the needs of faculty members with those of the university administration, to mediate between the different demands and expectations, and to reconcile the vision of senior management with that of faculty and other staff, causes difficulty for most HoDs (Gmelch, 2004; Marshall, 2012; Stanley and Algert, 2007; Wolverton, Ackerman, and Holt, 2005). The metaphors about “herding cats” (Scott et al., 2008) and being sandwiched between senior management and the staff below them in the hierarchy are therefore highly applicable to describe these middle managers who have to manage both up and down and deal with conflicting demands (Bryman and Lilley, 2009; Mercer, 2009).

The complexity in the middle management role derives from playing the roles of superior, colleague, and subordinate simultaneously (being a superior line manager in leading a group of academic colleagues, being an equal to others holding a similar middle managerial role and being a subordinate to those at senior positions in implementing the university's mission and vision) and the need to shift from one role to another (Branson, Franken, and Penney, 2016; Clegg and McAuley, 2005; Marshall, 2012) as well as having to manage a complex network of multidirectional relationships (Franken, Penney, and Branson, 2015). Middle leaders play the role of master and slave simultaneously (Lapp and Carr, 2006).

The literature agrees unanimously that middle leaders are caught between contradictory demands: the requirement for efficiency and effectiveness in governing the department as imposed by senior leaders might violate the traditional values of an academic community based on cooperation, autonomy and collegiality (Bryman and Lilley, 2009; Clegg and McAuley, 2005; De Boer and Goedegebuure, 2009; Marshall, 2012). It is not easy to combine two conflicting expectations into a single role and that is why HoDs in Branson et al.'s (2016) study felt uncomfortable trying to align the responsibilities of line management with their academic role; the first implies a form of power and control while the second assumes a kind of support and assistance. According to Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham (2005), middle leaders have to deal with three conflicting demands: collegiality, professionalism, and authority. Thus, middle managers face the paradox of reinforcing collegiality and trust while monitoring performance, which might have the potential to weaken and threaten trust. These complex relationships result in middle leaders feeling isolated.

Likewise, Pepper and Giles (2015) confirm that although middle leaders do not contribute to strategy formation, they are responsible for introducing change and putting new policies in

place, and were accountable for ensuring the implementation of strategy; they were also the first to receive complaints and resistance from staff if the requests from senior managers seemed to be unreasonable, duplicated, or difficult to achieve in the allotted time span. If middle leaders exercise a certain level of control in order to deliver the university's strategy, they will encounter staff resistance as this could be seen as a form of administrative intervention and an abuse of collegiality (Preston and Price, 2012). This situation, according to Preston and Price (2012), contributes to creating an "us and them" culture that leaves leaders feeling isolated and losing touch with their colleagues. Not only are they unable to satisfy their colleagues' demands, but they cannot discuss their concerns with colleagues which adds to the pressure upon them. Thus, HoDs may find themselves in a situation in which it is difficult to decide which party to serve or from whom to seek advice (Gmelch, 2004; Wolverson et al., 2005). Therefore, the position of middle management in HE tends to be associated more with stress than reward (Floyd, 2012).

In the same vein, Sotirakou (2004, p. 354) identified two key sources of conflict for HoD: "Janusian" and "Value" conflict, where the former is a product of having a dual role of being an academic and a manager at the same time (discussed further in Section 3.4.4) and the latter refers to the contradiction between what heads are required to do in practice and their own beliefs and values, which possibly arises because of the need to merge competing managerial and academic demands. Likewise, instances of value conflict were revealed in Hellowell and Hancock's (2001) study of middle-level managers in the UK. Although HoDs in their study seemed to value collegiality as the best approach in decision-making due to the necessity to gain staff support in order to implement change or pursue new initiatives, this was seen as difficult to implement as collegiality was sometimes bypassed and ignored. This was sometimes justified due to the difficulty of reaching consensus among faculty, the necessity of

making quick decisions, and the communication difficulty that results from geographical expansion and an increase in department size. Accordingly, Winter (2009) points to the emergence of divisions in academic identity where the traditional academic values such as collegiality and professional autonomy have been reduced and marginalised in favour of the emerging managerial identity that supports the making of money and reducing of costs.

On the other hand, HoDs in Mercer and Pogosian's (2013) study did not face this kind of value conflict. There was no instance of tension in the Russian context between what HoDs wanted to achieve and what their senior leaders asked them to do. The authors attributed this result to two factors: one was the appointment process. In this case study, HoDs were invited to apply to the post by senior leaders, who were confident about their ability to succeed based on their previous performance. The second factor could be attributed to the research methodology; the lack of conflict could be due to the fact that the study adopted focus groups interviews. Therefore, participants may not have spoken openly because confidentiality could not be assured. Moreover, this finding could be linked to the fact that in the Russian context the quality of teaching and research was not tightly monitored and there were fewer accountability procedures in comparison with the UK system (Mercer and Pogosian, 2013).

In the same vein, Bennett, Woods, Wise, and Newton (2007) identified two tensions for middle leaders: the first is associated with the need to align the managerial nature of the organisation reinforced by the hierarchy structure with the collegiality inherent in the academy; the second relates to the expectation to preserve loyalty both to the units under their leadership and to the university as a whole. Although elected academic leaders are expected to maintain loyalty to their units, appointed leaders are expected to support senior management and the institution (Mørthe, Ballangrud, and Stensaker, 2015). Middle leader must place the interests of the

institution at a higher or parallel level to the interests of their academic units, which may expose them to criticism (Knight and Trowler, 2001). In contrast, at senior management level, leaders have clear responsibilities to support a range of disciplines and so can have less direct loyalty to their own department (Bolden et al., 2008). Hence, leadership positions at more senior levels seems to be more attractive than those of middle management because senior leaders, with the exception of Chancellor/Vice-Chancellor, were less likely to face conflicts and tensions (Bolden et al., 2008).

3.4.2 Responsibility Without Power

Another challenge encountered by HoDs is the limited authority they have in comparison to their huge responsibilities (Mullen, 2009; Riley and Russell, 2013; Wolverton et al., 2005). Although middle leaders are in charge of conducting all the operational tasks to ensure the smooth running of the department in a way that corresponds with the university vision, they do not have the authority to make others implement it and rarely contribute to decision making (Preston and Price, 2012). Middle leaders perceived themselves to be marginalised when they did not participate in making important decisions and solving problems (Clegg and McAuley, 2005).

Indeed, organisational structure plays a major role in determining the level of authority and the level of involvement in decision-making (Branson et al., 2016; Marshall, 2012) and it defines the position of middle leaders in relation to those above and below them (Franken et al., 2015). The traditional hierarchy promotes unequal authority, separates middle leaders from academic colleagues and assumes leadership is confined to those who occupy senior positions, whereas middle leaders are accountable for implementing the strategies and the vision of senior leaders and ensuring that others adhere to this direction (Branson et al., 2016; Marshall, 2012). Briggs

(2004) affirms that the impractical bureaucratic organisational structure may contribute to the middle leaders not being included in developments, not understanding the elements of the bigger picture, and not communicating with others outside their colleges, which in turn affects their effectiveness in their roles. Moreover, the job description confirms the limited power of HoDs and reinforces the linear nature of power within the organisation; it depicts HoDs as working under delegated authority to ensure that colleagues within their department commit to the direction of the dean and to implement the strategies which have been decided from above (Franken et al., 2015).

Middle leaders have limited positional power; their ability to lead effectively derives from other sources such as the ability to influence and persuade, and is influenced by the nature of the relationships with others and requires trust, credibility and transparency (Branson et al., 2016). Likewise, Mullen (2009) claims that middle managers are considered institutionally powerless and they are not entitled to participate in important decision-making related to their department. The authority of middle leaders could be undermined by the need to ensure both collegiality and efficiency; thus they need to negotiate, conciliate, and solve conflicts (Branson et al., 2016; Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham, 2005; Johnson, 2002).

HoDs execute what Martinez (2011) called "marginal leadership" because of the limited power associated with the role. Decisions were often made by higher authorities or influenced by individuals having informal relationships, the so-called "old boys' networks". She claims that HoDs had little access to important information and were less involved in decision making and that is why there is a shortage of candidates for headship positions (Martinez, 2011). She further explains that HoDs perform many of the day-to-day tasks that must be carried out to ensure the progress of work but are considered of little value to academic career progression.

Consequently, middle management has been portrayed as a feminine activity because the position is devoid of true authority and is based on the ethics of service and care. She argues that female stereotypes and the socially constructed capacities of women condition both men and women to believe women are better at multitasking and therefore, more suited to these pastoral middle management roles rather than more senior positions. This in turn is inconsistent with an image of empowerment or of enhancing the female leadership role.

Furthermore, many HoDs lack control over financial resources and, as a consequence, their abilities to execute the requirements of the role are affected (Hellowell and Hancock, 2001; Mercer and Pogolian, 2013). In contrast, Bolden et al., (2008) argue that HoDs now enjoy controlling budget and financial resources. Similarly, Scott et al. (2008) concur that the roles of both senior and middle academic leaders have evolved. Middle leaders enjoy managing resources, participating in developing strategy, accomplishing staff expectations, and making enhancements in the areas under their control (teaching and research). Likewise, De Boer and Goedegebuure (2009) affirm that middle leaders were not only implementing strategy but were also key players in designing policies and developing strategies. However, the extent of middle leaders' involvement in these issues will be influenced by the nature of the organisation and the willingness of its members.

3.4.3 Heavy Workload

Academic managers who obtain a departmental headship position in the UK complain about the heavy workload, as they spend 60 to 70 hours a week on managerial duties and on their daily routine, full of meetings, paperwork and seeking funding, rather than on academic activity (Deem et al., 2003). Bolton (2000) found that the average working hours of a HoD was 50 hours a week. Likewise, Smith (2002) confirms Bolton's (2000) finding where HoDs in his

study complained about the workload that required an intensive time commitment, exceeding 50 hours per week, which had a negative impact on their personal and family life.

Similarly, academic leaders in Australia indicated that unproductive meetings, bureaucracy, and numerous reports consumed a lot of their time yet were considered the least satisfying aspects of the role (Scott et al., 2008). Furthermore, the administrative tasks of academic leaders expanded to include responding to emails, bureaucracy and other monitoring procedures (Floyd, 2016; Martinez, 2011). Therefore, the need to fulfil different demands and expectations resulted in intensive working hours; this was a common challenge that HoDs faced regardless of the length of service in post and was a main cause of stress (Berdrow, 2010; Gemelch, 2004; Mercer and Pogolian, 2013; Papper and Giels, 2015; Wharton and Estevez, 2014).

3.4.4 Trying to Achieve a Balance between Academic and Management Responsibilities

There is a consensus in the literature regarding the difficulty facing HoDs as a result of the post having two ‘faces’: management and leadership on the one hand and academic responsibilities on the other (Bryman, 2007; Smith, 2002; Sotirakou, 2004; Thomas-Gregory, 2014). Carrying out onerous administrative duties consumes a lot of a HoD’s time at the expense of performing the core academic business of teaching and research (Cardno, 2014; Gmelch, 2004; Mercer and Pogolian, 2013; Preston and price, 2012). Wolverton et al. (2005) claim that the need to be active in research and teaching and to sustain an academic identity as a scholar and lecturer whilst performing administrative duties is a distinctive aspect of the HoD role that academic leaders at a senior level rarely encounter.

HoDs spent 71% of their time on managerial duties (Hancock, 2007); therefore, accepting a headship post is considered a great sacrifice because it takes HoDs away from teaching and research activities, the primary reason for their choice of profession, in order to provide a service to their institution and to play an administrative role for which they are not qualified (Hancock, 2007). When heads return as academic members of their department, their period as head may not only affect their ability to produce quality research and lead to feelings of negativity due to being out of the mainstream and not keeping up-to-date in their field but it might also negatively affect their credibility when evaluating the research and teaching activities of colleagues (Hancock, 2007).

According to research by Mullen (2009), administrative duties take up between 60% to 80% of the time of female HoDs in the U.S. meaning scholarly activities constitute a secondary, albeit important, role for HoDs. Likewise, HoDs in Vietnam spent 70% to 80% of their time on administrative functions, and were only able to assign 20% to 30% of their time to personal academic assignments, mostly teaching rather than research, even though the regulations state that 50% of a HoDs' time should be allocated to academic duties (Nguyen, 2013).

The HoD position was seen as detrimental to professional life; it impeded research productivity or the chance of promotion to a full professor (Brown, 2001). Gemelch (2004) claims that HoDs would be reluctant to continue in post if there was no time dedicated to research. Therefore, the majority of HoDs (65%) chose to return as academic members of their departments after the end of their term in order to continue carrying out their core academic work in an attempt to protect their professional identities (Gmelch, 2004). This contradicts a study conducted by Bolden et al. (2008) that revealed a tendency, in both old and new UK universities, for HoDs to remain in post after the end of their term and to seek more leadership

roles as their chosen professional path. This increase in career-track managers results from the roles of HoDs evolving to be more strategic because of the increased level of authority granted to them in decision-making and in influencing the overall direction of the university. Although HoDs faced a decline in their research publication to the extent that even a sabbatical period was not sufficient to catch up, they enjoyed facilitating the research of others. The presence of professional managers who work hand in hand with deans and HoDs in most institutions gives deans/heads greater opportunity to focus on long-term priorities and strategies more than managing the daily routine of the unit (Bolden et al., 2008).

In the same regard, Floyd and Dimmock (2011) argue that academic HoDs have to switch between multiple professional and personal identities. The extent to which HoDs succeed or fail in managing several identities seems to influence their experience in the posts and their career trajectory. Floyd and Dimmock (2011) conclude that those who succeed in managing multiple identities tend to complete their headship terms and aspire to gain higher leadership posts but that those who fail to do so often change their roles or occupations. Those who find it difficult to balance aspects of the role as a result of reduced research time face identity conflict that leads them to decide to return to a former post. In many UK universities, the HoD role is rotated and is therefore for a fixed term. Therefore, maintaining research productivity, “external academic career capital”, was seen as more important for career progression than acquiring a managerial post, “internal academic career capital”. This was particularly the case for those who had not reached full professor rank or for those seeking career progression outside their institution (Floyd and Dimmock, 2011). This is because promotion and rewards within HE are more likely to be influenced by research publications rather than teaching or administrative duties (Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Preston and Price, 2012; Roworth-Stockes and Perren, 2000).

Peterson (2016) concurs with this view and found that the expected negative impact of a leadership role on professional identity affects the decision of the incumbent regarding whether or not to accept further leadership roles in the future. The temporary nature of headship portrays the position as a transitional stage, which in turn reinforces the HoD identity as essentially a researcher and a lecturer. HoDs are academics first and foremost but develop a managerial identity when they take on the role of head (Martinez, 2011).

However, the extent to which HoDs can maintain their research productivity will depend on the extent of the demands on their academic units at any given time and the availability of administrative support (Preston and Price, 2012). The lack of administrative assistance for those in leadership positions contributed to expanding academic leaders' workloads (Smith, 2002; Yelder and Codling, 2004). In order to enable HoDs to continue their research activities while in the post, Gemelch (2004) suggests that they are provided with research assistance in addition to allocating time to this task in their schedule. In contrast, Smith (2007) and Cardno (2014) highlight the need to provide the administrative or clerical support to deal with routine procedural issues; this will free up academic leaders' time to concentrate more on performing their main tasks and research. Likewise, Mercer (2009) proposes transferring the successful lessons learned in English and Welsh schools (with regard to teaching assistants freeing up teachers' time) to HE by reaping the benefits of administrative staff supporting HoDs in performing low-level administrative tasks that do not need an academic background, in order to free up their time for core academic duties. Moreover, HoDs have to learn the art of delegating to be able to manage all the role requirements and to sustain their academic identity (Hancock, 2007).

3.4.5 Human Resource Management

There is strong agreement in the literature that managing personnel is one of the most challenging aspects of the HoD role (Cardno, 2014; Hancock, 2007; Wolverton et al., 2005); in particular, dealing with uncooperative and underperforming staff, handling complaints and conflicts raised between academic colleagues (Bryman and Lilley, 2009; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2007) and supporting staff when they encounter personal difficulties (Smith, 2002). The vulnerability of UK middle managers is partly due their inability to control staff in their units because they cannot impose sanctions and receive limited support from senior management in this regard (Hancock and Hellowell, 2003). This is consistent with Smith's (2002) findings that HoDs lack authority over their staff, and he argues that the absence of senior leader support prevented HoDs from managing people effectively.

Stanley and Algert (2007) argued that 40% or more of academic leaders' time was allocated to conflict resolution. If conflicts are left without good management, the tensions within the department will increase, the focus of staff will be distracted from achieving the goals of the department, and communication channels will be affected (Stanley and Algert, 2007). Bolton (2000) points out that academic units with a large number of staff are highly likely to form cliques and groups having different interests, which makes managing large departments challenging. Smith (2002) supports Bolton's view and contends that staff management are a key obstacle faced by heads of large departments.

Middle leaders who took up a temporary HoD position found that their colleagues reacted very differently to them compared to when they had been peers working together on teaching and research (Preston and Price, 2012). When HoDs take on a leadership role, they are responsible for supervising colleagues and find themselves having to tell colleagues what to do despite

often lacking the requisite skills. This can lead to different reactions and some criticism from their colleagues as a result of the more formal relationship (Preston and Price, 2012). This is not only because the nature of a peer relationship differs from that of a manager-subordinate relationship but is also due to the autonomous nature of academic work where academic staff develop as independent thinkers and tend to refuse to be managed (Bryman, 2007, p.706).

Similarly, Hellowell and Hancock (2001) argue that middle leaders face more challenges when managing people than those in higher positions because they might still share the role of teaching with those people they are expected to manage, conduct research together, or even play a secondary role in another aspect of academic work. Therefore, issuing direct commands or behaving in a way that contradicts collegiality might be acceptable from those at the top of the hierarchy but will be perceived negatively if it comes from the HoD and might lead to more staff resistance (Hellowell and Hancock, 2001). Furthermore, Berdrow (2010) mentions the tension inherent in the temporary nature of the role and how it influences relationships with peers. This is depicted as “king among kings”, being the first among colleagues when taking the leadership position and then returning back to the ranks as an academic member.

Dealing with older well-established colleagues is also difficult because, according to Hellowell and Hancock (2001), they tend to fight against change and resist many of the new tasks imposed by senior managers due to the increasing administrative nature of the university, such as introducing new curricula or performing new administrative duties, because they did not agree with such tasks. Moreover, long-serving members are more likely to have greater influence and to develop their networks. Preston and Price (2012) support this view, stating that some of their participants found it difficult to deal with older, well-established colleagues. Power relationships between department chairs and staff in their units become more complex, either

because HoDs have to lead a group of senior colleagues who have higher academic status or they are managing experienced colleagues who have greater influence as well as opportunities to establish informal networks within and outside the institution (Branson et al., 2016). They added that members who enjoy expanded networks within the institution can exploit these relationships to marginalise and resist the authority of the HoD. Therefore, Martinez (2011) suggests that HoDs who are older and have more experience tend to acquire more authority and credibility which facilitates their tenure.

Dealing with staff resistance when their wishes conflict with the vision of senior managers, and a lack of understanding of the organisational strategy were among the main obstacles that confronted HoDs in Australian HE (Pepper and Giles, 2015). In their study, academic staff complained of overload due to heavy teaching loads and many administrative tasks, such as providing pastoral support to students or because they had to compete with colleagues to obtain research funds. These situations might justify staff reluctance to accept new initiatives, and that is why convincing staff and gaining their trust are important (Pepper and Giles, 2015). Likewise, Blackmore and Sach (2000) claim that academic leaders have to be more involved in convincing colleagues to accept the changes. For instance, the revolution in technology affects universities and gives rise to new demands. Academic members are expected to be proficient in using computers and adopt new teaching pedagogies to meet diverse student needs and this in turn has implications for the HoD's role. This difficulty of managing personnel inherent in headship results in many academics being reluctant to accept such a role to avoid having to take sides in conflicts or dealing with poor performance (Bryman and Lilley, 2009; Scott et al., 2008). Therefore, good communication skills such as the ability to convince others were identified as important skills for effective leaders in HE at the departmental level (Bryman, 2007).

3.5 Leadership Development

The majority of academic leaders gain leadership positions as a result of achieving excellence in teaching and/or research rather than by demonstrating management ability (Hempsall, 2014; Johnson, 2002). However, Bolden et al. (2008) argue that academic excellence is no longer the only criterion used when selecting appropriate individuals for a leadership role; other factors, such as personality, capability, and leadership credibility, are considered. Despite this, the transition from an academic role to a management role and the challenges encountered in the new post both require a new set of knowledge, skills and capabilities that are not necessarily acquired through leaders' prior experiences as faculty members (Hempsall, 2014; Johnson, 2002; Knight and Trowler, 2001; Mercer, 2009; Riley and Russell, 2013). For example, a former academic role as a researcher requires an individual to be an expert in his/her field, and the work is often conducted in isolation or with colleagues who share similar intellectual abilities. In contrast, a HoD role requires constant communication and interaction with a wide range of stakeholders within and beyond the institution, involvement in conflict resolution and searching for consensus. Therefore, HoDs must be able to respond quickly to urgent situations and possess interpersonal skills (Wolverton et al., 2005).

Furthermore, the enormous responsibilities placed on the shoulders of HoDs and the constant change in the HE landscape make it all the more necessary to provide academic leaders with different sources of support and with effective professional development through which leaders can learn and grow (Inman, 2009; Johnson, 2002; Smith, 2007). This section will explore the knowledge and skills needed for effective leadership and the methods by which academic leaders could develop leadership skills.

3.5.1 Required Knowledge and Skills for Effective Leadership

Seven types of leadership and management knowledge were identified by Knight and Trowler (2001) as essential for middle-level leaders: control or self-knowledge, knowledge of people, knowledge of educational practice, conceptual knowledge, process knowledge, situational knowledge, and tacit knowledge, which involves all previous six types of knowledge in practice. While certain types of knowledge can be taught formally, others can only be acquired through practising leadership or by taking on many leadership roles and positions. For instance, conceptual and process knowledge can be best acquired by attending formal leadership training (Inman, 2009; Knight and Trowler, 2001), whereas contextual knowledge or knowledge of educational practice can be obtained only through working in HEIs and taking more leadership roles, which contributes to gaining a deep understanding of the leadership role before formal appointment (Inman, 2009).

In another study, Scott et al. (2008) provide a widely cited framework for academic leadership capability in HE (Figure 2). The framework encompasses three overlapping capabilities: personal, interpersonal and cognitive. However, these capabilities are heavily based on two interrelated forms of knowledge and skills: generic and role-specific. The former concerns the acquisition of generic skills such as self-organisation, information technology skills, and an understanding of the university system and structure as a whole, whereas the latter related to having the necessary knowledge and skills to perform role-specific tasks in leading teaching and learning in HE.

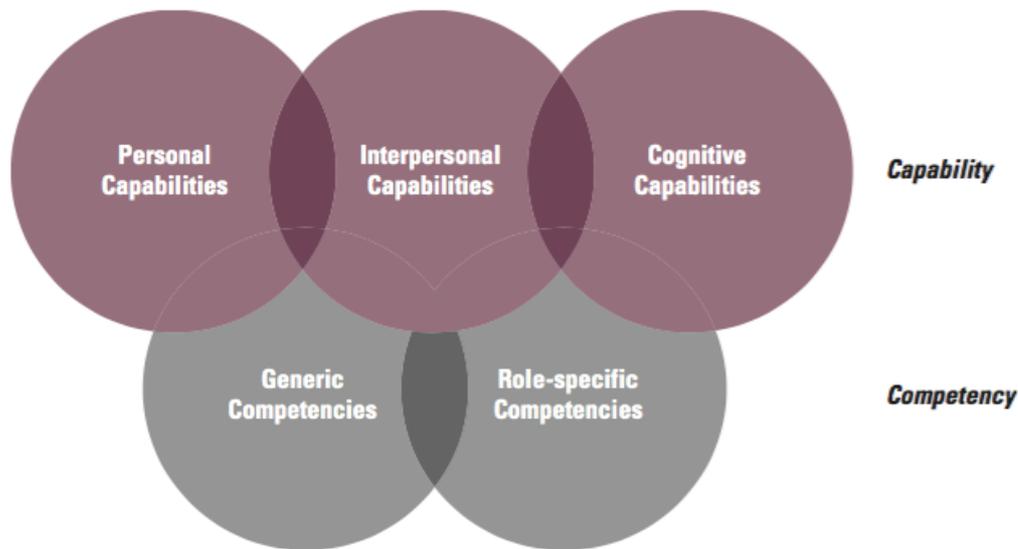


Figure 2: HE leadership capability (Scott et al., 2008, p. 18).

In terms of the personal capability, it is important that academic leaders manage and control their emotional reactions, especially in times of crisis and difficulty. At the same time, it is necessary that they be able to deal with others and handle difficult situations in an appropriate way, especially since most of the challenges faced by academic leaders involve a human dimension (interpersonal capability). Academic leaders must be able to diagnose events accurately, particularly in times of uncertainty, and be able to take the most appropriate actions to solve the problem (cognitive capability). The overlap between the five dimensions in the framework indicates that all of these aspects are necessary for effective leadership.

Similarly, Berdrow (2010) identifies the knowledge and skills that HoDs have to gain in order to be effective in the role. HoDs must have a deep knowledge of organisational systems and structures, the legal procedures and human resources policies, and the programmes and courses provided in their department. The required skills were grouped under two main categories: foundation and leadership skills as shown in Figure 3.

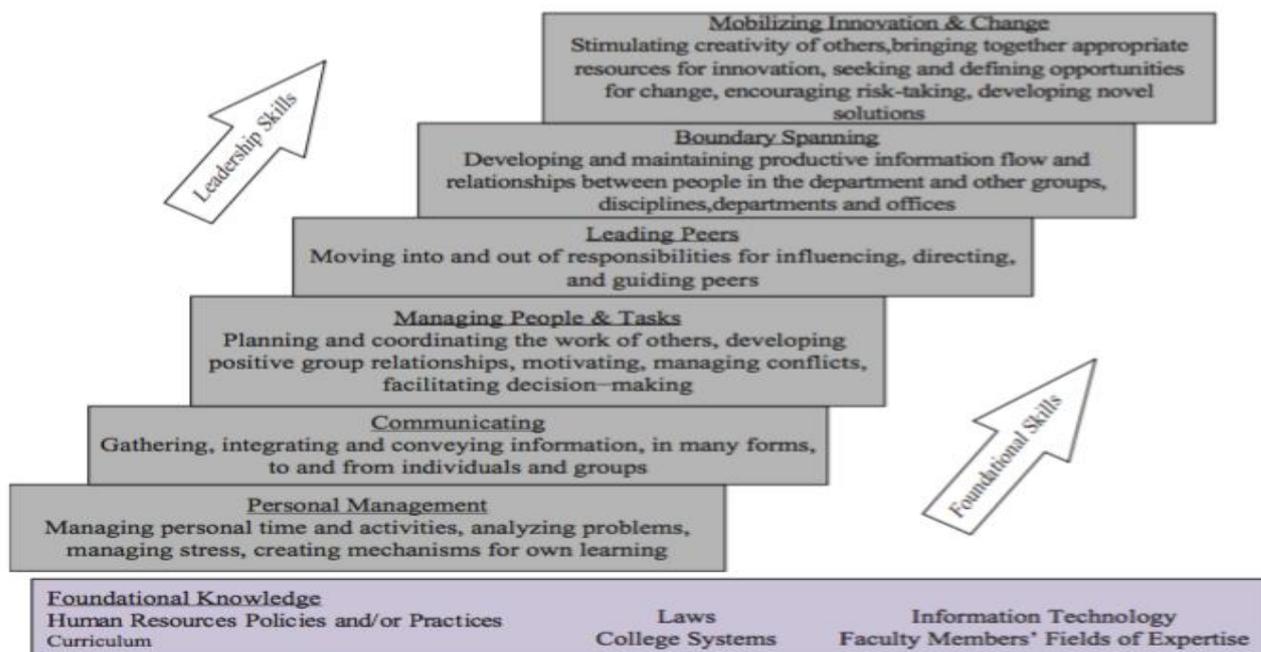


Figure 3: Requisite skills and knowledge for the department chair (Berdrow, 2010, p. 507).

In the first category, HoDs have to possess the personal, communication, and people management skills which are, in the author's view, necessary to perform the managerial aspect of the HoD role. On the other hand, leading peers, boundary spanning, and managing change and innovation are necessary skills for HoDs to execute the leadership dimension of the role (discussed in Section 3.3.1). These results, to a large extent, accord with the academic leadership capability framework proposed by Scott et al. (2008). The foundation knowledge identified in this study wholly aligns with the generic and role-specific competency framework in Scott et al. (2008) whereas the foundation and leadership skills largely agree with the personal, interpersonal and cognitive academic leadership capability in Scott et al. (2008).

3.5.2 Formal Leadership Training Programmes

In the past, there were few formal leadership development programmes offered to academic leaders prior to, or even following, their appointments (Aziz et al., 2005; Gmelch, 2004; Inman,

2007, 2009; Johnson, 2002; Smith, 2007). Only one third of academic managers in the HE in the UK received formal training (Deem, 2000). HEIs seemed to lack clarity or successful planning in preparing and developing their academic leaders (Brown, 2001; Spendlove, 2007) or they provided little support in this regard (Franken et al., 2015). Thus, the majority of new academic leaders feel that they are ill-prepared for their roles (Pepper and Giles, 2015; Smith, 2007; Wolverton et al., 2005).

In a recent study involved interviews with 15 middle leaders from five English HEIs, followed by a questionnaire distributed to 172 middle leaders across England and Wales, Preston and Floyd (2016) found that 60% of middle leaders (associate deans) had received little or no formal leadership training, and those who had attended some training found it to be of limited value. Likewise, Floyd (2016) in a study that involved interviews with 28 middle leaders at two HEIs in the UK confirmed that the majority of academic leaders were not adequately prepared for their new roles. He went further, saying academic leaders usually assume their new roles without leadership training, without prior managerial experience or clear knowledge of the requirements of the role, and without sufficient awareness of the impact of this shift from an academic role to a leadership role on their academic and personal life.

In contrast with previous literature, in a more comprehensive study, Bolden et al. (2008) reveal that leadership development initiatives which target ongoing and potential leaders have significantly expanded and are now being accessed in the majority of HEIs in the UK, and that different learning opportunities and a wide range of support are offered to academic leaders to enable them to select those that meet their interests and needs. Boyko and Jones (2010) concur and state that several leadership and management courses were offered across Canada and could be tailored to serve specific institutions' needs. Hemsall (2014) supports this view and

confirms the availability of many programmes that aim to develop academic leaders at all institutional levels in the USA, UK, and Australia. Furthermore, in some countries, specialised agencies have been established to meet this need, such as the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education in the United Kingdom (LFHE) and the LH Martin Institute in Australia. Despite this, not all aspiring leaders have a clear and recognized path towards development.

It seems that there is no clear picture regarding the adequacy of formal leadership training. Some authors argue it is very much better whereas others state it is still insufficient which reflects the inconsistency in the literature. This might be because the majority of studies focus on the experience of individuals who participated in the training, so the measurement is one-sided. There is little consideration of the individuals who provide the training or the institutional judgment whether training is valuable for money or an effective use of people's time. However, the change in the route to leadership positions within the majority of universities might explain the expansion of such programmes (Hempsall, 2014). The traditional method of appointment to a headship position, which was a fixed-term rotational approach, has been now replaced in many but not all institutions by a permanent appointment. Headship is no longer perceived as a temporary post, rather leadership is viewed as a desirable career path. Thus, the number of academics who are interested in enhancing their leadership and management skills and becoming career track managers has increased (Bolden et al., 2008; Hempsall, 2014).

Different professional development programmes have emerged to meet the diverse needs of academic leaders and are offered through a mixture of in-house training and external providers. For instance, at the institutional level there are four main categories (Bolden et al., 2008):

1. generic programmes, open to anyone in the university, are delivered centrally, and include leadership and management aspects;
2. tailored programmes for managers and leaders occupying a specific, formal role such as HoDs or deans;
3. bespoke programmes for specific departments, schools or faculty; and
4. individual programmes incorporating mentoring, coaching and/or shadowing.

Tailored programmes aimed at leaders occupying a specific role enable interaction between groups of leaders operating at the same level and dealing with similar issues to exchange practical, successful solutions and experiences and to find a supportive environment in which to seek advice. This horizontal form of learning enables leaders to find free time in their busy schedules to practise reflection. On the other hand, the vertical form of interaction that allows middle-level managers to communicate with their senior colleagues might facilitate cooperation, create formal and informal networks, and build trust (Bolden et al., 2008).

Although formal leadership training courses may contribute to the acquisition of theoretical and conceptual knowledge, this cognitive approach to learning is not necessarily seen as useful because of concerns about the relevance of the content. Johnson (2002) argues that the content and the materials are prepared in advance and that the participants are asked to communicate knowledge and apply it in practice. This traditional classroom-based, tutor-centric, off-the-job approach to learning is rarely appropriate for middle-level managers. HoDs graduated long ago to become critical thinkers and well-established researchers and this approach to learning seems to ignore their prior experience and is detached from their daily needs (Johnson, 2002).

Formal leadership training is criticised for the lack of ongoing self-enquiry (Inman, 2009). It does not engage academic leaders in a process of examining practical problems by recalling

prior experience and inspiring critical thought (Johnson, 2002). Wolverson et al. (2005) argue that learning which provides opportunities for critical reflection and which encourages leaders to observe their practices, to reinforce good practices and alter ineffective ones, is more valuable. Another drawback of formal leadership programmes is that the focus is on a generic approach to learning rather than on specific individuals' needs (Aziz et al., 2005; Inman, 2009). Similarly, Scott et al. (2008) confirm the inadequacy of formal leadership programmes and attribute this to several reasons: being too generic, sometimes offered by individuals who lack a clear understanding of the HE system and culture, over-emphasising the cognitive dimension at the expense of the practical aspect, not being tailored to meet the specific needs of particular individuals or roles. Preston and Floyd (2016) concur that formal leadership programmes tend to be too generic, prioritise processes and procedural aspects and follow a traditional model that does not take the individuals' specific needs, context, and roles into account.

Leadership development cannot be done in a single session but must encapsulate a series of interrelated sessions extended over a long period so that each session is based on the previous one. Such an approach allows individuals opportunities to meet colleagues several times to share experiences, discuss tasks, receive feedback and to create support networks (Gemlich, 2004; Wolverson et al., 2005). Formal leadership training becomes more effective, according to Johnson (2002, p. 50), when it is bespoke to meet specific individual or institutional needs in a coherent programme spanning a long period of time; includes activities that allow the use of theoretical knowledge in practice; provides opportunities for leaders to interact regularly with peers to discuss real work problems, and exchange knowledge and experience in a supportive environment that allows for constructive feedback. In line with Johnson's (2002) study, off-the-shelf training was regarded as an unsatisfactory form of development unless it

provides academic leaders with opportunities to communicate with peers and share their experience (Inman, 2009).

Although formal leadership development programmes have become widespread, they do not attract high levels of participation; according to Hemsall (2014), this is because the content does not meet participants' actual needs; individuals have no time to devote to such programmes; some individuals believe that they can manage well without additional training and, finally, the cost can be a deterrent. Smith (2007) agrees that given the intense demands placed on HoDs, they are often unable to find time in their busy schedules to attend such leadership development opportunities.

The literature agrees that individualised and bespoke leadership programmes are more beneficial than the one-size-fit-all approach to learning (Floyd, 2016; Johnson, 2002; Preston and Price, 2012; Scott et al., 2008). This need to shift from generic programmes which are delivered centrally to a bespoke, individual approach to learning can be attributed to the diversity of leaders' experience, motivation, professional backgrounds, and paths to leadership (Bolden et al., 2008). Academic managers might take on leadership posts at different stages in their careers and encounter different challenges. The nature of the academic leader's role varies even in the same university and is influenced by the nature of the academic discipline and the departmental culture (Floyd, 2016; Preston and Price, 2012). In addition, the variation in how long leaders spend in their posts, their number of years of service, and the disciplinary nature of the posts all make it difficult for generic leadership courses to meet the diverse needs of academic leaders (Bolden et al., 2008). Blackmore and Blackwell (2006) concur that bespoke professional development aimed at specific individuals, departments, or institutions will work

better than generic leadership learning because special consideration will be paid to the context in which leaders work.

Moreover, the complexity of the HoD role makes it difficult to determine which aspects of the role are most important and to agree on how leadership training programmes should be constructed and what their focus should be (Aziz et al., 2005; Inman, 2009). In order to assess the training needs of the department chairs, Aziz et al. (2005) carried out a study at one American university to identify the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) required for HoDs to be effective in the role. They claim that the findings could be used as a starting point for the development of leadership programmes that specifically target this group and could be used during the recruitment process to assess an applicant's capability. The top five KSAs where training is a priority are:

1. the ability to deal with and provide feedback for under-performing academic staff;
2. knowledge of internal and external sources of funding and how to access them;
3. skills in conflict resolution;
4. skills in utilising different leadership styles to handle various situations; and
5. knowledge of procedural legal issues.

Many studies agree with Aziz et al.'s (2005) findings, noting that for many academic leaders the role of HoD is their first administrative position; therefore, they lack the understanding of the management processes and welcome training in issues related to human resources and dealing with staff, disciplinary issues, conflict management, budget and financial resources, and strategic planning (Preston and Price, 2012; Smith, 2002; Stanley and Algert, 2007). Similarly, middle leaders in Inman's (2009) study identified human resources management and training in functional aspects of the role as critical training needs, while newcomers to the

university expressed a desire for some induction in order to understand how their roles fitted within the university system as a whole.

Middle leaders in Bolden et al.'s (2008) study not only express a desire to receive training and development in technical topics such as budgets, organisational structures, and policies but also to receive training aimed at changing their own perceptions and developing soft skills such as effective team management and leading change. In the same vein, Nguyen (2012) explored the training needs for HoDs in a developing country (Vietnam). The study revealed that HoDs lack generic management knowledge and skills and a clear understanding of the role's demands. Training was deemed necessary in topics related to communication, planning, English language acquisition and research methods. The result confirms that factors relating to both the context and the individual are crucial in determining training needs.

After assessing the needs of current HoDs and potential leaders at one American university, and reviewing leadership development literature, Wolverton et al. (2005) proposed a curriculum for leadership development programmes aimed at prospective department chairs. They identified three main aspects to be included: conceptual understanding, skills development, and reflective practice. Conceptual knowledge means gaining a deep understanding of the leadership role, of the responsibilities associated with specific roles, and of the organisational culture and context in which leaders will execute their leadership roles. Skills development refers to the importance of the acquisition of the skills necessary to carry out the work and to deal with different constituents such as faculty members, students, and other stakeholders. Reflective practice emphasises the importance of learning from prior experience and of observing effective and ineffective practices and reflecting on them to come up with new understanding.

3.5.3 Informal Leadership Development

Previous experience and work-based learning have been identified as the main sources of knowledge to help new HoDs to prepare for their role (Johnson, 2002; Mercer and Pogosian, 2013). Experience of working in a HE environment enables academic leaders to obtain knowledge and a better understanding of the organisation's culture, structure, processes and practices (Bolden et al., 2008; Floyd, 2016). Leaders' career trajectories and prior experience seem to provide them with opportunities to co-operate with other academics and staff, participate in strategic planning activities, get involved in research project activities and acquire administrative responsibilities (Johnson, 2002).

This view is consistent with Inman (2009) who confirms that middle-level leaders learn informally on the job and the knowledge and skills required to perform leadership roles were primarily self-taught and gained through life experience. Middle-level leaders in Inman's study (2009) acknowledged that learning is an incremental process and that working within the HE system, being exposed to leadership roles, such as being a course leader or a committee chair, early in their career contributes to improving an individual's leadership skills and educational practices and helps prepare them to meet the challenges of the headship role. Thus, experience of working in a HE environment supports leaders' attainment of contextual knowledge (Hellowell and Hancock, 2001).

Similarly, experiential learning that takes a leader's personal needs and background into consideration was identified as the most effective form of leadership development in highly effective further education organisations (Muijs et al., 2006). Ohlott (2004) concurs with this view and suggests that what people learn during their career tends to be acquired through their real-life, on-the-job experience rather than in a structured classroom. These studies support the

notion that leadership development can be best understood through ongoing contextual, practice-based learning (Day, 2000; McCauley and Van Velsor, 2004). Instead of providing leaders with learning opportunities away from their work, they can be supported to learn while practising their role (Day, 2000). Likewise, practice-based learning was the preferred approach to leadership development for academic leaders in Scott et al.'s (2008) study; this was followed by self-managed learning and, finally, formal leadership and generic training. In their study, practice-based learning refers to learning on the job through handling real work problems and involvement in formal and informal mentoring whereas self-managed learning includes self-initiated activities such as participating in peer networks, accessing online material and guided reading.

Although work-based learning and experience is a good source of learning in context, this informal method of learning is not sufficient for preparing academic leaders (Johnson, 2002). This form of learning might be problematic if it lacks a focus, intention, and conscious plan (Day, 2012). Most leaders start their careers without clear aspirations to attain leadership roles, which results in unconscious and unintentional learning (Inman, 2009). This makes it difficult for leaders to understand the amount of learning that has been acquired and to apply their learning to a different context (Day, 2000). Johnson (2002) contends that management learning as common sense or simply the result of accumulated experience is problematic because academic managers are not involved in questioning their practices or assessing how they have reached this understanding. The lessons learned from experience will remain implicit. However, providing leaders with opportunities to discuss and critically reflect upon their practices can facilitate experiential learning (Inman, 2009; Johnson, 2002; Van Velsor, Moxley, and Bunker, 2004).

Work-based learning is an ongoing process that allows leaders to learn within their context; it includes different approaches to improve leadership practices, such as challenging job assignments and developmental relationships in the form of coaching, mentoring, and networking (Day, 2000). On-the-job developmental learning occurs when leaders are forced to deal with change, have unfamiliar responsibilities, or face new challenges (Ohlott, 2004; Yip and Wilson, 2010). This situation moves leaders away from their comfort zones and forces them to think, act, and be responsible for the consequences of their actions (Ohlott, 2004; Yip and Wilson, 2010). Such situations enable academic leaders to reach a better understanding of themselves as leaders after identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and might help them to consider matters from different angles and alter their ineffective practices (Drew, Ehrich, and Hansford, 2008).

Although there is a positive relationship between difficult tasks and the development of leadership skills, once the challenge reaches a certain limit, the mental demands that the challenge requires will lead to energy loss and an impediment to learning (DeRue and Wellman, 2009). A pattern of declining returns in the relationship between the development challenge and the development of leadership skills will be observed. However, if individuals possess a positive attitude towards learning where failure and error are not to be seen as problems but as opportunities for learning (personal factors), and if there are feedback opportunities that help individuals to focus on learning (contextual factor), the positive relationship will be sustained (DeRue and Wellman, 2009). Therefore, the development of leadership skills is not only the result of difficult tasks, individuals or context; all of these three elements must be present to facilitate the development of leaders through experience.

This view is further supported by Yip and Wilson (2010) who state that having a productive relationship with peers provides leaders with opportunities to discuss what is being learned and, with effective feedback, that might facilitate the transformation of learning into practice. Learning occurs not only as a result of doing job assignments but also as a result of interacting with peers. This interaction assists leaders in interpreting their experiences and generating meaning from them. Networking provides leaders with a useful source of colleagues who can be relied upon to help solve problems (McCauley and Douglas, 2004). There are two forms of networks: formal and informal. A formal network consists of work-based relationships that are structured formally by the organisation, such as work groups and project teams. An informal network refers to the relationship that is created spontaneously inside or outside of work (McCauley and Douglas, 2004). Building a network with colleagues can serve multiple purposes: it contributes to expanding a leader's knowledge, provides leaders with the required support to overcome real challenges, allows the sharing of ideas and successful practices, enhances problem solving capabilities (Bolden et al., 2008; Mullen, 2009; Pepper and Giles, 2015), provides leaders with space to practise reflection and reduces feelings of isolation in the role (Floyd, 2016; Gmelch, 2004). Academic managers found that participation in networks and the interaction with experts within their institutions enabled them to learn together, share ideas and be exposed to new thinking (Johnson, 2002).

Due to the inadequacy of formal leadership training, many middle leaders established their own informal networks as a mechanism to overcome the challenges of their role (Floyd, 2016; Inman, 2009; Preston and Floyd, 2016; Preston and Price, 2012). For many, outgoing HoDs were the first port of call when problems arose. The consultation and discussion with peers, particularly those with long experience and who had been through similar situations, was a useful source of guidance and advice as well as sharing and exchanging knowledge with senior

colleagues within and beyond the institutions (Bolden et al., 2008; Brown, 2001; Drew et al., 2008; Mercer and Pogolian, 2013).

Developmental relationships enable new middle-level leaders to benefit from being exposed to experienced leadership practices. Franken et al. (2015) provide an account of how two new chairs of departments in a HE institution communicated with an experienced head and engaged in a productive learning community that provided them with opportunities to learn with and from each other in a cooperative environment. Leaders established their own supportive network due to the lack of a formal transitional or handover period to shadow the outgoing heads, and due to inadequate departmental files inherited from former heads to clarify what the role entailed. The discussion among this group of middle-level leaders enables them to learn their role, share their experience, evaluate their practices, challenge their thinking and draw on the experience of others to expand their knowledge; this seems to provide relevant contextual knowledge. In this self-initiated community, learning is a two-way process by which academic leaders are committed to and aware of their collective contribution in knowledge construction (Franken et al., 2015).

Mentoring is classified as an experiential approach to leadership development and is seen as a powerful method of learning in context (Bolden et al., 2008; Drew et al., 2008). Mentoring is a dual relationship in which the senior leader supports the personal and professional development of novice leaders, providing guidance, advice and consultation over a long period in order to improve their skills and boost their potential (Eby and Lockwood, 2005; Hansford, Ehrich, and Tennent, 2003; McCauley and Douglas, 2004); it can operate on the basis of one-to-one, peer, or group relationships (Darwin and Palmer, 2009). The interaction between the experienced leader 'mentor' and the new leader 'mentee' encourages both parties to reflect on

their practices and facilitates the growth of a novice leader, passing on and sharing experience and reducing the ambiguity of the role as the mentor supports the new leader in identifying their responsibilities, defining their priorities, setting goals, and managing time effectively (Bolden et al., 2008). Experienced leaders can also benefit from such a relationship by enhancing their coaching and communication skills. Although there is a chance that the mentee will become over-dependent on the mentor, the benefits of mentoring tend to outweigh this drawback (Day, 2000).

There are two forms of mentoring relationships: formal and informal (Hansford et al., 2003; Day, 2000). The formality of a mentoring system can be determined according to the degree and level of planning, purpose, external control, and the time frame of establishing the relationship (Ragins and Cotton, 1999). In a formal mentoring system, the relationship is intentionally established according to predetermined objectives, administered and maintained by the organisation. A junior manager is provided with the opportunities to learn by being assigned to an experienced leader or peer in a formal mentoring programme (Bolden et al., 2008; Smith, 2007). This situation enables novice leaders to interact and discuss important issues with senior leaders, which in turn might contribute to improving the leader's interpersonal competences and facilitate their understanding of the organisation's culture (Day, 2000). Such intervention seems to be especially valuable in supporting women and other minority groups to increase their self-confidence, alter their perceptions and enhance their skills to be future leaders (Bolden et al., 2008). By contrast, in informal mentoring, the relationship is not structured by the organisation; rather, it emerges spontaneously as a result of a mutual admiration and support. However, it might be encouraged by the organisation (Clutterbuck, 2004; Day, 2000; Floyd, 2016).

HoDs participating in Smith's study (2007) valued mentoring and networks as powerful methods for learning in context, and expressed the desire to participate in formal mentoring programmes particularly in the early stages of their appointment. Heads also highlighted the value of interaction with other heads within their institutions to share challenges and successful solutions. The study concluded that although leaders found that observing experienced leaders' practices was useful, the benefits seemed to be maximised if leaders were given the opportunity and the time to critically reflect upon and discuss the outcome of these practices. Likewise, academic leaders in Inman's (2009) study were not provided with formal opportunities to shadow the practice of outgoing heads; rather they observed their practice from a distance. However, these academic leaders would have welcomed opportunities to observe other senior leaders' practices with structured time for reflection and discussion. Another study that targeted American female HoDs reached a similar conclusion (Mullen, 2009): Almost half (47%) of the 121 participants reported that they were not involved in a mentoring scheme and that this hindered their effectiveness in the role. Almost all (95%) stressed the importance of having a mentor, in particular a female mentor as she might be more understanding of the personal and professional needs of other women.

It appears that although much of the literature agrees that mentoring and shadowing are effective methods to support leadership development and seem to have a positive impact in preparing leaders in HE (Bolden et al., 2008; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2007), these approaches tend to be left to chance and are often not included in the organisation's leadership development strategies (Floyd, 2016). Although formal mentoring schemes have been launched in some institutions, academic leaders tend to benefit from informal mentoring relationships more than formal mentoring programmes (Bolden et al., 2008). The reason might be that effective mentoring requires time and commitment from both parties (Bean, Lucas, and Hyers, 2014). It

seems that individuals who take part in informal mentoring tend to be more committed because they seek out this opportunity. They might be free to choose their mentor rather than being assigned one by the organisation. According to Day (2000), the success of mentoring can be attributed to the presence of certain abilities: honesty, interpersonal communication skills, trustworthiness, patience, and the ability to understand organisational structure and context.

In summary, there is no single approach where leaders can learn about leadership, rather, leadership development is an ongoing process which occurs at three interlinked levels, the personal, departmental and the institutional, and it integrates both formal and informal learning methods (Drew et al., 2008). According to Drew et al. (2008) leaders learn from sharing with others, in particular from mentors where support, encouragement and challenge are provided. Although most leadership learning occurs at the departmental level where leaders handle real work problems through exchanging views with colleagues, formal leadership training provided at the institutional level was also useful (Drew et al., 2008). Effective learning, therefore, is role-specific and work-based. It requires individuals to engage in practice, recall their experience, reflect on their actions, and contact expert practitioners to benefit from their insights. Thus, learning becomes more relevant, available as and when needed, and tailored to fit specific needs as learning and action overlap (Scott et al., 2008). Leadership development should follow the action-learning loop that involves four stages: diagnose, develop, implement and evaluate (Scott et al., 2008). The cycle starts by identifying weaknesses in an individual's capabilities based on the framework discussed on page 55 (Figure 2), followed by a mixture of different sources of developmental opportunities in the form of practice-based learning, self-learning and structured formal training. Then, opportunities must be provided to apply what had been learnt and finally leadership practices should be assessed to sustain effective practices

and to alter ineffective ones. Any new gaps in an individual's practice can be identified, and the cycle will continue. Thus, learning is an ongoing process.

Acknowledging the diversity of leadership development approaches described in the literature, Inman (2009) proposes a model of leadership development that integrates different strategies. Due to the apparent preference for more informal forms of learning, the model maintains experiential, work-based learning as the preferred method of learning for middle-level leaders because it considers the individual's needs and context and promotes interaction with other leaders (see Figure 4). This model is flexible, where no individual method is proposed but a mixture of methods are offered giving academic leaders the chance to choose those which suit their needs, thus providing bespoke leadership development. Some strategies suggested in the model are forming networks, establishing a formal mentoring system, providing leaders with opportunities for structured reflection based on experience, and interacting or sharing with peers. Whatever approach is selected for leadership development, it must follow the four phases of Kolb's learning cycle: planning, experimenting, reviewing and concluding to ensure effective learning (Kolb, 1974, as cited in Inman, 2009, p. 428). This figure usefully summarises the main arguments presented in the literature and it will play a key part in my own data analysis.

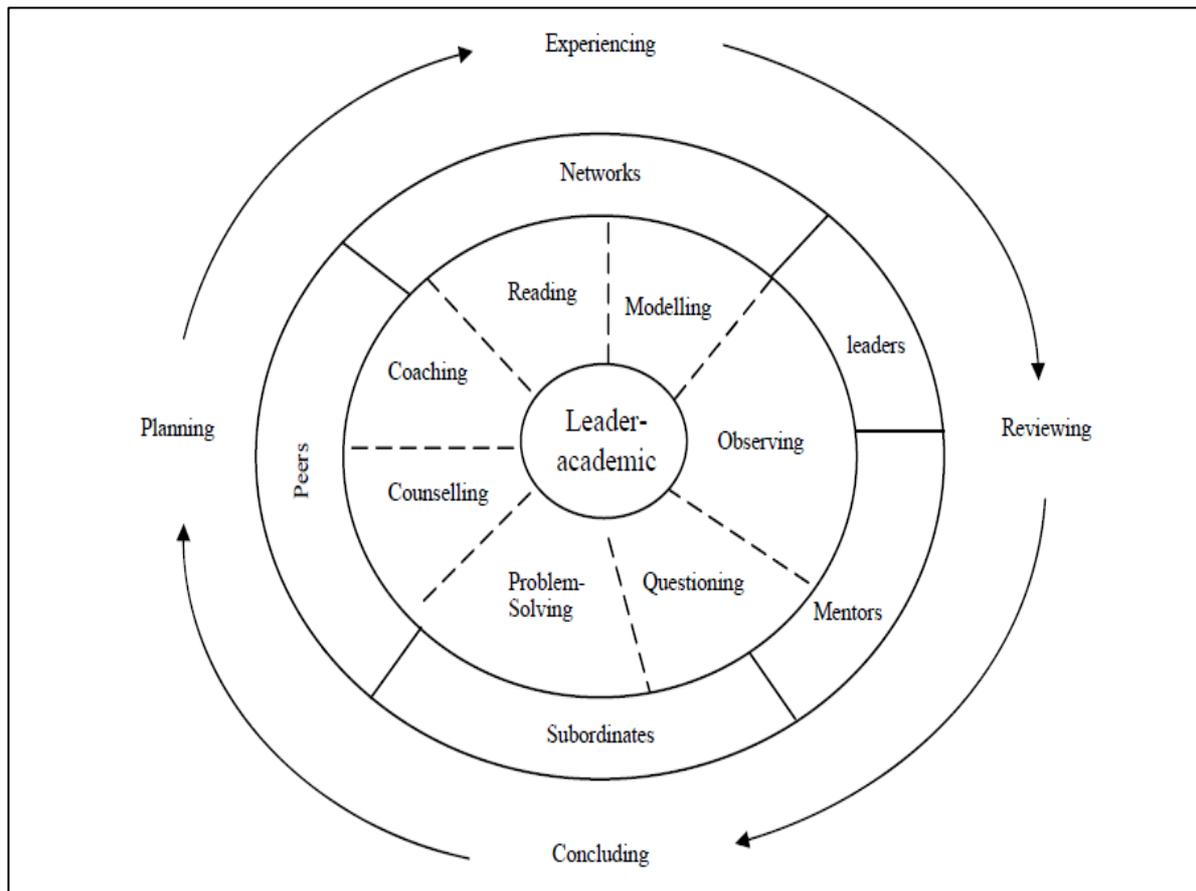


Figure 4: Summary of effective development methods for leaders-academics (Inman, 2009, p. 428).

3.6 Challenges Hindering Academic Women from Taking Leadership Positions

There is agreement in the literature that females are underrepresented in leadership positions in HE. This is a global phenomenon that is common across different cultures (Blackmore and Sachs, 2000; Deem, 2003; Doherty and Manfredi, 2006; Dunn, Gerlach, and Hyle, 2014; Morley, 2013, 2014; Neale and Özkanli, 2010; Nidiffer, 2010; Pyke, 2013; Read and Kehm, 2016; Tomas, Lavie, Duran, and Guillamon, 2010). There are many reasons which explain this phenomenon, some are external and derive from cultural and organisational practices, whereas others are internal and stem from the individual's circumstances.

3.6.1 Socio-Cultural Challenges

Cultural norms represent shared beliefs by community members and they contribute to determining the roles that both genders play in society (Cubillo and Brown, 2003). Strong traditional social expectations still exist whereby women occupy a low status role in taking care of children, husbands and extended family and doing the housework (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Oplatka, 2006). Although men share more domestic work nowadays, the heavier load still falls on women's shoulders and they are obliged to perform these tasks even if they are working (Eagly and Carli, 2012; Neale and Özkanli, 2010).

The division of roles within the family setting has transferred to the workplace through sets of practices that promote the superior role of men and the subordinate role of women (Acker and Armenti, 2004). The gender social role expectations and unequal distribution of care responsibilities within a family have played a key part in slowing the progression of women's academic careers; it is a major cause of underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in general, and in academia in particular (Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Grummell, Devine, and Lynch, 2009).

Likewise, Muslim women leaders are still subject to strong traditional social expectations that require them to take care of their home and children (Al-kayed, 2015; Omair, 2008), which, in turn, hinders the advancement of women professionally (AlDoubi, 2014). In traditional patriarchal societies, like most Arab societies including Saudi Arabia, the classic definition of the gender roles, in which men are the breadwinners and women are responsible for caring and housekeeping, is largely applied (Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov, 2010). In her study of Middle East countries, Metcalfe (2011) states that the biological difference between men and women determines the role that each gender plays in society, the co-called "Islamic Gender

Regime”. In this philosophy, men and women play “equal but different” roles within the family, yet complement each other. Women are assigned the housework, whilst men have the more prestigious role being in charge of finances, decision-making and family protection; this asserts their authority over women. Men therefore tend to occupy higher positions in society that have power and influence whereas women are placed in lower positions (Hamdan, 2005).

Many social values in many cultures are derived from religious beliefs and, therefore, some authors assume that Islam is the root cause of inequality and discrimination against Saudi women (Hamdan, 2005). However, Islam does not link women to certain roles, rather the patriarchal culture and norms exploit the spirit of Islam to support their view on the submissive role that Muslim women should play and to justify what is acceptable and unacceptable from women (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Effendi, 2003; Kauser and Tlaiss, 2011). This gender role expectation is socially constructed and results from a misinterpretation of religious texts (Alajmi, 2001; Effendi, 2003). Furthermore, women in Saudi Arabia face additional challenges relating to the great importance of family ties (Long, 2005; Metcalfe, 2008) and the high level of dependence on the mother in Saudi culture compared to Western countries (Al-kayed, 2015). For example, children depend on their mothers even when they reach adulthood. Family commitments therefore require more time, effort and energy.

3.6.2 Stereotyping Challenges: Women and Leadership

Gender stereotypes associate both men and women with particular traits and qualities and portray women as lacking the required attributes to be effective leaders (Eagly and Karau, 2002). It is believed that women are suitable to be care providers as they are often characterised by empathy, compassion and kindness. In contrast, men are considered to be rational, self-reliant and self-confident, thus making them suitable for being in charge (Eagly and Carli,

2007; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Welbourne, 2005). The capabilities expected of leaders are more closely linked to the male stereotypical qualities than to the females ones, meaning leadership is linked with masculinity (Morley, 2013; Read and Kehm, 2016).

The attitudes of society towards women in leadership positions are influenced by gender stereotypes. In an academic context, women find it difficult to be accepted as leaders; they are highly likely to be simply seen as *the other* (Acker, 2012; Probert, 2005; Read and Kehm, 2016) because of the widely accepted phrase “think-leader-think-male” (Eagly and Karau, 2002). Therefore, the appropriate qualities required for leadership are culturally associated with masculine behaviours such as being confident, assertive and ambitious (Tomas et al., 2010). Such beliefs force many female leaders to act like men, adopt a masculine leadership style and suppress their feminine traits in order to be treated equally or to be perceived as successful leaders (Eagly and Karau, 2002). This not only causes some women leaders to feel uncomfortable but also leads to negative interpretation of women leaders’ practices.

The contradiction between the way that women and leaders are supposed to behave hinders women’s success in leadership roles (Eagly and Karau, 2002). If female leaders act in a way that contradicts the feminine stereotype, they will be criticised for not conforming to their traditional gender image. For instance, when women leaders demonstrate assertive behaviours and make difficult decisions, they will be perceived as harsh and lacking in empathy, compassion and sensitivity to the needs of others (Acker, 2010; Johns, 2013; Kellerman and Rhode, 2014). On the other hand, if women exhibit empathy and caring, they will be perceived as incompetent in decision-making and lacking the qualities of good leaders (Eagly and Carli 2007; Keohane, 2014). Consequently, women face double standards because of the contradiction between gender stereotypes and leadership stereotypes (Eagly and Karau, 2002;

Kellerman and Rhode, 2014). In either case, female leaders will face prejudice because they are seen as lacking the required qualities for leadership and less effective than men (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Hoyt, 2005).

The prejudice that women leaders face due to the incongruity between the stereotypical female role and the stereotypical leadership role takes two forms. Firstly, women are less likely to succeed as a potential candidate for a leadership role compared to men (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Eagly and Sczesny, 2009). Secondly, there is a bias when evaluating and measuring the success of female leaders' actual practices (Deem, 2003; Eagly and Karau, 2002; Johns, 2013). Nguyen (2012) concurs that the prejudice against women leaders limits their opportunities to access leadership roles and hinders their success while in post. In a study involving female senior academic leaders in UK and Germany, Read and Kehm (2016) found that the connection between leadership and masculinity makes it difficult for women to be accepted as leaders. The under-representation of women in leadership positions makes them more visible, hence, their practices and behaviours are more likely to be scrutinised than those of men. Therefore, female leaders who behaved assertively were perceived in a more negative way than males who acted similarly.

3.6.3 Organisational Challenges

The structural and cultural systems of HEIs imply certain beliefs about gender, race and class (Acker, 2012). Although the number of females has increased in terms of the demographic composition of students and of junior or newly appointed academic staff, HEIs worldwide are still seen as having an elite place in society and tend to be controlled by white middle class males (Leathwood and Read, 2009; Read and Kehm, 2016). Despite increased representation of women in decision-making positions, according to Blackmore and Sachs (2000), access

alone is not enough to redistribute power; women still do not have the same privileges and access to information as their male colleagues. The spirit of "old" universities and male dominance lingers on (Acker, 2010; Blackmore and Sachs, 2000; Tessens, White, and Web, 2011).

Because men dominate in terms of numbers, women are seen as being *the other*; therefore, normative expectations are consistent with the masculine rather than feminine (Acker, 2012; Dunn et al., 2014; Morley, 2014; Read and Kehm, 2016; Tomas et al., 2010). The expectation is that male values, such as hierarchy, competition and efficiency, should be applied when managing HEIs, and that emotions and social relationships should be downplayed (Tessens et al., 2011). This matter is becoming more pressing in light of new managerialism which emphasises the need to focus on goals and standards and encourages competition (Acker, 2012; Deem, 2003; Morley, 2014).

Universities are 'greedy' organizations because they demand an intense time commitment and single-minded dedication from their members to ensure productivity (Grummell et al., 2009; Morley, 2013; Tomas et al., 2010). Because women still have the primary role in childcare, many struggle to reconcile work and family obligations and find it difficult to fulfil the demands of two greedy institutions, the family and the university (Airini et al., 2011; Deem, 2003; Dunn et al., 2014; Morley, 2014; Pyke, 2013; Strike and Taylor, 2009; Tessens et al., 2011; Wharton and Estevez, 2014). This is a major obstacle that women face in academic careers, in general, and in leadership roles, in particular, because success is linked with an intensive workload and being a successful leader assumes a lack of any family or other domestic responsibilities (Bailyn, 2003; Gatta and Roos, 2004; Grummell et al., 2009; Winslow, 2010). Although some women have found solutions to cope with family pressures

by sharing the housework with husbands or hiring employees to do some of these tasks, their suitability for leadership positions is still questioned (Eagly and Carli, 2007). In contrast, male leaders are less likely to perceive work/family integration as problematic; rather they see their wives and families as a source of support to reduce the stress that accompanies the role (Grummell et al., 2009; Wharton and Estevez, 2014).

The care responsibility has caused discrimination against women regarding promotion and the appointment to leadership positions in universities (Deem, 2003; Tomas et al., 2010). Men are preferred to women to fulfil leadership roles because they are able to devote more time to work whereas women's social role requires them to allocate more time to their domestic role, reducing the time available for work (Nguyen, 2012). Female academics are more likely to interrupt their professional career due to their family obligations (for example, they may work part-time, take maternity leave, take more days off work) which can result in gaining less experience and put them at a disadvantage when seeking to meet promotion criteria (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Nguyen, 2012; Winchester and Browning, 2015). Therefore, women often do not apply for promotion because they have limited experience compared to male colleagues (Probert, 2005). This social situation can lead to women in academia coming up against a 'glass ceiling' because organisations do not acknowledge the unequal balance in domestic responsibilities (Grummell et al., 2009). Moreover, women face bias in the evaluation, promotion and recruitment processes because eligibility is judged according to male standards and because of the hegemony of men in decision-making roles and on the selection committees (Bagilhole and White, 2008; Van Den Brink and Benschop, 2012, 2014).

Women must adapt to the prevailing organizational culture by dedicating their time to their work rather than caring for their families and children in order to succeed professionally and

attain leadership positions. Women might take the decision to delay starting a family or to abandon the idea of having children at all (Acker and Dillabough, 2007; Jacobs and Winslow, 2004; Misra, Lundquist, and Templer, 2012; Pyke, 2013). Women who are appointed at a senior level tend to have no children or have delayed accepting such a position until a later stage in their career when their family obligations had reduced, in particular when children had left home or become adults (Al-kayed, 2015; Grummell et al., 2009; Tomas et al., 2010). Due to the lack of organisational support and policies for the parental role, many women prefer to keep quiet and not claim for arrangements that could help them to fulfil both their professional and family obligations and have the opportunity to gain promotion to a leadership role (Liff and Ward, 2001).

The impact of women's family obligations extends to reduce their opportunities to find time to create professional networks which are crucial for professional development (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Pyke, 2013). Even if they have time, it is hard for women to gain access to and to benefit from such networks because they constitute a minority (Eagly and Carli, 2007). Men often dominate these networks and exploit their influence in order to control resources, gain access to information (Gersick, Dutton, and Bartunek, 2000; Maranto and Griffin, 2011; Omar and Davidson, 2001), and become the gatekeepers to support and facilitate their male counterparts' opportunities to access leadership role (Van Den Brink and Benschop, 2014). Women find it difficult to penetrate these networks and overcome the nepotism and loyalty that exists, consciously or unconsciously, among members of the group in order to gain leadership positions (Alomair, 2015; Kellerman and Rhode, 2014; Ledin, Bornmann, Gannon, and Wallon, 2007). Such a lack of support and the exclusion of women from professional networks partly accounts for the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in HE, an issue widely cited in the literature (Bagilhole and White, 2008; Munoz, 2010; Wharton and Estevez, 2014).

Although women in leadership roles emphasise the importance of receiving peer support (Airini et al., 2011), Dunn et al. (2014) wonder whether this focus on networking and working with others is a necessity in the work environment, which might apply equally to men, because an individual's success requires gaining the trust of others and attracting them to his/her networks, or whether this is in line with the stereotypical expectations of women. However, Acker (2010) stresses the importance of supporting women leaders in building professional networks because they are not only a minority group but also because they will be distanced from their former colleagues by taking on such roles.

3.6.4 Personal Challenges

Several studies agree that another barrier to women's career advancement stems from the women themselves, such as a lack of desire for leadership positions; however, this is closely linked to the social and organisational barriers discussed above (Dunn et al., 2014; Morley, 2014; Tomas et al., 2010). Socialisation has contributed to the internalisation of certain behavioural models of both genders, such as women's desire to serve and a lack of desire for power (Tomas et al., 2010). These social norms restrict women to certain roles and put pressure on them to meet these role expectations by being less ambitious for power and reluctant to apply for leadership roles. However, Tomas et al. (2010) argue that these internal barriers are not only a result of the gender roles that are socially constructed and assimilated by women but also because women tend to have different values and beliefs and want to participate in academic life accordingly. Women reject the traditional leadership models predominant in universities because they are based on hierarchy where some individuals enjoy unique privileges due to their academic status. Moreover, women disagree with the prevailing values and strategies because they have no involvement in the creation of such values. This means they do not feel like they belong and they have no desire to lead (Tomas et al., 2010). Similarly,

Dunn et al. (2014) found that women leaders do not plan in order to apply for leadership positions. However, they wonder whether this stems from a genuine lack of desire due to the absence of female role models or whether the university environment does not encourage women.

Because males dominate in leadership positions in HE, women are assumed to lack confidence and be afraid of failure (Cubillo and Brown, 2003). They are unaware of the rules of the game due to their exclusion from such positions (Morley, 2013). Others attribute the slow progress of women in higher academic to personal choice. Women prefer not to pursue leadership positions in order to maintain a balance between work and family life or to sustain their health (Airini et al., 2011; Doherty and Manfredi, 2006).

3.7 The Status of Female Leaders in Saudi Arabia

Female leaders in Saudi Arabia encounter, to some extent, the same challenges that female leaders face in other geographical contexts (Kausar and Tlaiss, 2011; Metcalfe, 2008). However, the unique culture of Saudi Arabia imposes different kinds of challenges. Metcalfe (2008) found that the cultural factors represented in the stereotypes and gender social roles were the main obstacle along with many organisational barriers. The cultural constraints that prevent direct communication between women and men create a segregated work environment and strengthen the traditional patriarchal organisational structure that sustains men's dominance in senior positions (Metcalfe, 2008). The organisational factors were manifested through the lack of career professional development opportunities and the absence of mentoring programmes for women due to the limited financial resources allocated to women's sections (Metcalfe, 2007). Moreover, some of the organisational policies work against equal

opportunities where appointments are usually influenced by favouritism and informal social relations dominated by men rather than by merit and qualifications (Metcalf, 2007).

Similarly, Kauser and Tlaiss (2011) investigated the main barriers that hinder women's managerial advancement in Arab countries. The study revealed that the stereotypes of gender roles that are culturally constructed and are deeply rooted in Arab family life are reflected in the organisational context. The patriarchal nature of organisations and the predominance of men in leadership positions were attributed to the traditional beliefs and stereotypes that link a leadership image with male traits. Moreover, organisational practices play an important role in hindering the career advancement of Arab women leaders, such as excluding women from informal networks, the absence of professional development programmes and mentoring opportunities, and the lack of female role models.

In Saudi Arabia, men dominate decision-making positions in all sectors (Hamdan, 2005). Because of cultural practices such as gender-segregation, the performance of women's sections in many government sectors is negatively affected because they often work in the men's shadow (Al-Halawani, 2002). Therefore, women's freedom to make decisions is diminished by continuous intervention by men (Al-Halawani, 2002). Female leaders lack the freedom to make many critical decisions related to their departments and have to refer to their male counterparts to obtain their approval (AlDoubi, 2014; Al-kayed, 2015; Almunajjed, 2010; Alsubaihi, 2016). This process, in turn, consumes a lot of time and effort and slows down the decision making.

Saudi women are excluded from professional networks that are dominated by men (Alsubaihi, 2016; Al-Tamimi, 2004; Kauser and Tlaiss, 2011; Omar and Davidson, 2001). The situation seems more complicated due to the policy of gender-segregation (AlDoubi, 2014; Al-

Mohamed, 2008). Female academics are discouraged from direct contact with their male colleagues in gender-segregated campuses and this reinforces the exclusion of academic women from decision making (AlDoubi, 2014; Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013). Therefore, gender segregation is seen as a practice that sustains the gender hierarchies in universities and is a major impediment to female career advancement (Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013).

Women's sections in gender-segregated campuses are considered subordinate to men's sections (Almenkash et al., 2007) and the highest leadership post that an academic woman can achieve is to be a deputy to her male counterpart (AlDoubi, 2014). Therefore, women's sections suffer from many structural challenges, such as: unclear organisational relationship with male administrators, lack of organisation and poor communication which results in conflicts and long work procedures (Almenkash et al., 2007). Moreover, women's sections are very unlikely to be kept up-to-date with the events held in the men's sections and this lack of information further widens the gap between women and senior leaders. The centralisation of authority in the men's sections prevents women leaders from real participation in decision making (Alsubaihi, 2016), strategic planning and the membership of academic committees, which negatively affects their ability to lead effectively (Almenkash et al., 2007). Furthermore, the presence of multiple leaders in male and female sections while there is no clear system for how leadership roles are allocated leads to many problems such as the multiplicity of visions and directions, the absence of coordination, and weak communication (Almengash, 2009).

In a large-scale study involving 160 female leaders, Al-Ahmadi (2011) sought to explore the most important challenges faced by Saudi women leaders in various government sectors. The study concluded that structural obstacles, most notably the limited authority granted to women leaders and exclusion from participation in the planning and decision-making process were the

major. A second challenge was the lack of control over financial resources; and the third was that women leaders suffered from a lack of empowerment opportunities in terms of the limited training offered to develop leadership skills and the absence of mentoring programmes. The process of Saudization has given women more access to leadership positions but not to the required leadership skills. Saudi women lack opportunities to learn by example, and this is attributed to there being very few female leaders as role models due to the limited experience of women in leadership positions. Moreover, the cultural and social practices limited women's opportunities to learn from male counterparts (Al-Ahmadi, 2011). However, it is interesting that the gender role stereotypes and work/family integration came at the end of the list as barriers for women's career progression in contrast with Metcalfe (2008) and Kauser and Tlaiss (2011). This might reflect not only a shift in the attitude of society towards women's role, but also a greater emphasis on women's empowerment in national policies (Al-Ahmadi, 2011).

A similar study, adopting a qualitative approach, investigated the major impediments that Muslim female academic leaders encountered in the HE context (Almaki, Silong, Idris, and Wahat, 2016). Two HEIs, one in Malaysia and one in Saudi Arabia, were selected as case studies to elicit academic leaders' perceptions regarding the main obstacles to female leadership. The findings indicate that gender role stereotypes and the strong cultural attitudes that associate men with leadership remain prevalent in society and constitute the main barrier to female leadership in both countries, as well as many organisational and personal factors. Malaysian participants stressed that male colleagues lack confidence in female leaders. Thus, in order to be successful in a leadership role, they have to demonstrate masculine behaviours. There was a slight suggestion among Malaysian participants that some males believe that the physiological nature and emotional sensitivity of women limit their ability to think and make good decisions, and that women's lack of experience in leadership positions made them

inflexible in decision-making. In contrast, Saudi female leaders pointed to the change in the social culture and in male views toward the social role of women which aligns with Al-Ahmadi's (2011) study. Saudi society is becoming more open and more appreciative of the role of women and they attributed this to women's success in proving their abilities and their contribution to their university's achievements. Moreover, participants in both countries agreed that some of the challenges are due to personal factors, such as the difficulty of balancing work and family life, as well as organisational obstacles such as dealing with human resources, long working hours and a lack of training opportunities.

3.8 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature on the focus of the research. At the beginning, it highlighted recent changes in HE and the resulting influence on management and leadership practices at departmental level. This was followed by a discussion of the roles and the responsibilities of HoDs and the challenges they face. Then effective approaches to leadership development were presented. Finally, as the study only addresses female leaders, the main obstacles facing women aspiring to, or already in, leadership positions were discussed.

The previous studies reviewed agreed on the multiplicity of roles and tasks carried out by the HoD but they did not concur on which dimension or aspect of the role is more important. This confirms the fact that the role played by the HoD and the associated tasks vary to some extent and are influenced by the context of the institution and the academic discipline. Furthermore, the picture is not clear about the level of authority and power the HoD has; some authors suggest the role is strategic and includes more planning and decision-making functions, particularly for those controlling their own budget, while others emphasise that HoDs enjoy little power in comparison with the huge responsibilities they have.

The literature shows the diversity of leadership development approaches in HE, both on and off the job. Leadership learning is an ongoing social process that requires interaction with others, is a product of practice, and is context-specific (Johnson, 2002; Preston and Floyd, 2016). Therefore, HEIs should become aware of the importance of these characteristics in leadership learning by providing space for self-critical reflection, conversation, sharing experiences, and giving and receiving feedback among peers.

A review of previous studies on middle leadership in HE and leadership development methods helped me to design the research instruments and to analyse the results to understand the role that participants in this study undertake and to what extent they benefited from different types of leadership development. Previous studies which addressed the barriers to women's leadership have been useful in analysing whether female leaders at a female-only university face similar challenges and therefore to understand whether or not this unique context represents an opportunity for women's empowerment.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Methodology means "a system of rules and procedures that provides the foundations for conducting research and evaluating claims to knowledge" (Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, and DeWaard, 2015, p. 12). It refers to "the rationale for the application of particular research methods" (Hammond and Wellington, 2013, p. 109). It defines "how one will go about studying any phenomenon" (Silverman, 2011, p. 53). This includes selecting data collection methods, identifying data analysis techniques, and considering ethical issues.

Creswell (2009) interprets methodology as the decisions, actions and procedures taken to conduct a research project that include the philosophical positions that the researcher brings to the study, the strategies that are to be employed, and the methods of data collection and analysis. In the same vein, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009, p. 21) define methodology as:

A broad approach to scientific inquiry specifying how research questions should be asked and answered. This includes worldview considerations, general preference for designs, sampling logic, data collection and analytical strategies, guidelines for making inferences, and the criteria for assessing and improving quality.

Researchers, to some extent, differ in their definition of research methodology: some see methodology in the broader sense to include philosophical beliefs about reality and how to acquire knowledge, in addition to the approaches used to address the research problem and the methods used to collect and analyse data (Creswell, 2009), whilst others define methodology in a narrow sense placing it in the middle of the hierarchy, where the philosophical assumptions and the type of questions raised are at the top of the hierarchy and the methods and tools of data collection and analysis are at the bottom (Hammond and Wellington, 2013). However, all these definitions share the same idea regarding the importance of justifying the methods used to address a research problem (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002). Silverman (2010) points out that there is no right or wrong methodology but it may be more or less useful. Hence, the aim of

methodology is to clearly explain why the researcher chose a particular research design for a particular inquiry.

This chapter provides a detailed description of all the procedures followed to conduct this study. Firstly, the research aims and questions are outlined. Then the research approach is explained. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the sequential mixed methods design that includes the methods of data collection, the rationale behind selecting these methods, the sampling strategies, and the analytical techniques used for both quantitative and qualitative data. Finally, the ethical considerations underpinning this research are discussed.

4.1 Review of Research Aims and Questions

This study aims to analyse the perceptions of female HoDs, in a female-only university, regarding their roles. More specifically, it seeks to explore the most important tasks that HoDs carry out and the key challenges they encounter. The research also aims to investigate what constitutes effective leadership development for this group, as well as the contextual factors and the methods which could help HoDs enhance their leadership skills.

The following research questions have been formulated to address the above objectives:

- How do HoDs perceive their role, and what are their main duties and responsibilities?
- What are the key challenges that HoDs face in carrying out their role?
- What are the most effective approaches to improve leadership and management capabilities, and what makes them effective?
- How can learning opportunities and leadership development for HoDs be enhanced within Saudi Arabian HE sector?

4.2 Research Approach

The researcher's standpoint and his/her ontological and epistemological assumptions play a critical role in the selection of the research methodology (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). This view is supported by Wellington (2000), who states that the selection of the research methodology is heavily influenced by the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions of the researcher and his/her disciplinary background and experience. Ontology refers to the nature of things or what constitutes social reality, whereas epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge or how knowledge is obtained (Creswell, 2003).

In social sciences, the main philosophical paradigms, or "worldviews" to use Creswell's term (2009), are positivism and interpretivism. These paradigms differ in their perspective of what constitutes reality and how we know such reality. Positivists adopt the scientific methods used to study natural science in studying the social sciences (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). In a positivist paradigm, the social reality is seen as external, objective and independent of the researcher's personal conception (Scott and Morrison, 2007) so it can be observed and measured quantitatively by the researcher. The aim of the research from a positivist perspective is to test theories and hypotheses to prove or refute their validity. Researchers seek to generalise the results, therefore it is often linked with quantitative research and produces numerical data (Mack, 2010).

In contrast, interpretivists believe that the principles of natural science are not valid for the study of social reality. In an interpretivist paradigm, social reality is perceived as an internal and subjective entity that can only be understood through participants' eyes by collecting personal accounts and seeking individuals' interpretations of the world based on their experiences (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011). Reality is socially constructed and

individuals have different interpretations of social phenomena. The interactions between individuals and the context in which they live are important in constituting their understanding. Therefore, the researcher seeks to understand these multiple interpretations of reality as well as the historical and cultural contexts (Scott and Morrison, 2007). This paradigm is linked with qualitative research that sees knowledge as the product of the interaction between the researcher and the researched (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). From this perspective, research cannot be entirely objective (value free); instead, the researcher must interpret the participants' views of the phenomenon being studied (Mack, 2010).

Although this study is most closely aligned with the interpretivism paradigm, I agree with Philip (1998) that the relationship between philosophical position and research methodology should not be seen as static in that the researcher's philosophical assumptions suggests certain methods and procedures. Philip claims that the selection of a research approach should be fit for purpose and assist in addressing research questions fully rather than being a methodological preference of the researcher or based on loyalty to an epistemological stance. Hibberts and Johnson (2012) support this view saying that, although the general beliefs that researchers possess about knowledge and how it is constituted affect the selection of the research approach, the research topic and questions should be the key factors in selecting the research methodology (Bryman, 2006). Therefore, researchers may select different techniques that fit their purposes and may collect quantitative and/or qualitative data and use different analytical procedures (Gorard and Taylor, 2004). According to Creswell (2009), qualitative and quantitative should not be viewed as opposing approaches. In some cases, the use of one of these approaches alone is not adequate to address the research questions, which might lead the researcher to combine both quantitative and qualitative methods. Therefore, the mixed-methods approach allows the researcher to combine the techniques used in quantitative and qualitative approaches if the research questions require such integration (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

Mixed-methods research refers to “research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study” (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007, p. 4). This approach is appropriate to address those research questions that could not be sufficiently answered using quantitative or qualitative research alone (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). One of the main advantages of adopting a mixed-methods approach is that it can combine the strengths of quantitative and qualitative approaches to overcome the limitations of using a single method alone (Creswell, 2014). For instance, the subjective nature of qualitative research, and the bias that the researcher can bring, can be compensated for by quantitative data; conversely, the weakness of quantitative research resulting from the lack of understanding of the research context and the absence of the participants’ voices can be overcome using a qualitative approach. It is a practical approach in the sense that it allows the researcher to use any tools or methods to answer research questions rather than being restricted to specific methods of data collection and analytical techniques typically associated with a quantitative or qualitative approach (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Punch, 2009).

Conducting mixed-methods research requires the researcher to be familiar with both quantitative and qualitative approaches in terms of their underlying epistemological beliefs and methods of data collection and analysis. Moreover, conducting the research may take longer, so this needs to be feasible in light of the resources and time available.

I chose a mixed-methods approach because both quantitative and qualitative data are required to answer the research questions. First of all, the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire provided the broad picture of the research issue in terms of describing the respondents’ background, their most important tasks, the key difficulties encountered, and the

methods they perceived to be effective in enhancing their leadership skills. Although the quantitative data helped to answer "what" questions, they could not fully answer "how" and "why" questions such as "how do respondents understand their role", "why are some leadership development methods effective", and "how could leadership development opportunities be enhanced". Therefore, the qualitative data from the interviews allowed detailed answers to these questions to be obtained by allowing the participants to use their own language to describe their role and the support needed to develop their leadership competencies. Moreover, the qualitative data helped to explain and illustrate the meaning of the quantitative results (Bryman, 2012). The open-ended interview questions enabled the participants to clarify their point of view, provide examples and additional insight. In this way, combining the strengths of the quantitative method (general understanding) with the power of qualitative data (depth) provided a better understanding of the research problem than could be reached through utilising a single method (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

Another fundamental reason for using a mixed-methods approach was that I was able to compare and combine the quantitative results obtained from the questionnaire with the qualitative results of the interviews particularly since they both addressed similar issues. By adopting this approach, research questions can be considered from different angles and perspectives. Quantitative and qualitative data were also integrated in order to interpret the study findings and to enhance the credibility and the validity of the study findings through methodological triangulation. Another reason that justifies the use of mixed-methods was that I used the quantitative method (questionnaire results) as a framework to aid the selection and the recruitment of the participants in the follow-up qualitative phase (Creswell, 2003) and to develop and refine some of the previously planned questions in the interview schedule. This aligns with Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) who point out that the employment of mixed-

methods research could be for sampling reasons; in other words, the choice of the corresponding sample is based on the results of the questionnaire. Having clarified the research approach, in the following section, I provide a brief overview of my stance in order to identify any bias that I might bring to the research.

4.3 Positionality

The selection of the research methodology and methods are highly influenced by the researcher's philosophical assumptions regarding reality and how knowledge is acquired (Creswell, 2009). I believe that the researcher cannot be completely separated from reality and there is no absolute neutrality, especially if the research deals with a topic that includes a human and social dimension. Therefore, I completely agree with Wellington (2015, p. 100) who states that "The researcher influences, disturbs and affects what is being researched in the natural world, just as the physicist does in the physical universe". I think the researcher's influence starts from the selection of the subject of research, through the development of research questions and the choice of an appropriate design. However, I also share the view that, regardless of the theoretical position of the researcher, the type of question that needs to be answered is the fundamental criterion in determining the research methodology in practice.

Therefore, the type of questions being asked led me to adopt a mixed-methods approach where both quantitative and qualitative approaches were useful. I believe that the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods may lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. I also acknowledge that my personal beliefs, and historical, cultural and professional background played a major role in selecting the research problem and in formulating its questions. Thus, I present a brief overview of my professional experience which

contributed to shaping the research problem whilst identifying my interests and stance as an educational researcher.

My personal interest in leadership began to develop when I had the opportunity to join a master's degree programme in the field of educational leadership and management. During the programme, I studied various modules that increased my awareness and appreciation of the important role that academic leaders play in driving change. After obtaining my master's degree, I worked as a lecturer for six years in the Department of Educational Leadership in KSU that has gender-segregated campuses. During this time, I had numerous opportunities to be involved in many departmental committees under the supervision and guidance of the HoD (a male colleague) and his deputy (a female colleague responsible for running the female section); this situation inspired me to think about the critical role that both colleagues played in leading the academic department and about their leadership approaches in dealing with the dean of the college, the faculty members, and the students.

It is worth noting that, during the six years, I worked with several HoDs and deputies as these positions rotate every two years. This gave me the chance to closely observe the difference in the leadership skills among the occupants of these roles. For example, when problems arose between female academic staff, they turned to the female deputy head to solve them because of her essential role in the management of the academic and administrative affairs of the unit. I realised that some deputies were able to solve the problems, keen to resolve conflicts before they got worse and create a positive work environment, whilst others were less successful in doing so. In addition, some deputies were able to achieve the desires of the academic staff whereas other asserted that they did not have the authority to make certain decisions and they had to refer to the male HoD. Consequently, I began to wonder why there was a difference. If

some female deputy HoDs (this focus was due to my direct contact with female leaders) were not fully aware of their role and the limits of their authority, was this influenced by the gender-segregated nature of the organisation or due to differences in personality?

Accordingly, I can say that my professional career increased my curiosity to learn how those responsible for the university's core business of teaching and research understand their role and how they could be supported to improve their leadership skills in order to be successful in carrying out their role. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge, all of the Saudi studies that dealt with female leadership were conducted in universities having two campuses (i.e. separate male and female sections). This prompted me to consider another context, that is whether the role of HoD would differ at a female-only university and would the power granted to the HoD be different in the absence of a male section. My interest in female leadership in HE is in line with the new vision and strategic plans of the Saudi ruling family towards empowering women and giving them the opportunity to take on more leadership positions.

4.4 Research Design

Research design refers to “the procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting, and reporting data in research studies” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011, p. 53). According to Punch (2009, p.114) research design “sits between the research questions and the data, showing how the research questions will be connected to the data, and what tools and procedures to use in answering them”. Therefore, the selection of the research design should fit the research questions. Robson and McCartan (2016) concur with Punch and confirm that the nature of the questions that the need to be answered plays a key role in identifying the appropriate research design. In the following, I explain how the design chosen in the current study fits with the research objectives and addresses the questions.

Scholars in the field of mixed-methods have formulated multiple designs and typologies; each has its purpose and rationale for the integration of the quantitative and qualitative data (Bryman, 2012; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). These typologies provide the novice researcher with a framework that facilitates the implementation of research methods in a manner that ensures the quality and persuasion of the design (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009). One of the most well-known typologies was proposed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) and adopted four criteria in forming the mixed-methods design. In order to select an appropriate mixed-methods design, a researcher needs to answer questions with regard to time, priority, mix and level of interaction: a) time refers to the implementation of the quantitative and the qualitative data - whether the collection and the analysis of the two data sets occur simultaneously or in sequence; b) priority means the importance given to the quantitative and qualitative data in addressing the research questions; c) the mix refers to the stage at which the quantitative and qualitative data are combined during the research; and d) interaction concerns whether the quantitative phase is carried out independently from, or interactively with, the qualitative phase.

By answering these questions, I was able to choose the most appropriate design, keeping in mind the research questions. Since the aim of the study was primarily to create a broad picture about the research context by obtaining general information about the participants' characteristics, their perceptions regarding their main duties, the key challenges encountered in the role and the effective approaches that could develop their leadership skills, and then to gain a deeper understanding of these issues by allowing the participants to use their own language, the sequential design was selected; this entailed the study being conducted in two sequential phases by collecting quantitative then qualitative data. In the quantitative phase, I employed a questionnaire to collect data. Then follow-up semi-structured interviews were

conducted to gather data in the qualitative phase. The qualitative data were given a higher priority in answering the research questions, while the quantitative data played a supporting role, because the main research questions included ‘how’ and ‘why’ aspects necessitating a detailed understanding of the participants’ perspectives. The two data sets, quantitative and qualitative, were integrated in the interpretation stage before drawing research conclusions. The study was conducted in an interactive manner whereby the questionnaire was used as a framework to choose the participants and formulate and amend some of the questions in the second qualitative stage.

4.5 Sequential Mixed-Methods Design

The main purpose of the current research was to explore the perception of the HoDs of their role including their important tasks, difficulties faced in the role and the effective methods by which they could develop their leadership skills. Therefore, I adopted the sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011) because it seems suitable for the goal of my research, which is going beyond the general understanding produced from the quantitative data in the first phase to obtaining participants’ perceptions in more depth by conducting a qualitative phase. The interviews were particularly useful in generating more detailed information by providing the interviewees with an opportunity to explain, in their own words, their role, how they develop their leadership competences and to talk about what is important to them without being restricted by the questionnaire format (Punch, 2009). The rich qualitative data generated from the interviews helped to interpret and further explain the initial results obtained from the questionnaire. Combining the results obtained from these two different methods of data collection helped me to reach a better understanding of different aspects of my research problem. A detailed explanation of the mixed-methods procedure and the two research stages is provided in the following sections.

4.5.1 First Phase: The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was selected to gather data in the first phase because it fits the research aim in providing an overview of the participants and their views and attitudes toward the social phenomenon under investigation. Questionnaires are useful as a means to gather different types of information, namely: knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and attributes (Hartas, 2010; Punch, 2003). Another reason for using a questionnaire is that it allows quick responses to be gathered from a large group of people within a short timescale (Wellington and Szczerbiński, 2007). Hence, it is considered an efficient method to obtain responses quickly and at a low cost. The questionnaire is also considered a convenient tool as it can be completed as and when appropriate for the respondents.

One of the reasons for adopting the questionnaire was that its completion does not require the presence of the researcher and therefore the researcher's influence and any bias which may occur in his/her presence can be reduced (Bryman, 2012). A questionnaire preserves respondents' anonymity (Basit, 2010), which might encourage participants to express their views openly, particularly regarding sensitive issues (Cohen et al., 2011; Robson and McCartan, 2016). Moreover, in this study, the questionnaire was used to refine some of the interview questions and to inform and guide the selection of the research sample in the follow-up semi-structured interview stage (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4 on page 294.

4.5.1.1 Design the Questionnaire

A focused literature review was carried out to identify the major themes related to the research topic and to formulate the questionnaire. Three topics were identified for inclusion in the questionnaire in order to meet its aims, namely: HoDs tasks, key challenges facing HoDs, and

leadership development methods. The questionnaire was mostly structured (closed questions) but also included a few open-ended questions, to allow the researcher to compare participants' responses (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2011). Considering the busy schedules of HoDs, closed questions are quick to answer, which might encourage completion (Gorard, 2001). However, the fixed response categories provided are not exhaustive and might not cover all the possibilities (Bryman, 2012; Robson and McCartan, 2016). To combat this, open-ended questions and 'other' options were used (Hartas, 2010; Opie, 2004). More importantly, there was a second phase using interviews as the data collection method, which invited participants to reflect on their experience and to give their views and opinions in their own words (Silverman, 2011).

Multiple-choice questions were used to obtain the demographic information. Rating scales (4-point and 5-point Likert scales) were used for the remaining questions to obtain participants' perceptions. The Likert scale was used because it records the degree of intensity of the measured items and uses numerical data to differentiate participants' responses which seems to fit the nature of the study (Cohen et al., 2011). When the intention was to measure the intensity of a single attribute (the level of importance of certain tasks or the significance of certain approaches to leadership development) 4-point Likert scales were used whereas a 5-point Likert scale was employed when the scale contained an opposite attribute (such as agreement and disagreement); the scale contained a 'neutral' midpoint in case the respondents did not want to express their opinion.

At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were briefly informed about the purpose of the questionnaire and the value of their contribution. In light of suggestions made by Hartas (2010) and Punch and Oancea (2014), the voluntary nature of participation and the anonymity

of the participants' identity were assured. Participants were given the contact details of the researcher in case they had further questions. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. In section A, participants were asked to provide their personal information (such as academic discipline, rank, length of experience in HE, length of service in the post and the number of academic staff in the department). In section B, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which 35 tasks are important for HoDs. The tasks were split into seven categories (by consulting studies shown in Table 2 on page 32): administrative (7 items), resources management (3 items), strategic leadership (3 items), internal/external communication (7 items), personal scholarship (3 items), faculty affairs (8 items), and instructional (4 items). Section C consisted of two questions that explored the key challenges facing HoDs by indicating whether they agree or disagree with the provided statements in the first closed question and by using their own words in the second open question. The respondents were given extra space to add any challenges they had encountered which had not been previously covered. In section D, certain methods of leadership development were listed and participants were asked to indicate how effective these methods were in developing their leadership capabilities. Once the questionnaire was finalised, I translated it into Arabic, the mother tongue of the participants. Special consideration was given to ensuring that the translated version maintained the intended meaning and semantic equivalence, rather than being a literal translation (see Section 4.5.5).

4.5.1.2 Online Questionnaire

There are different ways in which the questionnaire can be administered, namely: face-to-face, telephone, and self-completion. With the development of technology, the internet has been widely used as a means of surveying a large number of participants in a relatively short period of time and thus saving the researcher time (Hartas, 2010). Web-based surveys allow the

researcher to take advantage of visual aids, using diagrams and charts to display their data, and enable them to store data directly in a Microsoft Excel file; this saves researchers' time and effort and minimises errors that might occur during the data entry process (Agruma and Zollett, 2007).

Despite the benefits of administering the questionnaire online, there are issues with access as not all individuals have access to the Internet, as well as with the bias that might result due to the fact that individuals who are more competent at using computers tend to participate more than others (Robson and McCartan, 2016). However, this was not a problem in this study because the target sample, the HoDs at Tala University, used e-mail on a daily basis as a formal communication tool and, as in other HEIs in Saudi Arabia, all administrative transactions are carried out through e-mail.

In light of this, a web-based questionnaire was employed to collect data in the first phase of this study due to the advantages discussed above. Google Form was used to design and host the electronic Arabic version of the questionnaire (Appendix 5). One of the main advantages of this tool was its ability to solve the problem of missing data; respondents were not allowed to move on to the next section or to submit the questionnaire until all questions had been completed. The questionnaire was distributed via the university official email by providing participants with a link to the web page hosting the questionnaire; in this way the data obtained were anonymous.

4.5.1.3 Piloting the Questionnaire

Piloting is a crucial stage in designing the questionnaire because it offers feedback on the content of the questionnaire, the relevance of its items to the subject of the study, the clarity of

the questions and the layout, and the time needed to complete the questionnaire (Cohen et al., 2011; Hartas, 2010; Robson, 2011). Any problems with aspects of the questionnaire can be identified and corrected in light of the pilot. Because the questionnaire is administered without the researcher being present, it is crucial to remove any ambiguity that may occur either in the questions or the instructions before distribution (Bryman, 2012; Wellington, 2015).

I met with my supervisor several times to discuss the content, the type of questions and the items to be included in the questionnaire. Once the initial draft of the questionnaire was formulated and approved by my supervisor, I carried out a pilot with four current HoDs at a public Saudi university. The two versions of the questionnaire, the Arabic and English, were sent to all participants in the pilot test and they were asked to check the validity of the questionnaire, the clarity of questions and instructions, the applicability of the questionnaire items in the Saudi context, as well as the accuracy of the translation. They were also asked to test the online version by clicking on the attached link sent to their emails.

The feedback revealed that the content and the format of the questionnaire were seen as appropriate. However, concerns were raised regarding the clarity of some questionnaire items and some phrases. After a careful review of the suggestions gained in the pilot study, some modifications were applied. For example, I moved two tasks from the leadership section to the faculty affairs section. These tasks were: 1) encouraging collegiality, cooperation, and teamwork among faculty members, and 2) providing a healthy work environment through solving problems and reducing conflicts. After I reduced the items in leadership tasks, the label of this section was altered to become strategic leadership tasks, to better capture the role of the remaining items. The feedback suggested that the difference between formal and informal mentoring might be unclear and that more explanation was needed. Thus, I added the phrase

“organised by the university” to formal mentoring programmes and “spontaneously occurring between colleagues” to informal mentoring to differentiate between these approaches to leadership development.

With regard to the wording used, minimal amendments were made. For instance, the term ‘industry’ in the item ‘establishing partnership with business and industry’ was modified to ‘private sector’. The phrase ‘imposed by’ in the item ‘implementing the quality system and procedures for promoting good teaching activities imposed by the university administration’ was changed to ‘proposed by’ to better represent the role of a Saudi HoD. After applying the required modification, the final draft of the questionnaire was produced and the web-based questionnaire was tested using different browsers and different devices before distribution to the participants.

4.5.1.4 Gaining Access and the Distribution of the Questionnaire

After receiving the ethical approval letter for conducting this research from the University of Warwick (explained in Section 4.6, the ethical considerations), I contacted the Deanship of Scientific Research at Tala University, to enquire about gaining access to research participants and the formal procedures to be followed. They asked me to provide them with a letter explaining the objectives of the research, a letter from my supervisor showing her consent to conduct the study and a copy of all the data collection methods to be discussed by the Committee of Scientific Research Ethics in the university. After fulfilling all the requirements, I obtained permission to conduct this study.

I contacted the Deanship of Scientific Research at Tala University again in order to obtain a mailing list for all HoDs. They stated that as they are responsible for the distribution of

information of email communications, I should determine the sample of the study and provide them with a link to the electronic questionnaire so they could invite HoDs to participate in the study on my behalf. I sent them a copy of the information sheet of the questionnaire which indicated the research objectives and the participants' rights, in addition to my personal contact details and the link to the online questionnaire. There might be a potential bias in having the Deanship of Scientific Research distribute the questionnaire: some participants might respond more positively, or others, who feel negative about their role and the opportunity for empowerment might have chosen not to respond due to concerns about anonymity. However, this bias is unavoidable because there was no other way of contacting the HoDs.

The questionnaire was sent to all HoDs (60 in total) through the university's official e-mail on the 10 February 2016; only 10 responses had been received by 20 February. A low response rate to questionnaires is a common problem and the literature offers advice to increase the response rate, such as using a follow up questionnaire (Robson and McCartan, 2016). Respondents were informed about the estimated time required to complete the questionnaire and I included an indicator in the questionnaire to show respondents their progress. In order to increase the response rate, a second invitation was sent by email to all HoDs; 14 days after the first distribution; a further 22 responses were received. In addition, I visited the university campus several times, targeting different colleges each time, and distributed printed copies of the questionnaire to the departmental secretaries to be delivered to their heads. Only 4 returned the printed questionnaire and these were converted to an electronic format. The process of data collection in the first phase took approximately a month and a total of 36 responses were obtained representing a 60% response rate. This could be deemed sufficient given the voluntary nature of participation; according to Mangione (1995, as cited in Bryman, 2012), achieving 60-69% is considered an acceptable response rate.

4.5.1.5 The Questionnaire Sample

The sampling strategy depends on the research purpose, approach, and the methods of data collection (Cohen et al., 2011). The aim of the questionnaire in the first phase was to obtain a general overview of the role that HoDs play, the key challenges encountered and the effective methods in which they could improve their leadership competencies. Hence, all HoDs at Tala University who were in service in the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016 were invited to take part in the questionnaire (60 in total according to the Deanship of Faculty Members Affairs). A total of 36 responses were received and the participants were HoDs at different colleges: 22 from humanities colleges, 9 from science colleges, 4 from health and medical colleges and one from the community college.

4.5.2 Second Phase: Semi-Structured Interviews

Individual semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were chosen to gather more in-depth data in the second qualitative phase. The rationale behind selecting the interview was that it can assist in meeting different purposes and eliciting rich detailed information that cannot be obtained using other methods of data collection (Mason, 2002; Silverman, 2011). As I sought to capture participants' perceptions of their role and the effective approaches to leadership development based on their experience, the decision to use interviews at this stage was well justified. The interviews not only allowed me to ask participants to further explain and articulate their views and to provide examples, but also provided the interviewees with the opportunity to seek clarification of any ambiguous questions (Hobson and Townsend, 2010).

Although observation can be used to overcome the bias inherent in self-report, it also has limitations. In the first place, what is observed depends largely on the selectivity of the researcher (Gray, 2014; Moyles, 2007). Second, the researcher's presence may affect

participants' behaviours and actions. In other words, participants might modify their behaviours and exhibit actions that portray them appropriately. This in turn affects the validity of the data obtained. It is worth noting that time and access were other factors which prevented me from using observation to document participants' tasks and this has been highlighted as one of the study's limitations (Section 7.9). Departmental meetings, where there were greater opportunities to observe HoDs' practice, were usually held once a month; observing such meetings required a time framework not available to me as a PhD student. Furthermore, it may have been difficult to get approval to observe departmental meetings given my position as an external researcher and the fact the topics being discussed might be sensitive and/or confidential.

I decided to choose individual interviews to enable each participant to speak openly and reflect on her personal experience. There were several reasons for selecting semi-structured interviews. First of all, this type of interview is a flexible method which facilitates addressing the research agenda whilst also providing the researcher with the opportunity to follow up interesting new responses that may not have been considered previously and giving the participants the opportunity to speak about important issues from their point of view (Cohen et al., 2011). Moreover, it allows the interviewer to prompt and probe the interviewee to seek further explanation and more detailed information (Gibson, 2010a; Hobson and Townsend, 2010). Semi-structured interviews enabled me to cover the research schedule, while at the same time giving me the freedom to change the order of the questions and their phrasing, and the amount of time allocated in order to focus on various topics, as determined by the research, according to the participants' responses (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

4.5.2.1 Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was formulated in the light of Robson and McCartan's (2016) suggestion that the questions should be divided into three stages: the warm-up, the main body, and the closure. The warm-up stage began by clarifying the purpose of the research and obtaining personal and background information. Such introductory questions assist in building a rapport with the participants. In addition, participants were asked some general questions about what motivated them to take up a headship role and how they would broadly describe their role.

In the next part, participants were asked detailed questions about how they understood their role, their most important tasks and responsibilities, which activities were most time-consuming and what challenges hindered them in performing their role. Participants were also asked to give their perceptions of the effectiveness of different leadership development approaches they had experienced, including an explanation of why they were helpful, and how they could be supported to develop their leadership skills. In the closing stage, participants were asked to explain whether working in a women-only university affected their role and then they were given the opportunity to add any comments or suggestions related to the subject of the research. Finally, they were thanked for taking time to participate in the study (see Appendix 6 on page 301 for the interview schedule).

It is worth noting that the interview questions covered all the topics previously discussed in the questionnaire. However, the open-ended questions in the interview enabled more detailed information to be gained by allowing participants to use their own words to answer the research questions.

4.5.2.2 Piloting the Interview

Once the interview schedule was completed, it was reviewed by my supervisor. She provided me with some suggestions such as adding additional probes to follow up one of the main questions. She also recommended changing the order of some questions. I amended the questions in light of this feedback and then had further discussion with my supervisor until a final draft of the interview schedule was produced. Then I conducted face-to-face pilot interviews with two Saudi friends who are studying educational leadership in the UK and with a former female deputy HoD to ensure the fitness of the questions to the research purpose, their ability to generate a valid response and to identify any ambiguity in the questions.

The interview includes a verbal and non-verbal interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee; it is therefore important for the interviewer to develop his/her communication skills in understanding body language and facial expression because they provide useful impressions of the interviewees (Cohen et al., 2011). Because the success of the interview depends largely on the researcher's skills, piloting was a crucial step which assisted me to improve my interviewing and communication skills. The pilot gave me the opportunity to practise active listening, maintain the dynamics of the situation by keeping the conversation going, move between topics in a smooth and logical manner, and probe the interviewees to encourage them to express their ideas, clarify their answers further, and confirm my understanding of their responses. Piloting was also useful in determining the length of time needed to complete the interview.

4.5.2.3 The Interview Sample

Since the aim of the second phase was to obtain rich information about the research topic, a purposive sample was employed. Criterion-based or purposive sample is a widely used strategy

for selecting a sample in qualitative research where certain individuals are selected not for the sake of being a representative sample but based on their full knowledge of the research subject (Creswell, 2014). The researcher does not intend to generalise the results and therefore a large sample is not required. Consequently, sample size will be judged by the ability of the participants to provide adequate information to address the research questions (Travers, 2010). Ideally, interviews should be conducted until the data saturation stage is reached, when no new themes emerge (Bryman, 2012).

In light of this, a purposive sample was used in the second qualitative phase of the study because it allowed the researcher to access particular individuals with certain characteristics that would enable them to answer the research questions and provide in-depth information. Participants were selected according to these criteria: a) a current HoD at Tala University, and b) participation in the first quantitative phase of the study by completing the online questionnaire. Twenty individuals who had completed the questionnaire expressed their willingness to participate in the qualitative stage.

These individuals were all contacted in order to arrange interviews. However, four were excluded for different reasons: work pressures prevented two from participating, one did not respond to the numerous emails sent to her, and one was on a scientific trip and would not be returning within the timescale. Therefore, 16 individuals met the criteria to take part in the second qualitative phase of the study. It is worth noting that I wanted to achieve a mix between participants in terms of their academic discipline, length of experience in HE, length of service in the post, and department size, in order to explore whether differences in these aspects would, as suggested in the literature, influence participants' experience and their understanding of their role and, ultimately, to enrich the data. However, this could not be completely assured due to

the voluntary nature of the participation and the need to participate in the first quantitative phase to be eligible for the second qualitative phase.

The majority of the participants (12) were assistant professors, two were associate professors and the other two were professors. They were HoDs from different faculties: eight from humanities, six from science and two from health and medical colleges, and their level of experience in HE ranged from 11 to 37 years. Seven were in their first year in post, four in their second year, and five had been HoDs for more than two years (i.e. their tenure had been extended). A summary of the interviewees' characteristics is shown in Table 3 below.

Pseudonym	Academic position	Discipline	Number of academic staff	HE experience	Headship experience
P1	Assistant Professor	Humanities college	11-20	15 years	2 years
P2	Assistant Professor	Humanities college	11-20	11 years	First year
P3	Assistant Professor	Humanities college	More than 40	18 years	First year
P4	Assistant Professor	Medical/health college	11-20	37 years	3 years
P5	Professor	Science college	11-20	25 years	5 years
P6	Assistant Professor	Science college	More than 40	18 years	2 years
P7	Associate Professor	Humanities college	11-20	22 years	First year
P8	Assistant Professor	Science college	11-20	25 years	4 years
P9	Associate Professor	Humanities college	11-20	20 years	First year
P10	Assistant Professor	Science college	More than 40	17 years	5 years
P11	Assistant Professor	Humanities college	More than 40	17 years	First year
P12	Assistant Professor	Humanities college	More than 40	12 years	2 years
P13	Assistant Professor	Science college	21-30	18 years	2 years
P14	Assistant Professor	Humanities college	11-20	18 years	First year
P15	Assistant Professor	Science college	More than 40	12 years	First year
P16	Professor	Medical/health college	31-40	31 years	6 years

Table 3: A summary of the interviewees' characteristics.

4.5.2.4 Conducting the interview

All of the 16 individuals who agreed to participate in the interviews were contacted in order to arrange the appropriate date, time and venue for conducting the interviews. Kvale (1996) states that respondents tend to be more open in expressing their experiences and feelings when they feel safe, hence the researcher's responsibility is to create an appropriate environment. All participants chose to conduct the interviews in their office on campus, as this arrangement was most convenient. All the interviews were conducted between March and April 2016; most lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, but two took an hour and a half.

At the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself, explained the objectives of the research, clarified the participants' right to withdraw from the research at any stage or to refuse to answer any questions, confirmed the confidentiality and the anonymity of all data gathered and gave the participants the opportunity to ask any questions about the study, all of which helped me to establish a rapport with the participants. A copy of the information sheet (Appendix 2) was handed to the participants before the interview started and they were also asked to sign the consent form (Appendix 3). I also sought participants' permission to record the interview using a digital recorder. All except one agreed to this so I relied on my handwritten notes to record this interview. Using the digital recorder during the interviews gave me the opportunity to focus more on the participants' answers, to pay more attention to body language, and to maintain eye contact; all these factors enhance the accuracy of the data obtained (Wellington, 2000). Moreover, notes were taken during the interviews which were very helpful in the analysis stage.

The interviews were conducted in Arabic since the participants were more fluent in Arabic than English and felt more confident using their native language. All respondents were female and

the selected university was previously a collection of education colleges. Consequently, it was unlikely that the HoDs would have been educated in English rather than Arabic. By conducting the interviews in only one language, there was less scope for interviewees to interpret languages differently and less opportunity for misunderstanding.

It is worth noting that I was aware that the quality, validity and authenticity of the data obtained from the interview might be influenced by the "power relations" between the interviewer and the interviewee. This is a view supported by Denscombe (2003) who states that the differences between the researcher and participants in some characteristics such as age, gender, educational qualifications, social status and class might affect the nature of the data given. Henn, Weinstein, and Foard (2006) concur with Denscombe and note that "the power of certain people and groups to resist a researcher's investigations is also likely to affect the outcome of any research study" (p. 74). However, if the opposite is true and the power is perceived to be on the researcher's side, the results of the study could be also affected.

Given that I was a PhD student interviewing middle level leaders in HE who had higher qualifications, higher status and more power than me, I could have been seen as lacking a clear understanding of the headship role, having never been in that position. It is therefore possible that they would provide an account of their role to present themselves in an appropriately positive manner. I was also aware that asking questions about challenges that HoDs encountered might make them feel pressured. They might not choose to share their views frankly, particularly if the difficulties arose from dealing with the university administration. However, in the context of my interviews, I tried my best to overcome this issue by demonstrating how the significant range of literature that I reviewed gave me sufficient cognitive knowledge about the issues discussed. In order to avoid participants feeling

intimidated, I tried to make it clear from the beginning that I was not evaluating people or their skills. Prior to the commencement of the interviews, participants were assured that their identities would be kept anonymous and their right to refuse to answer any question was confirmed (see Section 4.6).

4.5.3 Additional Information and Data Source

Social research is not a linear process or a specific procedure that must be literally followed (Hammond and Wellington, 2013). It is possible for the researcher to amend some of his/her plans in response to things that occurred during the research process or as a result of reflection on the different research stages. One of the important changes I made was to interview an individual who was not in the original research proposal before the data collection.

During the interviews with the HoDs, they talked about the programmes offered by the DDSA, which aims to develop leadership skills, and about the main obstacles that prevented them from participating in such programmes or other learning opportunities. I felt that it would be useful to obtain the perspective of those in the DDSA in order to better understand the support provided to HoDs in this regard and to enrich the study findings.

Thus, I found an opportunity to interview a member of staff in the DDSA to elicit her opinion on programmes that target HoDs. In order to ensure her anonymity, I have not mentioned her job title since she is the only person with that role. Although the interview was short and informal, it was extremely useful in adding a new dimension that helped me answer one of the research questions and to have a better understanding of the issue of leadership development. The information obtained from this interview has not been presented in a separate section, but

was used to support the study findings and compared with the viewpoints of the main research sample.

I also sought to obtain the job description of the HoD, as I felt it was crucial to one of my research questions to understand the role of HoD from an alternative perspective (the university perspective). However, my quest to locate such a document was difficult and frustrating. It was not available on the university website. During the fieldwork, I visited the university campus several times and enquired who was responsible for issuing the job description without finding any useful answers. As a result, I decided to ask the participants who had the opportunity to see such a document to provide me with a copy. However, they either could not find it or they forgot where it was. Only one participant showed me an old version of the description and mentioned that it had not changed. I read it carefully trying to understand the hidden meaning according to Robinson's advice (2010, p. 190) "this not only demands a face-value reading of the document to elicit factual information from what is actually written, but also requires a much more difficult and tenuous engagement with hidden and obscured meaning". I used the information in the job description only to support my analysis and to be compared with the perspective of HoDs, especially to understand the compatibility of the tasks performed by the HoDs (according to their information) with what is set out in the document.

4.5.4 Quality of Qualitative Data

Educational researchers need to demonstrate the credibility of their findings. According to Silverman (2011), validity and reliability are widely used to assess the rigour of quantitative research. Validity refers to the extent to which research instruments measure what they are supposed to measure, whereas reliability refers to the ability of the research method to provide a consistent result if it is employed by multiple researchers in a similar setting (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2014).

Although some scholars adopt the same terms, validity and reliability, to assess the quality of qualitative research (Mason, 1996), others have questioned the appropriateness and the applicability of these concepts to qualitative research because of the variation in the nature and the purpose of these two research approaches (Golafshani, 2003). Accordingly, Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest trustworthiness as an alternative criterion to evaluate the rigour of qualitative research. Trustworthiness encapsulates four elements: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability; each element has an equivalent criterion in quantitative research.

Credibility is equivalent to internal validity in quantitative research and it relates to the extent to which the research findings correctly reflect the reality of the participants and whether the research was conducted in a proper manner and followed rigorous procedures. Transferability is a parallel to the external validity or the generalisability and refers to the extent to which the research findings can be transferred to or compared with other contexts (Bryman, 2012). Dependability is the alternative of reliability or replicability and is concerned with keeping accurate records during all the research stages to enable others to follow them in order to judge the merit of the research (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Confirmability is the equivalent of objectivity and means that the researcher should show integrity and report the findings honestly and faithfully without allowing personal preferences to affect the research design and results (Bryman, 2012).

To achieve trustworthy data, I employed different techniques. Firstly, all the methods of data collection were piloted and amended in the light of the feedback received in order to enhance the credibility of the main study (Cohen et al., 2011). Another technique that was employed to enhance the credibility was methodological triangulation, using different methods of data

collection and multiple analytical techniques to understand the phenomenon from different standpoints (Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, I used respondent validation in the qualitative phase (Hammond and Wellington, 2013). I sent a brief outline of the final findings to all interviewees to review, add further information, correct any errors, and comment on the accuracy of the findings. Creswell (2003) notes the usefulness of member checking to make sure that the researcher's interpretation matches the intended meaning by the participants. I chose to send a brief summary of the whole research instead of sending the full interview transcripts to encourage participants to engage in the validation process as I was aware of their busy schedules. However, only three responded and indicated their agreement with the results. Moreover, I followed Yin's (2009) suggestion of providing detailed descriptions of research procedures in order to allow others to follow them. Doing so will allow readers to judge the applicability of the findings to similar contexts (Bryman, 2012). In light of this, I sought to provide detailed information about the research context (Chapter 2) so others could assess the applicability of the findings to their own context, and documented all the steps taken in order to conduct the research (current chapter) through to writing the research report that included quotations from the participants (Chapters 5 and 6).

I believe complete objectivity is impossible and I fully understand the influence of the researcher on what has been studied (Wellington, 2015). Thus, in order to establish the conformability of the research, I briefly explained my stance and used examples of the raw data, quotations from the participants, to prove that the interpretation was based on data. Moreover, triangulation was employed to minimise researcher bias.

4.5.5 Translation Issues

Translation needs to be considered if the researcher intends to publish in English a study conducted in another language (Nurjannah, Mills, Park and Usher, 2014). In this research, both data collection methods, the questionnaire and the interview schedule, were translated from English to Arabic, the native language of the research participants, and then re-translation was applied to ensure the accuracy of translation (Maneesriwongul and Dixon, 2004).

The epistemology of the researcher affects the design of the research and all the decisions taken, including those relating to translation. Nurjannah et al. (2014) claim that from the interpretive perspective, knowledge is socially constructed; therefore, the translator's point of view is affected by the social world and this is reflected in the way in which he/she interprets and translates data. Accordingly, it is better to employ a translator from the research team rather than using a professional translator. From this perspective, translation is not merely a neutral technical procedure that requires altering terms from one language to another; rather translation itself is an act of interpretation that is influenced by the social context. Even though a translation might be considered technically accurate, it may fail to capture nuances and subtle differences contained in the original source.

I align myself more with the interpretive paradigm as I believe that the social world affects the researcher and the way he/she interprets the data. Similarly, the translator's perspective will be influenced by the external world and therefore his/her identity and experience will affect the data and ultimately the analysis process. Therefore, I thought the use of professional translation was inappropriate and I undertook the translation myself because I had a thorough knowledge of the research topics and the nature of the research as I was the person who formulated the research questions, designed the research tools, interviewed the participants and transcribed

the data. Moreover, I was fully aware of the research context and the participants' culture by the virtue of my work in Saudi HE.

In the same vein, Müller (2007, p. 207) notes the difficulty of finding “full equivalence of meaning”. Thus, Su and Parham (2002) affirm that in the search for equal meanings, linguistic and cultural aspects should be taken into account. Müller (2007) concurs that one of the main difficulties faced by the translator is to transfer the cultural meanings contained in the linguistic expressions from one language to another. Accordingly, translation as the transmission of meaning becomes partial and cannot be holistic.

In light of this, data analysis was conducted in Arabic and later on, only the parts reported in the thesis, including the participants' quotes, were translated into English. I chose to preserve the original language of participants for as long as possible and undertook the translation only after completing the analysis process to minimise the loss of meaning resulting from the translation and to maintain the integrity of data (Van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, and Deeg, 2010).

4.5.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is how researchers ‘tell the story’ (Jackson, 2010); the raw data alone does not reveal the full details, because ‘messages remain hidden’ (Robson and McCartan, 2016) and need to be drawn out. Wellington (2000) considers early data analysis to be essential due to its potential impact on any subsequent data collection.

As the study employed a mixed-methods approach in order to address different but complementary research questions, both numerical and non-numerical data were produced. Therefore, the analysis was conducted in two phases and two different analytical techniques

were utilised. In the first phase, the numerical data generated from the questionnaire was analysed using SPSS 22 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) whereas the qualitative data obtained from the interviews and from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire were analysed qualitatively using thematic analysis. Quantitative data analysis helped me to identify the background of the participants and to create a broad picture about the research problem. The analysis of the qualitative data in the second phase facilitated the interpretation of the results obtained from the numerical data and a more detailed exploration of the issues. Both data sets were integrated to address the research questions. In the following sections the analysis of numerical and non-numerical data is explained.

4.5.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis may require many analytical techniques to interpret the meanings of numerical data and may not necessarily be a straightforward matter (Jackson, 2010). SPSS 22 software was used to analyse the closed questions in the questionnaire and the process involved several steps. Firstly, the use of Google Forms in administering the questionnaire allowed the responses to be collated in a Microsoft Excel file. I moved these data from Excel to SPSS once the first phase of data collection had finished. The next step was the coding which replaced the text with numerical data to be compatible with the SPSS. There was no missing data because the "required field" feature was embedded while designing the online survey.

Since the purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain a general overview of the research topic through providing the demographic information of the participants, identifying the most important tasks that HoDs carried out, the main challenges they faced as well as to indicate the effective approaches that could support them in developing their leadership skills, providing answers to such questions did not require any statistical tests to be carried out. Cohen et al.

(2011, p. 606) note that “sometimes frequencies and simple descriptive analysis may speak for themselves”. This research is one of those instances. Descriptive analysis was only performed to describe the basic characteristics of the respondents and to summarise the data by providing frequency distribution, percentages and the means. It is worth noting that in terms of HoD tasks, the means were calculated at two levels: firstly, for each task (35 tasks in total) and secondly, for each dimension of the role (the seven dimensions).

4.5.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

There is no single correct approach to qualitative data analysis (Punch, 2009); instead, general guidelines are available to the researcher determining how the analysis could be systematically conducted (Wellington, 2000). Researchers should have clear objectives in order to identify an appropriate analytical approach to be conducted on the data (Cohen et al., 2011).

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews in the second phase. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis is an appropriate analytical technique for the novice qualitative researcher because it does not require a deep knowledge of theoretical and technical issues; it should therefore be the first analytical method to be learned because it provides the researcher with the basic skills necessary to conduct other qualitative analytical methods and is flexible enough to suit various theoretical and cognitive frameworks (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

4.5.6.2.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is defined as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Although thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative research, there is no agreement on how it is done (Bryman, 2008; Ryan and Bernard, 2003). Braun and Clarke (2006) state that a theme reflects an important aspect of data

with regard to the research questions and appears repeatedly within the data. Likewise, Bryman (2012) describes themes as the categories developed by the researcher that are related to the focus of the research or its questions and are constructed from the codes identified in the interviews transcripts, which help the researcher to understand his/her data and to create the basis of the theoretical contribution of the research. There are two methods by which themes can be identified: inductive ("bottom up") or deductive ("top down") approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In the inductive method, there are no predefined categories into which data have to fit, rather, themes are derived and generated from the data themselves. In contrast, in the deductive approach, the previous relevant literature and theory provide the basis for the generation of themes.

I could argue that I did not have predefined categories in terms of the coding but I did have themes that I expected to find based on the literature. Therefore, I agree with Braun and Clarke (2006) that data cannot be coded in a vacuum and that the researcher's epistemological and theoretical understanding has an influence. Strauss and Corbin (1998) support this view by stating that no-one starts the data analysis with a completely empty mind. In fact, I concur with Tuckett (2005) in that the researcher's engagement with previous studies may draw his/her attention to sensitive and subtle attributes in data and thus contributes to the improvement of the analysis process. The structure of the PhD, with its requirement for an upgrade, forced me to engage with the literature in a way that limits the possibility of an inductive approach.

4.5.6.2.2 Phases of Thematic Analysis

In order to interpret my data, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines which provide the researcher with a step-by-step practical outline for all the phases required to conduct thematic analysis (Table 4). Although the presentation of these six stages in a table might

suggest analysis is a linear process, in practice, the process was iterative requiring the researcher to move forward but at the same time to repeatedly refer back and modify what was done in the previous stage. In response to Ryan and Bernard's (2003) suggestion of providing detailed procedures of how themes are identified, I have explicitly set out how I undertook the analysis process to enable readers to assess the validity of the analysis.

First of all, the data was prepared for analysis by producing the interview transcripts in Arabic immediately after the data collection. I listened to the recordings of the interviews several times. Although this was a time-consuming activity, it helped me to ensure the accuracy of the transcription and to make sense of the data. Data was transcribed in Arabic twice, first in handwritten notes, and then through Microsoft Word.

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table 4: Phases of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

I listened to the interview recordings and reviewed all the interview transcripts several times which increased my familiarity with the data and helped form a general understanding. This stage, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), requires the researcher to actively immerse him/herself in the data by repeating the reading process in search of meanings. Reading through data sets allows the researcher to reflect on their meaning and create a general understanding

(Creswell, 2014). In light of this, active listening and reading enabled me to ask many analytical questions that helped me understand the data, write some comments and identify some possible codes. The second step was to produce the initial codes for each interview. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003) coding refers to the process of organising data by replacing a chunk of text with a word or a category that represents their meaning. Similarly, Gibson (2010b) describes the coding technique as the process in which labels are assigned to pieces of data that describe similar ideas to give meaning to them.

I tried to do the coding manually but that was not feasible with the large amount of data. Accordingly, I decided to use qualitative data analysis software to facilitate managing my data and the coding process. Such programmes are useful for organising, classifying and retrieving data quickly (Ozkan, 2004), but I was aware that they do not think or generate the codes on behalf of the researcher. Such programmes can only aid the analysis and cannot replace the intellectual role of the researcher (Wellington, 2015). I chose to use NVivo 11 software because it is provided free to students by the University of Warwick. In order to use the programme efficiently I watched several videos on YouTube and attended three workshops offered by the University of Warwick. When I felt confident in using the programme, I imported all the transcripts as internal files with pseudonyms.

The initial codes were generated by creating nodes for the specific segment of data that related to one of the research questions. I dragged the extracted text from each interview transcript and attached it to the corresponding node. This process was continued and each time new nodes were created to represent important aspects of the data until 50 nodes were created. It is worth mentioning that I initially translated one randomly selected interview into English and manually generated the codes, then compared my coding with my supervisor's codes. Our

coding was broadly similar, which made me more confident to complete the coding process for the rest of the interviews in Arabic to minimise data loss.

In the next stage, the different codes were sorted into potential themes for analysis. This was achieved by searching for relationships, similarities and differences between the codes (Newby, 2014). Some codes were combined to create more comprehensive themes while some other codes were considered as themes in themselves. The nodes hierarchy feature in NVivo was useful in clarifying the relationships between themes (see Appendix 7). In the following step, I reviewed the themes to check the validity and compatibility of their meanings with the extracted text attached to them and to ensure that the identified themes were valid among the data sets. This process was repeated until no new themes appeared. Then, I named and refined the final themes, and the stories derived from them, to be presented in the thesis. Quotes from participants were included to indicate the prevalence of the theme and to ensure the credibility of the analysis. The analysis process consumed a lot of time, required reflection and a lot of discussion with my supervisor to ensure that the final report was presented in a logic and understandable manner.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations must be given a great deal of attention at all stages of research, from the design stage, to the way in which participants are selected and treated during the course of the research, and the consequences of their participation (Miller and Brewer, 2003). In conducting this research, I adhered to the ethical principles that govern social research by following the British Education Research Association guidelines (BERA, 2018). In order to obtain permission to conduct this study, I submitted a research ethics approval form to the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Warwick explaining the purpose of the research and the

ethical issues underpinning this research; it was subsequently approved (see Appendix 1). The next step was to gain permission from Tala University and this was achieved through contacting the Deanship of Scientific Research requesting their consent to conduct this research, which was granted. In light of the ethical principles, involvement in this study was voluntary and participants confirmed this by signing a consent form.

One of the fundamental principles of ethical research is to respect the participants' dignity and privacy (Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey, 2011). In order to do this, participants were given information about the purpose of the research and provided with a copy of the information sheet that informed them about the purpose of the study, what the research procedures were, what involvement in the research would require, any harm associated with the research, and what would happen to the data obtained. Participants were also informed that their participation was completely voluntary and they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without giving a reason and without any negative consequences (Lindsay, 2010). The researcher's contact details were also given to the participants in case they were interested in the research findings or needed more explanation.

Moreover, a copy of the information sheet was attached to the email that contained a link to the online questionnaire. At the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself, explained the research objectives, welcomed the participants' enquiries, indicated the time needed for the interview, gave the participants a copy of the information sheet, and asked them to sign the consent form and give their permission for the interviews to be recorded. Participants were assured that no one else would listen to the recording and that I would do the transcription myself. However, one of the participants refused to be recorded and I respected her right without asking for any explanation; only handwritten notes were taken during this interview.

All data gathered from both research instruments were treated in confidence. In the online questionnaire, the participants' identity was hidden as they were not asked to provide their name. Since there was only one head in each department, this information was not revealed. Instead, departments were grouped into their respective colleges and reported on that basis. Pseudonyms were used so that the real names of participants were not published in any part of the research. Moreover, the name of the university selected for this research and its location were kept anonymous and a pseudonym was given. Lindsay (2010) stresses the importance of maintaining confidentiality when storing and recording information. Accordingly, I committed to remove identifiers and use pseudonyms for all the interview records, transcripts and NVivo files to protect participants' identity and to improve data security. The data obtained were kept secure via a password and only my supervisor and I had access to them. The participants were informed that the data collected and the recordings were for research purposes only, to be used for a PhD study and later dissemination via academic conferences and journal publications.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has presented and justified the research methodology in detail. Mixed-methods sequential design including both the quantitative and the qualitative phases was explained. Data collection methods, the questionnaire in the first phase and semi-structured interviews in the second, and the analysis procedures for both numerical and qualitative data, were also discussed. Finally, the ethical considerations were highlighted. In the next chapter, the results are reported and discussed.

Chapter 5: Findings and Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from both the quantitative data generated from the questionnaire and the qualitative data from the interviews to investigate the views of female HoDs at a female-only university about their roles, their main tasks, key challenges faced and effective approaches to leadership development. The findings from both data sets will first be presented in two separate sections but will then be combined in the next chapter when they are discussed in light of the wider literature.

5.2 Quantitative Data

A total of 60 HoDs were surveyed and 36 questionnaires were completed, which represents a 60% response rate. The findings are presented in line with the order of the questionnaire sections. First, I present the demographic characteristics of the participants, followed by the main tasks of the HoDs, then the main challenges facing them and, finally, the most effective approaches to leadership development. The frequencies, percentages and mean scores were computed to provide descriptive analysis of the data.

5.2.1 Respondents' Characteristics

The majority of respondents (22; 61%) were heads of colleges of humanities with only one participant managing a community college. In terms of the academic titles (ranks) of the participants, over half of the participants were assistant professors whereas only two were professors. Table 5 summarises the respondents' characteristics.

Most participants (26, 72%) had more than 10 years HE experience. Approximately half had served in a headship post from 1 to 2 years. Eight participants (22%) had served as a HoD for

more than two years which means that their tenure had been extended. In terms of the number of the academic staff in each department, nearly half the HoDs manage more than 40 people, which gives an indication of the scale of their task.

	Number of participants	Percentage
College		
Science college	9	25
Humanities college	22	61
Medical/health college	4	11
Community college	1	3
Academic Rank		
Professor	2	6
Associate Professor	7	19
Assistant Professor	23	64
lecturer	4	11
Experience in HE		
less than a year	1	3
from 1 to 5 years	7	19
from 6 to 10 years	2	6
more than 10 years	26	72
Experience as HoD		
less than a year	11	31
from 1 to 2 years	17	47
from 3 to 4 years	3	8
more than 4 years	5	14
Number of Academic Staff		
from 1 to 10	5	14
from 11 to 20	9	25
from 21 to 30	3	8
from 31 to 40	3	8
more than 40	16	44

Table 5: Respondents' characteristics.

* The percentage may not add up exactly to 100% because of rounding.

5.2.2 HoDs Role and Responsibilities

A total of 35 tasks were grouped under seven dimensions: (a) administrative tasks, (b) resources management tasks, (c) strategic leadership tasks, (d) internal/external communication tasks, (e) personal scholarship tasks, (f) faculty affairs tasks, and (g) instructional tasks. Participants were asked to indicate the degree of the importance of each of these tasks to their role as HoDs using a 4-point Likert scale. The percentage, frequency distribution, and mean score were calculated for HoD's tasks under each dimension (see Tables 6 to 12 in Appendix 8).

The different aspects of the HoD role were combined together in Table 13 and sorted according to mean rank. The results, shown in Table 13, indicate that assigning teaching, research, and other activities to faculty members and dividing the responsibilities was seen as the most important task, as it had the highest mean score (3.94). Encouraging collegiality, cooperation, and teamwork among faculty members and conducting department meetings were both rated second, and communicating departmental needs and concerns to the dean and university administration had the third-highest mean score (3.89). Developing academic programmes and updating the curriculum was rated fourth in terms of its importance to the HoD role. Convening committees to assist in the accomplishment of department functions, seeking new opportunities to improve the department, providing clear vision, goals, guidance, and direction for the department and communicating university administration decisions, expectations, and demands to the faculty both had the fifth-highest mean score (3.83). In contrast, obtaining external funds and grants had the lowest mean score (2.56), showing its relative unimportance to the HoD role. Preparing and maintaining the departmental budget had the second-lowest mean rank. Managing department financial resources was seen as an unimportant aspect of the role and received the third lowest mean score (2.89).

Rank	HoD tasks	Mean
1	Assigning teaching, research and other activities to faculty members and dividing the responsibilities.	3.94
2	Conducting department meetings.	3.92
2	Encouraging collegiality, cooperation and team work among faculty members.	3.92
3	Communicating departmental needs and concerns to the dean and university administration.	3.89
4	Developing academic programmes and updating the curriculum.	3.86
5	Convene committees to assist in the accomplishment of department functions.	3.83
5	Seeking new opportunities to improve the department.	3.83
5	Providing clear vision, goals, guidance and direction for the department.	3.83
5	Communicating university administration decisions, expectations and demands to the faculty.	3.83
6	Enhancing department's image and reputation within and off the campus.	3.81
6	Providing productive healthy work environment through solving problems and reducing conflict.	3.81
7	Fostering the development of faculty members' talents and supporting their accessing of attendance professional development opportunities.	3.78
7	Developing long term strategic plan for the department.	3.78
8	Evaluating faculty performance and assessing their eligibility for promotion.	3.75
8	Selecting and recruiting academic staff.	3.75
9	Implementing the quality system and procedures for promoting good teaching activities proposed by university administration.	3.72
10	Organizing class schedules.	3.69
10	Encouraging faculty research and publications.	3.69
10	Preparing annual reports on department functions to the dean.	3.69
10	Motivating faculty to improve their teaching.	3.69
11	Coordinating the system of pastoral support to ensure its responsiveness to changing students' needs and aspirations.	3.61
12	Planning department activities.	3.58
12	Managing non-academic staff	3.58
13	Assuring the maintenance of accurate records and updating department database.	3.53
14	Deciding the eligibility of students to the enrolment of the academic programme provided by the department.	3.44
15	Maintaining teaching activities.	3.36
16	Conducting personal research.	3.33
17	Recognising and rewarding faculty for their excellent contribution to the department and other services to the university and community.	3.31
18	Engaging and participating in the community service activities.	3.28
19	Communicate with other external entities such as schools, government agencies and employers.	3.06
20	Establishing partnerships with business and private sector.	2.94
20	Supervising graduate students.	2.94
21	Managing department financial resources which include facilities and equipment.	2.89
22	Preparing and maintaining departmental budget.	2.67
23	Obtaining external funds and grants.	2.56

Table 13: HoDs' tasks.

It is clear from Table 13 that with the exception of resources management and personal scholarship tasks, there was consistency between the degree of importance of tasks in each

dimension and their significance to the role in general. In other words, both the first- and second-rated tasks under each dimension were also rated highly in terms of their importance to the HoD role in general. For example, assigning teaching activities to faculty members was rated as the most important administrative task of a HoD. Similarly, it was ranked as the most important aspect of the HoD role in general. Likewise, encouraging collegiality, cooperation and teamwork among faculty members was rated as the most important task regarding managing personnel and second most important task of the HoD in general. Similarly, communicating departmental needs and concerns to the dean and university administration had the highest mean score in terms of the internal/external communication tasks of the HoD and rated as the third most important aspect of the HoD role in general. Developing academic programmes and updating the curriculum was rated the most important instructional task of the HoD and ranked as the fourth most important aspect of the HoD role overall. Similarly, seeking new opportunities to improve the department and providing clear vision, goals, guidance and direction for the department both had the highest mean rank in terms of the strategic leadership tasks and ranked fifth among the important duties of the HoD overall.

With regard to the internal/external communication tasks of HoDs, communicating departmental needs to the dean and university administration and communicating university administration decisions and demands to the faculty were the only duties under this dimension that were considered quite or very important tasks (Table 9). In terms of the resource management tasks, all duties in this category came last, at the bottom of Table 13, with regard to their importance as main parts of the HoD role in general. Similarly, the personal scholarship tasks of the HoD were also rated last compared with other aspects of the HoD role. For instance, maintaining teaching activities had the highest mean score in this category, rated 15th in terms of its importance to the head role in general. Participants considered supervising graduate

students to be a relatively unimportant aspect of the role and this might be attributed to their academic rank, as most HoDs were assistant professors, or simply to the fact that some academic departments did not provide programmes for postgraduate students. These findings from the questionnaire concur with the interview data, as will be explained in Section (5.3.1).

5.2.3 Main Challenges Facing HoDs

Participants were asked about the main challenges they encountered while executing their role. They were requested to determine their level of agreement with various statements on a 5-point Likert scale. Table 14 shows that the key challenges HoDs encountered in carrying out their role in order of mean score were (1) finding time to conduct personal research, (2) balancing leadership and management functions with academic activities, (3) finding the required resources to conduct assignments, and (4) managing problematic and underperforming staff. Although nearly a third of the participants did not consider dealing with university management a key obstacle in their role, more than half identified working without administrative support from university administration as a main challenge. This will be further explained when the interview findings are discussed (Section 5.3.4.5).

Statements		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly agree		Mean	Result
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	Find time to conduct my personal research.	1	3	0	0	3	8	8	22	24	67	4.50	strongly agree
2	Balance my leadership and management functions with my academic activities.	0	0	9	25	1	3	10	28	16	44	3.92	agree
3	Find the required resources to conduct my assignments.	0	0	5	14	8	22	14	39	9	25	3.75	agree
4	Manage problematic and underperforming staff.	0	0	8	22	7	19	8	22	13	36	3.72	agree
5	Work without administrative support from university administration.	2	6	8	22	5	14	9	25	12	33	3.58	agree
6	Fulfil all the demands of the role in the time available.	0	0	10	28	6	17	11	31	9	25	3.53	agree
7	Handle the pressure and change introduced by university administration.	2	6	9	25	6	17	8	22	11	31	3.47	agree
8	Manage with insufficient power and authority.	4	11	6	17	4	11	15	42	7	19	3.42	agree
9	Implement the demands of quality imposed by university administration.	2	6	10	28	4	11	12	33	8	22	3.39	neutral
10	Establish partnership with external bodies.	3	8	9	25	6	17	10	28	8	22	3.31	neutral
11	Sustain a healthy work environment and solve conflicts.	2	6	14	39	1	3	12	33	7	19	3.22	neutral
12	Perform duties contradict my perception of my role within the organisation hierarchy.	2	6	11	31	9	25	9	25	5	14	3.11	neutral
13	Deal with budget and financial issues.	3	8	6	17	16	44	7	19	4	11	3.08	neutral
13	Understand human resources policies and employment law.	1	3	15	42	4	11	12	33	4	11	3.08	neutral
14	Deal with university management.	3	8	10	28	10	28	8	22	5	14	3.06	neutral
15	Identify my role without specific job description.	5	14	13	36	5	14	7	19	6	17	2.89	neutral
16	Work with different parties (dean, staff, and students) and each has different expectations from me.	5	14	13	36	5	14	8	22	5	14	2.86	neutral
17	Handle students' complaints.	8	22	12	33	2	6	7	19	7	19	2.81	neutral
18	Create department goals.	8	22	15	42	4	11	6	17	3	8	2.47	disagree
18	Communicate departmental needs and concerns to the dean and university administration.	9	25	16	44	2	6	3	8	6	17	2.47	disagree

Table 14: Main challenges facing HoDs.

* The percentage may not add up exactly to 100% because of rounding.

Participants were provided with an open-ended question allowing them to speak in their own words about the challenges encountered in case the statements provided were incomplete. Twenty-two open responses were received. Table 15 shows examples of the open responses, all of which merely supported and confirmed the interview data and did not reveal new insight.

Open Response
No special budget allocated for department.
Lack of administrative staff qualified to carry out administrative work.
Dealing with members and solving disputes between them.
Bureaucracy, as each action requires a series of endless approval and any initiative killed because of this bureaucracy.
The actual decisions are not in my hands but in the line managers and the top leaders hands.
Insufficient time to perform all the duties of the HoD and to follow up doing research as a requirement for promotion.
Making decisions concerning the fate of the department without reference to it.

Table 15: Examples of the open response regarding the challenges HoDs faced.

5.2.4 Leadership Development Approaches

Participants were asked about the most effective leadership development methods that contribute to enhancing their leadership capabilities. They were asked to choose from four given alternatives ranging from *not experienced* to *have a significant effect*. Table 16 shows that the following leadership development approaches were rated as the five most effective leadership development methods according to the mean score: (1) learning on the job, (2) past experience, (3) formal mentoring programmes, (4) self-learning, and (5) networks with others in similar roles within the university. Table 16 also shows that 15 of the participants had no experience of participating in formal mentoring programmes. Likewise, 11 participants indicated that they did not have the opportunity to externally network with others in a similar role outside the university. If someone has not experienced a particular development method, s/he cannot judge its effectiveness. Consequently, this column was excluded when calculating

the mean score to obtain more accurate results regarding the effectiveness of those methods that the participants experienced.

About half of the HoDs thought that bespoke leadership development programmes had a significant effect in enhancing leadership competences, whereas a third perceived that generic leadership/management programmes contributed significantly to developing their leadership capabilities. Half of the participants thought that informal mentoring that had spontaneously occurred between colleagues had a significant effect in developing the leadership capabilities of the HoD.

Development methods	Not experienced		Minimal effect		Moderate effect		Significant effect		Mean	Result
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Learning on the job.	0	0	2	6	3	8	31	86	2.80	significant effect
Past experience	4	11	1	3	6	17	25	69	2.75	significant effect
Formal mentoring programmes (organised by the university).	15	42	0	0	7	19	14	39	2.66	significant effect
Self-learning (accessing information on the internet- self guided reading).	2	6	2	6	11	31	21	58	2.55	significant effect
Networks with others in similar roles within the university.	1	3	3	8	11	31	21	58	2.51	significant effect
Informal mentoring (spontaneously occurred between colleagues).	1	3	3	8	14	38	18	50	2.42	significant effect
Participating in bespoke leadership/management development programmes.	7	19	5	14	7	19	17	47	2.41	significant effect
Participating in formal generic leadership/management programmes.	9	25	3	8	12	33	12	33	2.33	moderate effect
Attending professional conferences and seminars.	2	6	8	22	7	19	19	53	2.32	moderate effect
External networks with others in similar role.	11	31	4	11	12	33	9	25	2.20	moderate effect

Table 16: Leadership development methods.

* The percentage may not add up exactly to 100% because of rounding.

5.3 Qualitative Data

This section provides an analysis of the findings obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with 16 female HoDs at a female-only university. These results are organised and discussed in themes that correspond to the key research questions.

5.3.1 HoDs' Roles and Responsibilities

All the Interviewees mentioned four elements of their role – being a manager, a representative, a leader and an academic. They differed, however, in the amount of emphasis they gave to each element.

5.3.1.1 Management Role

All participants agreed that managing the department was one of the main roles they played. The administrative aspect of the role involved organising the educational process and supervising the workflow to ensure the smooth operation of the department. For instance, P12 described this dimension of the role as follows:

My role is running the department, receiving formal letters, and executing what they [university management] ask us to do. It involves allocating courses and other tasks to academic members, building the course schedule, and assigning assignments to the relevant administrative units within the department to make sure that the department administration operates under an integrated system.

Participants concurred that the management of daily routines dominated their roles. They were responsible for implementing university management mandates, supervising lectures, and producing the annual reports about the department functions to be submitted to the dean of the college. Other important operational assignments included managing student affairs, listening to their complaints, and solving any difficulties they might face.

HoDs were absorbed in paperwork and in responding to emails received from different constituencies within the university. P2 revealed that:

80% of my role was administrative duties: Monitoring the secretaries and responding to emails... all the time, we responded to letters and emails. Some of them requested us to nominate candidates or provide proposals. So, some of the topics need to be discussed in the department meetings.

P14 and P9 emphasised that the department council was a high priority and a lot of their time was spent preparing topics for these meetings and acting on the outcomes with the dean of the college and the university management. They added that participation in the college council meetings and in different committees at the college level was considered a crucial part of their administrative duties. However, it seems that some of these tasks are not automatically managerial duties; rather, it depends on the context. For example, if these meetings are just for conveying information, then it is largely administrative. If HoDs actually make or influence decisions, then it is more of a leadership role.

Participants complained that they did not have control over financial resources and this delayed the completion of tasks. P7 pointed out that “we do not have budget at the departmental level, even one riyal.” Participants expressed concern that the budget was held at the college level and there was a financial affairs unit in the college structure whose main role was providing the required resources. Therefore, to be awarded such resources, they had to draw attention to their needs from the relevant authority and the college dean. However, they revealed that this procedure takes a long time and their needs might not be met. This was particularly challenging in applied science and medical colleges where there was a continuous need to purchase equipment and supplies. The HoD in one such department contended that it would be better if the department controlled its own budgets.

5.3.1.2 Representation Role

Participants also described their role in terms of being the interface between the department and the university administration. Therefore, an important element of their role was representing the needs, interests, and requirements of the staff and students in the department to the dean and senior management, and to communicate the vision, expectations, and demands of the university management to the department's staff and students. As members of the college council, HoDs were responsible for allowing the voices of department members to be heard at the institutional level, endorsing the views of their colleagues and having to fight for them in front of senior managers who already hold the upper-hand. P14 explained this further:

During the college council meetings, you can clearly see the sense of belonging that every HoD shows to a large extent. They desperately defend their department's rights and demands.

Participants agreed that they had direct contact with the dean of the college but not with the senior administration, and that the college dean communicated with the university management on their behalf.

In their role as representatives of the department, the HoDs tried to enhance the image of their department both on and off the campus. They did so through participation in different competitions on behalf the university and through sharing departmental news and their students' successes and achievements. P13 pointed out that:

We regularly organise some events and conduct seminars to show the outcomes of our courses. We invite the dean of the college and all the university community to attend these events and the accompanying exhibition. I also consider that our role is representing the university in external competitions. Our booth in the Saudi Arabia *Colour Forum* gained effective feedback...we recently participated in the community research competition and our students received many certificates.

Participants concurred that departments were not allowed to communicate with external entities individually. Although they might utilise their informal networks to facilitate certain tasks, they had to gain the university administration's approval. For instance, P6 revealed that

she sometimes needed to communicate with external employers and relied on her social relations within the labour market to search for job opportunities and field placements for students. Likewise, P4 added that she used her personal networks to persuade some colleagues to join the department as academic members or to contact potential visiting professors. However, she had to consult with the department council and obtain the dean's and the university management's approval to actually recruit them.

5.3.1.3 Leadership Role

Leading the department to achieve its objectives in a manner that is consistent with the university's vision and mission was another essential aspect of the HoD role. Participants described their role in terms of leading the department to implement the university's vision and by influencing others to accept changes. For instance, P10 emphasised that the university was continuing to pursue academic accreditation and that this affected her role. Specifically, she explained her leadership role during times of transition:

There has been transition and tremendous change in Saudi HE, particularly as a result of introducing concepts around quality and universities striving towards obtaining academic accreditation. I think the strategic leadership role is how the HoD can transform her department from what it was; how to deal with the problem of non-acceptance of change; how she can change the direction of the boat and alter staff thinking to accept change and accept quality requirements to achieve academic accreditation. However, this cannot be achieved without higher level leadership support.

Likewise, P4 said that this situation had put more pressure on the academic departments and their heads to pay more attention to quality issues and its requirements, to be more involved in monitoring performance, and to check that the courses provided were compatible with the standards of the quality assurance.

Five participants highlighted that the leadership dimension of the role included creating and developing a strategic plan to improve the department. P3 explained how she achieved that:

By studying the department's current status, I can identify the strengths to be reinforced as well as any weaknesses to be overcome. Through this process, I can create clear goals and produce a plan for improvement.

Likewise, P15 insisted that her role to guide the department to achieve its targets should be connected with the university-wide missions and orientations. She added that she was not only involved in developing the department's long-term plans but also supervising the execution of such plans and then evaluating the outcomes.

Five participants identified developing the academic programmes, updating courses, and seeking any opportunity to improve the department as important leadership tasks. However, they varied in how much involvement they had in such tasks. For instance, some participated with other academic staff as members in the academic programmes committee, whose main duty was developing plans and curricula, whereas others only supervised these committees to ensure this was done. P7 expressed this role:

I check our courses to ensure that they align with recent developments. We work to introduce new subjects to respond to students' needs. We update the course descriptions that we have used for many years, particularly our speciality, which requires keeping up to date with the latest technologies.

P9 spoke about how she wants to be a founder for any matter that will benefit her unit and its members, such as her proposal to open postgraduate programmes in the department because she had qualified academic staff members who were able to supervise students who would enrol in such courses.

Managing academic members was another important element of the HoD role. For example, P16 mentioned that resolving conflicts between academic staff and sustaining a healthful work environment fell within her responsibilities. She stated that:

My role includes managing people and solving any crises and conflicts they might encounter. I have to maintain a friendly relationship and use teamwork rather than domination and authority.

Ten participants described their key role as assisting people to fulfil their potential and providing the time and the required resources. P2 described her role as a developer of her staff as follows:

I have a leadership role towards encouraging academic members to improve themselves and to implement quality standards in teachings. I play an important role in supporting them in using e-learning and inspiring them to write books and disseminate research.

Likewise, P15 reported that empowering others was an essential leadership responsibility that she had. She added that:

My role involves utilising my knowledge of my members to select the right person in the right place; to enable staff members to be more innovative; to provide them with the time and the support needed; to evaluate their work; and to provide them with effective feedback.

Similarly, P3, P8, and P9 spoke about their role in fostering the development of staff talents by facilitating their access to professional development opportunities. P5 added that an important component of her leadership role was paying attention to any shortage in the staff's performance and rewarding outstanding performance, and she explained how that left a positive impact and spread a culture of excellence.

5.3.1.4 Academic Role

Interviewees defined their academic role in terms of preserving their teaching activities and supervising students but made no mention of their own research; this might be because 12 of them were lower-ranking academics (assistant professors). This dimension of the role necessitates keeping up to date with new knowledge in the field and maintaining personal professional development. P7 mentioned the importance of this aspect of her role:

Could you imagine a doctor who leaves his/her clinic! Likewise, the HoD has to teach ... so as not to lag behind in the field or lose teaching skills.

Five interviewees agreed that they loved teaching. They saw it as a way to escape from the excessive administration and the most enjoyable aspect of the role.

Although the university regulations set the teaching load of the HoD to a minimum of 3 hours, some HoDs taught more than others. There seem to be many factors contributing to this variation, such as the nature of the discipline, the nature of the course, the number of teaching hours allocated for each module and the number of academic staff in each department. For instance, P4, who worked in an applied college said that she was overloaded. She taught 18 hours a week, as well as being the course director in one of these courses. This was a result of the long-term shortage of teaching staff in her specialist area because it was hard to recruit to that subject.

Only one participant, P9, mentioned carrying out her own personal research activities. P9 was the HoD of a support unit that only provided postgraduate programmes, so it is possible that she had more free time than others to conduct her research. The fact that she was an associate professor heading a postgraduate department might also have increased the importance of research. Other interviewees might consider this aspect a part of their role as academics and not a main component of their headship role; notably, the HoD job description did not mention this duty, even though it set the expected teaching load. Another interpretation might be that in Saudi HEIs, although research is expected from staff and encouraged, it is not taken seriously or monitored. Thus, it tends to be conducted by those who are looking for promotion. Moreover, Tala University is considered a teaching institution according to Mazi and Altbach's (2013) classification and it has been only recently established. Therefore, there might be a lack of research centres on the campus. This in turn affects the scholarship activities of the participants, especially in medicine and natural sciences. P16 reported that:

There is a lack of facilities... if there were a research laboratory on the campus, I could exploit the free hours to spend them there.

Despite this, participants agreed that they did not have the time to perform such a task when they spoke about the main challenges in the role (Section 5.3.4.1).

5.3.2 Job Description

Eleven interviewees confirmed they had received a formal job description, whereas five said they had not. Participants agreed that having a formal job description was important because it increased their understanding of their role and the scope of their responsibilities. P2 described the job description as “the map that gives you a clear picture about your role and duties.”

Likewise, P3 said:

Having a job description as a regulatory framework is significant . . . to be educated about your rights and obligations and to recognise your specific tasks. This does not mean having a fixed job description that cannot be modified, added to, or some of its duties delegated to others.

Another benefit of having such a job description was highlighted by P12: “At least when you recognise your tasks, you can organise your priorities — which tasks to carry out yourself and which duties to delegate to others”. P4 concurred with P12, adding that sometimes when there is no job description, the person might fall short in doing important tasks at the expense of executing less important duties.

P10 highlighted another advantage of having a job description, saying:

The existence of a job description will help in preventing role conflicts...sometimes the person might perform tasks that are not part of her duties or duck some of her responsibilities because of a lack of awareness of the role.

Similarly, P2 asserted that having a job description was very important and felt that she carried out some duties assigned to other administrators within the department because she had not received such a description.

Despite the importance of having a formal job description, interviewees criticised the current one. They drew attention to the university’s expansion, the increase in the number of students, and the overwhelming demands for quality and development, making the existing job description out-dated. For instance, P1 revealed:

All the time we are being asked to do new tasks that are not found in the current job description. They are assigned to us by the university rector. So, despite having a conception of the role, new functions are added to the list and to your reign of responsibilities.

P3 dealt with this situation positively and revealed that she found herself performing certain tasks that were not included in the job description but that this was the nature of the work. However, this did not mean exceeding her authority or, as she called it, “bypassing the red lines.” She explained the reason for carrying out these duties was that she valued cooperation and teamwork. It seems that her leadership role was reflected here through her initiative in doing what would benefit her department, irrespective of whether or not it was included on the list. However, this could not be confirmed because none of the staff in her department were interviewed.

Three interviewees complained that the current job description was unclear, too general and did not take account of disciplinary differences. P4, who is a HoD in the medicine college added, “I think it needs some modification to be commensurate with the nature of our college and our demands.” Thus, it seems that the responsibilities of HoDs might differ according to their discipline and their department size. However, having different job descriptions for the different departments might be impractical.

Participants were asked to determine the extent to which their tasks corresponded to those included in the job description. Almost all agreed that they did all of the things on the list and more besides. For instance, P10 revealed that she might need to act like a psychologist to solve staff and student problems. Only one interviewee highlighted the contradiction regarding financial issues: P16 pointed out that she could not manage financial resources because there was no budget allocated to the department even though it was highlighted in the job description.

She was a head in a lab-based department, where a great deal of equipment and materials needed to be purchased on a daily basis, and this might explain why she picked this issue.

Two interviewees highlighted the importance of distinguishing between the reality and the expectation when writing the job description. They felt dissatisfied because they were unable to perform some of their tasks as they had hoped. P8 complained that although the job description pointed out that the HoD has to be the departmental developer, she could not give this aspect its due and was not able to allocate more time for such issues. This was attributed to the lack of time to fulfil all the demands of the role.

On the other hand, only one participant thought that the existence of a formal job description was not sufficient. She explained that the HoD must have a high sense of responsibility and should not rely on a list of tasks to follow or, as she described it, “words on paper . . . one, two, three.” She added that sometimes one might be asked to deal with problems that require a fast response, and this does not mean the person has to check whether this task is included on the list. She thought the HoD had to be proactive and depend on his/her expertise to identify his/her tasks and priorities.

5.3.3 Time-Consuming Activities

Interviewees were asked to identify the three most time-consuming tasks. There was a consensus that HoDs were engrossed in responding to urgent e-mails and formal letters coming from university central management and other constituents. This was followed by preparing for quality assurance issues and then participation in meetings. Interviewees were consistent in stating that bureaucracy and the need to respond rapidly to several letters asking for information or statistics by different constituents were time-consuming P13 reported:

We receive a huge number of e-mails every day enquiring about the number of academic staff in the department, their specialisations, their CVs, and publications. Although this information is available in staff files, our database, and the deanship of faculty affairs, we are requested to give this information. Such task takes up most of our time, which could be devoted to performing duties that are more important.

Likewise, P5 explained that ongoing, incoming letters to the department require time to answer and more time to go through long procedures until reaching the requesting unit. However, she added that the response to certain letters might be returned for modification and would then pass through the same procedures again, and this consumes a lot of time and effort. Although respondents concurred that responding to daily e-mails took up most of their time, this was not necessarily seen as an important task; rather, respondents considered it a low level administrative duty.

Five participants revealed that preparing for quality assurance demands was a time-consuming task. This was evident in P14's response:

We are a new, emerging university seeking to obtain academic accreditation, and the quality demands are very high. This subject requires time to sustain communication up and down . . . to encourage faculty members to execute quality in their courses and to provide evidence demonstrating the implementation.

Similarly, P6 added that one needs time to understand the quality issues, become familiar with the standards of the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA), modify course descriptions in light of the requirements of the Commission, and encourage departmental members to commit to these standards.

Four interviewees identified preparing and conducting department council meetings and attending college council meetings as activities that took up most of their time. In addition to department and college meetings, P7 complained that the HoD is involved in several unhelpful meetings. She thought that one weekly meeting was enough, instead of conducting worthless and unproductive meetings, and suggested informing heads about new instructions

electronically. It is relevant to mention that my interview with her was postponed because she had an unexpected meeting.

There were other tasks that also took up a lot of HoDs' time, although not on a daily basis. For example, three interviewees spoke about spending a lot of time designing course timetables and distributing work. Likewise, three others mentioned managing personnel, listening to staff demands, and answering enquiries as tasks that consumed a lot of time. Only P7, the head of a support unit that serviced postgraduate students, spoke about developing courses, restructuring study plans, and working on a new initiative as activities that consumed her time; P7 may have been able to find time for course development because she leads a small department, which may generate less paperwork and/or fewer demands compared to larger departments.

Thus, it appears that most of the time-consuming activities for the HoDs were associated with different dimensions of the managerial, leadership, and representation aspects, whereas they were rarely linked with the academic aspect of the role. However, some of these tasks might be considered low-level administrative tasks that could be done by others, as they did not require a HoD's expertise.

5.3.4 Role Challenges

Interviewees encountered several challenges in carrying out their role. These challenges were grouped under six themes: balancing academic and management tasks, work overload, lack of power and authority, managing people, unqualified administrative staff, and being in the middle, each of which will be discussed in the following section.

5.3.4.1 Balancing Academic and Management Tasks

The majority of participants (11 in total) referred to the difficulty of being both an academic and an administrator at the same time. They spoke about the volume of administrative tasks executed on a daily basis and how that had a negative influence on their teaching and research activities. P6 believed that teaching along with administrative duties was a heavy burden, and she found it difficult to balance them all, although she only taught one course. She opined that:

You have to be present all day at the office, check emails and formal letters, and supervise everything in the department. When I spent time in my lectures and returned back to my office, I was distracted.

Although university regulations require departmental heads to teach only three hours, many felt under pressure, particularly those who taught more than the three-hour minimum. The time spent in lectures might interrupt some administrative duties, particularly those needing urgent completion. Moreover, carrying out teaching assignments in an effective way necessitates dedicating more time to prepare the lessons, course syllabi, materials, examinations and other assessment methods, which in turn requires extra work and effort. That is why P2 felt that she did not give the academic and administrative functions their due. To cope, she said:

I stop any administrative tasks on the lecture day. I come early but do not open my computer or even check my emails just to concentrate on my teaching.

This HoD chose to be a poor manager during her lecture day and preferred to free her time to conduct more academic tasks, such as creating new activities to be used in her lectures, enhancing her teaching approach and fulfilling her responsibilities towards her students. This might help her to become more satisfied about the academic aspect of her role.

Respondents also illustrated that not only did their teaching assignments suffer, but so did their research activities because conducting research requires a high level of concentration and designation of more time that cannot be offered with all the administrative obligations. They

frequently complained that the administrative duties consume a lot of their time and effort, leaving little to carry out their research. P8 noted: “I organised my research plans before starting my role as HoD, but they remain unfinished”. Similarly, P3 reported that:

Although I am nearly finished with a research project supervised by al Jazirah research chair, I feel that my performance in doing research is not like my performance would be if I became free from the managerial duties.

On the other hand, there were some cases of success in balancing these two aspects of the role. Three respondents, two of them leading a support unit and one heading a small department indicated that the administrative duties were not a barrier for carrying out their academic tasks. This might be dependent upon the HoD’s leadership style and personal attributes, such as their time-management skills. According to P1, the HoD cannot be absorbed in the managerial aspect to the extent that it impacts negatively on the academic dimension of the role. P7 concurred saying personality and internal motivation were both key factors in achieving balance between administrative and academic duties.

HoDs identified a range of coping strategies to reduce role overload. For instance, delegating some tasks to others within the department was a successful mechanism that P10 implemented. Similarly, P6 spoke about ways to reduce her administrative load:

You must distribute some tasks to the academic staff, as they can help you in performing whatever tasks you ask them to do. I delegate many assignments related to student affairs to my deputy head. She searches for information and studies the cases, but I am the person who makes the decision after ensuring its validity and that it follows the law and regulation.

Generally speaking, the difficulty in balancing the managerial and academic dimensions of the headship post has an impact on the HoDs’ academic identity. As HoDs see themselves, first and foremost, as academic members, it can be painful that the management aspect of the role overpowers the academic duties. This was clearly evidenced in P11’s response:

My teaching was sacrificed in favour of administrative tasks. My performance in teaching decreased compared with my colleagues who were only concerned about their lectures and the preparation of their lessons. Their minds were free and focussed on teaching and research, so they were being creative ... I was always busy and did not have time to prepare my lessons or conduct my personal research.

P11 valued teaching and research as her first priority and sought to keep up-to-date with the new debates in her field and current teaching strategies. However, she complained that she did not have space to do this while supervising a large department, which in turn affected her identity as a lecturer and researcher and reduced her job satisfaction.

It is worth remembering that some respondents were in their first year of headship and that many administrative duties were new to them. Interestingly, the pressure that came from holding the dual role led two participants to suggest HoDs should be exempt from teaching.

For instance, P11 stated:

I wish that the university did not assign any teaching hours to the HoD, so she can devote all her time to providing the appropriate environment for her colleagues to be creative in their teaching.

Overall, the ability to balance the administrative and the academic tasks varied among the respondents in this study. In most cases, HoDs found it difficult to perform the two aspects of the role. However, department size (in terms of the number of academic staff, administrative staff and students) and the type of programmes provided in each department affected how far HoDs felt pressure and were able to achieve balance between the academic and the managerial sides of the role. This was clearly illustrated by P9:

I do not face the same challenges as the HoDs in the huge departments. The number of academic staff in my department is very small compared with other departments, which have more than 60 staff. We do not provide undergraduate or postgraduate programmes. We do not even have our own students. We only teach an optional course for students in different departments.

However, there seem to be coping strategies that contribute to reducing the pressure and achieving some kind of balance between the academic and managerial roles, such as delegating and effective time management.

5.3.4.2 Work Overload

Almost all the interviewees complained that it was impossible to fit all the tasks required into the official working day. This led them to complete many assignments at home. This was depicted in P16's response:

You cannot finish issues related to building the schedules, academic accreditation and quality during the working hours, so you are forced to stay up till midnight to complete them.

Likewise, P13 added that her office was open all the time to receive students' complaints and academic staff demands, so she could not find time to do her business without interruption, which led to her completing tasks at home.

Several respondents spoke about the long working hours that were not even sufficient to fulfil all their duties, which in turn forced them to work day and night and during the holidays. This was clearly illustrated by P8:

I worked eight hours every day at my office and two extra hours at home... It is a continuous job. You have to work day and night and on the weekends. There is no summer holiday or Eid holiday.

Being ultimately responsible for everything within the department resulted in endless work, as P15 explained:

You have to supervise students, staff and labs. You have to check the equipment to make sure it works. If there is something broken or out of order, you have to contact maintenance. You are responsible for providing the required resources, and you must be involved in development... I wish my day could be 28 hours, not 24.

However, it seems that some HoDs unwittingly increase their workload by failing to delegate tasks. This was clearly shown in P11's response:

I checked whether they [secretaries] did the job by opening the department email to ensure that they sent the work to the unit requesting it and to know when it was sent. I did not feel relief until I had checked that everything was OK.

This suggests that HoDs do not trust those to whom a task has been delegated due to the lack of professional skills as will be discussed in Section 5.3.4.5. The culture of the organisation (i.e. the lack of understanding and acceptance of committing mistakes by senior leaders) might force HoDs to exercise strict control.

This work overload was having a huge impact on the HoD's personal and domestic life. Ten respondents said their vast responsibilities and the long working hours affected their family life. P14 reported that:

The HoD is a researcher, a wife, a mother and a governess. When my work extends beyond the working hours, it will influence my kids, my marriage and even my social relationships. I used to spend four hours daily with my children; this now is being reduced to an hour and a half to two hours.

It seems that those who complain most about the impact of the headship post on their domestic life might be those who have young children. Thus, they face more pressure to finish their job early or during the working time to free their time afterwards to engage in other commitments and to spend more time with their family. This was evident in P15's response:

The working hours expand, and meetings outside the department last for many hours. They might go on until the afternoon or be held outside the official working hours, and you know, I am a woman who has a family and kids so I have a lot of other commitments. I am supposed to be free to spend the rest of the day with my kids.

Only one respondent, P13, a non-Saudi HoD, identified that the absence of supportive relatives and a housekeeper contributed to the pressure on her. She explained:

I returned home with loads of duties that had to be handled by the next morning. If I was in my country, I could manage to finish them all because my mum would take care of my kids so I would be free to do the work.

There was also evidence that the workload not only impacted the HoDs' family life but also indirectly affected their personal life. The respondents explained how their work consumed their time to the extent that they were unable to meet their basic needs. This was clearly articulated by P8:

I do not have time for my personal life. I do not have time to go shopping. If there is nobody to buy me some new clothes, I will wear what I have.

It appears that the workload that HoDs experience not only consumes their family life and leisure time but also impacts their health. Several respondents mentioned being distracted, tired and exhausted all the time, as P14 said:

I could not sleep well at night because I was busy thinking all night of what I should do the next morning. So I had to take Panadol at night to be able to sleep.

To sum up, the workload that HoDs experience has a negative impact on their personal and family life. However, they vary in the amount of pressure they experience. This could be linked to differences in the way the HoDs organise their priorities: whether they are able to prioritize family more than work or vice versa. This in turn can be linked to cultural issues, insofar as Arab Muslim communities tend to place high priority on family. The period during their career trajectory in which HoDs are appointed and the availability of support from the extended family might also play a part in determining the level of pressure felt.

5.3.4.3 Lack of Power and Authority

12 of the 16 interviewees spoke about how little power they have, which prevented them from serving their department to the fullest extent. Therefore, they have to refer to a higher administrative level and pass through a large hierarchy to take many decisions, which delays them in conducting tasks. This was clearly evident in P10's response:

I expected that the HoD could decide the extent to which the department needs new academic members and would be able to hire them. However, there are other big policies that hinder the HoD from carrying out her duties as smoothly as expected.

Working in a centralised system with a rigid organisational structure is difficult because HoDs will require senior administrative approval. As P15 said:

You have to refer to the dean of the college even for the simplest things, such as booking the classrooms, using the advertisement board, and allocating special storage for the department.

Likewise, P3 said that having to manage with so little power made it hard to implement many ideas that might serve the department and encourage an outstanding performance culture.

Similarly, P1 described her role as management with little power:

It is not allowed to establish partnerships with external bodies. The department might provide proposals or initiatives to build such partnerships but I cannot sign the contract. Academic staff members cannot provide consultancy services to the society until we [the department] obtain university management approval.

P6 claimed that although the HoD has to follow the rules and regulations, she should be given a degree of autonomy to manage the human resources within the department without needing to consult the department council in every matter and that she should be delegated on their behalf to take certain decisions.

Interestingly, in reference to the lack of power, two participants — P12 and P9 — described their role as being implementers rather than decision makers. Thus, they must implement the orders dictated by the university management, as P9 explained:

Any issue has to be discussed at the department board meetings to obtain its members' views, perceptions, and votes on the topics under study. Thus, the HoD's role is to execute what the university management asked her to do and to ensure following the rules and regulation . . . decisions will be made by the supreme authority [university management] . . . We have little power at the college and department levels. We are executive managers, not strategic leaders.

This bureaucratic structure seems to delay many tasks. As P15 explained:

I could do quite a lot if more power were delegated to me, instead of having to wait for someone to say yes or no to me.

Similarly, P10 claimed that there has to be space for the HoD to take decisions and to be accountable for them, rather than implementing what others have asked her to do. She added:

It is too difficult when the leadership at a higher level is centralised and you have to refer to it in everything. . . they must trust the HoD even when she makes mistakes. Everybody can make mistakes. Understand their mistakes, rather than punishing them.

It appears that senior leadership lack trust in HoDs and so they are delegated fewer responsibilities and assigned limited power. This can be linked to the wider culture and the norms and traditions within Saudi society, as the kingdom has a centralised government system; therefore, all society members tend to adhere to the rules and accept unequal distributions of power which will be further explained in Section (6.5.3).

5.3.4.4 Managing People

Almost all of the interviewees (14 in total) identified interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution as their main challenges. Thus, HoDs have to deal with different personalities and accommodate them all, despite variations in age, background, and academic rank. P10 explicitly expressed this:

Management is not only about applying rules and regulations but also about dealing with different personalities. There are stubborn and rebellious personalities, so how can they be accommodated to understand you and implement what you have asked them to do? Sometimes, you deal with someone who is bigger than you or has a higher degree—you have to manage them all. So, I think HoDs have to be good readers of psychology and sociology to become able to manage people.

P12 asserted that this was challenging, particularly when the head has a lower academic rank than other colleagues within the department. She experienced this personally by being an assistant professor who managed professor and associate professor colleagues. She spoke about

how it was difficult to persuade well-established colleagues to do some tasks. P16 clearly supported this point of view:

I have very long experience in the university, so all faculty members respect these differences in age and experience, which in turn facilitates my job.

The changing culture of the university and its attempt to obtain academic accreditation contributes to this difficulty. As P1 pointed out:

At times, the faculty member resists some initiatives coming from the university administration. So, to persuade colleagues to accept change, I always adopt a friendly style, but you have to face people who always resist, cause problems, or are against change.

P8 and P9 discussed how academic staff were primarily focused on their teaching and research assignments, and with this new orientation in mind, they were being asked to respond to quality-related matter. Therefore, academic staff were reluctant to carry out extra administrative assignments and participate in departmental committees, as this required extra work and effort and increased their workloads, which were already full of teaching and research activities. P2 added that some academic staff were more conscientious, accepted direct guidance, and performed tasks the first time they were asked to, whereas others resisted and created problems.

Participants mentioned that resolving disputes that arose among staff was a challenging aspect of their role, particularly when there was disagreement between the perceptions of academic staff regarding the distribution of the course schedule, whether to teach in the morning or afternoon, or in taking study leave. In addition, the need to treat people with fairness and avoid favouritism made managing people difficult, particularly for those who lead large departments.

As P11 explained:

I have 122 academic staff members, and each has different circumstances. So, I have to be aware of that, look after them all, and be fair with them.

The unpredictable circumstances that people might undergo is another cause of challenges when managing people. As P2 said:

Managing people is all about unpredictability. Sometimes, you have to offset the teacher's absence as a result of a birth or a hospital stay. Sometimes, I cover this shortage by involving myself in teaching more lectures.

The difficulty of managing people might be compounded by the temporary nature of head posts. In the Saudi HE system, the HoD is appointed to serve in the post for two years and can be renewed for an extra two years, and the post is rotated. Thus, when the duration of the headship ends, a majority of HoDs return as academic peers, which is problematic. P15 stated:

How can someone execute a leadership role and overcome being overly empathetic, or think more objectively and rationally without losing anyone at the same time? Sometimes, some academic staff members are surprised and ask why I behaved like I did. I try to implement the law and regulations irrespective of who I am or who they are.

Many participants' responses depicted this fear of peer relationships getting worse. As P11 reported: "My words now are being counted. I talk with my colleagues in a completely different way than I did a month and a half ago". P7 concurred with this and believed that obtaining departmental members' approval and applying the rules without losing anyone was challenging. Similarly, P1 pointed out that many conflicts occur as the nature of the relationship changes:

Your relationship with them as a manager differs from a colleague relationship, which tends to be friendlier. Sometimes, I need to clash with them because I have commands and they have to execute them, so they might resist any change.

It seems that the academic leader needs some characteristics and abilities to solve conflicts that arise between colleagues and overcome staff resistance. P13 stated:

It is a hard job that requires patience, flexibility, and the capacity to be involved in different discussions. Thus, leaders have to be wise enough to convince academic members to execute tasks because there is no one else to do it and at the same time to make them satisfied—this is the difficult equation.

Although almost all of the respondents agreed on the difficulty of managing people, they gave different reasons for this problem, identifying factors such as variation in personality types, having low academic status compared with colleagues in the department, staff resistance to innovation, unpredictable circumstances, and the temporary nature of the headship post and its expected impact on relationships with peers.

5.3.4.5 Unqualified Administrative Staff

Half of the participants identified the lack of qualified secretaries as being challenging and contributing to their workload. The volume of the administrative tasks on a daily basis is unpredictable and requires a fast response. Therefore, HoDs need administrative staff members who are capable of helping them carry out these duties to a high standard. Half of the participants claimed that administrative staff members lacked the necessary skills, notably in using the computer, writing reports, organising files, and English language proficiency. As P13 said:

Sometimes, I would write a speech by hand and ask them to rewrite it on the computer. However, I was surprised to find many mistakes after the revision . . . I have four secretaries but I prefer to have one instead who studied secretarial duties and knows how to draft a speech, read emails, understand them, and deal with them. So, if the required task is routine, she can respond quickly without informing me.

The participants indicated that the problem was not in the shortage of administrative staff but in the quality of their performance, as they lack basic skills, leading the HoDs to execute tasks on their behalf. These tasks take time that should be used for carrying out more important strategic assignments. For instance, P3 said that although she has 10 administrative staff in her department, only four have mastered working on the computer. Likewise, P14 complained that administrative staff lack certain skills. Therefore, she was forced to check their tasks to ensure that they met the required expectations or criteria required. She said:

I always check the department emails after the secretaries to ensure that the tasks required were sent to the requesting units. They were inaccurate in performing the work.

The inability of the administrative staff to perform routine administrative tasks might force HoDs to do these low-level tasks themselves to get the job done, leading to HoDs being overloaded. P2 supported this view and added:

The lack of highly skilled human resources [the secretary] delays and disrupts work. So, I have to do the job to make sure that it shows up as expected.

This was evident during the interview with her. She was in the secretary's office responding to a call that came into the department and helping the secretary write the minutes of a meeting.

Frequent absences were another problem with the administrative staff. Four respondents indicated that their administrative staff lacked the commitment to attend work on a daily basis due to their personal circumstances and family burdens. For instance, P16 said absences happened a lot and articulated:

There are no secretaries at the office today. One is taking a vacation, and another sent me an email informing me she was tired.

P11 and P14 mentioned that many secretaries were students enrolled in different programmes at the university, so they tended to be absent during the examination period and the time before tests for preparation, which in turn affected their tasks and disabled much of the department's business. The feeling of having less flexible working hours and low status compared with academic staff colleagues within the department might have led many administrative staff members to complete their studies in order to become academic staff and gain similar financial privileges which in turn, explains the high absence level.

The inadequate secretarial support indicates a need for more investment and training so that the administrative staff are better able to serve their academic department. P8 argued that appointments to secretarial posts in the university should follow strict standards and criteria

rather than rely on nepotism or “wasta” which means "a social network of interpersonal connections, rooted in family and kinship ties" (Abalkhail and Allan, 2016, p. 162). She explained it as follows:

They have to be qualified for the secretarial level and have training in secretarial issues, human relations, and office management instead of using "wasta" as a means of appointment.

5.3.4.6 Being in the Middle

Thirteen interviewees identified that being the interface between the university administration and the department members was challenging. The need to represent the demands and interests of the department to a higher administrative level and to convey the university management’s vision to the department was a major concern, which P2 described as being “squeezed between two pressures “. This direct contact with a wide range of stakeholders; the need to manage up and down as well as tackle conflicting demands led P12 to describe her role as follows:

It is the worst administrative position within the university structure. You deal with academic and administrative staff and have direct communication with large and broad audiences. You might deal with 1,500 students, 100 academic staff, and 15 administrative staff directly, and each has different needs. You are holding the most responsibility toward achieving tasks in front of senior management, and this is the hardest bit. This is not the case at the deanship post, I think.

The university is striving toward academic accreditation and the rapid shift to implement new technologies seems to be increasing the pressure, not only on the HoDs but also on every member within the university. However, HoDs tend to experience more pressure because they are responsible for implementing the university’s initiatives and mission as well as persuading their members to do so. As P2 said:

We are in the time when the university is trying to obtain academic accreditation. However, some academic staff lack an understanding of the quality requirements. So, they might resist certain tasks because they have a full teaching load and the quality requirements will increase their workload. They have to be more active in using e-learning, and some may lack the experience and skills.

Arguably the new technologies that academic staff are being asked to adopt as one of the quality requirement will make them very busy at least in the short term when they need to undergo training and adapt their usual pedagogies. This also seems to cause challenges for the staff and their HoDs.

Managing conflicting demands seems to have contributed to making one HoD, P2, feel isolated, as she was unable to persuade her colleagues to execute a senior management proposal. She reflected:

I failed to convince academic staff to do certain tasks, so I took full responsibility for achieving them. When the university's senior management asked the faculty members to hand out the course report in English, the faculty members resisted strongly. I was forced to prepare the course reports alone, as the staff claimed that translation was not one of their tasks.

Likewise, P11 felt sorry because she was unable to achieve the demands and expectations of some staff members in her department because they conflicted with the senior management's orientations. Although she was fighting with all her might for the department's and staff members' rights and talked on their behalf in the college board, her wishes were sometimes not met because the senior management had different views.

HoDs have to implement the demands of the senior management and convince their colleagues to follow the university management orientation, even when they conflict with the department's views. This was clear in P12's response:

We do not have a choice — the desires of the senior management have to be executed. When the university administration asked the department to prepare the course plans within a period of three weeks, the academic staff viewed this as an impossible task, particularly since we were near the end of the term and it was the examination period. However, we persuaded them and produced the course plan.

Ultimately, the departments have to function under the university umbrella to flourish and succeed. As P4 articulated:

The dean of the college and the university administrators look inside and outside, so they might see some things that we are not aware of. So, we have to respect their viewpoints. We as departments are linked with the university, so they know whether things concur with the university's vision and system or not as they are exposed to all other units in the university and are more aware of the university's laws and regulations.

Similarly, P1 discussed how departments cannot oppose the university management's decisions. Although it is usual to have different points of view, the university orientation has to be adopted because departments cannot have a different orientation and have to work under the university framework. Therefore, managing in the middle means that the HoD must be involved in many discussions and listen to different points of view. They have to implement university legitimation without losing the staff in their department, as their success will rely on getting their staff's support and cooperation. Therefore, dealing with such situations without losing any party is challenging and necessitates some attributes in the HoD. As P10 stated:

The difference between the manager and the leader will appear in their ability to compromise on matters and convince both parties to waive and at the same time maintain their satisfaction. I think HoDs have to have certain features to be able to deal with such cases, such as interpersonal skills.

5.3.5 Leadership Development Approaches

Interviewees identified several ways they can develop their leadership competences. These methods were grouped under six themes: past experience, networking and consultation, on-the-job learning, self-directed learning, mentoring, and formal leadership training programmes. Each of these will be discussed in the following section.

5.3.5.1 Past Experience

Ten participants spoke about how their previous HE experience assisted them in developing their leadership skills. All highlighted that progression up the career ladder, involvement in different committees, and prior management positions were helpful in enhancing their leadership competences. Three participants described how their experience as academic staff

facilitated understanding of the university system and regulations, and absorption of the organisation culture, which in turn helped them to perform well in their headship roles. P14 pointed out that participation as an academic member in department council meetings was helpful in acquiring the necessary skills for her headship role and increasing her awareness of what was expected of the HoD. She said:

I think attending the department board assisted me to improve certain competencies: information delivery, proper guidance, decision making, and negotiation skills. Although these characteristics could be considered personal attributes, they can be cultivated and refined through participation in department meetings.

Likewise, P4, who had wide experience working at different national and international HEIs for more than 38 years, said she had learned aspects of her role by observing her prior HoDs and copying many of them. She stated:

I came across several HoDs, so I learned from dealing with them. I continue doing things that my prior HoDs performed that I liked as an academic member, whereas I avoid treating my staff the way I disliked being treated as a departmental member.

However, this view presumes that HoDs have control over the way they treat their staff and this is not always the case. Sometimes HoDs have to treat staff in ways they disagree with, just because the central university has told them to as discussed in Section 5.3.4.6. P4 added that although she benefited from the situations she had experienced and from contact with her previous heads, there were still hidden aspects because she was not exposed to other dimensions of the HoD role. She gave an example about how she learned to issue purchase orders from observing her prior head that maybe other colleagues in different departments had not experienced. Therefore, one's past experience as an academic member seems insufficient on its own to develop the necessary competences for the headship role. The experience obtained varies according to the nature of the discipline, the years of experience in HE, the person's age, and the type of tasks in which the academic member is involved.

On the other hand, two participants, P6 and P7, indicated that their past experiences as academic members were not very helpful in terms of executing their leadership roles. For example, P6 reported that although she used her experience to build internal and external relationships and benefited from that, as an academic member the emphasis had been on the subject area and teaching approaches; little attention was paid to management and leadership issues. P7 added that the experience gained from being an academic member could not equal the experience obtained from having an administrative post in acquiring the required skills to perform well as a HoD.

Two respondents highlighted that their participation on different committees was useful in acquiring certain skills. For instance, P11 mentioned how she benefited from her previous work in the Activity Commission, where her main tasks were to organise events to highlight the department role at the university level, learn how to write formal letters, communicate with more senior staff, be aware of the university structure, and reach the appropriate unit. Similarly, P16 spoke about how her work managing different teams, such as being a course leader, was helpful to learn some aspects of her current leadership role, particularly in dealing with other staff members.

Three participants claimed that their experience as department deputy heads was useful in facilitating an understanding of their new roles. P1 said that her work as a deputy for one year at least gave her a clear idea about the tasks that would fall under her scope of responsibilities as a HoD, and this was the result of her direct contact with the post incumbent. Similarly, P3 who was appointed HoD at an awkward time in the middle of the semester insisted that:

I consider my job as a deputy head and my work with three HoDs equal to receiving a long and intensive training programme . . . I learned many administration aspects, such as how to respond to letters, decide on things, and make decisions.

P5 and P12 claimed that HoDs have to work as deputy heads before being appointed to a headship post and that they must be given the absolute freedom to select their deputies to facilitate the work in harmony. In effect, this means that the existing HoDs will choose the next incumbent if they choose their deputy. This may have negative consequences such as following and implementing the agenda and vision of the former heads without bringing in new insight.

Four participants indicated that obtaining managerial positions before the appointment to a headship post was beneficial in enhancing the leadership and managerial competencies required in their new role. For instance, P6 described how she benefited from her experience as a deputy head for student affairs at the college level by obtaining qualities necessary for leaders, such as patience and flexibility. She added that she learned how to deal with subordinates, accept their differences, and ignore some matters in order to “make the boat sail”. P7 had a unique experience working in an administrative unit that linked directly with university senior leadership. She was very enthusiastic during her interview and constantly referred to this experience. She described her work there as the first shift in her career and how she learned from being in touch with senior leaders. She added:

My work with senior leadership provided me with opportunities to acquire many skills, such as time management and decision making. I think I attended a strong school there; that was the best instructor, so when I was appointed to HoD, I found things easier moving from senior to the middle leadership positions.

5.3.5.2 Networking and Consultation

Participants identified consultation and networking with a wide range of people around them as extremely helpful in learning aspects of their role and coping with its demands. Eight participants spoke about how they sought their colleagues’ advice and support in handling many issues. P3 and P11 revealed that they were keen to form an advisory committee that included colleagues who had lengthy experience in HE and who had assumed several

administrative positions because they believed that considering others' views was better than relying on a personal vision. P3 added that discussing topics with the deputy head, exchanging views and experiences, gave her a wider perspective and made her more confident in making wise decisions. Still, P16 drew attention to how important it was to seek advice from appropriate people who were trustworthy and competent to give useful tips. P11 found that consulting others was extremely beneficial in her situation; in particular, she lacked the preparation for her headship role. She articulated:

We have competent colleagues who have lengthy experience working in the university and have former or current senior positions in different deanships within the university administrative structure, so I pick up the phone and ask them what they think about something and what I should do about such and such.

Likewise, P2 added that in the Saudi HE system the headship post is a rotating post. Therefore, there will be some departmental members who have held the position previously. Consequently, she takes advantage of talking to them and getting their support. Five participants highlighted that their line manager, the dean of the college, was their first port-of-call in learning about their role. They added that when they encountered issues they had not experienced before, they sought the dean's advice. P9 reported:

I definitely have regular contact with the dean . . . I learn a lot by observing her. If I have some enquires or want some clarification on an issue, my dean is the first reference. For example, we receive some letters regarding unclear issues, even after consulting the rules and regulations, so I directly consult her because she has wide experience, and I learn a lot from her leadership approach.

Seven respondents indicated that ongoing contact with peer HoDs within the university and their regular discussions were useful strategies to learn how to manage and deal with certain tasks. This cross-university sharing of experience contributed to enhancing their practice. For instance, P15 highlighted the importance of such interaction:

If I do not know something, I pick up the phone and ask them [other heads]. If there is a problem, I ask them, “What would you do about this topic, and how would you solve this issue?” If I receive new letters that I do not know how to respond to, I consult other HoDs.

Participants explained that this kind of interaction was very strong at the college level; in particular, monthly meetings allowed for such sharing and exchanging of ideas and good practices, as P9 revealed:

When we meet at the college council, we talk to each other and listen to how one head tackled a certain problem. How did she solve it? What was the outcome? If they achieve good results, I try to benefit from that and apply it myself, whereas if they fail, I avoid using their approaches and make another plan.

Participants insisted that such networking with other HoDs was helpful and more beneficial than attending formal training programmes because it enabled consulting with people about real work problems as they went through similar experiences and dealt with similar situations. However, P2 stated that despite the importance of such interaction, she was concerned that there were too few opportunities to meet peers with similar management roles in other schools and colleges.

In the same vein, two participants, P6 and P14, complained that they lacked such interaction with other HoDs in other universities. They expressed their desire to establish such networks to share experience and best practice. Likewise, P13 considered exchanging experiences with peers in counterpart departments in other institutions a useful strategy to learn about the role, saying:

There are many advantages to external networking and exchanging visits with counterpart departments in other institutions. First, you can attract members to work with you. Second, we will be more aware of the nature of others’ work and compare our outcomes with theirs, and from this we can identify our weaknesses and areas of concern to work on to develop ourselves.

Although P13 highlighted the importance of external networking with peers, she seemed to contradict herself when she later stated that she rarely did this because seeking advice from

external bodies would draw further attention to the existence of problems and might create a bad image for the university.

5.3.5.3 On-the-Job Learning

Thirteen participants identified practice-based learning as a crucial way to improve their leadership competencies. P13 revealed that a lot of knowledge and skills necessary for the role was self-taught and acquired on the job. She said:

Learning by doing is the best approach. I think whatever training courses a person goes through will not give the same result as putting that person in the work environment and allowing her to practise the job. This can be also applied to how we can teach a child to swim. Nothing can be compared with putting the child in the swimming pool. This is the real training. Likewise, doing the job is the best way to learn.

P11, consistent with P13, believed that the benefits gained from attending leadership and management training programmes were not equal to the experience gained from practising the role.

Five participants spoke about how on-the-job learning was an ongoing process that helped them learn valuable lessons and develop their management and leadership skills. For instance, P15 stated, “Every day I learn new things. I suppose I learn 10 key lessons every working day in terms of the ability to organise things, make decisions, deal with people, and solve problems”.

Likewise, P6 added that some challenging job assignments assisted her to be more aware of the university rules, as she said:

Every day I learn new things, even about the organisation’s rules and regulations. When you read items in a list, it is completely different from facing a case in real life. Learning will be sustained if a case is in your hands and you apply the rules, more so than reading abstract items.

In the same vein, P1 revealed that work-based learning promoted her to develop several skills necessary for the role, such as critical thinking, stress management, communication skills, broad perspectives, and the ability to look at situations differently, which in turn helped her to

accept some stances that were not acceptable in the past. Similarly, P2 claimed that practising the job helped her to become more aware of herself as a leader, as she said:

Doing the job helped me to understand what it means to be a leader. I modified my way of thinking, the methods I use to manage people, and how I evaluate them. Now I involve more colleagues in decision making to reach a stage where collaboration and teamwork is the norm.

Four participants indicated that encountering real workplace challenges forced them to take actions to deal with these dilemmas, to evaluate the consequences of their actions, and to use the evidence to improve their practice. P6 and P7 highlighted that they learned from their mistakes when they handled real problems and tried to use successful approaches to solve problems when they encountered them again. P6 added, “I believe the mistakes I have committed make me stronger. I think we all learn from our mistakes. I do not consider making mistakes as a fault, but you have to not commit the same ones again”.

Likewise, P9 pointed out that she learned how to lead through reflection. She explained how she took advantage of standing back and reflecting on her experience:

When I carry out my tasks, I realise that I execute them with 60–70% success, whereas 30% are failures. Therefore, I stand back and study my failures, and this is always happening. I benefit from the experiences I undergo and try to avoid any mistakes I committed in in the past. I try to learn from the positions we were in in the past.

Although these participants emphasised the importance of practise-based learning, this did not mean they neglected the benefits of other developmental approaches. Participants agreed that seeking advice from colleagues and utilising internal networks effectively were useful strategies to enhance on-the-job learning. For instance, P14 said, “I learned from practising the role and from getting feedback from my deputy head and prior HoDs”. Furthermore, P8 claimed that this type of learning needs to be reinforced by formal training and added, “50%

of knowledge can be obtained theoretically, whereas 50% of learning can be acquired through practice.

5.3.5.4 Self-directed Learning

Four interviewees indicated that self-directed learning was an effective way to enhance their leadership competences. This was particularly beneficial for those who did not have the opportunity to attend formal leadership training. For example, P11, who complained that she lacked preparation for her role, found accessing information on the internet very useful, and used her free time at home to watch YouTube videos. Similarly, P12 thought that self-learning was a useful solution to overcome the time obstacle preventing her from participating in formal leadership training following her appointment (see Section 5.3.5.6.5.1). Thus, she could read at her own convenience.

Similarly, P5 and P9 revealed that they benefitted from self-guided reading on leadership topics. P5 read about great leaders, in particular the leadership of the prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, in addition to gaining knowledge from her previous study particularly in managing people. Likewise, P9, a specialist in management, read about “new development in the field of management”.

5.3.5.5 Mentoring

Fourteen participants indicated that they would have liked to have been mentored by the previous HoD, though they did not get the chance. It is important to note that participants did not explicitly use the term mentoring, even though they described different strategies fitting its definition. Participants suggested setting up a mentoring system before the end of the previous

head's appointment when a new head was identified or that mentoring should be performed immediately following the new head's appointment if the head was not known in advance.

P8 stated that she spent many months getting to grips with the situation and stressed the importance of having a transitional period when former and incoming heads spend time together to make sure that knowledge and good practice were smoothly transferred. P6 said that she would like to meet the previous head on a regular basis before being formally appointed to absorb her leadership style, to learn about her tasks and duties, and to be aware of the goals set for the department and the extent to which goals were accomplished. She articulated that when goals are unified, this benefits the department rather than when they are constructed from nothing. P11 agreed with P6 in that she might have to complete a process or deal with issues initiated by the former head; therefore, it is useful to spend from two weeks to two months at the end of the current headship to learn from the head's experience, informed by the role and limits of the head's authority, and to find a trustworthy colleague who can advise you in times of challenge.

Similarly, P3 said that mentoring was especially beneficial when the appointment happened in the middle of the semester, saying "In this circumstance, you need someone to receive you and explain things to you. This is the previous HoD". Likewise, P9 added that working with the former HoD can draw attention to potential difficulties and help determine a safe place to turn to when one hesitates when making vital decisions. Thus, HoDs must pass their experience on to the incoming heads and not abandon support at the end of their formal appointments.

In the same vein, P14, who was made aware of her nomination to the headship post early, was proactive in that she requested to be mentored by the incumbent head before the end of her

term. She spent a whole week at the previous head's office observing her and seeing how she responded to emails, solved problems, and managed issues. She was not embarrassed; indeed, she retains a friendly relationship with her. Conversely, P7 did not take up her former HoD's kind offer of a week's mentoring because she felt that she was adequately prepared, having had a leadership role at the university level.

However, P12 thought that the knowledge transfer model of mentoring implied above was not sufficient to acquire the required knowledge and skills. She thought that mentoring should be expanded over a long period of time, in which the former head will be on hand to guide the new head when needed. This does not mean having the two heads working alongside each other which she felt would be inefficient and potentially conflictive. Furthermore, she suggested that the department deputy head should be mentored by the current head to be the incoming head because it is easier to transfer experience this way. It is important to mention that the university has introduced a deputy head post for succession planning to prepare academic staff to obtain headship posts. In order to encourage academic staff to take on such job, they have a reduced workload. However, deputy heads do not receive any financial reward which in turn discourages many from taking on the job.

It seems that, with one exception, participants expressed the desire to have mentoring opportunities either formally or informally. However, it appears that this development opportunity has to be offered formally to ensure commitment, because when this is left to an informal arrangement, only one HoD was able to establish and sustain such a relationship.

5.3.5.6 Formal Leadership Training Programmes

Half of the participants had had leadership development prior to their appointment as HoD. In all but one case, this was as a result of holding an administrative post, such as deputy head or member of the senior leadership team (SLT). 11 of the 16 participants had had training once in post. Two participants (P11 and P12) had not had any training, neither prior to nor after their appointment. They complained that the transition from being an academic to being a leader was challenging.

The participants agreed that the university offered several types of in-house training and that a wide range of learning opportunities target academic leaders to enhance their leadership competences. For instance, P16 who has been a part of the university since its inception, revealed that:

The university offers many leadership courses. There is a generic administration course that is open to everyone. Therefore, staff will be ready to take on leadership roles in the future because they will have basic administration knowledge. The university also provides tailored leadership training for the HoDs on topics of interest, such as crisis management, conflict management, the management of change, and others.

Likewise, P4 stated that the university is distinctive in offering continuing professional development for its academic leaders. She had participated in many leadership courses that targeted leaders at different institution levels. The DDSA had collaborated with an internal department specialising in management to provide a range of training programmes that target university academic leaders at different stages of their careers.

In addition to the in-house leadership training, four participants highlighted the usefulness of several leadership development opportunities provided by external agencies. P2 spoke about attending leadership courses held at the MoE and said:

I attended an outstanding week-long programme that was offered by the MoE. It was entitled “Women Leaders in Academia.” The programme was fully delivered in English

by American trainers. The university also offers two to three days' worth of leadership courses.

Similarly, P10 added that the MoE provides a series of training programmes targeting young leaders to prepare them for leadership in collaboration with prestigious universities in America and Britain. She articulated that the selection of the potential candidates depends on line managers' nominations in all Saudi universities. Likewise, P9 who is a specialist in leadership and management, reported that she participated in different conferences and training courses in this area irrespective of whether they were being provided by the university or by the Institution of Public Administration (IPA).

P10 drew attention to the university's great enthusiasm for developing its academic leaders' talents through the partnerships with overseas providers, as she said:

There is a special programme provided by European Institute of Business Administration in France [INSEAD]. Only 10 leaders are nominated to participate in this programme according to certain criteria. Those who are selected will get intensive training for a long period inside and outside of the kingdom. This kind of programme is useful in refining the self and changing the leadership style of the participant...to learn how to delegate tasks, plan, take initiative and manage people.

Despite the importance of this leadership programme, only two HoDs mentioned it, perhaps because potential participants face fierce competition. P10 pointed out that she did not have the opportunity to engage in this programme because the selection criteria included fluency in English language which she did not have (see Section 5.3.5.6.5.3).

Six participants stressed the importance of preparing academic leaders prior to formal appointment. For instance, P9 argued that investment in training human resources was less expensive and harmful than assigning an unqualified person:

All those appointed to leadership posts must have the basic principles of administration. Sometimes, the incumbent performs the role blindly until she finally learns from trial and error. During this time, she might perpetrate major mistakes. Therefore, academic

leaders have to be trained in management and leadership at an early stage to be ready to lead when the time comes.

P8 indicated that the university ought to follow a systematic approach to development. She suggested the following:

When one is appointed as a teaching assistant, she has to receive training in management. This training has to be compulsory for at least one course each academic year... therefore, as they are pressing ahead in their careers, they will gain basic skills in management and be ready to accept more senior leadership roles.

This suggestion might be unrealistic because academic staff often say they are overloaded and do not have free time to attend training courses even when they are provided at different time.

P4 and P12 agreed with P8 and added that enabling academic staff to participate in leadership training at an early stage of their careers will facilitate exploring who has the sufficient leadership potential to be put under a microscope, given priority in leadership training, and be nominated for middle and senior leadership posts in the future.

5.3.5.6.1 The Advantages of Formal Leadership Training Programmes

Ten participants indicated that their participation in leadership training courses contributed to their obtaining a general conceptual knowledge of leadership and management and a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. For instance, P2 asserted the benefits of formal training in gaining an understanding of leadership theory and added that:

I participated in a two-day course that helped me to understand how leaders are different. It aimed to explain the participants' leadership styles and to consider whether practices were appropriate, or should be modified

The participants contended that leadership training courses assisted them in learning more about their leadership roles; particularly, the functional aspects of the job. P16 revealed that she had participated in training programmes designed specifically for HoDs to help them to recruit new academic members and to evaluate performance according to specific criteria.

Similarly, P1 spoke about obtaining the necessary skills to carry out her role through attending leadership courses, as she said:

One course I remember well was about strategic planning. I benefited a lot from it because planning is a core and essential task in my job. It helps you to learn how to distribute duties, how to set a plan for the future, how to define your goals, and how to seek to achieve them.

P5 and P16 agreed with P1 that leadership courses helped them acquire skills that were actually needed to perform their daily tasks, such as solving conflicts, managing people, and altering their ways of thinking when talking about issues. Likewise, P6 spoke about the effectiveness of some training courses she had experienced:

It makes a difference. Sometimes it opens my eyes to something that I had not previously taken into account. The course on decision-making helped me to make decisions properly and to improve my skills in this area.

At the time of her interview, P6 showed me a leaflet about an academic leader's qualities and attributes which she had kept from a course she had attended. She said that some course material can be used for reference and as an incentive when she is frustrated by work challenges.

Another advantage of attending formal training programmes was that it offered participants excellent opportunities to network with peers and colleagues and to exchange information about their experiences. Eight participants revealed that mixing with other leaders having similar aspirations was helpful for exchanging ideas, views, and good practices. P2 stated that:

In the same hall, you meet members across the university who have extensive experience or who have held this post previously, so you will get live experience as they give you extracts of their experiences, and this is the most useful bit from attending the programme. I learned from their stories and from the stances they took, as well as how they took actions and solved problems.

Similar sentiments were expressed by P4, P10 and P15 who all valued the opportunity to learn from leaders at other universities taking the same MoE courses.

Three participants indicated that attending formal leadership training gave them time to reflect on their own practices away from their daily routines. P15 felt that she lived in an isolated place. However, participating in leadership training gave her the space and time to evaluate her actions and rearrange her priorities. Likewise, P8 stated:

When I spend all day in the office, I cannot find time to think about what I have done with this or how I dealt with that. However, on these courses, there was a time to talk about your practices and compare with others how you perform a task or solve an issue. You can talk during the break with other HoDs, check whether they met similar difficulties, and exchange successful solutions.

The underlying assumption here is that the HoD role is similar regardless of the specific discipline. However, the extent to which department heads are involved in certain tasks and the emphasis placed on them differs depending on the department discipline, department size, and HoD's personal interests and priorities.

5.3.5.6.2 The Drawbacks of Leadership Training Programmes

As well as the positive points noted above, several criticisms were levelled at formal leadership training programmes. Three participants revealed that the majority of courses they had experienced were too theoretical. Training was mostly provided in lecture form, so the participants were passive listeners, receiving information. As P13 said:

I attended a course where I felt bored. I sat down all the time listening to the coach, who read items displayed on PowerPoint slides that I had already gotten in paper form. There was discussion time at the end when you might forget your questions.

P14 and P8 concurred with P13 and added that even when there was a practical portion in the training programme, the time specified for it did not compare with the time dedicated to talking about theoretical aspects.

Three participants claimed that the content of leadership courses does not take participants' actual needs into consideration or talk about real work problems. As P14 pointed out:

Training packages are mostly prepared in advance by the trainer, who lacks a clear perception of the needs of the university at this time. She might not be aware of the current demands that we have to accomplish or our daily problems.

P3 added that the topics discussed in some leadership courses were duplicated. As she said:

I would like the DDSA to pay more attention in analysing our needs and revise their courses to avoid providing repeated courses, such as on dealing with stress and conducting personal interviews... to offer something new that is relevant to real work problems.

It seems that P3 was not in favour of formal leadership training and that she perceived discussion with colleagues about real work problems to be more useful. She suggested that “there are some hot topics that require live debate with colleagues rather than looking at a booklet, as if you will find a panacea or magic solution.” Likewise, P9 said she was full to the brim with the same topics and wanted to attend training on creative issues and topics. Similarly, P7 added that “some courses I went through were trivial and only offered glossy handouts.”

Two participants indicated that some leadership training sessions were too generic and did not consider variation in the department context or the participants’ wide experience. For instance,

P3 said:

They do not consider the narrow framework we work in [the department], and you know each department is different, which is why they do not achieve full benefits for our department. They talk within a general framework that serves and has to fit all colleges and specialist areas.

P9 was consistent with P3 in saying that generic leadership courses are not useful and sometimes provide superficial knowledge. They did not account for differences in participants’

level of experience. As she said:

I attended one course about the development of institutional performance, but I did not find it useful. They provided us with the basics on administration, and I did not go for that. Such leadership courses benefit non-specialists. However, specialists find them trifling and ridiculous, and that they only offer ABC knowledge.

5.3.5.6.3 Effective Leadership Training Programmes

Participants asserted that the effectiveness of leadership and management courses depends on the training style, the duration of learning, the type of instructor, and the participants. For example, P1's response mentioned some of these characteristics:

Effective training depends on the training method, the trainer's skills, and the extent to which the trainer uses modern training approaches that promote active learning. I think learning can be sustained when the trainees are involved in trying out things practically, rather than only being listeners.

Four participants claimed that effective leadership training provides participants with the opportunity to practise what they had learned. P1 stated, "theoretical knowledge that has not been applied on the ground is useless. learning can be sustained when one tries to apply what has been learned to solve real-world problems faced in daily work". Likewise, P16 said training that allowed participants to link the theoretical knowledge to their daily work and to engage in meaningful discussion with peers was more effective.

P15 believed that training is effective when it is extended and sustained over a long period of time and when it provides a safe environment for honest feedback. She articulated:

The period of time for training should be extended to allow individuals to build trust with colleagues so that they can discuss problems in a transparent manner.

Seven participants highlighted the importance of selecting an appropriately-skilled instructor. P1 said, "Those who deliver content must be competent and have interesting methods to attract trainees". P14 attributed the variation in leadership programmes offered to the trainer's style and insisted that both the trainer and those who provide training have to be trustworthy and prove their efficiency. Similarly, P2 and P5 found that training becomes more effective when the trainer has practised the job or had similar experiences. Thus, they were able to convey the essence of their experience. As P5 said:

I was involved in a training course with a practitioner, so I learned a lot because she transferred her real experience. Things were different when one read a booklet and provided training. It is the difference between theorising and being a practitioner.

Both P4 and P15 usually checked who was the speaker or trainer before formally registering on the course. P4 added:

Sometimes, we received the trainer's CV, or I might Google their names to see what their interests and contributions are. Sometimes, the impression I received from others who had previously attended the course with the same coach encouraged or discouraged my participation.

However, she said she very rarely regretted her attendance. P10 concurred with P4 and added that coaches in leadership courses are chosen very carefully because they will present in front of academic leaders, and with time and age, these leaders will gain more experience and become more critical.

The effectiveness of leadership training was judged based on the type of participants in the courses. Six respondents perceived training in which the target audience had similar roles as being more beneficial than a generic management course. Their views were typified by P10 who said:

I prefer to attend bespoke courses for HoDs. I could not perceive the usefulness of generic courses when I was mixed with novice colleagues who lacked basic administration knowledge. How does the coach reconcile the needs of both [experienced and inexperienced attendees]? . . . I am in favour of training in leadership and strategic planning topics targeting categories [of employees] close to each other in the administrative structure to provide more room for debate with those who are able to enrich me with their wide experience.

5.3.5.6.4 Training Needs

Four participants claimed that they needed to acquire basic management knowledge and skills, whereas nearly half of the participants indicated the need to be trained on functional aspects of their specific role. P15 reported:

We need training in different areas: time management, decision making, problem solving, and some of our responsibilities in our daily work as well as how to evaluate

academic staff, manage human resources, distribute burdens, and select appropriate people for committees.

The need to gain general management knowledge seems to be logical because some HoDs take up the role without holding any previous administrative post or without being adequately prepared. Thus, they might lack the management skills needed if their prior academic role did not require administrative expertise.

Five participants identified interpersonal skills as a critical training need. They revealed that HoDs have to maintain friendly relationships with colleagues to lead the department successfully and to pull others towards achieving objectives drawn for the department. They also must learn how to communicate with more senior leaders. They added that HoDs manage up and down and have wide contact with many stakeholders. P16's response summarised this need:

You have to have good communication skills to be successful as a leader, to persuade others to do tasks and achieve your goals while preserving staff satisfaction.

Three respondents referred to the necessity of understanding the university system and rules as well as how their role fitted within this wider context. P6 stated:

We need to be informed about the university's rules and regulations. How does the overall university system work? Awareness of these issues can shorten the time needed to learn about them. It is better to be introduced to the *Banner system* [a comprehensive system to manage student and faculty members' information] from the beginning rather than spending time every day to discover new things about it.

Two respondents stated that they needed to improve their competences with technology. As P3 said:

With the accelerated evolution of technology, we have to be familiar with new systems. We used Blackboard this semester and will use the Electronic System of Councils next semester, so we must enhance our knowledge of technical issues.

Only one participant pointed to the importance of English language proficiency because it is the gateway to collaborating in research, exchanging knowledge with international colleagues and building partnerships with external institutions. This was surprising, given that HoDs complained that English fluency was a major barrier for their participation in some leadership courses (Section 5.3.5.6.5.3).

5.3.5.6.5 Barriers to Participation in Leadership Training Programmes

The participants indicated three obstacles that discourage them from participating in leadership training programmes: time, the venue of the course, and poor English language skills.

5.3.5.6.5.1 Time

Eleven participants claimed that they had no time to attend such courses because participants were overloaded. They added that the courses were mostly conducted during official working hours and at busy times of the year such as during the exam season. Two participants indicated that the amount of time needed to complete the training course also hindered their participation. For instance, P15 enrolled on a leadership course about administrative decisions but cancelled when she realised she would have to attend for three consecutive days. Likewise, P13 withdrew her participation in a leadership course because she could not find two consecutive days when she was free from obligations and did not want to attend for only part.

In the same vein, two participants revealed that they were highly likely to attend leadership programmes when offered in the evening because they could finish their assignments in the morning and be free to participate without being bothered by department matters. In contrast, three interviewees stressed that although the university offered some evening courses, this

affected their family life. They added that they became very tired after long workdays, which might influence their understanding. In the same context, P3 suggested:

These workshops could be offered during the weekend, such as Saturday morning. Participants will attend fully energetic and without concerns.

However, this was seen as an extra load by other HoDs, impacting upon their personal and family life. Two participants — P13 and P15 — argued in favour of removing the HoD from her responsibilities for a short period of time to attend leadership training courses, as P15 said:

The university may allocate a specific day for academic leaders to attend leadership training in the same way that we do in the department. When we build the academic staff's schedule, we do our best to free them on Monday to be able to join the department meetings.

Another issue with the leadership training courses was the announcement of their dates. P1 stressed that the dates must be announced at the start of the year and not be altered.

5.3.5.6.5.2 The Venue of the Course

Three participants complained that university's large campus covers a significant geographical area and that leadership training is often provided in the university administration building because it houses the DDSA. Travelling across campus takes time. P8 found it difficult to leave her department and said:

The process of going to and returning from the deanship building will take approximately an hour. However, if the training is held at the college, things will become easier. When there is an urgent situation or letters to be signed, you can manage the issue quickly and return to complete the course.

P2 explained how the DDSA tackles this issue:

The DDSA launches innovative ideas by sending the trainers to the department on a prearranged date to provide training tailored to our needs to encourage staff attendance.

In a similar way, to facilitate academic leaders' participation in leadership courses, some of the courses can be held at the college to allow the participants to discuss internal issues facing the college. Nevertheless, relying only on this solution seems impractical because the networking opportunities with other academic leaders within the university will be lost. Moreover, the time

spent travelling could provide breathing space or time for reflection. Participants seemed to contradict themselves. They complained about not having enough time to attend locally-provided courses but these objections disappeared when the provider was external to the university.

5.3.5.6.5.3 Poor English Language

Four participants indicated that their lack of English language proficiency was another obstacle that discouraged them from attending leadership courses. Most middle leaders within the university have been educated locally; thus, they lack this skill. P11 pointed out that she could not participate in leadership courses with a prerequisite of fluency in English. Likewise, P1 added:

Sometimes, the situation requires a presentation of the experiences of other countries and to have international speakers. Although there was a translation, we could not keep pace with what the coach was saying, and this affected us.

Likewise, P7 pointed out that a majority of the leadership courses are offered in English and that this is a significant barrier to participation. She articulated:

I prefer to receive information in Arabic rather than English to be more persuaded, particularly when talking about theories. I find my mates always ask me, “What does the speaker mean by that?”, even though she might be wearing headphones for translation. I believe that if you want to change someone, use her language.

5.3.6 The Impact of the University’s Unique Context on the Role

Participants had different opinions about the impact of working in a female-only university on their role. Nine believed this had a positive effect on their role, whereas seven had mixed feelings. Ten participants indicated that ease of communication was an advantage when managing at a single-sex university. They added that middle management requires continuous contact with senior leaders and with academic staff members, and this communication was

easier when all of them were female due to religion, customs, and culture. P9 stated the following:

I think the situation here is better because we can meet and talk easily face to face. When a HoD is male and I am the deputy head in the female section, we contact each other by phone. However, some matters cannot be solved by phone, require long explanations, and might necessitate one's presence.

P2 added that society in Saudi Arabia is conservative. Therefore, communicating directly with men is not easy, which is why she felt comfortable that all her colleagues were female. Likewise, P1 added that easy communication within the department contributed to making fast decisions, something that would never happen when there were male colleagues involved due to poor communication. Similarly, P8, who had worked at different co-educational but gender-segregated universities, explained that the existence of a single unit was better and easier than consulting two separate sections:

I worked at university X and Y. In both, the female unit is a sub unit linked with the male unit. Meetings were conducted using CCTV, so when there was a breakdown, something was out of order, or devices stopped working, the meetings might be cancelled. At this university, the situation is different. It is easy to conduct meetings and make decisions because a single unit is responsible for making decisions.

P16 concurred with P8 that having one leader was better than being led by two and gave a lovely metaphor:

If there is one leader, there is a sense of direction and guidance. However, if there are two leaders, each has opinions that might contradict the other, so the situation will be different. Boats that have two captains sink. Here, our decisions are easy to make because we have only one unit.

In the same vein, three participants revealed that they preferred the current situation because communication with higher levels, such as the dean of the college and other senior leaders, was easier, which in turn facilitated performing tasks and solving many issues quickly. For example, P2 stated that sometimes she needed to meet more senior leaders and because she was able to do this easily, matters were quickly resolved. Likewise, P4 added that communicating was easier here in comparison with her experience at a university with two

sections because the dean was in the same building, whereas at the other university, the dean was always in the male section.

Six participants believed that obtaining a leadership role in the university was an excellent opportunity for women's empowerment instead of being subordinate to men. This was evident in P14's response:

I considered this an excellent challenge for women to demonstrate that they are able to perform their jobs and make decisions rather than be under the authority of men. Saudi society is considered a patriarchal society and often does not accept women's leadership. Therefore, this segregation is a great opportunity for women to prove their worth, merits, and strengths without doubt.

Likewise, P4 mentioned that the university vision to give full opportunity and empowerment to women had a positive impact on her role:

Our opinions and words are heard. We [the HoDs] and the deans of the college make the decisions ourselves. In contrast, when the university has female and male sections, women have to rely on the male HoDs and cannot be the foundation. However, given a complete opportunity, we are the foundation, not a branch.

P10 agreed with P4 that managing at a female-only university was a gateway for all women aspiring to obtain leadership posts. She reflected on her experience working at a newly established, gender-segregated university and how she moved up the career ladder, from being a department *deputy* head to being *deputy* dean of the college, in addition to her work on different consultation committees with the Provost of the university. At gender-segregated campuses, women can become deans of the female sections but they act as deputies to the male deans. Accordingly, P10 felt that, at her previous institution, she had obtained the highest position offered to women and was not able to acquire a more senior post in the hierarchy because they were restricted to men. This is why she chose to change universities and ignore all the privileges previously offered to her to join this female-only university, believing it would be a portal to obtaining a senior leadership post.

However, seven of the participants indicated that despite the aforementioned benefits of working in a female environment, there were some drawbacks. Four participants revealed that this situation stopped them benefiting from the wide experience of men in the workplace, as

P9 said:

Men can give valuable opinions and can add to our opinions. Men have more freedom to mingle with others and can gain more experience and skills than women because there are religious and cultural restrictions on women as opposed to men.

Two participants believed that females had different leadership styles compared to males. For instance, P5 thought that women focus on unimportant and minute tasks, whereas men pay more attention to long-term goals. Therefore, they were highly likely to make appropriate decisions. As a result, she strongly preferred to have males in senior leadership posts because she thought women's leadership impedes matters instead of facilitating them. She articulated the following:

I think matters are solved quickly in co-educational universities, although there is no direct contact with males. Here, we sometimes send important letters and do not receive responses even though all of the leaders are women.

Likewise, P7 stated that women precisely follow instructions and rules, whereas men have more flexibility. Therefore, matters might be solved and decisions made more quickly by men because they have more power and authority. In contrast, women are more fearful and cautious than men. Therefore, they tend to check whether items are mentioned in regulations. Both P5 and P7 agreed that men were better at achieving tasks and not disrupting decision-making. Despite this, P7 felt that working in a female-only environment was better because of the difficulty of reconciling the male and female sections with regard to decision-making.

Having presented the findings of the research obtained from both the quantitative and qualitative data, they are discussed in relation to the relevant literature in the following chapter.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to compare the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data with relevant literature on middle management in HE, leadership development, and female leadership. This will help readers to better understand the results and whether they fit with their own context.

6.2 HoD's Role and Responsibilities (RQ1)

In the qualitative phase, participants identified a wide range of duties and these were grouped into four categories (management, leadership, representation, and academic tasks). In the management/operational role, participants worked to ensure proper functioning of day-to-day tasks by, for example, allocating tasks to faculty members, organising and conducting department meetings, managing student issues, and preparing annual reports. The leadership role involved elements related to leading the department in general, leading people, and leading the academic programmes. With regard to leading the department, the role included creating a departmental plan to align with the university vision toward obtaining academic accreditation and leading the required change. Leading people involved developing faculty members, encouraging research and publication, evaluating staff performance, resolving conflicts, and maintaining a healthy work environment. Leading academic programmes encompassed enhancing teaching and learning and developing curricula.

Under the representation role, the HoD worked as a mediator communicating the department's interests and concerns to senior management and supporting the senior leaders in implementing the university mission, in addition to seeking to improve the department's reputation internally and externally. However, the representation role has not been fully implemented. Bureaucracy limits middle leaders' opportunities to establish relationships with external bodies. Moreover,

HoDs rarely obtain external funds or generate income for their departments because they lack control over financial resources. The academic role involved carrying out teaching activities, supervising students, and staying up-to-date in their discipline. However, conducting research was not identified as a key component in this temporary role. Generally speaking, participants performed all the activities linked with the managerial dimension, whereas there were differences regarding how much participants performed activities linked to the other three dimensions of the role.

The quantitative data was consistent with the qualitative data. Tables 17 and 18 (below) summarize the five most and least important tasks of HoDs and to which dimension they are relevant, according to the questionnaire respondents. It can be seen that the five most important duties include elements related to the managerial, leadership, and representational aspects of the role. However, there are no tasks associated with the academic dimension of the role. Academic tasks appear near the end of Table 13 in terms of their importance to the HoD. Participants struggled to engage in personal scholarship whilst a HoD. This will be explained in more detail when discussing the role challenges (Section 6.5.1).

HoD tasks	Rank	Dimension
Assigning teaching, research and other activities to faculty members and dividing the responsibilities.	1	Administrative tasks
Conducting department meetings.	2	Administrative tasks
Encouraging collegiality, cooperation and team work among faculty members.	2	Faculty affairs tasks
Communicating departmental needs and concerns to the dean and university administration.	3	Internal/external communication tasks
Developing academic programmes and updating the curriculum.	4	Instructional tasks
Convene committees to assist in the accomplishment of department functions.	5	Administrative tasks
Seeking new opportunities to improve the department.	5	Strategic leadership
Providing clear vision, goals, guidance and direction for the department.	5	Strategic leadership
Communicating university administration decisions, expectations and demands to the faculty.	5	Internal/external communication tasks

Table 17: The five most important tasks of HoDs.

HoD tasks	Rank	Dimension
Communicate with other external entities such as schools, government agencies and employers.	19	Internal/external communication tasks
Establishing partnerships with business and private sector.	20	Internal/external communication tasks
Supervising graduate students.	20	Personal scholarship tasks
Managing department financial resources which include facilities and equipment.	21	Resources management tasks
Preparing and maintaining departmental budget.	22	Resources management tasks
Obtaining external funds and grants.	23	Internal/external communication tasks

Table 18: The five least important tasks of HoDs.

Table 19 shows the seven dimensions of the role of the HoDs in the questionnaire and their equivalent response in the interviews. It can be seen from this table that the three dimensions of strategic leadership, faculty affairs, and instructional tasks in the questionnaire were subsumed into the leadership role at the interview stage. This leadership role involved responsibilities geared toward leading the department to achieve the university mission, leading personnel, and leading the academic programmes. Likewise, the management role included performing day-to-day administrative tasks and managing department resources. Therefore, it can be said that HoDs played three major roles as a manager, leader, and representative in addition to completing their core academic tasks of teaching and supervising students.

Method	Interview	Questionnaire
Dimension	Management role	Administrative tasks Resource management tasks
	Leadership role	Strategic leadership tasks Faculty affairs tasks Instructional tasks
	Representation role	Internal/external tasks
	Academic role	Personal scholarship tasks

Table 19: Comparison between HoD roles based on the two methods of data collection.

Generally speaking, the role of the HoD aligns with that described by Sotirakou (2004) and Cardno (2014). Both authors identify four dimensions of the HoD role, three of which (management, leadership, and academic), were found in the present study. However, the HoD's role in leading and developing academic programmes was identified as a distinctive role in Sotirakou under 'instructional role' and in Cardno under 'curriculum leadership' whereas it was included in the leadership role in the current study. This is because not all HoDs were directly involved in curriculum or instructional leadership. Some of them only oversaw this process because there was a special committee within their departments responsible for developing courses and programmes. Interestingly, participants in the current study emphasised their role in representing the department but in reality this was limited to internal representation as they did not participate in establishing partnerships with external entities or in generating income. This might be a consequence of the centralised system in which the participants worked and the need to refer any decisions to senior leaders, no matter how small. In contrast, these activities were considered an important component of the HoD's role in Sotirakou's (2004) study.

Likewise, the role of HoDs as depicted in this study aligns with the five dimensions of an academic leader's role as portrayed by Scott et al. (2008). For instance, 'management and administration' equates to the management role in this study; 'planning and policy development' is equivalent to the leadership role; 'networking' is similar to the representation role; and 'academic activities' represent the academic role. However, "managing staff" in Scott et al.'s (2008) study is included under the leadership role in the current study. This might be because HoDs in western universities have a more explicit role in recruiting their staff. They are also more involved in performance management whereas in the Saudi context, this is not

extensively monitored due to the fact that Saudi academics are guaranteed tenure once they are appointed.

This study differs from Berdrow (2010) in that the academic dimension was not mentioned at all in his work whereas in this study it is highlighted, although not to any great extent. This study also contrasts with Berdrow (2010) in that faculty development is included under the leadership dimension in the present study whereas it occupied a distinctive dimension in Berdrow. Moreover, managing and developing resources, including budget management and obtaining external funds, constituted distinctive elements of the HoD role in Wolverton et al.'s (1999) study. However, these tasks were not considered important in the current study as there was no departmental level budget.

In summary, this study agrees with previous studies that HoDs have to fulfil multiple roles simultaneously. Although the participants described their role in terms of four dimensions, they differed regarding the extent and the emphasis placed on executing certain roles depending on their department discipline, department size, and their personal interests and priorities. This echoes the findings of Sotirakou (2004) and Inman (2009) that HoDs chose to perform certain tasks and placed more emphasis on certain aspects of the role due to their personal interests and their departments' unique contexts. This in turn aligns with the findings of Nguyen (2013) regarding the difficulty of producing a single list that captures all the duties of the role.

6.3 Role Ambiguity

Interviewees agreed that they accepted this management post without a clear perception of what the job entailed. This aligns with findings by Riley and Russell (2013) and Wolverton et al. (2005) that academic members moved up the career ladder to take on middle management

positions without a clear understanding of the role's demands. A part of the problem is the role conflict that arises from acting as a representative of senior management and a defender of the faculty. They still have the responsibility of managing their colleagues in addition to maintaining their core academic tasks.

11 of the 16 interviewees confirmed receiving a formal job description. This is consistent with the findings of Boyko and Jones (2010), who pointed out that the majority of universities now have official documents that define their formal positions, even though these might be outdated. Similarly, although the participants in this study agreed on the importance of a formal job description, the current description was criticised because it provided them with little insight, a view that was supported by Cardno (2014) and Boyko and Jones (2010). Participants sometimes had to refer to the rules of SCHE to understand the scope of their responsibilities and authority. They stated that they worked in a changeable environment that was very much concerned with academic accreditation, highlighting the emphasis placed on ensuring quality. They added that their responsibilities had expanded to capture this new set of demands and, therefore, the existing description was outdated. This agrees with the literature that suggests providing a general job description in a rapidly changing environment is insufficient (Bolton, 2000; Smith, 2002).

Participants agreed that the available job description lacked a lot of detail and did not consider the department's unique context, which is in an agreement with Nguyen's (2013) finding. For example, heads of lab-based departments were more concerned with managing department resources than their counterparts in social science. Heads of larger departments in this study identified human resource management as an important duty, whereas heads of smaller departments did not. The department size and the academic discipline might be key factors

influencing the nature of the role and determining the job's priorities. This finding concurs with Johnson (2002) who found that the responsibilities of a HoD are largely influenced by the academic discipline, subject area, and the department size. Although it is difficult to find a one-size-fits-all job description (Bolton, 2000), having different descriptions for the different departments may not be practical. The existence of several job descriptions for different departments could be subject to criticism on the grounds that this undermines equality. Moreover, the examination of the formal job description document revealed that it did not mention specific activities that HoDs have to conduct, nor did it specify the order of importance. Instead, it merely listed the HoDs' major tasks relating to administrative, financial, and academic affairs. Thus, it would still be up to the individual judgement of the HoD to decide on her major and minor tasks.

There seems to be some contradiction between what was written in the formal documents and how heads perceived their role in reality, particularly in relation to financial management. For instance, P16 argued that the job description gave a false impression about the head's responsibilities regarding finance because there was no budget allocated to the department. This aligns with Nguyen's (2013) finding that what was written in the job description was rarely reflected in practice. In conclusion, this study agrees with Nguyen (2013) that the formal job description should be reviewed every few years to respond to the any new demands of the role. However, this needs to be done in a way that maintains a balance between being fit for purpose and stability.

6.4 More Management, Less Leadership

It is clear from the quantitative data in Table 13 and from the interviews that participants in this study perceived their role to include both management and leadership, and both were

deemed necessary to complement each other. This finding is consistent with Marshall's (2012) conclusion that the academic leader has to embody both elements in order to achieve the desired change. It also aligns with Middlehurst's (1993) view that the leadership and management dimensions are tightly combined at the department level in a way that is not found at the institutional level. Thus, leaders in the middle need to be able to achieve a balance between performing the managerial role and determining the strategic direction of the unit (Inman, 2009).

Moreover, participants identified bureaucracy and dealing with emails, preparing for quality assurance, and meetings as the three most time-consuming activities. This matches Hancock's (2007), Deem et al.'s, (2003) and Smith's (2002) findings. In Smith (2002), HoDs in both chartered and statutory universities found that paperwork and bureaucracy, managing personnel, and unproductive meetings took up most of their time. The current study differed in that managing personnel was not identified as a time-consuming activity on a daily basis. Rather, it was seen as a challenging aspect of the role (Section 6.5.2) that raised its head from time to time. Although participants in this study spent most of their time carrying out these activities, they were not seen as important components of the role. Rather, they were considered to be low-level administrative duties. Chairing department meetings was the only task ranked highly in terms of its importance to the HoD role (Table 13). Participants attached a high priority to departmental meetings, where they were actively involved in genuine discussion with their colleagues and, as a consequence, influenced decision-making. However, they considered other meetings that were only for information sharing less valuable. This concurs with the Australian academic leaders in Scott et al.'s (2008) study, who indicated that fruitless meetings, bureaucracy, and numerous reports were less satisfying aspects of the role. Some of these tasks, such as responding to emails, could be done easily by a secretary or administrator

and do not require the HoD's level of expertise. This matches Seagren's et al. (1993) finding that HoDs spent time performing tasks they are overqualified to do. This was evident in P10's response: "I could say that the HoD could turn into a secretary whose main task is receiving and replying to letters and emails".

There seems to be some contradiction between what HoDs believe to be important aspects of their role and what they do in actual practice. For example, although, in the quantitative data, HoDs attached importance to developing a clear vision for the department and a long-term strategic plan, (see Table 13, above), the qualitative data indicated that these tasks had a lower priority in practice. The management of the daily routine dominated HoDs' time. Only five interviewees spoke about their role in terms of setting a strategic plan to improve the department. However, they stressed that this had to be aligned with the university's vision toward obtaining academic accreditation. Thus, their main role as executive authorities was to influence departmental members to implement university management's mandates. According to Sotirakou (2004), HoDs have to have a clear vision to guide their departments to achieve their objectives. This sense of direction/strategic vision was identified as one of the main leadership characteristics associated with effectiveness at the department level in Bryman's (2007) extensive review of the literature. In other words, when heads are more involved in decision-making, they become change agents and this makes it more likely the required change will happen than if change is being advocated only at the senior level.

In the current study, HoDs had limited scope to lead because they had to do whatever was dictated by senior management. This echoes findings from several studies. For instance, heads in this study were similar to their Vietnamese counterparts in Nguyen's (2013) study in that they followed and implemented senior managers' orders and were not actively involved in the

creation of a clear vision for the department. Rather they were accountable for operational tasks. The current study also accords with Preston and Price (2012) and Pepper and Giles (2015) in that middle leaders carried out endless administrative tasks instead of contributing to developing strategies. As reported by Bedrow's (2010), the leadership dimension of the role was considered at the end of the to-do list.

6.5 Role Difficulty (RQ2)

Participants described several challenges they encountered in carrying out their role. To facilitate answering the second research question, these challenges were grouped under four comprehensive themes: work overload, managing people, lack of power and authority, and being in the middle. Each of these challenges will be discussed in the following section.

6.5.1 Work Overload

All the interviewees complained about the workload and having many different tasks to perform. They described the reality of their work as trying to juggle multiple priorities: teaching, researching, and performing managerial tasks, which put them under pressure. Likewise, according to Table 14, the first, second and sixth difficulties identified by the questionnaire participants are “finding time to conduct my personal research”, “balancing my leadership and management functions with my academic activities” and “fulfilling all the demands of the role in the time available”. This aligns with the literature regarding the huge responsibilities associated with the HoD role within academia and how time consuming it is (Pepper and Giles, 2015; Sotirakou, 2004; Stanley and Algert, 2007). Participants agreed that the workload required them to work long hours to fulfil all the role expectations, and this is a common problem cited in the literature (Gmelch, 2004; Mercer and Pogolian, 2013; Wharton

and Estevez, 2014). The HoDs in the two types of university in Smith's (2002) study revealed that the workload required an intensive time commitment that exceeded 50 hours a week.

Smith (2002), Yelder and Codling (2004) and Cardno (2014) both of which note how the absence of administrative assistance contributes to expanding academic leaders' workloads. In the current study, the participants' increased workload was partly the result of the low level of trust in the administrators or secretaries to whom a task could be delegated. Therefore, HoDs were involved in carrying out some routine administrative duties. The administrators' inability to complete tasks to the expected standards sometimes forced the HoD to perform these tasks on their behalf and avoid delegation.

The majority of the interviewees (11 in total) reported that managerial tasks reduced the time available for core academic tasks — teaching and research — the prime reasons they selected this profession. This finding is consistent with Nguyen's (2013) conclusion that Vietnamese HoDs spend most of their time carrying out administrative duties at the expense of conducting their core academic business. As a result, P8 suggested having office managers who could take care of mid-level tasks that are too demanding for the secretaries but not so demanding as to require the HoD's full attention. This suggestion concurs with Wolverson et al. (1999) who found Australian heads were more active in performing their research than their American counterparts because they were supported by office managers. In addition, Gmelch (2004) suggests that if HoDs want to sustain their scholarship productivity while in the post, they have to be provided with research assistance in addition to time devoted specifically to this task.

Participants complained that carrying out research activities demanded a high level of focus and more time than could not be afforded with all the administrative obligations. In this regard,

Hancock (2007) argues that the extensive administrative load and the decrease in time HoDs spent on teaching and researching not only led them to feel they were lagging behind in the field but also reduced their credibility while evaluating the academic work of their colleagues. There was clear evidence in the present study of the *Janusian* conflict identified by Sotirakou (2004) but, in line with the work of Mercer and Pogonian (2013), there was no evidence of value conflict.

This lack of time to conduct personal academic tasks as a result of the heavy administrative duties is a common challenge HoDs face and a main source of stress cited in many studies (Floyd and Dimmock, 2011; Floyd, 2012). Wolverton et al. (2005) claim that the need to perform administrative duties while sustaining an academic identity as a scholar and lecturer was a unique, distinctive aspect of the HoD role that leaders at the senior university level seldom encountered. This reflects P12's view the HoD role was more challenging than those of senior leaders, as there is a greater diversity of competing demands and relatively little support provided for heads whereas more senior leaders are allowed to specialize in one area of university life and get a whole team of people to help them.

Floyd and Dimmock (2011) draw attention to the danger of HoDs' losing some of their academic capital because they publish less as a result of their time-consuming administrative duties. This has a negative impact on their future career because publications are the main criterion for deciding promotions and rewards within academia. Similarly, interviewees in this study believed that maintaining their research productivity was more valuable than taking on a headship post in terms of influencing their career progression regardless of their specialist. In particular, 12 of them were assistant professors who had not reached full professor rank.

According to Saudi HE rules and regulations, the eligibility for promotion can only be measured by research publications, not acquiring managerial positions.

Therefore, 13 participants were initially reluctant to accept the HoD position and only accepted when called upon to do so by senior leaders. They expressed their desires to return to the previous status quo as regular faculty members. This concurs with Peterson (2016) that the negative impact of a headship role on one's professional identity as a scholar can make the incumbent less willing to accept more leadership roles in the future. Indeed, in Gmelch (2004) found that 65% of HoDs returned to the academic ranks after the end of their term. This aligns with the Martinez (2011) that the temporary nature of headship posts portrays the position as a transitional stage, which in turn reinforces HoDs identities as basically a researcher and a lecturer and then acceptance of their new emerging identity as manager that surfaces when obtaining a headship position. However, this contradicts a study conducted by Bolden et al. (2008) that indicates the tendency of academic leaders to stay in post after the end of their term and to seek more leadership roles as a desirable and professional path. This might be partly due to the fact that the majority of participants in the current study are junior academics, predominantly at the assistant professor level. They have not achieved academic success yet and are understandably keen to strengthen and enrich their identity as a scholar.

Similarly, Hancock (2007) argues that academic staff were unwilling to take on leadership roles. When accepting such roles, they chose to serve their institution at the expense of their research and teaching activities in order to execute management roles for which they lacked the preparation and required skills. This was manifested in P3's response: "I accepted this position to give back and return the favour to this university, which contributed greatly to our

success, and to reach what we are now even though it disrupts my research plans". Her view reflects the "good citizen" leaders identified by Deem et al. (2003).

The heavy workload and considerable pressure negatively affected not only on the participants' personal lives but also on their family lives. This finding echoes literature that highlights the heavy workload of a HoD and the difficulty of finding time for research and teaching, let alone for families and personal interests (Gmelch, 2004; Deem, 2003; Wharton and Estevez, 2014). The long working hours and their inevitable influence on HoDs' family life may explain the low percentage of women in leadership positions (Smith, 2002).

The tension between work and family life is not only an obstacle facing Saudi women in, or seeking to access, leadership positions in HE (Al-kayed, 2015; Almaki et al., 2016) but is also a barrier faced by women all over the world and across different geographical contexts (Deem, 2003; Pyke, 2013; Tessens et al., 2011). However, the issue seems greater in traditional societies where family is a very high priority (Long, 2005; Metcalfe, 2008) and domestic work is not equally split between men and women (Metcalfe, 2008). According to Omair (2008), women are primarily responsible for childcare even though they may receive assistance from relatives or servants.

The present study confirmed that those who suffer most in balancing their personal and professional lives are those who are middle-career and have young children. According to Al-kayed (2015), the level of work/family tension depends on the age of the children. The challenge is greatest when the children are younger and it becomes easier as the children grow older. This explains why some HoDs choose not to take on headship roles until a later stage of their careers, a feature noted by Thomas-Gregory (2014). This was clearly manifested in P7's

response: “Now I do not have little children, so my family and social responsibilities are reduced, which gives me more of an opportunity to accept more roles and responsibilities.”

6.5.2 Managing People

Almost all the interviewees (14 in total) identified managing staff and solving disputes between academic colleagues as important components of their leadership role, especially when their goals and interests conflicted. Similarly, “managing problematic and underperforming staff” was the fourth most important difficulty in the questionnaire. Hancock (2007) states that the HoD is in the first position to receive staff and student complaints, solve conflicts, and provide the required resources. Likewise, Stanley and Algert (2007) argue that 40% or more of academic leaders’ time was allocated to conflict resolution. Many scholars have described the difficulty HoDs encounter when managing people, particularly underperforming staff (Bryman and Lilly, 2009; Cardno, 2014; Scott et al., 2008; Smith, 2007). This difficulty makes many academics reluctant to accept headship role lest they have to judge in conflicts or address misbehaviour (Pepper and Giles, 2015).

This was particularly challenging for 12 of the interviewees because they had a low academic status compared with well-established colleagues in their department. Therefore, it was difficult to persuade older colleagues to perform some duties with which they were not familiar. This was echoed in Preston and Price’s (2012) findings, wherein some of their participants found it difficult to deal with older and well-established colleagues. Hellowell and Hancock (2001) supported this view that long-serving staff tended to fight against change and resist new mandates from more senior leaders because they differed from their essential values. Similarly, Brauson et al. (2016) point out that power relations between department chairs and members in their units can become more complex when HoDs take responsibilities to lead senior

colleagues at a higher academic level. They add that members who enjoy expanded networks within the institution can exploit these relations to resist HoD authority.

The department size was another factor that affected HoDs' ability to manage people properly. Participants asserted that managing employees becomes more challenging as the department size increases. This concurs with Smith (2002) and Bolton (2000) who suggest larger departments are harder to manage because staff form cliques and groups having different interests.

Participants in this study revealed that staff resistance to some of the new mandates imposed by senior management increased their stress levels. Academic staff claimed to be overloaded and thus refused to take on extra administrative duties or adhere to new quality requirements. According to Pepper and Giles (2015), the main obstacles facing Australian HE middle leaders were dealing with staff resistance and their lack of understanding of the organisational strategy. Academic staff in their study complained of being overloaded, having heavy teaching loads, and many administrative tasks. This made them reluctant to accept new initiatives, so it was important for middle leaders to convince staff and gain their trust. Furthermore, participants asserted that it was challenging to get academic staff to adopt the new technologies required for quality assurance and accreditation. This concurs with Blackmore and Sach (2000) who claimed that a revolution in technology affects universities and gives rise to new demands. Academic members are expected to be proficient in using computers and adopt new teaching pedagogies to meet diverse student needs. This in turn has implications for HoDs to be more involved in convincing colleagues to accept the changes.

Participants in this study revealed that the temporary nature of the role made staff management more complicated and affected their relationships with peers because the fellowship relationship differs entirely from the leader–subordinate relationship. This was echoed by the middle leaders in Preston and Price (2012) who found their colleagues reacted in a completely different way when they became HoDs. Likewise, Berdrow (2010) mentions the tension inherent in the temporary nature of the role and how it influences relationships with peers. This was depicted as “king among kings,” being the first when taking the leadership position and then returning back to the previous status as an academic member.

Thirteen of the participants wanted to return to the previous rank as faculty member after the end of their appointment. Thus, they wanted to sustain collegiality and not have their headship period negatively influence their future relations with peers. Thus, they felt that it is better, in the long-term, to use persuasion, not coercion. This aligns with Hellawell and Hancock (2001) who argue that middle leaders face more challenges when managing people than those in higher positions because they might still teach or conduct research together, or even take a secondary role in certain teams or committees. Therefore, issuing direct commands or behaving in a way that contradicts collegiality is not acceptable and causes more difficulty. Moreover, autonomy is seen as a unique feature of the academy (Bryman, 2007), and this may explain academic members’ tendency to refuse direction from others.

Moreover, staff management is difficult because of the unpredictable circumstances that staff might undergo. Therefore, HoDs are expected to respond wisely, manage unforeseen problems, and be supportive and empathetic. P2 experienced this situation when she was forced to teach more lessons to offset the absence of staff as a result of illness. This in turn led to more pressure.

This confirms Smith's (2002) finding that HoDs in the U.K. encountered challenges to support staff when facing personal difficulty.

“Working without administrative support from university administration” was ranked fifth in terms of being a challenge in the role according to the questionnaire. The qualitative data confirmed this finding and clarified that “university administration” meant secretarial support, not more senior leadership. Participants said administrative staff were poorly-skilled because of the recruitment system. Administrative staff were often appointed on the basis of “wasta” (i.e. because of informal networks and the influence of the extended family). P8 explained that some posts are not announced, and some appointees may not meet the criteria or do not enter the competition. That is why P8 advocated for stricter standards to ensure properly-qualified potential candidates for administrative posts. This view is consistent with Almansour and Kempner (2015) who found that Saudi academic staff complained of nepotism, because it was sometimes used by senior leaders as a mechanism to appoint administrative posts. Thus, appointment might rely more on relationships in so-called old boys' networks rather than merit and eligibility.

6.5.3 Lack of Power and Authority

Twelve interviewees were concerned about not having the authority to make many decisions required to perform their duties, to be involved in forming strategy, and to seek development opportunities. They had authority only to take care of internal operations and make routine decisions to run the department properly on a daily basis. Similarly, the eighth challenge in the questionnaire was “manage with insufficient power and authority”. Therefore, this study aligns with much of the Western literature in terms of demonstrating the little power that middle leaders have (Marshall, 2012; Pepper and Giles, 2015; Preston and Price, 2012).

Participants in the present study identified organisational structure as a barrier to them being effective leaders. They added that the bureaucratic, centralised system in which they worked required them to get a senior leader's approval, which in turn delayed the execution of many tasks. This aligns with the study of Marshall (2012) in which organisational structure affected the distribution of power and decision making. Likewise, De Boer and Goedegebuure (2009) argue that the extent to which middle leaders are involved in decision making can be attributed not only to the degree of readiness of the person but also to the nature of the organisation.

It appears that HoDs executed marginal leadership because of the limited power associated with the role and the low level of involvement in crucial decisions impacting the department as these decisions were highly likely to be made by senior leaders. The present study therefore concurs with (Branson et al., 2016; Clegg and McAuley, 2005; Martinez, 2011); all of these authors point out that middle leaders have limited positional power; and they perceived themselves to be marginalised from the course of events when they did not participate in making important decisions and solving problems. Martinez (2011) claims that this low level of involvement in making decisions and the expected negative impact on research, in turn accounted for the low number of candidates aspiring to take up a leadership role.

It seems that HoDs might be unaware of some matters and lack a full understanding of the university's vision. This was manifested in P4's reply: "they [senior leaders] might see some things that we are not aware of". This demonstrates that the participants had little involvement in developing strategy but remained loyal and obedient to their supervisors. This was consistent with Pepper and Giles's (2015) findings that, although middle leaders were responsible for putting the university's strategies in place, they had little influence in forming the strategies as they lacked awareness of the bigger picture. The organisation's hierarchy tends to reinforce

this practice of excluding middle leaders from strategy and policy formation. This finding was consistent with Brigg's (2004) view that the impractical bureaucracy's organisational structure may contribute to the middle leaders not being included in the course of events, not understanding the elements of the bigger picture, and not communicating with others outside their colleges, which in turn affects their effectiveness in their roles.

The interviewees mentioned the lack of control over the financial resources as a barrier in carrying out their duties. Likewise, "Find the required resources to conduct my assignment" was ranked third by the questionnaire respondents in terms of being a challenge in the role. Participants were not in charge of making any financial decisions and had to get the college dean's approval to obtain the required funds. This finding aligns with Hellowell and Hancock's (2001) study where HoDs were least involved in financial decision making. However, the present study contrasts with some recent studies suggesting HoDs in the UK and Australia have more power than in the past. For instance, Bolden et al. (2008) reveal that the role of middle leaders has improved to be more strategic, which implies more active participation in decision making and more financial control. Likewise, Scott et al. (2008), point out that middle leaders enjoy managing resources, participating in developing strategies, accomplishing staff expectations, and making enhancements in the areas under their control. In the same vein, De Boer and Goedegebuure (2009) described middle leaders in Europe as key players in developing policies and strategies and contributors in the implementation process. The present study confirms that Saudi HoDs are more like those described by Hellowell and Hancock than those by Bolden et al., Scott et al. and De Boer and Goedegebuure, and this matches Mercer and Pogolian's (2013) findings that middle leaders in Russia did not possess the same level of influence or control over the financial resources as their UK counterparts.

The lack of power that participants mentioned in comparison to the size of their responsibilities concurs with many Saudi studies. For example, Almenkash et al. (2007) argue that the organisational structure hinders women from participating in decision making and academic committees and limits their chances of developing strategy because they are not given important information. They add that poor communication between the male and female sections reinforced this situation. Likewise, Al-Halwani (2002) confirms that women tend to play a subordinate role to men in many government sectors, limiting their ability to make decisions and exercise effective leadership. Similarly, Al-Ahmadi (2011) reports that women leaders frequently encounter structural barriers such as centralised decision making and exclusion from strategy formation. Although the site of this research differs in having female leaders and an independent administrative structure with only some male members in the university council, the participants shared the same challenges regarding the low levels of authority they have. However, it is difficult to say how far this lack of power is the result of being a middle manager and how far it is the result of being a woman given the absence of studies about Saudi male HoDs.

Culture influences leadership (Hofstede et al., 2010; House, 2004) as does gender, though the former is usually more influential than the latter (Young, 2004). This in turn could explain the limited power that HoDs have and why senior leadership might lack trust in lower-level administrators, and so delegate limited responsibilities and power to them. Hofstede et al. (2010) point out that there is a tendency to accept an unequal distribution of power in Arab countries. Subordinates passively accept commands issued by their superiors which has an impact on the way decisions are made in the organisation. Hofstede et al. (2010) found that Saudi Arabia, in comparison with a number of Western countries, has a robust vertical hierarchy; therefore, power holders enjoy an array of privileges, including greater access to

information and more involvement in decision making, and that decision making tends to be individualised. Since the organisational culture is linked to, and affected by the national culture (Hofstede et al., 2010), not only is there a centralised government system in Saudi Arabia but all HEIs tend to implement a bureaucratic model.

6.5.4 Being in the Middle

Thirteen interviewees complained that they were stuck in the middle as a buffer between faculty and senior management. They had to deal with two groups — their colleagues and the central university administration — and manage the two groups' conflicting demands and expectations. Similarly, “handling the pressure and change introduced by university administration” and “implement the demands of quality imposed by university administration” in the questionnaire reflect this conflict. This classic middle management conflict is well-documented in many HE studies (Mercer and Pogonian, 2013; Pepper and Giles, 2015; Riely and Russell, 2013; Smith, 2002; Sotriako, 2004; Wolverton et al., 2005).

The participants agreed that the role was particularly challenging because they have to convey the department members' concerns and aspirations to the upper level administration, exercise the role of leadership, assist the senior leaders, and guide their units to implement the university's mission and vision. Therefore, the present study endorses Lapp and Carr's (2006) contention that middle managers are simultaneously masters and slaves and Branson et al.'s (2016) contention that HoDs must play the role of superior, colleague, and subordinate simultaneously. Likewise, Marshall (2012) describes the complexity of middle leaders' role of being the line manager for a group of colleagues of academic and non-academic staff in their units, fellow leaders of a team who participate in decision making, and a subordinate to senior leaders who implement the university's mission and vision.

The participants agreed that the need to maintain collegial relationships while ensuring tasks get done adds an extra layer of complexity. This was manifested in P7's reply: "They are your colleagues, and you do not want them to be displeased. At the same time, you are the HoD and you have to ensure they do their jobs." This view reflects the three conflicting demands identified by Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham (2005), namely: collegiality, professionalism, and authority. Thus, middle managers face the paradox of reinforcing collegiality and trust while monitoring performance, which might have the potential to weaken and threaten trust. They are caught between contradictory demands: the call for efficiency and effectiveness by senior management and the desire for collegiality and cooperation by the professionals (Bryman and Lilley, 2009). It was not easy to fit these two conflicting expectations into a single role as being a manager implies a sort of power whereas being a colleague assumes a kind of support (Branson et al., 2016). Therefore, middle leaders are unsure which party to satisfy and where to go for advice (Wolverton et al., 2005). The metaphor "being the meat in the sandwich" has been widely accepted as describing middle level managers because they have to manage two ways, up and down (Marshall, 2012; Scott et al., 2008), and act as a direct manager while retaining their professional academic careers and relationships with their colleagues.

The participants revealed that, although they represented their units' views in front of the university leadership, the senior leaders had the final say and participants had to implement the senior management's mandates, even if they contradicted their faculty's interests. This aligns with Pepper and Giles's (2015) findings that although the participants had little influence in decision making, they were accountable for transferring many orders and initiatives to the staff in their units and ensuring the orders were executed. This situation, according to Preston and Price (2012), creates an "us and them" culture that leads to middle leaders feeling isolated. In this particular context, it seems that the HoDs and other senior leaders might be "them" whereas

the rest of faculty members might be "us". This was reflected in P2 feeling of isolation when she failed to persuade her members to execute a senior management proposal (page 163).

However, the HoDs did not want to lose members in their department, especially if those members were in charge of implementing key tasks. The participants added that the university's vision could not be accomplished without staff cooperation. This view was supported by Bennett et al. (2007), who stated that the need to sustain loyalty to both the college and department was difficult to achieve, particularly in light of the organisational structure that promotes hierarchy. This result was aligned with Møthe et al.'s (2015) findings that, although HoDs were considered advocates for the department's views and the department's representatives in front of external bodies, they were also perceived as being loyal to the senior leaders and university, particularly if they were appointed rather than elected. As the participants in the current study were all appointed, this could justify their loyalty to their senior leaders. This in turn, aligns with Mercer and Pogosian's (2013) study.

6.6 Effective Approaches to Leadership Development (RQ3)

Interviewees identified several ways they could improve their leadership skills. These approaches were grouped under three overarching themes: formal leadership and management training, experiential practice-based learning, and self-directed learning. However, the vast majority of participants showed a preference for an informal approach to learning whether practice-based or self-managed more than attending formal leadership development programmes. On-the-job learning, previous experience, formal mentoring programmes, self-learning, and networking with colleagues within the institution were the five most effective approaches to leadership development in the questionnaire. Findings from the questionnaire

were consistent with those from the interviews. These approaches to leadership development will be highlighted in the following section.

6.6.1 Formal Leadership and Management Training

Half of the interviewees reported receiving formal leadership training prior to their appointment to headship. Moreover, the majority of the interviewees (11 of 16) had received formal leadership training after their appointment in the post. Participants spoke about several formal leadership training opportunities offered to them whether in-house provided by the DDSA or at the national level provided by external agencies such as the MoE or the IPA. This result contrasts with previous findings regarding the lack or inadequacy of formal leadership-training programmes for both aspiring and current leaders (Gmelch, 2004; Inman, 2009; Marshall, 2012; Preston and Floyd, 2016; Smith, 2007).

In terms of the programmes offered at the institutional level, there were generic leadership and management programmes as well as tailored leadership programmes for specific groups such as HoDs. Some of the training is delivered by in-house leadership specialists and some is provided by external HEIs. According to the DDSA staff member, the programmes target three levels of leaders within the university, namely: strategic, supervisory and executive leaders. Strategic leaders are accountable for creating strategies and long-term plans such as the rector of the university. Supervisory leaders, such as deans of the colleges, are in charge of supervising and mentoring the executive leaders to ensure the execution of the university vision whereas executive leaders such as HoDs, are responsible for implementing the university vision. She added that some programmes enabled HoDs to mix with senior leaders.

Therefore, the present study, to a large extent, is consistent with Bolden et al.'s (2008) study on the variety of internal and external leadership training programmes and support mechanisms offered to academic leaders. There was evidence of the availability of the three types of programmes mentioned in Bolden et al.'s study, namely: generic, bespoke programmes for certain groups of leaders, and bespoke programmes for specific academic units. However, there was no sign at Tala University of the fourth type of programme in Bolden et al. (2008), namely, individualised programmes such as mentoring and shadowing as will be further explained in Section 6.6.2. The benefit of external collaboration, according to Bolden et al. (2008), is that it enables academic leaders to learn from the experiences of colleagues in other contexts.

Generally speaking, respondents felt the university had invested in leadership training not just for those in formal positions such as middle leaders but also for aspiring leaders. This finding concurs with other research highlighting an increase in leadership development opportunities in the UK, US and Australia (Hempsall, 2014; Smith, 2002) as well as bespoke provision in Canada (Boyko and Jones, 2010).

The majority of participants revealed that leadership development training mostly occurs after formal appointment to headship. This might be why two interviewees only drew attention to the university initiative to provide leadership training for aspiring leaders. P10 described the fierce competition in relation to the INSEAD programme because only ten candidates are chosen. This may also show the filtering process that the university adopted to identify those who demonstrate exceptional leadership talent to invest in their development. This finding supports Hempsall's (2014) view that not all ambitious leaders have an obvious recognised trajectory towards development. The rotational nature of the headship post and the delay in announcing the next incumbent in advance makes it difficult to provide much preparation. This finding mirrors that of Bolden et al. (2008).

Participants had mixed feelings regarding their experience of formal leadership training. This result ran contrary to Mercer and Pogolian (2013), where formal training was free from criticism. On the positive side, participants valued the theoretical, cognitive, conceptual leadership and management knowledge acquired in such programmes because these aspects lead to a better understanding of their role and responsibilities as well as the wider university system and context. The importance of obtaining a conceptual understanding has been commonly cited in many studies (e.g. Knight and Trawler, 2001; Wolverton et al., 2005). From the interviewees' point of views, another advantage of formal training was that it granted them opportunities to engage in practical activities on functional aspects of the role and practise what they had learned; thus, they could improve their competence to perform the required daily tasks. This finding on the benefits of leadership training with practical application matches the findings of many studies (e.g. Brown, 2001; Drew et al., 2008).

Eight participants spoke about the opportunity that formal training provided to meet other chairs, share their experiences and challenges with trustworthy colleagues, and gain support and constructive feedback in a safe environment. The usefulness of the interaction with peers echoes many previous studies (Inman, 2009; Johnson, 2002; Thomas-Gregory, 2014). Three participants thought that formal leadership programmes were useful because they provided time to stand back and reflect on one's practices. This result confirms previous findings (Bolden et al., 2008; Wolverton et al., 2005). Similarly, Johnson (2002) drew attention to the time academic leaders spent carrying out management duties without having the chance to reflect on this experience, which makes it difficult for them to articulate what they have learned during this process and how they came up with the outcome. This leads Johnson (2002) to call for dedicated reflection time.

One interviewee, P10, described how she benefited from leadership training in terms of reinforcing her leadership identity and exploring her inner self: “During my participation in leadership courses, I check whether the values and principles I have formed are correct or whether they need modification. I think they also increase my confidence in my competences.” Gmelch (2004) argues that part of becoming a good leader is nurturing self-awareness and discovering underlying beliefs and values because, in the end, credibility, trustworthiness, and integrity are essential components of leadership. These elements have also been identified as key characteristics of an effective leader at the department level (Bryman, 2007). P10 was one of only two people to highlight values and principles in the interviewees and this is slightly at odds with much of western literature that talks about moral leadership as a dominant theme (Bolden et al., 2008; Bryman, 2007; Scott et al., 2008). A potential explanation for this is that Saudi Arabia is the birth place of Islam and religion is ubiquitous in a way that is not the case elsewhere. It may be these values and principles are already set by Islam in a way that does not have a parallel in leadership elsewhere. Another interviewee mentioned the usefulness of some course materials gained from the training she went through, specifically as a reference in times of challenge. This is supported by Scott et al. (2008), who observed the benefits of training materials.

However, formal leadership training was not free from criticism and this is why attending professional conferences, participating in bespoke and generic leadership and management programmes were among the five least effective approaches to leadership development (Table 16). Participants revealed that the focus was on the theory of leadership, whereas the practical dimension did not receive similar attention. Training tended to be delivered in a lecture format. Therefore, participants complained that they were passive listeners rather than active learners. This aligns with Johnson’s (2002) view regarding the poverty of off-the-shelf training in terms

of content and delivery. Johnson (2002) adds that leadership training mostly adopts a tutor-centred approach, which is based on the belief that participants will apply and transfer the theoretical knowledge gained to their practice. Johnson (2002) argues that such training does not take participants' wider experiences into consideration nor meet their diverse needs. Likewise, Franken et al. (2015) do not advocate formal training because, as they put it, such training treats learning as a transition and fails to address individuals' differences. In this view, knowledge is held by individuals (trainers) and transferred to a group of learners (middle leaders).

Participants indicated another drawback of formal leadership training: the programmes were too generic. They did not consider participants' actual needs and were irrelevant to real work problems and the demands of practice. Academic leaders vary in their skills, experience, subject area, time in post, and the career stage at which they obtain the role. Therefore, their professional needs will differ, which makes it hard to meet all of them through generic leadership training (Bolden et al., 2008). This result aligns with Blackmore and Blackwell (2006) who contend that general training based on the assumption that all participants have the same motivation and are faced with the same difficulties are ineffective.

In the same vein, P3 mentioned that some of leadership courses were not suitable for her departmental context. This supports Scott et al.'s (2008) contention that effective learning needs to be context specific. Likewise, Bolden et al. (2008) and Floyd (2016) claim the way in which academic leaders understand their role is affected by the nature of the department and its size. This was clearly true of the participants in the present study. For example, participants who led large departments believed that managing conflicts was a priority and perceived the benefits of training in this area more than those leading small departments. Thus, bespoke

leadership development programmes seem to respond better to these differences. This tendency to favour a tailored approach to leadership training was not surprising, and it is consistent with the findings of previous studies (Floyd, 2016; Johnson, 2002; Scott et al., 2008). Two reasons contribute to this, one deriving from the individual/personal factor, and the other from the nature of the department, or the organisational factor.

Participants identified four features of effective leadership training programmes, namely: active learning, provision over an extended period, skilful instructors and participants having similar roles. Participants valued experiential participatory learning when they were given opportunities to engage in practice, discuss real dilemmas with peers, reflect on their experiences, and receive useful feedback. This is in line with previous research (eg Floyd, 2016; Scott et al., 2008). Likewise, Johnson (2002) found that training which integrated both theoretical understanding and practical application, as well as providing opportunities for active interaction with colleagues, the exchange of ideas, and reflection on one's personal experience was more beneficial. Participants at Tala University perceived training that was sustained over a prolonged period to be more beneficial because it provided a safe environment for constructive feedback. This view of leadership learning as an ongoing process was consistent with the literature (e.g. Gmelch, 2004; Inman, 2009; Wolverson et al, 2005).

Participants asserted the importance of selecting a skilful, competent instructor to deliver leadership programmes as the third element of effective formal training. They added that they graduated long ago and became more critical with time and experience. Therefore, those who deliver leadership courses must have innovative methods to persuade their audience. They should also be a practitioner (or have similar experience) and be aware of the HE and university context. This view aligns with Bolden et al. (2008), particularly in relation to training offered

by external bodies. Such trainers need to gain credibility and respect and demonstrate awareness of academic culture and issues to ensure the quality of the programmes offered. Participants revealed that training in which the target audience had similar roles was more useful than general leadership courses because mixing with peers who have undergone similar experience created more room for genuine discussion of real work demands. This finding echoes that of Johnson (2002) and Floyd (2016). Likewise, Bolden et al. (2008) found that leaders at different organisational levels encounter different challenges. Therefore, when participants in leadership training hold a similar role, the discussion becomes more honest, open, and transparent.

With regard to training needs, participants showed a desire to gain basic leadership and management knowledge and skills, particularly those who had not held an administrative role before. They added that their new position required the sorts of skills not necessary for their previous academic work. This finding concurs with Nguyen (2012) and Preston and Price (2012) who conclude that middle academic leaders need a better understanding of what their management role entails. Although a HoD in Saudi Arabia has to be appointed from amongst existing faculty, nearly half of participants spoke about the need to be trained in functional aspects of the role and to understand the university system and structure and how their role fits within this. This contrasts with Inman (2009) and Smith (2002) who suggest internal appointments already have the aforementioned functional understanding.

Participants disclosed the need to develop their negotiation, communication, and interpersonal skills to effectively manage conflicts and change, deal with staff problems, overcome staff resistance, and lead their unit towards achieving the university's vision. These skills seem to be new for many middle leaders, particularly those who did not have any previous leadership

experience. This finding is consistent with many previous studies highlighting the fact that academic leaders need development in human resources management (Aziz et al., 2005; Preston and Price, 2012; Smith, 2007; Stanley and Algert, 2007). This was unsurprising given that management of people was among the main challenges HoDs faced in the present study and that there is an inherent tension in being sandwiched between two different groups (i.e. faculty and administration).

The specific knowledge and skills identified by participants in the present study broadly match the seven types of knowledge noted by the middle leaders in Knight and Trawler's (2001) study, namely self-knowledge, knowledge of people, knowledge of educational practice, conceptual knowledge, process knowledge, situational knowledge and tacit knowledge. It also, to some extent, aligns with the academic leadership capability framework proposed by Scott et al. (2008), insofar as an effective academic leader requires certain generic and role-specific competences in addition to personal, interpersonal, and cognitive capabilities. That said, the training needs identified in the present study only correspond to the foundational skills found in Berdrow's (2010) study – foundational skills allow HoDs to carry out their day-to-day administrative duties whereas leadership skills allow them to lead change or cross boundaries. This reflects the fact that participants see themselves as executive managers rather than academic leaders, because their roles involve more managerial and fewer leadership tasks.

Four participants acknowledged that lack of proficiency in English was a major impediment to participation in leadership development opportunities, especially those offered by external agencies or when the trainer was an international expert. Although HoDs are mostly going to engage with their staff in Arabic, enhancing second language acquisition, particularly for English, appears to be important for HoDs. This seems particularly useful for those leading

lab-based departments or multinational teams. Being proficient in English opens up a wider field of communication and widens academic leaders' opportunities to engage with international colleagues to share experiences and best practices. P6 thought that the lack of proficiency in English may contribute to, or be the root cause of, poor research productivity. This aligns with Almansour and Kempner's (2015) findings that the lack of English literacy was the key factor affecting women's contribution to research. The lack of proficiency in English as a means of communication limited their opportunities to participate in conferences or join and form research teams with international colleagues. This finding concurs with Nguyen (2012) regarding the need to enhance English language acquisition.

Participants argued that they were overwhelmed with work. Therefore, there was no time to attend such leadership training. They added that they prioritise carrying out their duties ahead of engaging in development programmes, particularly when the training time conflicts with work hours. This lack of time was a barrier to leadership development, confirming previous findings (Hempsall, 2014; Smith, 2007). Participants complained that both the timing of the programmes and their duration discouraged participation. Therefore, they suggested offering training at different times, including evenings and weekends. It seems important to note that the university was very responsive and flexible, providing training at different times. However, individuals often prefer different training times, so it is not certain that they would show up at the new time. Therefore, two participants proposed a seemingly practical solution. They suggested releasing HoDs from their responsibilities for a short period to be able to participate in leadership development opportunities. This view was also put forth by Johnson (2002), who found that administrative support in providing spare (free) time for manager academics benefited their learning. This is because the department can cope in the absence of its head for whatever reason. The university also needs to continue in its effort to provide training at a

convenient time for the intended audience. The length of leadership programmes offered has to be re-evaluated so that it does not negatively impact participation.

6.6.2 Experiential Practice-Based Learning

The majority of participants (13 in total) identified experiential practice-based learning through doing the job as their preferred approach to developing leadership skills. This result is consistent with the findings of previous studies on the value and effectiveness of informal and on-the-job learning as a means of leadership development (Drew et al., 2008; Inman, 2009; Muijs et al., 2006; Ohlott, 2004; Yip and Wilson, 2010). Participants, to a large extent, agreed that on-the-job learning was more valuable than attending formal leadership training in terms of enhancing their leadership skills.

Participants learned valuable lessons from real work problems and difficult times. For instance, P15 spoke about how practising the job helped her acquire many leadership skills in terms of dealing with people and problem-solving. P1 described how challenging job assignments helped her be more critical, look at situations in a different way, and manage stress effectively. Likewise, P2 reported how she became more aware of her leadership style because of on-the-job learning. Participants added that some work assignments forced them to think, act, and evaluate the outcome of the action and subsequently use the experience to enhance their practice. This finding matches the research done by McCauley and Van Velsor (2004), and Ohlott (2004); these authors argue that difficult tasks force individuals to leave their comfort zone and think and behave differently. However, participants asserted that they needed to reflect on their actions and receive colleagues' advice and feedback. This in turn helped them to avoid repeating the same mistakes. This matches the research done by Drew et al. (2008), Johnson (2002) and Scott et al. (2008) which found learning occurs through the engagement in

practice, reflection on experience, and interaction with others. Likewise, Van Velsor et al. (2004) argue that providing leaders with opportunities to discuss and critically reflect upon their practices can facilitate experiential learning.

Although participants valued this practice-based approach to leadership development, this type of learning is usually unintended and unplanned. It relies heavily on trial and error or what Floyd (2016) calls common sense; this was why P8 advocated support of on-the-job learning through formalised leadership training. Inman (2009) notes that informal methods of leadership development are insufficient since the majority of academic leaders start their careers without a clear aspiration for a leadership role, which resulted in unconscious learning. This was the case for the sample of leaders studied, as 13 of the participants were reluctant managers without a clear motivation or aspiration to take on more leadership posts.

Ten participants spoke about the value of their prior employment experience in preparing them for their current post. Participants revealed that their previous academic experience helped them understand the nature of academic work and university systems as well as to deeply absorb their university's culture. They added that climbing the career ladder, becoming involved in different committees, participating in department councils, observing the incumbent head and being a course leader all contributed to their acquisition and development of leadership and management knowledge and skills. This finding regarding the benefit of experiential learning as a means to leadership development matches many previous studies (Floyd, 2016; Inman, 2009; Johnson, 2002; Mercer and Pogolian, 2013).

However, experience was not sufficient on its own as a method of preparation. Two interviewees reported that their new position required new types of knowledge and skills not

necessarily acquired during their experience as academics, for which their primary focus was teaching and research in their subject areas. They met new challenges not experienced in their previous career trajectory. Other interviewees drew attention to the fact that what they had learned in their previous positions varied according to their experiences and the conditions they faced. They added that their learning influenced, and was shaped by, the nature of their subject area. This view was also expressed in Johnson (2002).

Seven participants said obtaining an administrative post before being formally appointed to a headship position was a useful strategy to gain the skills needed to perform well in the new post. Interviewees who felt most prepared for the role were those who had already held an administrative position, whether at the college or department levels. This result is consistent with studies showing that academic leaders grow and develop their leadership competencies as a result of assuming many leadership and managerial positions early in their careers (Bolden et al., 2008; Inman, 2009). For instance, interviewees who worked as deputy heads claimed that this managerial post gave them the opportunity to be more aware of what their new role entails as did direct contact with and observation of the incumbent. This was evident in P5's response: "My work as a deputy head for four years was equal to or more beneficial than any training." Therefore, taking leadership responsibilities at an early stage facilitated academic leaders' formation of a clear picture of a headship role before being formally appointed, thereby contributing to their acquisition of contextual learning (Hellawell and Hancock, 2001). Moreover, this experience seems to have helped two participants to decide leadership and management was a desirable pathway.

Although participants valued experiential learning, they could not precisely describe what they had learned. This aligns with Inman (2009) and Johnson (2002) who suggest trying to ascertain

concrete evidence from people that learning is the result of accumulated experience with time or trial and error is misguided. This type of accidental learning remains implicit and lacks intention and concentration, which make it difficult to determine the knowledge gained and how it was obtained.

Mentoring is a relatively new concept in Saudi Arabia (Alajmi, 2001). Interviewees did not use the term “mentoring” although they described mentoring activity. None of the interviewees had been mentored by the previous HoD, and yet, with just one exception, they all expressed a desire for this. Moreover, there was not even a formal transition phase in which they shadowed the former head. My interview with the DDSA staff member confirmed the lack of such programmes at Tala University. This apparent lack of mentoring aligns with the studies of Mullen (2009) and Franklin et al. (2015). However, this result contrasts with Bolden et al. (2008) who found that a mentoring system has been formalised in many U.K. universities to allow new HoDs to benefit from the invaluable advice and support of outgoing HoDs.

All but one interviewee thought former heads were a good source of support. Thus, they would like to have former heads on hand to offer useful advice, particularly in difficult times, or prior to or immediately following the formal appointment. This finding is consistent with many previous studies (Drew et al., 2008; Inman, 2009; Johnson, 2002; Smith, 2007). In light of the usefulness of mentoring with respect to developing leaders, three HoDs whose tenure was coming to an end stated their wish to mentor the incoming heads to explain some of the expected challenges they might face and how they could avoid repeating some of their own mistakes. O’Mahony and Matthews (2003) highlight the importance of involving more experienced academic leaders in the preparation and development of novice leaders, especially through shadowing.

Although such an initiative seems good, at first glance, it might underestimate the differences in values and priorities between the incoming and outgoing heads. Moreover, this might mean that a new HoD will seek the former HoD's approval. The common practice in UK universities of giving of study leave for the outgoing HoDs not only compensates for the previous loss of the research time but also makes sure that the new HoD is given a free reign.

In response to the lack of a formal mentoring system, P14 was proactive and informally requested that the outgoing head mentor her. She had a good relationship with the outgoing head, which is why she did not hesitate to ask for help. This kind of developmental relationship was organic, and it was created in response to a request to the new head without the university's intervention. This is consistent with Floyd (2016) who found such relationships tend to evolve as a result of mutual interest and comfort. However, it is important to note that when this approach to leadership development was left to chance only one HoD at Tala University established such a supportive relationship.

The rotating nature of headship in Saudi HE and the lack of time to announce the successor for a headship role may explain the university's failure to launch a formal mentoring scheme and provide appropriate preparation. This contrasts with the situation described by Bolden et al. (2008) in which the next leader is appointed far enough in advance to participate in several formal and informal learning opportunities and to shadow the person they are replacing. Tala University was established fairly recently, which may lessen the chance of having a real leadership model to learn from given the limited experience of the university's leaders. Furthermore, the fact that it is a female-only university may lessen opportunities for women leaders to benefit from the wider experience of male colleagues. As Al-Ahmadi (2011) notes, female leaders in Saudi Arabia have only recently come to hold leadership positions and lack

the accumulated experience qualifying them to effectively assume such roles. Their opportunities to learn from guidance or role models are limited because of the social conditions that isolate women from men in the workplace.

6.6.3 Self-Directed Learning

Participants said they greatly benefitted from consulting people around them and from networking and ongoing discussions with subordinates, superiors, and peers. Participants described how they learned to cope with the demands of their roles by talking to their deputy heads and exchanging ideas with trusted colleagues, particularly those with significant experience in HE or history in an administrative role. Bearing in mind that headship is a rotating post, there will be some individuals who have previously held the post. Such people can provide useful feedback and support. Five participants added that their line manager, the dean, was the first port of call to overcome role-related challenges.

Participants highlighted that their interaction with peers constituted a major source of learning and understanding. Such communication enabled participants to be more aware of their duties and responsibilities, discuss real business problems, identify successful solutions, share best practices, and receive valuable feedback. The importance of networking and sharing with others, particularly those in a similar role, was a key strategy for leadership development in several studies (Bolden et al., 2008; Brown, 2001; Drew et al., 2008; Inman, 2009; Johnson, 2002; Mercer and Pogosian, 2013; Pepper and Giles, 2015; Scott et al., 2008). The benefits of exchanging with others was highlighted by the participants and mirrors the findings of Gmelch (2004) and Floyd (2016), who stated that networking with trustworthy peers gave leaders space for reflection and helped them overcome the unwanted feelings of isolation. Likewise, Franken

et al. (2015) claim that academic leaders need to create their own networks, stressing the importance of connecting through community.

Participants agreed that interaction with peers was very strong at the college level, whereas it was less so at the university level. This was because there is a monthly college council that enables them to form informal support networks. Nevertheless, there were limited opportunities for networking with other HoDs outside their institution because of cultural norms. There was also some reluctance to highlight internal problems to colleagues outside the university lest it created a bad image of the university. Therefore, external networking with others in a similar role was not regarded as a highly useful method of leadership development (as demonstrated in Table 16) because of participants' limited opportunities to establish such networks and the competitive environment.

This finding is consistent with Almenkash et al. (2007), who argue that women have less opportunity than men to share experiences, engage with, and collaborate with counterparts in other universities, which prevents them from gaining wider experience. It also aligns with Al-Ahmadi (2011) who suggests women lack learning opportunities outside their organisation, for they are isolated from peer support networks. This might reinforce the notion that religion and social constraints may be among the reasons hampering and reducing women's chances of gaining experience outside their institution or creating external networks, especially with men. Such a situation affects their ability to grow as leaders and this will be further discussed in Section (6.8).

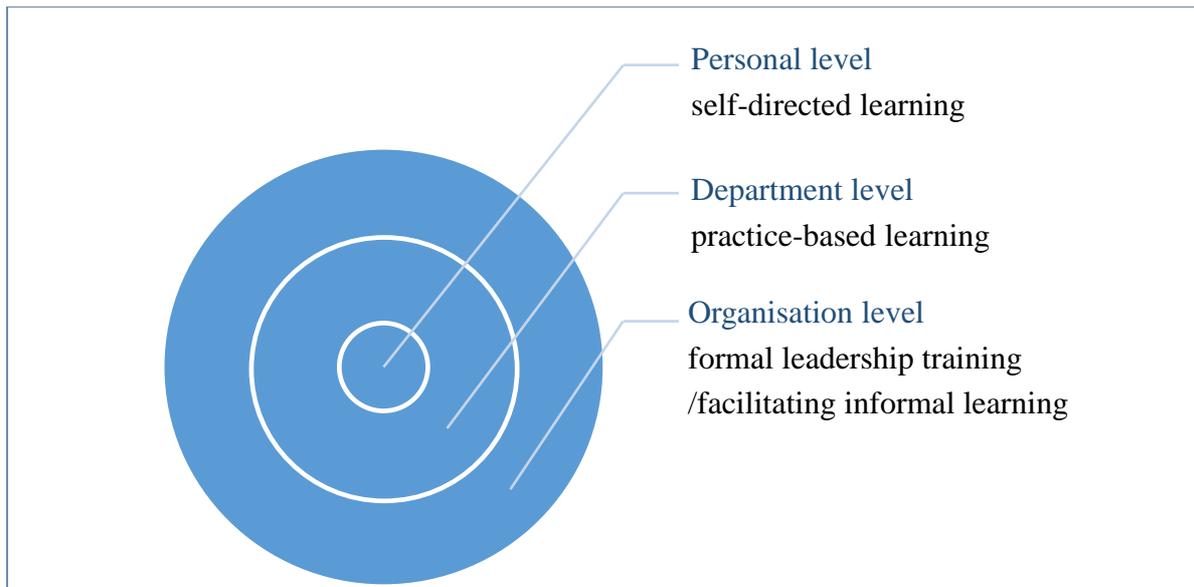
The importance of giving and receiving advice is noted by Branson et al. (2016) and Franklin et al. (2015). These authors depict learning as a social process in which knowledge is

constructed through collective participation and sharing in context. Thus, middle leaders can learn with and from each other. This view is also supported by Gmelch (2004), who stated that HoDs do not evolve outside of contexts; rather, leadership is based on relationships, and leaders' success relies on their abilities to interact with others. Moreover, leadership development through consultation and networking aligns with the concept of knowledge sharing (Bosua and Scheepers, 2007), specifically insofar as learning is a twofold process in which each individual contributes towards knowledge construction.

6.7 Proposed Model to Enhance Leadership Development for HoDs within Saudi HE

(RQ4)

As the previous evidence has shown, there is no single method of leadership development for HoDs. Instead, this study proposes a model of leadership development that integrates a wide range of valuable strategies and that can be executed at three different levels: the personal, the departmental, and the organisational (Figure 5). This model combines both participants' views of effective leadership development and strategies highlighted in the literature. At the personal level, HoDs can learn through their interactions with their subordinates, superiors, and peers. As mentioned earlier, learning is a social process that requires sharing and networking with others. At the department level, HoDs can improve their leadership skills through doing their job - participants argued that the majority of leadership learning occurs in the workplace. However, academic leaders cannot grow and develop on their own; they need their organization's support in providing opportunities for leadership development, and this, in turn, reflects leadership development at the organisation level. This model includes self-directed learning through consultation and networking with others (the personal level), experiential, practice-based learning through doing the job (the department level), and formal leadership development programmes provided by the university (the organisation level).



Self-directed learning/ socialization	Experiential practice-based learning	Formal leadership training
internal networks	learning on-the-job	leadership/ management conferences
external networks	experience	leadership/ management seminars
consultation	mentoring	generic leadership/management training programmes
	real work problems	bespoke leadership/management training programmes
	involvement in committees	
	observation/shadowing	

←
→

Informal **formal**

Figure 5: Proposed model for leadership development.

It is important to note that the influence of the organisation is not limited to providing the formal training which participants deemed insufficient. In fact, the right organisational culture can greatly increase the frequency and quality of informal learning. The self-directed and experiential learning that people are motivated to do undoubtedly depends on the personality of the person involved but it is also influenced by the organisational culture and, more specifically, by the deliberate support the organisation offers that make informal learning more likely to happen. Thus, the three loops overlap.

This model endorses Scott et al.'s (2008) conclusion that academic leaders must identify their deficiencies and then develop them through a combination of self-managed learning, practice-based learning, and formal leadership programmes. This model is distinctive because it is flexible and contains different strategies that suit the preferences and needs of different individuals. The present study upholds Drew et al.'s (2008) contention that there is no single best method in which academic leaders can learn the art of leadership and improve their leadership competencies. Drew et al. (2008) present effective strategies at each of these three levels: interaction with others (the personal level), critical incidents and dilemmas encountered on the job (the department level), and formal leadership programmes (the university level). However, the main difference between Drew et al.'s study and the present study was in the way in which academic leaders learn from others (the personal level). Participants in the current study revealed that they had improved their leadership skills primarily through their networking and consultation with colleagues within the institution, and not through the type of mentoring and learning from role models that is crucial in Drew et al.'s (2008) study. These forms of leadership development - mentoring and learning from role models - have not been implemented at Tala University and could be an area of development. Therefore, one of the most important lessons learned is that any leadership learning opportunities offered to HoDs has to consider all three levels and combine both formal and informal methods of learning to achieve the desired outcome.

This proposed model for leadership development aimed at HoDs appears to meet the three dimensions proposed by Gmelch (2004) namely: conceptual understanding, skills development, and reflective practice. Although conceptual understanding is mostly acquired through formal leadership training and skills are mostly enhanced through experience and practice on the job, in reality, there is always an overlap because most formal training provides

opportunities to practise what has been learned. The last component, reflective practice, should be cultivated at all three levels. Through interaction with colleagues, academic leaders can take a step back and recall aspects of their practices. While practicing the role, HoDs can reflect on their experiences and learn from their successes and failures. Formal training programmes also become more beneficial if they contain practical application and opportunities to recall aspects of practice and provide opportunities to discuss real life dilemmas with colleagues in a safe environment.

This model also aligns with Inman's model (2009, p. 428) in its flexibility, where no single method is proposed, but rather it offers a mixture of methods and gives academic leaders the chance to choose the methods at each of the three levels (personal, department, organisation) that suit their desires and inclinations. The model is also similar to Inman's model in making the experiential, practice-based approach (middle ring) the most significant means of leadership development. This is because practice provides the individual with the opportunity to apply the theoretical understanding gained in leadership programmes (outer ring), and to network and socialise with colleagues (inner ring). It also acknowledges the benefits of leaders' interaction and networking with individuals by surrounding them with either their superiors, subordinates, or peers (inner ring). However, this model differs from Inman's model in that it highlights the usefulness of formal leadership training programmes in promoting and complementing informal leadership learning. The participants in Inman's study had a more negative view of formal training programmes.

The proposed model of leadership development concurs with Floyd's (2016) view regarding changing the locus of control in leadership development. In other words, there is value in reducing the system's control as the only source of leadership development because the

university, which is represented by the DDSA, might lack a clear understanding of the actual needs of the academic leaders and their units. Leadership learning, therefore, should be initiated by individuals and that is why the self/individual dimension occupies the inner circle. Individuals and departments have to be the starting point for any support mechanism to ensure its relevance and to keep leadership learning an ongoing process. This does not mean restricting learning to the individual and department levels; rather, it means linking leadership development activities to the actual needs of leaders and paying particular attention to their context (the department). This in turn has to be balanced with the needs of the organization as a whole.

The literature suggests some useful approaches to leadership development that have not been widely exploited in the Saudi context, namely networking with peers in similar roles outside the university and mentoring, both informal and formal. Participants were keen to learn from counterparts outside the university because that would enable them to interact with males who had longer experience. However, it is possible that there would be some sensitivities in relation to reputation and prestige and it would need to be handled carefully in terms of conflicts of interest and confidentiality. Participants also highlighted that they welcomed more mentoring opportunities whatever form they took. The fact that the university is relatively new may explain the absence of this form of leadership development due to the limited number of female role models. However, the nature of the HoD's role and its rotation every two years could counter-balance this, over time. Nevertheless, mentoring has to be given a higher priority and more structured mentoring opportunities have to be provided. The religious and cultural norms that restrict women's interactions with counterpart male HoDs in other institutions cannot be fully overcome. However, developments in technology and online media could help to reduce the issue.

Leadership preparation should be planned and structured in a way that facilitates identifying those with leadership potential and investing in their development rather than leaving this to chance. Moreover, ongoing development after taking office is equally important because learning over an extended period tends to be more sustained. Furthermore, there is a need to integrate the leadership development opportunities offered by the university (especially by the DDSA) and external providers of leadership development programmes, whether by local bodies such as the MoE or the IPA or by external parties through partnership with many global HEIs.

6.8 The Impact of the University's Unique Context and the Cultural and Social Traditions

It is clear that the unique context of the research site and Saudi culture have played a significant role in the participants' experience. Nine of the participants believed working in a male-free environment opens the door for female leaders and working in a university run entirely by women provides fuller opportunities for women's empowerment instead of being subservient to men. Therefore, leading in a female-only environment could allow women to take control of decision-making and act outside men's authority. Both Alsubaihi (2016) and Almenkash et al. (2007) argue that in Saudi HEIs with male and female campuses, males still retain leadership positions and decision-making power which hinders women from accessing such positions. As the authority is based in the men's headquarters, women's freedom to make decisions, even those related to their own departments, will be limited due to the continuous intervention of their male colleagues. Similarly, many studies (AlDoubi, 2014; Al-kayed, 2015) argue that Saudi female leaders in gender segregated campuses have limited power. They have to refer to the dean in the men's section and must obtain the approval of their male counterparts in making all essential decisions, especially those relating to financial matters; this process is both time-

consuming and draining. Therefore, participants believed that the presence of a single authority responsible for decision-making would reduce bureaucracy and accelerate decision-making, at least at the departmental level.

Moreover, this male-free environment reduced the problem of a divergence of visions that might arise with the existence of male and female leaders. This finding aligns with the study by Almengash (2009) regarding the challenges arising from the presence of multiple leaders in the male and female sections, and the consequent weakness of communication, absence of coordination, conflicts and long work procedures. This environment could also eliminate male dominance over decision-making. Participants believed that in mixed groups where there is a diversity of opinions, the most dominant male view would be implemented.

Although some researchers argue that HEIs with gender-segregated campuses promote gender inequality and the marginalisation of female leaders' real participation in decision-making (AlDoubi, 2014; Jamjoom and Kelly, 2013), others believe that this gender-segregation policy provides women with access to leadership positions (Hamdan, 2005). Participants in the current study confirmed that the university being run exclusively by women leaders does provide a full opportunity for women to execute leadership role without male intervention. This unique context gives women a great opportunity to prove their worth in leadership positions and confirm their value in the decision-making process. This fact validated P10's decision to join this single-sex university because it is the gateway for every woman aspiring to leadership, and could facilitate her access to more senior positions in the hierarchy as these posts are reserved for women without having to compete with male counterparts. This supports the argument that no matter what leadership position a woman occupies in a university with male and female campuses, she will not be more than a deputy to a male colleague even if she has the same

academic rank (AlDoubi, 2014). This in turn reflects the vision of the policy makers in Saudi Arabia and their strategic plan towards facilitating women's empowerment. According to Al-Ahmadi (2011), one of the general objectives in the Eighth Development Plan is "empowering women, giving them a greater role and increasing their participation in various fields, both within the family and in the workplace, and providing them with better decision-making opportunities".

Ten participants indicated that ease of communication was an advantage when managing at a single-sex university. They added that middle management required continuous contact with the dean of the college, senior leaders and academic staff members, and this communication was easier when all of them were female due to religion, customs, and culture. Because the participants were all female, they were able to communicate face-to-face without needing to use closed-circuit television (CCTV) which is usually used during the communication with men. This confirms Jamjoom and Kelly's (2013) findings that communication in gender-segregated campuses was a major impediment to women's leadership. Similarly, Almenkash et al. (2007) found that in gender segregated campuses, there is poor communication between women and senior leaders. Therefore, women's sections were isolated from major events taking place at headquarters and female leaders lacked active participation in planning, decision making and academic and administrative committees.

On the other hand, some participants indicated that there were disadvantages because the female-only environment stopped them contacting and building professional networks with their male counterparts and limited their experience. In particular, participants highlighted their limited experience in leadership positions due to the relatively newness of the university and the lack of female role models. This finding aligns with those of Alsubaihi (2016) who found

that Saudi female leaders in HE struggle to develop their professional networks in a male dominant environment. AlDoubi (2014) reached a similar conclusion and found that Saudi female leaders lack social interaction with male colleagues and were excluded from informal networks. She added that the gender segregation policy in the workplace contributes to women's exclusion from such networks. In the same vein, Omar and Davidson (2001) pointed out that women are denied access to peer support that would make their role easier, while men dominate the main networks that enable them to reach higher positions and access important information. The huge number of men in leadership positions in HE leads to cooperation and loyalty between male members of staff, resulting in the creation of nepotism and favouritism, either consciously or unconsciously, and contributed to the exclusion of women from accessing leadership positions (Kellerman and Rhode, 2014).

This lack of professional networks (Al-Tamimi, 2004; Munoz, 2010; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014), the limited experience of women leaders, the lack of role models and the dearth of mentoring programmes (Al-Ahmadi, 2011; Kauser and Tlaiss, 2011) stop women accessing leadership posts and explain the low proportion of women in leadership positions (Kellerman and Rhode, 2014). However, it is worth noting that this tendency to exclude women from decision-making, and professional networks is not only an issue in gender-segregated universities where women cannot interact directly with men; rather, it is an international phenomenon occurring even in mixed universities (Maranto and Griffin, 2011; Munoz, 2010; Wharton and Estevez, 2014). Hence, this exclusion appears to be more related to gender than culture although it seems stronger in Saudi Arabia compared internationally.

Two participants were not in favour of women in leadership positions; they believed that men were better at decision-making. P5 strongly preferred to have males in senior leadership posts

because she believed that female leaders tend to complicate and delay the decision-making process. P5 spoke about male authority and seemed to endorse the general beliefs about women and their managerial capabilities held in Saudi society. Although this view was only expressed once, it seems particularly surprising as it came from a highly qualified woman who occupies a leadership position. Her view seems to endorse the gender stereotypes that portray men as leaders rather than women. These gender stereotypes were highlighted as a barrier to women's leadership in previous studies (Almaki et al., 2016; Eagly and Karau, 2002; Kauser and Tlaiss, 2011; Keohane, 2014). These beliefs present a negative image of women and diminish confidence in their ability to succeed in leadership positions.

P5's stance illustrates how a perceived contradiction between gender stereotypes and leadership stereotypes leads to prejudice against women (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Women may face more negative reactions and resistance than their male counterparts when exercising power (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). They may also make slower decisions because of their desire to be inclusive. However, any criticism arising from this approach could be countered by the argument that collegiality allows buy in and leads to longer-lasting, more embedded better decision making (Hellowell and Hancock, 2001).

Likewise, P7 said men were better at decision-making and women leaders precisely follow instructions and refer to rules and regulations more often than their male counterparts; this, in turn, delays decision-making. P7 believes women tend to complicate matters because they are more fearful and cautious than men concerning rules. If this is generally the case, as suggested by P7, it might be because women are relatively new in leadership positions and so lack experience of the decision-making process and are not fully aware of the regulations; this view

is mentioned in Al-Ahmadi's (2011) study. Feeling inferior to men may make women inflexible in an attempt to prove themselves (Al-kayed, 2015). Another interpretation could be that men face less scrutiny – or are less accountable – than women when it comes to obeying the regulations. Men seem to have a series of relationships that protect them because of the dominance of men in leadership positions, in contrast to women who, according to Alsubaihi (2016), lack such professional networks.

6.9 Summary

HoDs in this study played multiple roles though there were variations in how much time and focus they gave to these different roles. Workload; managing people; lack of power and authority, and being stuck in the middle were the key challenges for middle leaders. The study revealed that there is no single effective approach to leadership development and proposed a model for leadership development that can be implemented at different but interlinked levels. Despite the benefits associated with taking a leadership role in a female-only university, there were some drawbacks, most notably being unable to benefit from the wide experience of male counterparts.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This study has investigated the perceptions of female HoDs in a female-only university regarding their roles, the most important responsibilities they carried out and the key challenges encountered. The research has also explored what constitutes effective leadership development for this group. A sequential mixed-methods design was used incorporating a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. In the previous chapter, research findings were reported and discussed in relation to the literature; this chapter will summarise the main findings, provide brief answers to the research questions and provide further reflection in terms of the research context. The chapter will end by highlighting the contribution of the current study, its implications and limitations, and areas for further research.

7.2 Research Question 1

How do HoDs perceive their role, and what are their main duties and responsibilities?

The role of HoD was considered to be multifaceted with participants emphasising that they played multiple roles simultaneously as managers, leaders, representatives and academics. As a manager, the HoD is responsible for performing daily operational tasks but she is not in charge of managing financial resources because there is no budget at the departmental level. The leadership role includes leading the department towards achieving the university's vision, leading individuals and academic programmes. As a representative, the HoD liaises between the university administration and members in her department, communicates and conveys the wishes and concerns of the department members to senior management and helps the university administration in implementing its policies and mission, as well as working to improve the reputation of the department inside and outside the university. However, HoDs cannot establish partnerships with external bodies and rarely participate in fund raising activities. The academic

role of HoDs is limited to teaching, supervising graduate students and keeping up-to-date in their field; conducting research is a very minor element of their role.

Although all the participants said their role included these four dimensions, different participants emphasized different elements and prioritized different tasks, according to the nature of their academic discipline, the size of their department and the differences in their personal interests and priorities. This result is not surprising and is consistent with the many previous studies that have concluded the role and responsibilities are influenced by the nature of the academic discipline and the institutional context and culture (Bolden et al., 2008; Johnson, 2002; Smith, 2005).

In terms of HoDs' duties, Table 13 (page 131) illustrates the multiple tasks that come within their remit and Table 17 (page 191) summarises the five most important tasks. However, the study showed a mismatch between the tasks that HoDs believed to be important aspects of their role and what they actually did in practice (see Section 6.4). Participants were immersed in routine daily operational tasks rather than participating in strategic leadership or developing plans and academic programmes. Furthermore, the centralised decision-making system limits the ability of HoDs to effectively lead their departments because of the need to consult a long organisational hierarchy. It seems possible, therefore, to state that there is little room for department heads to execute leadership as they are more concerned with implementing the senior leaders' vision and policy.

To sum up, the experience of those female HoDs in a female-only university was similar to those academic middle leaders in other contexts who are involved in performing many administrative duties and rarely contribute to strategy formation (Marshall, 2012; Pepper and

Giles, 2015; Preston and Price, 2012). However, it contrasts with some recent studies that report the HoD's evolving role in strategic leadership and decision making (Bolden et al., 2008; De Boer and Goedegebuure, 2009; Scott et al., 2008).

7.3 Research Question 2

What are the key challenges that HoDs face in carrying out their role?

The study identified several key challenges that HoDs encountered, namely: work overload, managing people, lack of power and authority, and being stuck in the middle. First, participants complained that they had many tasks to perform and trying to fulfil them all required a huge time commitment. This finding aligns with the literature that highlights the heavy workload of a HoD (Berdrow, 2010; Deem et al., 2003; Smith, 2002). However, what is interesting in this particular context is that HoDs lacked confidence in the ability of administrators so did not delegate routine tasks, thus adding to their own workload and pressure. This had a negative impact on HoDs' ability to perform the core academic tasks of teaching and research, which made them vulnerable to what Sotirakou (2004) called the 'Janusian conflict'. This was a particular challenge because the majority of participants were assistant professors who had not reached the rank of full professor. According to Saudi HE regulations, eligibility for promotion is based on research output and not on holding a managerial position. This explains why the interviewees had accepted the role very reluctantly. This agrees with Peterson's view (2016) that the negative impact of the headship on academic identity influences the decision whether or not to continue in the post and that was why the majority of participants expressed their desire to revert to the status quo as a faculty member at the end of their term.

Second, managing people was challenging for departments heads for several reasons. A key characteristic of this study was that the vast majority of participants had a lower academic rank

than those whom they led, which made it difficult to deal with more experienced colleagues and persuade them to perform certain tasks. This finding concurs with the studies of Brauson et al., (2016) and Preston and Price (2012). Moreover, the temporary nature of the role adds an extra layer of complexity because most of HoDs will return as academic staff and do not wish the headship period to adversely affect their relationship with colleagues. This finding was not surprising and agrees with the studies that revealed the impact of the temporary role on the relationship with peers (Berdrow, 2010; Preston and Price, 2012). The study also revealed that the management of academic staff was difficult because the academy was unpredictable, and staff resisted change and/or failed to understand the bigger picture or vision of the university; most of these findings align with the literature (Hammersley-Fletcher and Kirkham, 2005; Pepper and Giles, 2015).

Other difficulties were the lack of power to make many decisions necessary to carry out the role as required and the lack of control over financial resources. Participants were only responsible for making routine decisions to manage day-to-day affairs; the centralised system and the rigid hierarchy required them to refer to senior management and seek their approval which often hindered their ability to carry out their role. The study therefore broadly agrees with many studies that assert the limited power of HoDs (Marshall, 2012; Martinez, 2011; Pepper and Giles, 2015; Preston and Price, 2012).

Finally, the study showed that occupying a middle position as the interface between senior management and departmental colleagues was a challenge because it is difficult to deal with the conflicting demands and expectations. Participants found it difficult to implement senior management's mandates with regard to quality issues that sometimes did not align with their colleagues' wishes and yet could not be achieved without their cooperation. This classic middle

management conflict is a common challenge that has been well-documented (Brauson et al., 2016; Hellowell and Hancock, 2001; Sotirakou, 2004).

7.4 Research Question 3

What are the most effective approaches to improve leadership and management capabilities, and what makes them effective?

The study identified different approaches through which HoDs could develop their leadership skills (Table 16, page 137). However, both the quantitative and qualitative data provided evidence that experiential practice-based and self-directed learning were more valuable than formal leadership training. In terms of experiential learning, the majority of participants confirmed that doing the job was the best instructor and that they learned useful lessons through dealing with real-work problems. This result is not surprising and largely coincides with the literature that indicates leadership learning is mostly gained through engaging in practice (Inman, 2009; Ohlott, 2004). It was also found that previous experience as a faculty member and participation in various committees helped many to become more aware of the nature of the HE sector and of the university's systems and culture, thus obtaining contextual understanding; this finding aligns with the studies of Johnson (2002) and Inman (2009). The study also revealed that obtaining managerial positions before taking on the head's role, especially working as deputy head, had a positive impact because it provided the opportunity to become familiar with what the head's role entails.

With regard to self-directed learning, participants felt that networking with people around them was an effective means of developing their leadership skills and overcoming many of the obstacles they encountered. The line manager, the dean, was recognised as a useful source for learning and support, especially in times of crisis. In addition, networking with HoDs from other departments helped participants to learn many aspects of their role and allowed them to

discuss their problems, and share experiences and best practice. Participants also benefited from consulting and exchanging opinions with some colleagues within the department in particular those who had already undertaken the role and so understood its requirements. The significance of networks with others as an effective leadership development approach is consistent with much of the research (Branson et al., 2016; Franken et al., 2015; Johnson, 2002; Scott et al., 2008; Yip and Wilson, 2010).

Participants had mixed feelings regarding the effectiveness of formal leadership training programmes due to their different experiences. On the positive side, the study provided evidence of the usefulness of some programmes in developing a theoretical and cognitive understanding of leadership and management concepts and theories, and enabling the participants to better understand their organisation's system and policies. Another advantage of these programmes was that they provided the opportunity for participants to meet with other HoDs to exchange experiences and practice. Some also suggested that these programmes gave them time to stand back, think and reflect on their practices. On the other hand, these programmes were not highly regarded as effective methods to support leadership development for number of reasons. The focus was on theoretical learning rather than providing participants with a chance to apply what had been learned. There was also criticism of the way in which the training was delivered, often adopting the traditional lecture mode where knowledge is transferred rather than constructed. Participants also complained that some of these programmes were too generic and did not take into account the differences between the participants' experiences or their department context; sometimes, the content was not based on actual work problems or the participants' needs. The deficiencies in formal leadership programmes referred to in this study are consistent with those frequently mentioned in previous studies (Johnson, 2002; Scott et al., 2008).

7.5 Research Question 4

How can learning opportunities and leadership development for HoDs be enhanced within the Saudi Arabian HE sector?

The findings and discussion in the preceding chapter showed that there is no single effective approach to leadership development. Rather, this can happen at three different but complementary levels: personal, departmental, and organisational. The study has proposed a model for leadership development (Figure 5, page 231), which contains a mixture of effective strategies to develop leadership skills based on the participants' perceptions and other effective methods identified in previous studies. At the personal level, HoDs learn a great deal by interacting with individuals around them, whether they are their subordinates, superiors, or peers (self-directed learning). At the department level, HoDs can improve their leadership skills through doing their job. In particular, participants emphasized that the majority of leadership learning occurs in the workplace. However, self-managed and experiential learning on their own are not seen as sufficient for developing academic leaders (see Sections 6.6.2 and 6.6.3). Therefore, organisational support in providing leadership development opportunities is needed, not only by offering formal leadership programmes, but also by creating the conditions that allow and facilitate informal learning, both self-managed or practice-based. Accordingly, any leadership development opportunity that targets HoDs must take these three levels into account and include both formal and informal approaches to learning.

This model for leadership development should not be viewed in isolation but should be seen alongside other leadership development efforts. There is a need to provide ongoing leadership development opportunities and to integrate those offered at the institutional level through the DDSA with other efforts provided by external bodies, whether national entities such as the

MoE or the IPA, or through partnerships with international HEIs to learn from the best practices.

The fact that Tala University is relatively new means that female leaders are still new in senior leadership roles and lack the experience to be role models for other young leaders. Being a female-only university has reduced the leaders' ability to network with male HoDs in other universities and prevented many from benefiting from the extensive experience of male counterparts with a tradition and history of being in leadership positions; this has resulted in a lack of leadership development opportunities for these women. However, this situation can be seen in a positive way in that female leaders will have the opportunity to look at problems with new eyes, thus avoiding committing men's mistakes. Although these communication constraints cannot be completely overcome, the development of technology may contribute to alleviating the problem. This is why it is important that the university cooperates with other leadership providers in providing learning opportunities such as online courses and electronic discussion forums that rely upon oral conversation to allow female leaders to contact with other colleagues to discuss sensitive issues. The study also recommends the establishment of a formal mentoring system within the university because, over time, especially as the post is rotated every two years, the experience of women in leadership positions will expand and the number of those who can be role models will increase.

7. 6 Further Reflection

The previous section has addressed the four research questions. In this section, I will further reflect on how the participants' experiences were influenced by their distinctive context and the culture of Saudi society. The majority of the participants expressed positive views and felt that working in a female-only university has already provided them with the opportunity to

exercise leadership and to control the decision-making process within their departments away from male authority. This finding is in line with the argument in Saudi literature that women in HEIs with gender-segregation (i.e. a male and a female campus) operate under the authority of male colleagues, which affects the performance of women's sections and limits their freedom to make decisions concerning their units due to male intervention (AlDoubi, 2014; Almenkash et al., 2007). Participants indicated that having one individual in charge of department leadership and decision-making minimises disparity regarding the vision that may result from the presence of multiple leaders; this is the case in gender-segregated campuses according to Almengash (2009). In turn, this can speed up decision-making and reduce bureaucracy.

The study revealed that being a female-only university opens the door for women's leadership and thus contributes to women being empowered rather than being subordinate to men. Participants believed that this male-free environment facilitates their access to more senior leadership positions because such positions are reserved for women and do not require them to compete with male colleagues. As a consequence, this study suggests that such an arrangement has the potential to achieve the vision of decision makers in Saudi Arabia regarding increasing the numbers of female leaders and facilitating their access to senior leadership positions. Indeed, one of the participants who had decided to join the university in order to obtain a senior leadership role had already managed to gain such a position by joining the university council. Furthermore, this environment facilitates the communication necessary to the leader's success, not only with her colleagues but also with the dean of the college and other senior leaders, because all are women working on the same campus. Such an environment overcomes the male-female communication barriers, stemming from the religious and cultural customs of the conservative society, which exist in a gender-segregated campus.

On the other hand, a male-free environment has some drawbacks, with regard to the lack of opportunity for female leaders to establish professional networks with their male colleagues. It seems that there is a contradiction here: while participants believed that the male-free environment gave them complete freedom to make decisions within their own departmental boundaries, they simultaneously identified the lack of power and authority as one of the key challenges facing them and limiting their effectiveness in the role. This confirms that Saudi HEIs suffer from bureaucracy and central decision-making, regardless of how women's sections are structured. Thus, it could be said that female-only universities are not sufficient to guarantee women's empowerment. The fact that the university is only for women may have accelerated decision-making at the department level but much still remains to be done to facilitate decision-making at the university level especially given that Saudi universities have less autonomy than elsewhere because they operate under the strict control of the MoE.

7.7 Contributions to Knowledge

Most of the research examining the role of HoDs has been conducted in developed countries. There is a scarcity of research that investigates the role in other cultural contexts, such as those with centralized, less autonomous systems and whose educational policies require gender-segregation, such as Saudi Arabia. This study therefore firstly claims to make a significant contribution to academic leadership at the departmental level by highlighting this particular context and adding to the limited literature from developing countries. Secondly, the study is valuable for those interested in conducting comparative studies as it focuses on a particular context influenced by Islam and the conservative culture of Saudi society and provides an excellent opportunity to compare this context with others. Thirdly, the majority of research carried out in HE in Saudi Arabia is quantitative. However, this study employed a mixed-methods approach where the qualitative data was prioritized. It is a response to Smith and

Abouammoh's (2013) call regarding the need to enrich Saudi HE with more qualitative data.

Fourthly, the study also adds to the limited research in the area of leadership development. It has been argued that more research is needed into how academic leaders learn and how to better support them, especially in light of the continuous change in the HE landscape and the emergent challenges that academic leaders face (Floyd, 2016; Inman, 2009). This study is a response to this need. Finally, the study also contributes to an enhanced awareness and understanding of the role of academic leaders and the challenges they face in a single-sex institution, an area that has not been adequately addressed.

7.8 Implications and Recommendations

In light of the efforts to reform Saudi HE, academic leaders are expected to play a significant role in leading change. Accordingly, this study, by exploring the role of HoDs, the challenges they encountered, and the effective approaches through which they developed their leadership skills, hopes to contribute to developing future leaders capable of achieving the desired change in Saudi HE. Therefore, the results of this study have implications for a number of stakeholders in Saudi HE.

Identifying the challenges that HoDs face provides both policy makers and university management teams with insights to enable them to better support heads so that they, in turn, can better fulfil their role. Participants complained that they lack the authority to effectively carry out their role due to bureaucracy and hierarchical structures. Therefore, the study suggests that more decision powers should be delegated to heads rather than all issues needing to be approved by department and college councils; this would relieve pressure on such boards to devote more time to strategic matters. The study also suggests giving some financial powers to

HoDs to allow them to plan appropriately, which may help to improve productivity and increase trust between them and senior leaders.

The study revealed that HoDs suffer from overload and therefore do not have enough time to conduct their research. In order to resolve this issue, the study proposes the establishment of the post of office manager, especially in large academic departments, with responsibility for routine administrative tasks allowing HoDs to focus more on strategic tasks; this is particularly important if more authority and the management of financial resources are delegated to heads. University administration should provide HoDs with a specific allocation of time to carry out research, either within their role or as study leave at the end of their term, in order to maintain their research productivity. Such an arrangement may encourage some academic staff to accept the role in the future because it offers the opportunity to maintain their research activity. Another solution might be to give the HoD a research assistant who could collect and analyse data as directed by the HoD.

The findings revealed a perceived lack of skilled administrators. The university appears unable to attract the right calibre of professional staff. This might be for financial reasons or work-related conditions but some participants also pointed to favouritism. Therefore, the study suggests the recruitment process for administrative positions should be reconsidered and that a more transparent approach should be adopted with regard to advertising such posts, as well as specifying the required qualifications and selection criteria. Moreover, university management should give more consideration to the professional development of administrative staff, through the provision of appropriate training programmes, in order to provide them with the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their roles in line with expectations.

It was found that previous administrative roles that participants had occupied were often effective in preparing them for the headship role. Therefore, in order to develop academic leaders at the university level, the study suggests the introduction of a system that allows individuals to experience some leadership roles within their department or at the college level as preparation for taking on a head's role. This process may provide a pool of qualified academic staff better equipped to take over the headship and other senior leadership positions in future. To maximise the benefits of such a scheme, it is suggested that such positions are rotated to enable a larger number of individuals to develop their leadership capabilities.

The study suggests reviewing the short-term nature of the headship post because this arrangement limits the value of the leadership and management experience gained in the position. Those with no previous management experience spent their first year exploring the role; they began to exhibit greater confidence and develop their leadership skills in their second year just as their tenure was coming to an end. Such an arrangement makes the preparation of academic leaders difficult because of the large number of those who enter and leave the post in such a short time-scale. In this context, it is necessary to review the selection process for HoD candidates, so that academic excellence and community service are not the only criteria; other factors such as previous management experience and personality traits should be given more weight.

Many participants complained they were unable to find time to participate in leadership training due to their huge responsibilities. The study therefore recommends freeing up a limited period of time, for example a week each semester, specifically for heads to attend such programmes; the time could alternate between departments and colleges giving heads the opportunity to interact with colleagues inside and outside their colleges. The study also

recommends announcing the dates of the leadership courses in advance and not changing those dates to ensure that HoDs are able to attend. Furthermore, HoDs should be given the opportunity to meet their counterparts within the university through periodic meetings arranged every month for those at the same college, or at specific intervals for all HoDs within the university, to allow them to exchange experience and discuss emerging issues and challenges.

The study revealed some deficiencies in leadership development programmes. This has implications for those responsible for planning, designing and providing leadership programmes. They need to reconsider the traditional delivery of these courses and to adopt more innovative methods whereby participants are encouraged to practise and reflect on what has been learned. Leadership programmes should be regularly evaluated to ensure they address actual needs in subjects identified in this study (see Section 5.3.5.6.4). The DDSA should invite former HoDs to share their experiences with incoming heads via discussions and presentations. Face-to-face training should be combined with online courses and resources to provide a blended learning approach. This may go some way to addressing the time issue and enable the use of available resources in a timely manner. The study also recommends the establishment of a mentoring programme that allows new HoDs to be paired with a more experienced peer. The University needs to put this in place for new heads early, before or as soon as they take up the role, and to monitor this process to ensure it is effective and both sides fully engage with it. The scheme can develop over time once the principle is established by allowing participants to choose their mentors through their informal networks.

The DDSA should cooperate with other local agencies concerned with leadership development such as the IPA and the ALC at the MoE in the design of leadership training programmes. Such collaboration in providing learning opportunities and leadership training will ensure the

integration and coherence of effort and provide greater opportunities for female leaders to learn from other leaders, especially male colleagues at the national level, and to benefit from a diverse range of experiences. This may facilitate and encourage women leaders to develop their informal professional networks with male counterparts, which is currently difficult because of the university's unique context.

The study pointed to a mismatch between participants' expectations of the role and what they do in actual practice. Therefore, this study is valuable for current HoDs, and those who aspire to the role, to make them more aware of the complexity of the role and to enhance their understanding of the responsibilities it entails, the challenges they can expect to face, and the effective ways in which they could develop their leadership skills to help them succeed in the role. It will also help those with aspirations to become a HoD to make a more informed decision about their future career.

7.9 The Limitations of the Study

In this section, I discuss the limitations of this research. First, the results of this study cannot be generalised because of the very distinctive research context: a women-only university in Saudi Arabia. The findings cannot be applied to other Saudi HEIs due to the difference in the leadership and management style of these institutions, their organisational structure and culture, and the demographics of their staff and students. The study was conducted within the time available to me as a PhD student and this restricted the time spent on field work. The sample was relatively small, only 36 questionnaires and 16 interviews, which meant that the participants' perceptions may not reflect or represent the views of other HoDs within the university. Furthermore, although I tried to achieve diversity in the sample, many participants

were from the same academic discipline, and therefore, the results may reflect the perceptions of a certain group in a given academic field.

The study has relied on a self-reported questionnaire and interviews. As a next step, observation could be used instead of relying solely on the opinions and statements of the participants. Observing a number of department council meetings might provide a more thorough understanding the role of HoDs, how decisions are made and the extent of authority granted to heads in this regard. Similarly, observing some of the leadership development programmes offered by the DDSA could result in a greater understanding of how these courses are delivered. The study was also limited to the perceptions of HoDs so it would be useful to expand the research to include other key members of the head's role set, such as the dean of the college, and academic or administrative staff, to analyse whether their perceptions of the department head's role, their responsibilities and the difficulties they face, correspond to those identified by the heads themselves. The study could be extended further to include those responsible for leadership training programmes such as administrators in the DDSA, or the administrators at the ALC affiliated with the MoE, to obtain a better understanding of their policies and decisions made about training programmes aimed at academic leaders and of their future plans and implementation strategies.

Another limitation is that the study is largely based on Western literature, while the few local studies that address female leadership have been conducted in gender-segregated environments. Despite this, many findings, especially the challenges participants encountered as middle-level leaders and the effective approaches to develop their leadership skills, were in line with what has been revealed in the wider literature and in previous studies of HoDs in other global contexts. The findings were discussed in the comparison with international studies

and a small number of models were used to support the analysis and the interpretation of findings.

Finally, as no research study is completely objective, there are inevitably some restrictions resulting from the bias that the researcher is likely to bring. I sought to minimise this effect by clarifying my positionality as a researcher in education and explaining how my professional experience generated this interest and led me to formulate the research questions (Section 4.3). I also employed a number of strategies to increase the credibility of the data and its analysis, including user-validation or ‘member checking’ (Hammond and Wellington, 2013) and methodological triangulation i.e. using several methods of data collection and multiple analytical techniques to understand the issue from different angles (Cohen et al., 2011).

Despite these limitations, the study is important and adds to the small number of studies that have explored the role of HoDs in a centralised, less autonomous and gender-segregated system such as Saudi Arabia. The results have generated a clearer picture about female leadership in a unique context, a female-only university, and helped to establish whether such an environment represents an opportunity or a challenge.

7. 10 Further Research

It would be worthwhile to conduct future research to compare the experiences and perceptions of female HoDs in a female-only university and in a gender-segregated campus to understand whether their roles, the level of authority they have and the challenges they face vary according to the nature of their institutions and their organizational structures; or to replicate the study with male HoDs in a male-only universities to compare their experience with the participants in this study and to explore whether there are differences between the roles of these leaders and

the range of power granted to each group. Moreover, given the newness of the university, the Saudi 2030 vision towards women's empowerment, and the HE reform efforts to delegate decision-making power to the institution, it is recommended that the role of female leaders should be re-examined in the near future in order to understand whether there has been a change in their roles and responsibilities.

Many of the findings from this study suggest areas for further research. For instance, in the qualitative phase, many participants declared they were reluctant to accept the headship role because of the negative impact on academic identity, especially since the majority of them were assistant professors who had not reached the rank of full professor because the promotion criteria in Saudi HE depends solely on research publications. This result warrants further investigation to understand the motivations and underlying beliefs that encourage Saudi academic staff to accept the headship role even if it is not seen as a desirable career move. Another key finding was the challenge that female HoDs faced in balancing professional and personal life, especially for those with young children. This area seems to merit further research to explore the career paths of female leaders in order to establish whether there is a stage in their careers at which they are best suited to leadership roles.

7.11 Concluding Remarks

This study sought to explore the perceptions of female HoDs in a female-only university regarding their roles and most important tasks. It also aimed to find out what constitutes effective leadership development for this group. The findings contributed to obtaining a better understanding of the complexity of the role and the huge responsibilities which lie on a head's shoulders. The study revealed that despite the multiple roles that HoDs carry out, they spent most of their time managing daily routines and, if they got a chance to exercise leadership, it

was limited to implementing the vision of university administration. There was very little opportunity for them to craft their own departmental vision. The study identified key challenges facing HoDs, which limited their effectiveness and proposed a model for leadership development that contains several effective approaches to be implemented at three interlinked levels. The study sought to clarify the role of middle leaders in HE, how they could be better supported in their role and to highlight some issues about female leadership and whether female-only universities could facilitate the accomplishment of the Saudi vision of women's empowerment.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Ethics Approval Letter

Application for Ethical Approval for Research Degrees

(MA by research, MPhil/PhD, EdD)



Student number: 1465953

Student name: Haifa alsuham

PhD EdD MA by research

Project title: Female Heads of Department in Saudi Higher Education: Role, Challenges and Leadership Development

Supervisor: Dr Justine Mercure

Funding body (if relevant):

Please ensure you have read the Guidance for the Ethical Conduct of Research available in the handbook.

Methodology

Please outline the methodology, e.g. observation, individual interviews, focus groups, group testing etc.

This study aims to explore the perceptions of heads of academic departments regarding their roles, key challenges, and effective leadership development methods. A mixed-methods approach will be implemented and the study will be conducted in two sequential phases. Firstly, I will employ a questionnaire to establish a broad picture of participants' experiences. Follow-up semi-structured interviews will be used to gather participants' perceptions regarding the research topic in more depth in the second qualitative phase. This approach will enable me to go beyond the general understanding produced by the questionnaire to obtaining participants' perceptions in more depth by using open-ended questions. The result from the quantitative phase will be used to refine the interview questions and to aid the selection of the participants in the second qualitative phase.

Participants

Please specify all participants in the research including ages of children and young people where appropriate. Also specify if any participants are vulnerable e.g. children; as a result of learning disability.

All heads of departments at a female university in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, in the academic year 2015-2016 will be invited via email to participate in the study. The deanship of e-learning at the university will provide the mailing list of the department heads and will send them an invitation to participate in the study on my behalf. The final sample used in the questionnaire will be utilised as a framework to choose the participants in the second qualitative phase. The participants will be obtained from those who completed the questionnaire in the first phase, as the questionnaire sample will be asked if they would be willing to participate in the interviews. The questionnaire contains a part where those who are interested in participation can provide their contact information. Then I will be able to contact them later. A purposive sample will be employed in the qualitative phase. I will seek maximum variation in terms of subject discipline, length of experience in higher education and number of years in the role. The justification for choosing female participants is that there is a lack of studies that target female academic leaders in higher education. Moreover, there are religious and cultural reasons as it will be difficult to me as a Muslim woman to interview men, who are not close relatives, face-to-face.

Respect for participants' rights and dignity

How will the fundamental rights and dignity of participants be respected, e.g. confidentiality, respect of cultural and religious values?

This study will conform to the ethical considerations governing social science research. Specifically I will follow the BERA (2011) ethical guidelines. Prior to conducting the study, a voluntary consent form and information sheet will be given to prospective participants. Participants will be informed about the purpose of the study, why their participation is important, what involvement in the research will require, any risks or harm associated with the research, what will happen to data obtained, and how they can access the findings. Participants will be also informed that their participation in the study is completely voluntary and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without giving a reason and without any negative consequences. I will request permission from the participants to record the interviews on a digital recorder.

Privacy and confidentiality

How will confidentiality be assured? Please address all aspects of research including protection of data records, thesis, reports/papers that might arise from the study.

All data gathered from both research instruments will be treated in confidential. The name of the university, selected for the research will be kept anonymous and pseudonyms will be used. Since there is

only one person in each department who holds the headship post, the college in which the participant's department affiliated with will be combined with numbers to hide participants' identities. The real names of participants will not be publicised in any part of the research and their identity will not be released in any reports, publications and summaries generated from this study. The data obtained will be kept safe and only my supervisor and I will have access to data obtained. The participants will be informed that the data collected will be used for a PhD study, and may later be disseminated at academic conferences and in journal publications.

Consent

How will prior informed consent be obtained from the following?

From participants:

The questionnaire will be distributed online and the participants will be informed about the purpose of the study. They will be told that completing the questionnaire will be considered consent to participate in the study. Prior to conducting the interview, the participants will be asked to sign a voluntary consent form. They will be asked to agree to the conditions stated in the consent form before proceeding with the interview.

From others:

I previously contacted the deanship of scientific research in the selected university to gain their permission to conduct this research. They ask me to provide them with a copy of the ethical approval from the University of Warwick, and the research instruments as this is the procedure usually followed in similar cases. I will do so after gaining the ethical approval from the University of Warwick.

If prior informed consent is not to be obtained, give reason:

Will participants be explicitly informed of the student's status?

Yes. The participants will be informed about my status from the beginning when I introduce my research project to them.

Competence

How will you ensure that all methods used are undertaken with the necessary competence?

I have attended the Advanced Research Method (ARM) course and received training in research methods and ethics when I studied for my MA at the University of Nottingham. I will continue to read books and

journal articles extensively to understand the research process and to upgrade my knowledge of research methods. I will discuss with my supervisor the choice of research methods and will share with her any problem that arise to gain expert advice while I am carrying out each aspect of this research and will modify my approaches accordingly. I will share my research design with other fellow research students to benefit from their suggestions. I will pilot all research instruments to check their validity and reliability.

Protection of participants

How will participants' safety and well-being be safeguarded?

The research topic is not controversial and the study is not intended to cause any harm to the participants. This will be conveyed to them before starting the interviews so that they make themselves as comfortable as possible. The participants will be asked to determine their preferred time and venue to conduct the interviews and I will respect participants' choice of the way in which their responses to the interview questions will be recorded whether they prefer to record their voices or taking notes.

Child protection

Will a CRB check be needed? Yes No (If yes, please attach a copy.)

Addressing dilemmas

Even well planned research can produce ethical dilemmas. How will you address any ethical dilemmas that may arise in your research?

Keeping in mind that I am a PhD student who will be interviewing middle level academic leaders in higher education who have higher qualifications and more power than me, I am aware that asking questions about challenges that department heads encountered might not reveal genuine. They might not share openly their perceptions and views particularly if difficulties arise from dealing with university administration. I will make it clear that in this study I am not evaluating people or their skills to make participants feel less intimidated. They will be assured that their identities will be kept anonymous.

Misuse of research

How will you seek to ensure that the research and the evidence resulting from it are not misused?

I will do my best to report the findings of the research project as fairly and accurately as possible even if the results do not support my position. The data obtained from the participants will be kept secure in files on a password-protected computer and only I and my supervisor will have access to them. The evidence resulting from the research will be used for the PhD project and later for publication in academic conferences/journals.

Office use only

Action taken:

- Approved
- Approved with modification or conditions – see below
- Action deferred. Please supply additional information or clarification – see below

Name: *Michael Hammond*

Signature: *Michael Hammond*

Date:

Stamped:

Notes of Action:

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: Female Heads of Department in Saudi Higher Education: Role, Challenges and Leadership Development

I am conducting a research study to explore how heads of academic departments in a female-only university perceive their role, important tasks in carrying out their role, and the key challenges they have encountered. The research also aims to explore the effective approaches that heads of departments can take in order to improve their leadership capabilities and thus be more successful in performing their role.

A mixed-methods approach will be adopted in this study, and it will be conducted in two phases. Firstly, I will use a questionnaire to collect data in the first phase, whereas semi-structured interviews will be conducted to gather data in the second phase. The process of data collection will be implemented in the academic year 2015–2016, and it might take four months from February to May.

Your participation is meaningful, as few studies have investigated the role that academic leaders play as well as the appropriate methods by which and the context in which they can improve their leadership learning, particularly in gender segregated Arab Islamic countries. The study will contribute to filling the research gap in the area of leadership development in higher education. The finding can be used to inform decision-makers at universities about the appropriate methods for supporting the learning and development of their academic leaders. Moreover, the findings are likely to be valuable to current and potential heads of departments by providing them with a better understanding of the main aspects of the role. The research is also important because it will be conducted at a female-only university which may therefore provide an excellent opportunity to understand the role played by female leaders and the level of power granted to them in the absence of male authority. Consequently, the results may be useful for higher education policy developers and decision makers in Saudi Arabia to thoroughly understand whether female-only universities offer better opportunities for women's leadership.

Participation in the study is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any stage of the research without giving a reason and without any negative consequences. You have the right to keep this information sheet if you decide to take part in the study. Participation in the study requires the completion of a structured questionnaire that may take from 5 to 10 minutes to fill in. The responses to the questionnaire will be utilised as a framework to choose the participants in the second qualitative phase. The variation in the experience and the discipline area will be considered in the selection of the participants. You might be invited to take part in a follow-up semi-structured interview in the second phase, and this will depend on the research sample. Each interview might take 45 to 60 minutes to conduct and will be audio-recorded. It is hoped that you provide detailed answers to research questions.

The data gathered from both research instruments will be kept strictly confidential. Your identity will not be released in any reports, publications and summaries generated from this study. You should be aware that there is still some possibility that your institution might be identified. I want to assure you that no one except for my supervisor and I will have access to the data. In case you are interested in receiving the result of this study after the analysis and write-up have been completed, it would be my pleasure to provide you with a copy of the findings.

I would like to invite you to participate in the study after being aware of its aim and procedures. If you find the information to be unclear, or in case you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me using the detailed contact information provided below.

Haifa Alsuheam

Tel: 966504250640

Email: h.alsuheam@warwick.ac.uk, h.snt@hotmail.com

Thank you for your Participation.

Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title: Female Heads of Department in Saudi Higher Education: Role, Challenges and Leadership Development

Researcher’s Name: Haifa alsuheam

Participant Identification Number for this project:

Please confirm the statements by putting your initials in the box below

- I have read the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have been informed of the purpose of the study and its methodology.
- I have had the opportunity to ask further questions about the research and these have been answered.
- I understand my right to withdraw from the study at any stage without giving reasons and without negative consequences. I am aware that I am free to decline answering any question.
- I give my permission for the researcher and her supervisor to use my anonymised responses. I understand that my identity will remain confidential and my real name will not be revealed and I will not be identified in any reports resulting from the research.
- I give my consent for any information collected in this study to be used for the researcher's PhD and for later dissemination at academic conferences and in journal publications.
- I am aware that the name of the university will not be mentioned in the study but that it might be identified from the context.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the interview.
- I agree to participate in the study according to the conditions stated above.

Participant Name	Signature	Date
Researcher Name	Signature	Date

A copy of the signed and dated participant consent form and information sheet will be handed to the participant.

Appendix 4: Questionnaire for Heads of Department – English Version

This questionnaire consists of several sections each of which has its own set of directions.

Section A: Personal information

Please select one of the options from questions 1 to 5.

1. To which school or college is your department primarily affiliated with?

- Science colleges.
- Medical/health colleges.
- Other
- Humanities colleges.
- Community colleges.

2. What is your academic rank?

- Professor
- Assistant Professor
- Associate Professor
- Other

3. For how long have you served in Higher Education?

- Less than one year
- 6-10 years
- 1-5 years
- More than 10 years

4. How long have you served as a head of department?

- Less than one year
- 3-4 years
- 1-2 years
- More than 4 years

5. How many academic staff in your department?

- From 1 to 10
- From 21 to 30
- More than 40
- From 11 to 20
- From 31 to 40

Section B: Head of academic department roles and tasks

Please indicate the extent to which each of the following tasks is important in carrying out your role as a head of department?

Head of department tasks		Not important at all	Not very important	Quite Important	Very important
Administrative tasks					
1	Assigning teaching, research and other activities to faculty members and dividing the responsibilities.				
2	Planning department activities.				
3	Conducting department meetings.				
4	Organising class schedules.				
5	Preparing annual reports on department functions to the dean.				
6	Convene committees to assist in the accomplishment of department functions.				
7	Managing non-academic staff				
Resources management tasks					
8	Preparing and maintaining departmental budget.				
9	Managing department financial resources which include facilities and equipment.				
10	Assuring the maintenance of accurate records and updating department database.				
Strategic leadership tasks					
11	Developing long term strategic plan for the department.				
12	Seeking new opportunities to improve the department.				
13	Providing clear vision, goals, guidance and direction for the department.				
Internal/external communication tasks					
14	Communicating departmental needs and concerns to the dean and university administration.				
15	Enhancing department's image and reputation within and off the campus.				
16	Communicating university administration decisions, expectations and demands to the faculty.				
17	Communicate with other external entities such as schools, government agencies and employers.				
18	Engaging and participating in the community service activities.				
19	Obtaining external funds and grants.				
20	Establishing partnerships with business and private sector.				

Personal scholarship tasks					
21	Conducting personal research.				
22	Maintaining teaching activities.				
23	Supervising graduate students.				
Faculty affairs tasks					
24	Fostering the development of faculty members' talents and supporting their accessing of attendance professional development opportunities.				
25	Motivating faculty to improve their teaching.				
26	Encouraging faculty research and publications.				
27	Evaluating faculty performance and assessing their eligibility for promotion.				
28	Selecting and recruiting academic staff.				
29	Recognising and rewarding faculty for their excellent contribution to the department and other services to the university and community.				
30	Providing productive healthy work environment through solving problems and reducing conflict.				
31	Encouraging collegiality, cooperation and team work among faculty members.				
Instructional tasks					
32	Developing academic programmes and updating the curriculum.				
33	Coordinating the system of pastoral support to ensure its responsiveness to changing students' needs and aspirations.				
34	Implementing the quality system and procedures for promoting good teaching activities proposed by university administration.				
35	Deciding the eligibility of students to the enrolment of the academic programme provided by the department.				

Section C: Key challenges in your role

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements

I find it difficult to:

	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	Balance my leadership and management functions with my academic activities.					
2	Understand human resources policies and employment law.					
3	Manage problematic and underperforming staff.					
4	Find time to conduct my personal research.					
5	Sustain a healthy work environment and solve conflicts.					
6	Communicate departmental needs and concerns to the dean and university administration.					
7	Fulfil all the demands of the role in the time available.					
8	Find the required resources to conduct my assignments.					
9	Identify my role without specific job description.					
10	Perform duties contradict my perception of my role within the organisation hierarchy.					
11	Deal with budget and financial issues.					
12	Work with different parties (dean, staff, and students) and each has different expectations from me.					
13	Work without administrative support from university administration.					
14	Handle students' complaints.					
15	Deal with university management.					
16	Manage with insufficient power and authority.					
17	Implement the demands of quality imposed by university administration.					
18	Handle the pressure and change introduced by university administration.					
19	Create department goals.					
20	Establish partnership with external bodies.					

2. What are the three most challenging aspects of your current role as a head of department?

- 1-.....
- 2-.....
- 3-.....

Section D: Leadership development methods

How effective have each of the following professional development methods been in developing your capabilities as a head of academic department?

Development methods	Not experienced	Minimal effect	Moderate effect	Significant effect
Participating in formal generic leadership/management programmes.				
Participating in bespoke leadership/management development programmes.				
Attending professional conferences and seminars.				
Networks with others in similar roles within the university.				
External networks with others in similar role.				
Learning on the job.				
Past experience.				
Self-learning (accessing information on the internet- self guided reading).				
Formal mentoring programmes (organised by the university).				
Informal mentoring (spontaneously occurred between colleagues).				
Other (please specify) :				

If you are willing to be interviewed in the second phase of this study, please include your contact information below:

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire.

Appendix 5: The Arabic Version of the Web-Based Questionnaire



استبيان رؤساء الأقسام الأكاديمية

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

سعادة رئيسة القسم بجامعة تالا سلمها الله

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ، وبعد:

أفيد سعادتكم بأنني مبعثه لدراسة الدكتوراه ببريطانيا حيث سأجري دراسة بعنوان " رئيسات الأقسام في التعليم العالي في السعودية : الدور ، التحديات، التطوير المهني "

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة وجهة نظر رئيسات الأقسام تجاه أهم المهام والواجبات التي يتطلبها دورها كرئيسة للقسم وأهم الصعوبات التي تواجهها. كذلك تسعى الدراسة إلى التعرف على أهم طرق التطوير المهني وتعزيز القدرات القيادية. ستجري الدراسة على مرحلتين وسيتم استخدام كل من الاستبيان والمقابلات الفردية لجمع البيانات.

نأمل من سعادتكم التكرم بالمشاركة في الإجابة على هذه الاستبانة علما بأن أي معلومات تقدمينها ستكون سرية تماما وستستخدم فقط لأغراض البحث العلمي. علما بأن إكمال الاستبيان قد يستغرق من 5 إلى 10 دقائق. إذا كانت المعلومات غير كافية أو إذا كان لديكم أسئلة بخصوص الدراسة الرجاء التواصل مع الباحث عبر الطرق التالية :

هيفاء السحيم

جوال : 0504250640

البريد الإلكتروني : h.snt@hotmail.com

ولكم خالص الشكر والتقدير على كريم استجابتكم

* الضغط على زر الاستمرار تعني موافقتك على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة

completed 20%

« Continue



استبيان رؤساء الأقسام الأكاديمية

Required*

المعلومات الشخصية:

الرجاء اختيار إجابة واحدة فقط

1. ماهي الكلية التي ينتمي إليها قسمك الأكاديمي *

كليات علمية

كليات إنسانية

كليات طبية أو صحية

كليات خدمة المجتمع

:Other

2. ماهي رتبته الأكاديمية *

استاذ

استاذ مشارك

استاذ مساعد

:Other

3. كم عدد السنوات التي قضيتها في التعليم العالي *

أقل من سنة

من 1 إلى 5 سنوات

من 6 إلى 10 سنوات

أكثر من عشر سنوات

4. كم عدد السنوات التي قضيتها كرئيسة للقسم *

أقل من سنة

Appendix 6: Interview Schedule

Part 1: Personal and background information

- What is your academic rank?
- How long have you worked in higher education?
- How long have you served as a head of department (HoD)?
- To which school or college is your department primarily affiliated with?
- How many academic staff in your department?
- What did you do before you became HoD? Did you have any special responsibilities before becoming HoD?
- Tell me how you came to be HoD?
- How did you feel when you found out you were going to be HoD?

Part 2: Role and tasks

- How would you describe your role as HoD?
- What are your most important tasks and responsibilities?
- What three activities consume most of your time?
- What aspects/dimensions of your current role do you think are most important and why?
- What has surprised you most about working in your current role?
- Who are the main people/members with whom you interact in your job?
- Do you have a job description?

If yes,

- Is it written? When did you first see it?
- Do you think having a job description is a good thing? Why/why not?
- How far does the job description match what you do?
- Do you think there are any tasks that you carry out that are not part of the job description?

If no,

- Do you think it matters whether or not you have a job description?

Part 3: Challenges and difficulties

I have asked you how you see your role and now I would like to ask how others see your role.

- How do your colleagues in the department see your role?
- How do more senior staff in the university see your role?
- How far do these different perceptions overlap?
- Are there places where they do not overlap but actually pull in different directions? When that happens, whose expectations do you think should be prioritised?
- To what extent do you consider your job includes management/administrative functions?
- To what extent do you consider your job involves academic tasks?
- Is it easy to manage all the different aspects of your role? Give specific examples?
- Which HoD tasks do you find easiest?
- Which HoD tasks cause the most difficulty for you and why?

- Are there any other challenges/difficulties in your job?

Part 4: Leadership development

- Did you plan to become HoD or did it happen by chance?
- How prepared did you feel when you started the HoD role?
- How prepared do you feel now?
- Did you participate in any leadership development activities or management training programmes before your appointment?
- Have you participated in any leadership development activities or management training programmes following your appointment?

If yes,

- What did you experience?
- How helpful/effective was it in developing your capabilities as a HoD?
- Is there any training you would like to have?

If no,

- What are the reasons for that?

- To what extent do formal management and leadership training programmes prepare HoDs for their roles?
 - What are the main advantages of such training programmes?
 - What are the main drawbacks of such training programmes?
- How much of being HoD can be learnt from experience? What particular experiences have benefitted you on this role?
- To what extent does on-the-job learning contribute to improve your leadership skills?
- Do you think relying on experience and on-the-job learning is sufficient in preparing HoDs? Why /why not?
- What about networking? Have you learnt about the role through networking?

If yes,

- In what way has this contributed to your effectiveness as a HoD?

if no,

- What are the main barriers to networking?

- Do you personally have a mentor or a coach?

If yes,

- In what way has this contributed to your effectiveness as a HoD?

If no,

- Do you think is it useful to have a mentor?

- What do you think to be the most effective methods for developing leadership capabilities of HoDs? Why?
- What do you think to be the least effective methods for developing leadership capabilities of HoDs? Why?

- What aspects of your role do you believe most need professional development?
- What form should it take?
- How should it be done? By whom?
- In your opinion, what is the key step your university should take to further support the professional development of HoD?
- If the university afforded you leadership development opportunities, what would you want to take away from such experience?
- What support do you feel should be ready available to new heads when they first take on the role? Give examples?

Part 5: Final thought

- To what extent does the university's unique context being a female-only university influence your role as a HoD?
- Are there any other points you would like to add in this topic?

Thank you for taking part in this study.

Appendix 7: Example of Coding Process Using Nvivo

Name	Sources	Referen...	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
lack of information	4	11	30 Sep 2016, 14:20	H	6 Oct 2016, 12:39	H
lack of international staff	1	1	30 Sep 2016, 12:02	H	30 Sep 2016, 12:04	H
lack of power and auth...	13	30	29 Sep 2016, 12:55	H	7 Oct 2016, 13:07	H
managing in the middle	15	22	27 Sep 2016, 11:59	H	7 Oct 2016, 12:41	H
unavailability of qualifie...	8	17	27 Sep 2016, 11:55	H	7 Oct 2016, 12:47	H
work load	11	24	27 Sep 2016, 11:58	H	7 Oct 2016, 12:45	H
decisions	0	0	27 Sep 2016, 12:11	H	27 Sep 2016, 12:11	H
unavailability of qualified administrative staff						

Summary **Reference**

Internals\Interviews\Interview 2
2 references coded, 2.99% coverage

Reference 1: 1.04% coverage

ي مشكلة السكرتيرات ماهم على درجة من المهارة العالية التي يمكن تساعدني انهم ينجرون الاعمال (فتقويين بعمل اداري المفروض يوكل الي اشخاص آخرين -نعم- وهذا يمنعك من القيام بمهام تطويرية للقسم -ايوه- يستهلك الوقت طبعاً قرار

Reference 2: 1.95% coverage

يتض من مهام إدارية؟
كثير للأسف وهذا احدى الصدمات يعني التي اصطدمتها لما ترأست القسم كنت متوقفة عمه اداري لكن مو بالشكل هذا واعتقد السبب ان ما فيه موارد بشرية ذات مهارة عالية عندنا في السكرتارية هذا الذي بيخليك بيعطل الموضوع اضطر أؤدي العمل بنفسي عثمان اناكذ انه يطلع بالشكل المطلوب فيه اقتراحات للجامعة بحكم نقص او عدم تأهيل الكادر الإداري؟
هو مو فيه نقص موجود لكن مش مؤهل تأهيل عالي يتناسب وطبيعة القسم التعليمي يتض

Internals\Interviews\Interview 3
1 reference coded, 1.40% coverage

Reference 1: 1.40% coverage

Appendix 8: The Percentage, Frequency Distribution, and Mean Score for HoD's Tasks under Each Dimension (Tables 6 to 12).

*** The Classification of the 4-point Likert scale**

The Weighted Mean	1-1.74	1.75-2.49	2.50-3.24	3.25-4
Level of importance	Not important at all	Not very important	Quite important	Very important

Table 6: The Administrative Tasks

* The percentage may not add up exactly to 100% because of rounding.

Administrative tasks	Not important at all		Not very important		Quite important		Very important		Mean	Result
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Assigning teaching, research and other activities to faculty members and dividing the responsibilities.	0	0	0	0	2	6	34	94	3.94	Very important
Conducting department meetings.	0	0	0	0	3	8	33	92	3.92	Very important
Convene committees to assist in the accomplishment of department functions.	0	0	0	0	6	17	30	83	3.83	Very important
Organising class schedules.	0	0	0	0	11	31	25	69	3.69	Very important
Preparing annual reports on department functions to the dean.	0	0	2	6	7	19	27	75	3.69	Very important
Planning department activities.	0	0	1	3	13	36	22	61	3.58	Very important
Managing non-academic staff	2	6	1	3	7	19	26	72	3.58	Very important
Result of the first dimension	2	1	4	2	49	19	197	78	3.74	Very important

Table 7: Resources Management Tasks

Resources management tasks	Not important at all		Not very important		Quite important		Very important		Mean	Result
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Assuring the maintenance of accurate records and updating department database.	2	6	1	3	9	25	24	67	3.53	Very important
Managing department financial resources which include facilities and equipment.	4	11	7	19	14	39	11	31	2.89	Quite important
Preparing and maintaining departmental budget.	7	19	7	19	13	36	9	25	2.67	Quite important
Result of the second dimension	13	12	15	14	36	33	44	41	3.03	Quite important

Table 8: Strategic Leadership Tasks

Strategic leadership tasks	Not important at all		Not very important		Quite important		Very important		Mean	Result
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Seeking new opportunities to improve the department.	0	0	0	0	6	17	30	83	3.83	Very important
Providing clear vision, goals, guidance and direction for the department.	0	0	0	0	6	17	30	83	3.83	Very important
Developing long term strategic plan for the department.	0	0	1	3	6	17	29	81	3.78	Very important
Result of the third dimension	0	0	1	1	18	17	89	82	3.81	Very important

Table 9: Internal/External Communication Tasks

Internal/external communication tasks	Not important at all		Not very important		Quite important		Very important		Mean	Result
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Communicating departmental needs and concerns to the dean and university administration.	0	0	0	0	4	11	32	89	3.89	Very important
Communicating university administration decisions, expectations and demands to the faculty.	0	0	0	0	6	17	30	83	3.83	Very important
Enhancing department's image and reputation within and off the campus.	0	0	1	3	5	14	30	83	3.81	Very important
Engaging and participating in the community service activities.	1	3	4	11	15	42	16	44	3.28	Very important
Communicate with other external entities such as schools, government agencies and employers.	3	8	6	17	13	36	14	39	3.06	Quite important
Establishing partnerships with business and private sector.	5	14	5	14	13	36	13	36	2.94	Quite important
Obtaining external funds and grants.	8	22	10	28	8	22	10	28	2.56	Quite important
Result of the fourth dimension	17	7	26	10	64	25	145	58	3.33	Very important

Table 10: Personal Scholarship Tasks

Personal scholarship tasks	Not important at all		Not very important		Quite important		Very important		Mean	Result
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Maintaining teaching activities.	1	3	4	11	12	33	19	53	3.36	Very important
Conducting personal research.	2	6	3	8	12	33	19	53	3.33	Very important
Supervising graduate students.	5	14	5	14	13	36	13	36	2.94	Quite important
Result of the fifth dimension	8	7	12	11	37	34	51	47	3.21	Quite important

Table 11: Faculty Affairs Tasks

Faculty affairs tasks	Not important at all		Not very Important		Quite important		Very important		Mean	Result
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Encouraging collegiality, cooperation and team work among faculty members.	0	0	0	0	3	8	33	92	3.92	Very important
Providing productive healthy work environment through solving problems and reducing conflict.	1	3	0	0	4	11	31	86	3.81	Very important
Fostering the development of faculty members' talents and supporting their accessing of attendance professional development opportunities.	0	0	0	0	8	22	28	78	3.78	Very important
Evaluating faculty performance and assessing their eligibility for promotion.	0	0	1	3	7	19	28	78	3.75	Very important
Selecting and recruiting academic staff.	0	0	1	3	7	19	28	78	3.75	Very important
Encouraging faculty research and publications.	0	0	1	3	9	25	26	72	3.69	Very important
Motivating faculty to improve their teaching.	1	3	0	0	8	22	27	75	3.69	Very important
Recognising and rewarding faculty for their excellent contribution to the department and other services to the university and community.	3	8	5	14	6	17	22	61	3.31	Very important
Result of the sixth dimension	5	2	8	3	52	18	223	77	3.71	Very important

Table 12: Instructional Tasks

Instructional tasks	Not important at all		Not very important		Quite important		Very important		Mean	Result
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Developing academic programmes and updating the curriculum.	0	0	0	0	5	14	31	86	3.86	Very important
Implementing the quality system and procedures for promoting good teaching activities proposed by university administration.	0	0	1	3	8	22	27	75	3.72	Very important
Coordinating the system of pastoral support to ensure its responsiveness to changing students' needs and aspirations.	0	0	2	6	10	28	24	67	3.61	Very important
Deciding the eligibility of students to the enrolment of the academic programme provided by the department.	0	0	5	14	10	28	21	58	3.44	Very important
Result of the seventh dimension	0	0	8	6	33	23	103	72	3.65	Very important