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School of Education

'NEW HEADS ON THE BLOCK'
CASE STUDIES OF TRANSITION TO PRIMARY HEADSHIP

by

Neil Graham Saunders

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ABSTRACT
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This study contributes to an understanding of the process of transition to primary headship. It examines, from the perspectives of three headteachers, their experiences over the first year as they make the transition to the formal leadership position of headteacher. Their transition is documented through individual case studies in order to highlight the importance of context in school leadership, and analysed further to identify significant emerging themes across the case studies in greater depth.

The enquiry has taken place at a time of increasing difficulty in recruitment to headship. As such it presents a relevant contemporary commentary of relevance to practitioners, researchers and policy makers. The study examines, through an interrogation of the literature, factors that influence transition to headship and the two key and inter-related dimensions of the enquiry : the nature of contemporary primary school headship, particularly in the context of school leadership, and the process of transition to headship. This reveals a job rich in complexity and challenge, with the transition of newcomers relatively under researched. Against the background of the literature review, a structure that adopts a grounded theory approach for the research is developed and explained. This qualitative interpretive stance traces the perspectives of the newly appointed headteachers through a total of 12 in-depth interviews. Each interview was reconstructed by the researcher and shared with participants for validation of interpretation to form the basis of the research data. This was then analysed in two stages, firstly to identify the main emerging themes for the case studies, and secondly to identify the main themes for the overall analysis: professional and organisational socialisation; school effectiveness and school improvement and the emotional dimension of headship.

The study concludes by reflecting both upon the research findings and outcomes and the identification of the main professional implications of the enquiry.

CONTENTS

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ACKNOWLDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CE	Church of England
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
ERA	Education Reform Act
ECM	Every Child Matters
EI	Emotional Intelligence
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
ICT	Information Communication Technology
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Education Authority
LMS	Local Management of Schools
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
NQT	Newly qualified teacher
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
SATs	Standard Assessment Tasks
SEF	Self evaluation form
TLR	Teaching and learning responsibilities
TTA	Teacher Training Agency

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

This study aims to make a contribution to our understanding of the process of transition to primary headship by studying three headteachers over their first year in post. It examines from their perspectives, what occurs during that year as they move into the formal leadership role of headship and provides a new insight into the work of beginning headteachers. The study particularly explores headteachers leadership, motivation and actions as they make the transition. The study identifies and examines the main themes that emerge during the first year through distinctive phases of professional transition to headship, and concludes by identifying some significant issues for leadership development.

BACKGROUND, FOCUS AND SCOPE OF THE ENQUIRY

The study has been undertaken at a time of significant and continuing school leadership recruitment difficulties (Ward, 2004; NCSL, 2006; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2008). The reasons for these difficulties are complex and inter-related, and research by the National College of School Leadership (NCSL, 2006) identifies several factors. Firstly, there is an acceleration in the number of headteachers taking retirement - the 'retirement boom' that reflects the age profile of the current workforce. Secondly, perceptions of the job, and in particular the views of those not yet in headship who identify its significant responsibilities and accountabilities together with change management demands and heavy workloads, combine to make headship an increasingly unattractive career option. Thirdly, the drawn-out 'apprenticeship' prior to becoming a headteacher, which typically lasts for 15 years or more, exceeds that for an equivalent level of seniority in other professions. Finally, a variety of national and regional variations relating to location, school size, socio-economic, cultural or religious circumstances make some headships particularly difficult to fill. Notwithstanding, teachers continue to present themselves for appointment and regularly take up first headships. This study looks in depth at the experiences of three such appointees over the course of their first year in post in the maintained primary school sector in the south of England. It examines their perception of their journeys over the course of that year as they move into their schools and begin their work as headteachers. It traces their development over that year in order to provide an understanding of their

experience and actions, and in so doing, to deepen and extend our existing knowledge base about the process of transition to headship.

Research Question: What factors influence transition to primary headship and leadership during the first year in post?

This question reflects two key and inter-related dimensions that form the basis of the study: the nature of contemporary primary school headship, particularly in relation to headteacher leadership, and the process of transition of newcomers to headship. The focus provided by this question gives emphasis to the relationship between headship and leadership, whilst recognising their differences.

The significance of headship for effective school provision is widely acknowledged. Sergiovanni (2001, xi) contends 'rare is the effective school that does not have an effective head', and similar views have been expressed by many others including MacBeath (1998), Harris and Bennett (2001) and Gronn (2003). Whilst the significance of headship and headteacher leadership for school effectiveness and school improvement is well documented from survey, case study and inspection evidence, there is less empirical understanding as to the impact of headship as one dimension of a multi-faceted job. This study seeks to deepen that understanding within a particular group of headteachers; those new to the post as they make their transition to headship.

The study's focus is also reflected in the structure of the enquiry process. Chapter 2 analyses the theoretical and conceptual basis of the study, through a review of the literature identifying previous academic research in the area. This review traces the two dimensions of the enquiry in the context of the research question, and provides the basis for the research process developed later in the study. It reveals that the period since 1997 has been one of the major periods of structural reform, introduced initially by the 1988 Education Act, combined with an intensification of political interest in education, particularly in relation to the twin-fields of school effectiveness and school improvement. This growing policy interest in education reflects a period of increasing central control over education, and a succession of Green and White Papers as an unprecedented system-wide education reform agenda began to be implemented (MacGilchrist, Myers and Reed, 2004). This period of 'practice centralisation' (Bottery 2007, p87) with its emphasis on

goals, targets and increased external pressures, has heightened the public's perceived need for accountability of headship. This has led to a situation of 'decentralised centralism' (Bottery, 2007, p90), rather than devolution of power to schools and headteachers. This presents particular challenges for headteachers, as they work to maintain a personal vision for education through their work, whilst responding to external policy demands alongside the day-to-day challenges of their job.

The centrality of the headteacher's leadership and management in the context of improving standards is one of the strongly emerging themes of the literature review. Chapter 2 explores this theme further and enquires more deeply into the nature of effective leadership in order to understand how the concept is changing and the implications of this change. The notion of headteacher vision is also explored and some of the dangers of visionary leaders, identified by Fullan (1992) are considered. The exploration is extended to include reference to the centrality of personal values as the basis of leadership behaviour, particularly in the context of work by Southworth (1997) and Bush and Glover (2003), together with the inter-relationship of leadership with management and *how* headteachers make a difference to their schools. The significance of context, school size and development needs, together with the head's own background, experience skills and knowledge all emerge as important factors and are considered in greater depth within the study. Chapter 2 goes on to consider how headteachers prepare to make the transition to first headship, recognising that preparation is a long-term process that involves both conscious and systematic formal preparation, such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) developed around a series of job-related competencies and occupational standards. However, this form of preparation is not without its critics (Tomlinson, *et al.*, 1999), who raise significant concerns about the limitations of such an approach to pre-appointment training. In contrast, a longer-term and more informal process of headteacher preparation is examined which recognises the developmental nature of becoming a headteacher and reflects the importance of the twin processes of professional and organisational socialisation identified by Duke (1987). The chapter draws upon transition theory together with a number of studies into beginning headship to identify a possible framework for better understanding this complex process. The phases of transition are examined and their characteristics explored in the overall context of Merton's (1963) socialisation theory, and more particularly their implications for transition to headship. A number of different models to describe transition are identified

and summarised by Weindling's (2000) synthesis, which is used to provide the structure for the analysis of the empirical data presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

Finally, the central importance of transition and the formation of occupational identity is considered. Occupational identity is a concept that links professional and occupational socialisation, and the literature review highlights its significance. The implications for headteacher leadership are considered and a framework for the enquiry is presented that seeks to identify a theoretical perspective about transition.

The absence of existing theory in the context of the research question enables a grounded theory approach to be taken. This approach is explained in Chapter 3. The research process, which was planned and developed in the context of the literature review, sets out to explore the process of transition to headship experienced by three new incumbents over their first year in post. Through tracing their experiences over the course of their first year, this research has sought task to capture as accurately as possible their perceptions of transition and to interpret those perceptions on an individual basis and collectively. The study therefore seeks to deepen knowledge and develop new understanding.

The methodology adopted in this research provides a rich and extensive source of data, although it is acknowledged that the findings have inevitable limitations and are unlikely to reflect the full complexity of transition to headship. Nevertheless, the qualitative approach adopted in the study, through a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews over the course of the year with each of these headteachers provides a grounded-theory approach that reflects both trustworthiness and authenticity. Data from the interviews was reconstructed and shared with participants for validation of interpretation, resulting in theory evolving from event reconstruction and subsequent event co-construction. Each of the three case studies presented in Chapter 4 provides a synthesis of the first stage of data analysis. They reflect the phases of transition identified in Chapter 2, and describe and analyse significant events in that process. The context of each study is described to reflect the particular circumstances of both the new headteacher and the school at the point of their arrival.

Chapter 5 draws the case studies together and presents an overarching analysis of the empirical data. It considers the significance of context before exploring the phases and

themes of the enquiry. From this analysis two themes emerge during the phases of 'entry', 'orientation and immersion', and 'control and action'. These are concerned with professional and organisation socialisation, and school effectiveness and school improvement. However, in the third phase of transition control and action, a third theme emerges, the *emotional* dimension of headship, and this is explored within the overall analysis of data.

Finally, the study concludes by drawing together the main outcomes of the research and the identification of its main implications.

CHAPTER 2

AN EXPLORATION OF THE THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BASIS OF THE STUDY

AN EXPLORATION OF THE THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BASIS OF THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the main literature relevant to the study and identifies the academic and research basis of the enquiry. It provides the starting point for this study into transition to headship, the outcomes of which are presented, analysed and discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

Two key and inter-related dimensions form the basis of this study. Firstly, the study is about the nature of contemporary primary school headship particularly in relation to headteacher leadership. Secondly, the study is about transition of newcomers into headship – the move from teaching to headship. The literature review is presented to reflect these two dimensions, and the study's central research question:

> **'What factors influence transition to primary headship and leadership during the first year in post?'**

This review and analysis of contemporary primary headship and headteacher leadership draws upon a range of contemporary research and other interpretations. It provides the context for the examination of the factors that influence the preparation and transition of newcomers to headship, and concludes by drawing together these two strands to provide the basis for and justification of the research methodology which is explained and discussed in the following chapter.

CONTEMPORARY PRIMARY HEADSHIP AND HEADTEACHER LEADERSHIP : A PERSONAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

In order to clarify the context of contemporary primary headship, this section outlines how headship has developed since the early twentieth century, and analyses the factors that currently influence the headteacher's work. It is divided into three chronological parts. The first deals with headship prior to the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA), the second

considers the period from 1988 until the start of the Labour administration in 1997, and the final section, with the period from 1997 to 2007.

This structure has been adopted for several reasons. The 1988 Education Act is frequently identified as a key watershed in the work of headteachers, since this legislation introduced significant and deep-rooted structural change into education and, in consequence, school leadership and the work of headteachers. Examples of such changes include the introduction of a National Curriculum; a national system of pupil assessment at regular and fixed points; and the increased local autonomy of schools through locally devolved management. The period since the 1988 Education Act is considered in two parts, with 1997 identified as a second key watershed. The election that year of a Labour administration brought with it a renewed policy interest in the education system generally, and in particular, to the educational achievement and standards agenda. (Tomlinson, H., Gunter, H. and Smith, P. (1999); Day, C. *et al.,* (2000), and Brundrett, M., Burton, N. and Smith, R. (2003)). This had important implications for the work of headteachers and contemporary headteacher leadership. The section concludes by the identification of a number of emerging themes about headship and headteacher leadership that inform and guide this research.

Primary headship before the 1988 Education Act

Hall and Southworth (1997) present a detailed and comprehensive review of the literature and research on primary headship up to 1988. Their review considers a number of mainly small scale studies, since no major funded investigations or national surveys into primary headship were undertaken in this period.

Prior to 1988, Coulson's (1976) important study provided one of the more systematic enquiries into primary headship. He argued that the job title headteacher signalled an emphasis upon teaching rather than administration, and that headteachers had the freedom to set the school's aims and underlying philosophy (Coulson, 1976, p275). This view sustained the perception of headship that had existed for much of the early twentieth century that headteachers in this country predominantly held the position of leading practitioner within their schools. The legitimacy of the traditional authority of the headteacher stemmed from the mid to late nineteenth century, and from Morant's 1902 Education Act, where the delicate balance of power between central and local bureaucratic

control was seen to be protected by the relative independence of the headteacher. The headteacher's 'independent' power and authority were traditionally legitimated by a academic and social elite, who had little guidance, specific training or preparation for headship. The dominant values and expectations of the class-based society of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries supported the distinctive role of the headteacher as one of 'the benevolent autocrat, feared and loved by staff and pupils' (Buckley, 1985, p8).

This perception of headship was particularly reflected through the work of Victorian public school headmasters who were:

> *...expected to promote good learning as well as godliness, to turn out scholars as well as gentlemen; to fulfil this role he was expected to be a teacher as well as a preacher, a learned man as well as a judge and executioner, a thinker as well as a practical former of citizens.* (Allen, 1968, p111)

The nature and purpose of the headship task was clear, and driven by convergent demands which confirmed beyond question the headteacher's authority. Conformity and stability were established characteristics of headship at this time, in a context where the authority of headship was largely unquestioned by society, and the job predominantly undertaken by men.

Coulson's (1976) research confirmed headship to be a blend of personal control and moral authority, derived largely from a Victorian concept of headship, and which was implicitly gendered. Headteachers were the pivot and focus of their schools and were expected to mould the school 'in accordance with their own views' (p276). This concept of primary headship influenced and sustained much of the approach to headship in the earlier elementary schools, the forerunners of contemporary primary schools.

Headteachers could certainly 'exercise coercive and paternalistic authority' (Allen, 1968, p112), over pupils and also to some extent, over staff and parents. Since headteachers largely determined the shape of the curriculum, and were responsible for internal organisational and structural decisions, the authority and power of headteachers was largely unquestioned. This remained largely true until after the Second World War, when

patterns of authority more generally, began to be increasingly challenged and questioned as part of a bigger shift in society in both the family and the workplace.

Coulson's (1976) research identifies that during the 1970's, heads began to adopt an increasingly consultative and less authoritarian approach to their work. Nevertheless, the internally centralised pattern of paternalistic power, and the headteacher's pivotal influence persisted:

> *At the root of the primary head's paternalism lies the ego-identification which he normally has with his school. He tends to think of it as 'his' in a very special way and therefore to feel a deep sense of personal responsibility for everything and everyone in it.* (Coulson, p285)

Coulson argues in his later work (1978) these themes of power and influence were generally seen as both personal and individual, and had a significant influence upon the management of the school. Both themes emphasise a paternal model of headship, and an absence of a collegial or distributed approach to management. The personal and professional centrality of headteachers within their schools was a theme later developed by Nias (1980, p256) in her longitudinal study of graduate teachers' views on teaching as a career, which identified inefficient management and dictatorial leadership as characteristic of many primary schools.

Lloyd's (1985) later research identifies in headteachers a desire to move away from a 'head-centred' approach, yet acknowledges that in practice, primary heads remained influential and powerful figures in their schools, who found reducing their dominance difficult to achieve in practice, with the reality of power relations in schools largely unaltered.

Although there are a few descriptive accounts from the 1980's of headteachers in action, from his analysis of headteacher diaries, Clerkin (1985, p298) concluded headship was:

> *More often about tackling a high intensity of tasks with frequent interruptions, rather than a systematic ordering of curricular or organisational programmes based on agreed policies or clearly understood management structures.*

A similar picture emerges from the research of Davies (1987, p44-45). This found headteachers to be at the centre of their school's information network and with their working days characterised by brevity, fragmentation and variety.

From their review of the studies and research into primary headship before the 1988 ERA, Hall and Southworth (1997, p155) identify four main themes that characterised headship up to that time. Firstly, headship was concerned with organisational power, with headteachers being key players in their school's power relations. Secondly, headship was largely conceived in terms of functions and tasks. An instrumental view of headship was evidenced which relied upon a bureaucratic and managerial rationality. Thirdly, the field of study largely reflected a gendered male construction of headship, and finally, there was an absence of sustained studies of headteachers at work, a gap subsequently addressed by Southworth's later doctoral research undertaken during 1988-89 at the start of the implementation of the 1988 Education Act.

Primary headship from 1988 to 1997

This section considers how primary headship developed following the influential 1988 Education Act, until the election of the Labour government in 1997. It traces the effects of this legislation, which fundamentally changed the focus of policy making in English education and resulted in significant implications for the work of headteachers.
The 1988 Education Act brought a number of significant changes for headteachers including the introduction of local management of schools; a National Curriculum with regular testing and assessment; and a number of organisational and structural changes including the opportunity for governors to seek Grant Maintained Status and to move out of the control of local education authorities (LEAs). All of these changes combined to locate the headteacher's job within a new and overtly political context of imposed and centralised change, and sharper public accountability. One key aspect of this change was the purported aim to increase local accountability for school performance of governors and headteachers (Maclure, 1988). Along with this increased accountability and autonomy, was a new relationship between school and the local authorities – one in which local authorities were far less directive and controlling than previously, with their influence focused primarily upon the provision of a range of services to schools, many of which, such as the provision of some school improvement services, were optional rather than part of a core entitlement.

The emerging context for education at the start of the 1990's was described by Grace (1995, p21) as

> *A process of ideological transformation is occurring in contemporary English society in which education is regarded as a commodity; the school as a value-adding production unit; the headteacher as chief executive and managing director; the parents as consumers, and the ultimate aim of the whole enterprise to achieve a maximum value-added product which keeps the school as near the top of the league table of success as possible ..... Contemporary headteachers are therefore expected to 'market the school', deliver the curriculum' and to 'satisfy the customers'*

The 1988 Education Act was strongly influenced by right-wing Conservative thinking. This thinking had originated in the early 1980's, and focused upon reducing the power and influence of local education authorities (LEAs) and establishing a free market approach to education. The momentum for the 1988 Education Act developed overtime, and although 'the intellectual background to the ERA 1988 was therefore complex' (Chitty, 1992, p35), it is clear that by the pre-election period of 1987, it reflected the strong personal stance of the then Prime Minister to transform the education system as reported by Chitty (1992, p35-6).

> *We are going much further with education than we ever thought of doing before. We've spent all that money per pupil, and even with more teachers, there is still so much wrong; so we are going to do something determined about it. ... There is going to be a revolution in the running of schools.*

Directed specifically to curb the influence of what was perceived to be the 'worst left-wing Labour authorities' (Chitty, 1992, p36), the 1988 Education Act was the most comprehensive educational legislation since the 1944 Education Act (Maclure, 1988). From the point of view of headship and headteacher leadership, the Act had three important implications. Firstly, the introduction of a National Curriculum imposed, for the first time, national control on what would be taught and reduced curriculum freedom at individual school level. Southworth's (1995a) year-long ethnographic case study of primary headship researched the work of one headteacher during the 1988-89 school year,

and through this identified a particular implication of this for headship. The headteacher feared that the transmission of *his* beliefs to the staff, which up to that point had been for him an important aspect of his job, would change to become the implementer of a National Curriculum, resulting in a loss of control of his personal curriculum vision. Compliance would be checked through national testing and reporting, together with the introduction, in 1993, of a national system of regular school inspections by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

The second major change was the introduction of a devolved system of school management – local management of schools (LMS). This delegated significant responsibilities, including local financial management, to individual schools through governors and headteachers. This delegation included responsibility for finance, staffing and accommodation previously controlled and managed by LEAs. Mortimore and Mortimore (1991, p125), identified the emerging tension between the head-as-teacher and the head-as-manager, and that primary heads were spending increased time on management. A similar view was expressed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) in the Chief Inspector's annual report (1991, p8, para 48) who detected that management and administrative duties were 'beginning to take their toll' on the curriculum leadership of primary heads.

Southworth's study (1995a, p148) indicated the headteacher remained 'at the centre of the school, personally involved and closely associated with almost every aspect of it' and this re-emphasised the pivotal and powerful dimensions of headship which contribution significantly to the head's professional identity (p150). This confirmed much of the pre-1988 research into headship relating to the power associated with headship. In Southworth's study (1995a) the head's power was the result of a combination of factors. Having founded the school, he was the most experienced professional and perceived by the staff to be a successful headteacher. His authority was a consequence of his position in the organisation. Although powerful, the head was not inconsiderate towards staff with a sense of care and support often demonstrated. Consultation and involvement in policy decisions – an opportunity for staff participation rather than any devolvement of power – characterised the head's approach. Blasé (1991, p46) argues there is both a control and a collaborative – collegial dimension to headship. In this instance however, whilst both dimensions were apparent, they were not equal. The head was willing to consult, but not at

the expense of his control. Control pervaded the school. Ball (1987, p278) identifies that heads need to both control staff and encourage their participation, and that control of school organisation is significantly concerned with domination – the elimination or pre-emption of conflict. The study therefore verifies existing theories about heads – that primary heads are powerful figures in their schools (Coulson, 1976, 1978; Ball 1987; Nias, *et al.*, 1989).

Southworth's (1995a, p150) research identifies that the head's beliefs about his work and the nature of headship reflect a set of standards and ideals about occupational self. Occupational norms about teaching and headship are learned from career experiences, which together help to form professional identity – personal beliefs about headship and school leadership. Southworth sees this approach to headship as an occupational identity – not an imposed externalised role – but as part of the headteacher's professional self. The concept of headship as an identity, rather than a role, emerges as one of Southworth's main research conclusions.

Unlike the National Curriculum and LMS the third implication of the 1988 Education Act did not directly influence the work of all primary schools. This was the opportunity within the Act for schools to apply for Grant Maintained Status, and to opt out of the locally maintained system and to receive direct and enhanced funding from central government. For those schools that took this opportunity, the impact on the work of the headteacher was considerable, providing greater institutional and personal autonomy and an increased personal workload.

The 1988 Act increased central control of the curriculum and the powers of the Education Secretary, whilst simultaneously limiting the functions and powers of LEAs as greater autonomy was given to individual schools and governing bodies. It effectively ended the ill-defined partnership between central and local government and individuals schools, which had been such a prominent feature of the educational landscape since the 1944 Education Act.

There are a variety and range of interpretations of the 1988 Education Act. For the government, it was policy change and legislation intended to raise standards and extend parental choice, through breaking the producer-dominated approach to education that was

seen as insensitive to the demand for change. Variety, independence and choice were politically popular concepts, not only in education, but across the broader public sector. For others, the accountability dimension of the Act, linked to strengthening the consumer interest in education, was seen as the linchpin to the government's reforms, through an improved basic curriculum, extension of parental choice and influence and better management of schools. This focus on improved management had particular implications for headship, and increasingly the relationship between effective school management, the quality of provision and the standards achieved by learners started to be explored with increased vigour as illustrated in subsequent successive Ofsted inspection frameworks developed during the 1990s. The possibility of the growth of successful schools, through the attraction of more pupils, and the closure of unsuccessful schools, due to pupil drift, began to introduce concepts into school management that up to that time had been alien : competition, market forces, value for money, and diversity, in a context of sharper accountability for standards.

An extensive review of some of the alternative interpretations of the 1988 Education Act is developed by Thrupp and Willmot (2003). Their incisive critique of the impact of that legislation, particularly its 'managerialist underpinning' (p26) with implications for efficiency, productivity and cost-effectiveness ('value for money' in Ofsted terminology) highlights some of the harmful effects they identified of the 1988 policies particularly those concerned with polarisation and the development of a quasi-market:

> *The market-based approach to education brought in by the Conservative government after the Education Act 1988 was centred on the idea that popular schools were good schools which deserved to thrive while unpopular schools were bad and could safely be allowed to go to the wall.* (p38)

The implications for schools, and therefore for headteachers and headteacher leadership were potentially significant, and reflected in a number of research studies undertaken between 1990 and 1995. Nevertheless there remains a lack of clarity about what actually happened in terms of the changes to headship in this period, and there is some contradictory research evidence.

Alexander *et al.,* (1992, p47), whilst acknowledging the changing nature of headship, argued that heads should take a lead in ensuring high quality provision, monitoring teaching and learning and providing 'a vision for what their schools should become.' Webb's (1994) small scale survey of 50 schools across 13 LEAs showed whilst there was more to manage and administer, there remained the long-standing expectation at the level of national policy, that heads should be curriculum leaders. This confirmed the well-established view of headship in relation to curriculum and curriculum leadership and encouraged by Alexander *et al.,* (1992).

The notions of both continuity and change in headship for example, with established responsibilities for the curriculum continuing, albeit in a new context, whilst new demands added to reflect the requirements of local management, is a theme identified in Southworth's (1995b) study reflects headteacher perceptions of their work before the 1988 Act, and in their work in the mid-1990's. Three major themes emerge:

- the persistence of work patterns: The heads continued to deal with many things at once, with interruptions, variety and fragmentation reflecting their working day (p25)
- ego-identification: Heads continued to feel personally responsible for 'their' schools. If anything, increased accountabilities (for example, through publication of results and inspection reports) had strengthened this sense of personal responsibility (p25)
- power: Heads readily spoke about their influence, authority and control, clearly recognising they were powerful and describing themselves as 'resident inspectors' of their schools' performance (p27).

The changes identified in Southworth's study included:

- an intensification of the work of headteachers, both in terms of what had to be done and the increased complexity of the headship task
- more management and school maintenance tasks, stemming largely from local management requirements
- more politics and diplomacy because of networking and liaising with parents and governors and dealing with more players and stake-holders

- an increased public role to headship and sharper public accountability for results (p25-27).

Because there was more to do, one consequence identified in the study was a decrease in the personal teaching undertaken by headteachers. Finally, Southworth (1995b) identifies one new dimension of headteacher leadership that emerged during the early 1990's, the cycle of regular national inspections of schools, introduced by the 1992 Education Act and initiated in primary schools by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) from September 1994. Inspection emerged as the major predominant issue for headteachers in Southworth's research, irrespective of where schools were in the inspection cycle. The reasons for this were many and included the headteacher's acute sensitivity to how the school's report would reflect on them individually, because of their strong personal identification with the school, in essence, a professional and personal assessment of themselves as leaders. This is essentially a reflection of personal identity - the power and influence of headship. For the first time, the way headteachers do their job, and their effectiveness at that job, started to be judged, and that judgement and made public. In so doing, it provided a test of professional credibility, and represented a dramatic alteration in public accountability.

By the mid 1990's primary headship had therefore become more complex and challenging, with more tasks associated with the job; more stakeholders involved with the school's life and work, particularly governors and parents; and sharper responsibilities and accountabilities. As a result, the work of headteachers had intensified and work hours increased. Although more was being done by headteachers, there did not appear to have been a 'wholesale change of approach to headship' (Hall and Southworth, 1997, p159). Heads remained powerful figures in their individual schools, a feature that remained one of the most notable and continuing features of primary headship following the 1988 Education Act.

Primary headship from 1997 to 2007

This section considers a range of literature and research to present a view of primary headship since the election of a Labour government in 1997. These more recent developments in primary headship particularly provide a focus for this study of transition to primary headship

The period since 1997 and the election of a Labour administration with a strong commitment to education, is characterised by the continued influence of most of the major structural reforms introduced by the 1988 Education Act, the only exception being the disappearance of Grant Maintained Schools. This sustained political interest in education has had a marked influence upon both headship and headteacher leadership, and is now analysed.

Particularly central to this strengthened political interest in education, and with important implications for headship, are the twin-fields of school effectiveness and school improvement. The term 'school effectiveness' is a well-established concept used to describe studies which measure and relate pupil intake, to process and outcome variables. A more recent and growing development in the context of school effectiveness, is the concept of value-added measures. Such measures indicate how pupil achievement has changed between key stages in relation to both previous attainment, and the attainment of pupils in other schools. Contextual value-added measures provide a further and more sophisticated indication of school effectiveness, by taking a range of socio-economic indicators into account in measuring value-added. Whilst a full exploration of the complex field of school effectiveness and valued-added studies is beyond the scope of this study, it is nevertheless important to identify the key implications of the school effectiveness movement and the significance of school improvement processes for headship, since securing and sustaining school effectiveness is an important part of the work of headteachers.

The centrality of school improvement, the planned and deliberate attempt to help move a school forward by improving pupil attainment, is increasingly pivotal to the perception of headship now held by policy makers, and described in the current National Standards for Headteachers (DfES, 2004, p2). School improvement typically focuses upon classroom processes that support teaching and learning. The impact of school improvement in the context of raised standards of pupil attainment, particularly in the core subjects, is often closely aligned with quantitative indicators of school effectiveness, and the statutory target setting requirements introduced into primary schools in 1999 in English and mathematics for Key Stage 2 pupils. This focus, upon two of the three core subjects, reflects the importance attached by central government to a relatively narrow, but in practice what has become an increasingly significant aspect of the broader primary curriculum.

'Target setting', and the notion of 'raising standards' have become key dimensions both of headship, and school effectiveness. However, the policy expectation to improve pupil outcomes in end of key stage assessments in English and mathematics is not the only expectation faced by contemporary primary headteachers. The period in education since 1997 has been one of continued and intensified 'practice centralisation' (Bottery 2007, p87), and the 'continued acceptance of quasi-market mechanisms and the increased emphasis on performance management in order to enhance national competitiveness' (Thrupp and Willmot, 2003, p13), reflected through the setting of goals, targets and increased external pressures. Both in this country, and across much of the western industrialised world, the decentralisation that was initiated with the 1988 Education Act, has continued. This movement has been mirrored by the increased use of pupil testing and the publication of results, with increasingly sophisticated value-added and other comparative performance measures being developed, together with a more centralised curriculum, including since 1999 the development of a range of national strategies to improve outcomes and management, particularly the Primary National Strategy. Views differ about the impact of these developments on both teachers and pupils, but one consequence is "a more centralised system and a more directed profession" (Bottery 2007, p90). What has emerged is described by Bottery as 'decentralised centralism', with delegation of responsibilities alongside greater central surveillance, such as through a national inspection system, rather than devolution of power. One consequence of this that is particularly important for headteachers is their ability to manage and translate a centrally initiated policy agenda in a particular context and thereby provide new meaning to it. One result of this is an extensive and growing literature on burnout, early retirements, and reluctance of individuals willing to put themselves forward for headship (Gronn, 2003; Fullan, 2004).

The challenge for headteachers presented by the continuing and possibly intensifying central control agenda is examined in research by Day, *et al.,* (2000). This study into the work of headteachers who were identified for their effectiveness, suggests that they manage to maintain a personal vision from a basis of secure personal ethics and values to enable them to decide how to react to external policies and the daily demands headship presents. Other research, for example by Wright (2001), based upon the perceptions of a broad cross-section of headteachers, suggests that many heads feel so constrained, that they feel forced to concentrate on working out ways to implement central policy largely uncritically, rather than adopting a personal or communal critical stance. The research evidence is inconclusive.

Bottery's research into contemporary primary headship (2007) reveals a thought provoking and provocative perspective on headship. Based upon a small, but broadly based sample of 12 primary headteachers, the study uses a semi-structured interview approach around five initial areas of enquiry relating to (1) legislation; (2) Ofsted inspections; (3) working in a quasi-market situation; (4) the pressure of time; and (5) the expenditure of personal energy. After initial questionnaire data analysis, follow-up interviews were undertaken and final data for the research was eventually derived. The collective responses provide a perception of headship that has eight critical findings.

First, due to personality and context, there is no simple clear pattern to centralist legislation in relation to headship. Bottery (2007, p106) considers this to be a reflection of "the interaction of personality with context, which is the reality of headship." Therefore addressing headteacher's professional and training development, both pre and post appointment, through a standardised competencies based model such as National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), is unlikely to be successful, since it fails to highlight sufficiently what he identities as the two key variables to job success, the inter-play of context and personality.

Second, most headteachers believed they still have a strong role to play in deciding the educational goals of their schools, in spite of central direction and control. Again, the strength of their action depended upon personality and context, but none saw themselves as simple conduits for government policy.

Third, all the interviewees were driven by a motivation to achieve 'the best' for their children. This 'best' reflected a broad focus and meeting the needs of the whole child, the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda, and the traditional ethos of English primary school, with an emphasis on pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development, as well as curricular and academic attainment. To this extent, headteachers support a key element of government policy and thinking, and at strategic level at least, there is no marked difference of view.

Fourth, a number of interviewees reflected a perceived lack of co-ordination of policy at national level, and some demonstrated a degree of personal defiance as a consequence. This

was not universal, and either through personality, experience or circumstance, expressed resistance was very variable.

Fifth, all acknowledged that legislation, directives and advice formed the architecture and 'thinking' space for their day-to-day work. More experienced headteachers saw this pressure much more strongly now than 20 years ago, reflected for example, through the influence of Ofsted. Yet there was variation in responses, with mediation attempted by all in terms of values, personality and context. Different approaches to handling central dictates were characteristic in a perceived attempt to mediate to generate success in each school by creating different examples of practice.

Sixth, was a strong and widely held view about the primary curriculum. This identified a belief that curriculum management 'needs a considerably more creative approach than has been officially sanctioned for some time'. (Bottery, 2007, p108) reflecting again a perception of central control, and a high focus on the core subjects in the context of a standards driven agenda and measurable outcomes. Headteachers perceived contradictory messages about the curriculum from different official sources, and particularly a continuing focus from Ofsted on a compliance model with an emphasis on progress and value-added data in the core subjects.

Seventh, the research indicates that governments may be able to trust headteachers rather more than seems the case. Headteachers 'interrogate critique and mediate educational policy in an attempt to forge a best way forward between policy, theory and educational practice' (Bottery, p180). The perception identified in the research, is of headteachers working pragmatically to enable government policy to be interpreted and implemented in practical contexts, rather than any suggestion of undermining policy.

Finally, whilst macro issues were recognised by all the interviewees, almost all saw such macro factors primarily as useful in achieving the meso and micro-goals of their schools. Dealing with specific short-term school issues seemed to dominate headteacher thinking and action, yet set within an overall context of the pragmatic management of macro-issues. Nevertheless, within a current context of pressure and demands, opportunities to further develop the macro dimension of headship appear limited and restricted.

CONTEMPORARY PRIMARY HEADSHIP AND HEADTEACHER LEADERSHIP: SOME EMERGING THEMES

This section provides an analysis of the emerging major themes of contemporary primary headship and headteacher leadership that emerge from the literature review. It is influenced by my personal perceptions of headship, both as a former headteacher and more recently as an observer of headteachers through my work as a local authority primary phase adviser.

One of the strongly emerging themes from both the literature and research review, and from my personal experience, is the centrality of the headteacher's leadership and management in relation to improvement of standards, however broadly or narrowly defined. Indeed, the current National Standards for Headteachers (DfES, 2004, p2) identifies the provision of 'professional leadership and management to secure a foundation from which to achieve high standards' as the core purpose of headship. This core purpose is extended to include specific reference to pedagogical leadership; leadership of the school's culture of excellence; accountability for performance to governors; evaluation; internal policy development; school management and administration and community links. Male (2001, p464) sees the headteacher as 'the managing director of a self-managing organisation.' This definition usefully highlights the unique nature of headship in a self-managing institution, within the overall context of national expectations associated with headship, particularly in relation to school improvement and school effectiveness.

It is important to clarify terminology and thinking in relation to headship. Leadership, whilst important, is nevertheless just one part of a trilogy for action by headteachers together with management and administration. Definitions of school leadership are many, but a central element of many definitions is that of influence. Yukl (2002, p3) explains this process of influence.

Most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a social influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person (or group) over other people (or groups) to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation.

Whilst there is wide recognition that in order to be effective, schools need effective leaders (Jirasinghe and Lyons, 1996; Brighouse and Woods, 1999; Day *et al.*, 2000), one potential problem of this view is the emphasis it places upon the headteacher's personal accountability, and does not sufficiently emphasise the need for broader participation in the school's leadership. Understandings of the concept of leadership are changing and shifting towards a new re-definition of this elusive concept. Old paradigms view leaders and leadership as synonymous and by situating leadership in a role with implications for individual position and skill set, leading has become aligned with formal authority. By further situating leadership in the goals and actions of an organisation's mission, larger value issues are missed (Lambert, 2003).

Although leadership may be understood as 'influence', this notion is neutral in that it neither explains nor identifies what goals or actions should inform this process of influence. Wasserberg (1999, p155) identifies the need for leadership to be grounded in firm personal and professional values. The significance of personal and professional values as the basis for effective leadership and which represent the school's moral purpose is widely reported in the literature (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2001; Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2002; Brundrett, Burton and Smith 2003).

Discussion about values and leadership often takes place in the context of vision, which is increasingly regarded as an important component of leadership. Empirical evidence from Southworth's (1997) research, and other more recent studies into primary school leadership reported by Bush and Glover (2003), show the high level of support for visionary leadership, but acknowledge that it can be 'highly problematic' and a potentially 'uncomfortable' facet of a head's leadership. Fullan (1992, p19) is even more critical, and suggests that visionary leaders may damage, rather than improve their schools.

> *The current emphasis on vision in leadership can be misleading. Vision can blind leaders in a number of ways ..... The high powered, charismatic principal who 'radically transforms the school' in four or five years can be blinding and misleading as a role model. Principals are blinded by their own vision when they feel they must manipulate the teachers and the school culture to conform to it.*

Day *et al.,* (2000, p20) identifies the importance of the articulation, development and implementation of 'vision' in the context of a headteacher's leadership of the process of building organisational capacity.

> *It is one thing for a leader to have the vision : it is quite another for that vision to guide the behaviour of an entire organisation. Leaders in successful quality settings have been able to conceptualise the theory in ways that translate into practice, steer the change process, and guide people in determining not only how to perform their jobs, but even more importantly, what those jobs should be.*

A headteacher's vision can therefore have a powerful influence and impact upon the culture of a school, providing direction for school-level change and direction. The study by Day *et al.,* (2000) examined more fully how effective leadership is underpinned by a number of core *personal values.* These concerned the modelling and promotion of respect for individuals; fairness and quality; caring for the well being and whole development of students and staff; integrity and honesty. The concept of school leadership therefore needs to be consistent with underpinning values and vision.

For the purposes of this study, a working definition of school leadership is adopted which draws from this discussion about values and vision is that offered by Bush and Glover (2003, p5).

> *Leadership is a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and other stakeholders to share the vision. The philosophy, structures and activities of the school are geared towards the achievement of this shared vision.*

The implications of this definition for contemporary headteacher leadership are significant and will now be explored as shifts in thinking about leadership are traced, and their influence examined.

For most of the last century, until as recently as the 1990's, the concept of leadership was relatively consistent. Roost (1991, p180) describes the prevailing perception of leadership to that time:

> *Leadership is good management ..... leadership is great men and women with certain preferred traits influencing followers to do what leaders wish in order to achieve group/organisational goals that reflect excellence defined as some kind of higher-level effectiveness.*

Roost refers to this definition as the 'industrial leadership paradigm' – one which is hierarchical, individual, reductionalist, linear and mechanical. In response to the changing demands faced by schools, particularly since the 1988 ERA, thinking about the concept of leadership has become broader and deeper, and a wide range of alternative perspectives and approaches to developing an understanding of the concept of leadership have developed.

Definitions of leadership emerged in the thematic overview of research undertaken by Bush and Glover (2003, p7) on behalf of the National College for School Leadership. The college proposes school leadership is contextualised, collaborative, distributed, learning-centred and forward-looking. The implications of this proposition for head leadership are examined in Chapter 5.

One of the most robust findings from the extensive review of research into leadership by Bush and Glover (2003, p5) is that leadership overlaps with management, and while vision is essential to establish the nature and direction of change, effective implementation of innovation needs effective management. Educational management must not be confused with the 'managerialist' approach to education discussed earlier in this chapter. Management in this context is centrally concerned with the purpose or aims of education. These purposes or goals, derived from the values and vision that underpin leadership processes, underpin the management activities within an organisation. These activities are therefore focused upon the achievement of authentic educational goals and hence the link between purpose and management is clear and the symbolic relationship of educational leadership and management clarified. Headship involves working with this overlap, and

Hall and Southworth's research (1997) traces a series of themes which focus thinking on headship and how headteachers both lead and manage.

The first of these themes concerns the lack of understanding of *how* headteachers make a difference to their schools and how this might vary according to the school's context, size, development needs and the head's own background, experience, skills and knowledge. Whilst the centrality of the headteacher's work and leadership to the school improvement process is widely acknowledged, the nature of this work has not been examined in much depth. My own research study provides a contemporary perspective on headteacher's work and leadership in relation to the school improvement process in three particular school contexts, and this is examined both in the case studies in Chapter 4 and through the emerging overall themes discussed in Chapter 5.

Leadership of school improvement is a central facet of contemporary headship. Gronn (1996) argues that in reality, headteachers are far from being visionary leaders, but bargain and negotiate, as they always have, but since 1988, do this with a larger number of interest groups. In this sense they are not in the position of an autocratic leader, working in a values-free context that lacks any ethical commitment to children and their development, or with children and teachers relegated to follower status. The building and fostering of alliances and networks is central to headteacher leadership. If this is an accurate perception of the reality of contemporary headship, it is important to consider how headteachers are prepared for this aspect of their work, through programmes such as the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH).

The second theme that emerges from Hall and Southworth's work (1997, p165) is that leadership is less about functional role and more about enabling teachers to participate in management decisions:

> *The use of management teams reflects heads' attempts to improve the effectiveness of their schools by increasing the power of colleagues' contributions. Such heads may be seeking to empower colleagues by transforming the nature of leadership in the school.*

Such approaches to leadership, through changing the culture of schools to give greater emphasis to collaborative adult learning cultures is reflected in the work of Jenkins (1997). Adopting such an approach to leadership is seen as the most creative way of coping with the unpredictability of contemporary organisations, and the rapidly changing contexts within which they operate. Jenkins sees the 'strong' leader as increasingly being one who has the skills and abilities to create a collaborative culture which diminishes autocracy and extends leadership in others in the organisation. The ability to create a unifying culture across all stakeholders through coherent processes becomes pivotal to the promotion of an organisational vision and headteacher leadership. In reality, the challenge may be that of trying to reconcile this kind of collaborative working with the demands of external accountability and internal expectations of how headteacher leadership might be perceived by teachers and other stakeholders.

The third theme for head leadership is that of a greater strategic role in school performance for headteachers and a reduced connection with the classroom. Opportunities to lead by classroom example have reduced, as time spent on other activities, such as data analysis and other school self-evaluation activities, has increased. Engagement in day-to-day educational processes has decreased as public interest in outcomes has increased, and accountability for school performance has heightened.

The fourth theme concerns change management. Discontinuous change is central to a headteacher's work and arises from both external policy changes and internally initiated changes. The origin of the change agenda is not insignificant for the leadership of the change process. The implementation of what might be perceived as a punitive centrally determined policy, is potentially very different to a school-based development agenda with important implications for how a headteacher's work is conceptualised and organised.

The fifth theme concerns the need for a differentiated approach to the study of headship to reflect the gendered nature of headship and leadership. There is a need to ensure studies of leadership can, and do, enable leaders to challenge existing power structures and to consider how far programmes such as NPQH encourage such questioning of orthodoxy. The sixth and final theme is concerned with headteacher development. There is the need to understand better how headteachers grow in their professional development and understanding and how they can be supported, challenged and developed in their work.

This theme points to a lack of knowledge about the realities of headship (Gronn, 1996) and the absence of a grounded theory approach within the existing research literature into the nature of contemporary primary headship. This study represents one response to this challenge, focused upon the first year of transition into primary headship.

PREPARATION FOR AND TRANSITION TO FIRST HEADSHIP
Pre-appointment preparation

Previously in this chapter the research and literature on primary headship has been presented as an analysis of contemporary headship and headteacher leadership. This section considers the literature and research about the pre-appointment preparation of headteachers, and provides the basis for the discussion that follows about transition to headship.

Systematic preparation for headship in this country was established relatively recently. The introduction in 1997 of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) reflected central government's attempt to improve the quality of headship preparation which, up to that time, had been described by observers as 'patchy' (Bolam, 1997, p227), 'disjointed and insubstantial' (Male, 1997, p6) and 'haphazard' (Bush, 1999, p244). Although there had been previous headship preparation initiatives, these were largely seen to have failed to either define the job of headship, or to impact upon a sufficient high number of potential headteachers (School Management Task Force 1990).

In order to address these apparent deficiencies, two developments were initiated by central government. Firstly, in 1997, the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) created the first National Standards for Headship (TTA, 1997) which identified the attributes, skills and professional knowledge and understanding deemed to be appropriate to headship. The National Standards replaced the existing HEADLAMP tasks and abilities model, which had been developed in 1994 to support the induction of recently appointed headteachers. Both the HEADLAMP model, and the National Standards, reflected a similar competency-driven and management orientated perception of headship – a perspective that is controversial, particularly in the light of the significant and complex leadership dimension that is increasingly associated with headship (Tomlinson, Gunter and Smith, 1999; Male, 2006). Since 1998, the National Standards have been periodically revised to reflect changing views of the nature of headship. The most recent version, in 2004, provides the

current framework for both the re-appointment training and assessment offered in relation to the NPQH.

The national standards are important for several reasons. Firstly, they provide a policy-makers perception of contemporary headship, described through a competency-based model. However, the appropriateness of a competency-based approach both to describe and delineate a job as complex as headship and to inform training and assessment processes, can be questioned. Indeed, there is no evidence to support that NPQH, with its prescribed assessment and training packages, is likely to 'foster personal responsibility for, and control over, development and training.' (Jirasinghe and Lyons, 1996, p108). Further concerns about NPQH are raised by *Tomlinson et al.,* (1999, pxix), who question whether 'the reality of headship might be somewhat different from what is presented to teachers undergoing this type of national training.' Tomlinson's work, whilst recognising 'the dominance and authority of the headteacher, in different guises, over time' also identifies what Grace (1995) sees as an equally strong theme of professional collegiality to support learning and professional development. This is a dimension of contemporary headteacher leadership already been highlighted in this chapter.

The NPQH, which is set to become a mandatory pre-appointment qualification, is the main formal preparatory experience undertaken by prospective headteachers. However, preparation for headship is increasingly seen as a complex process, reflecting an inter-play of both formal and informal processes. Southworth (1995b) argues that headship is the combination of occupational self as teacher with the occupational self as headteacher, with the one informing and supporting the other, arguing that in both selves, control of others is a key feature. Southworth's research into primary headship was undertaken almost 20 years ago, and many changes have taken place since then, in order to accept that remains a strong relationship between occupational self as teacher and occupational self as headteacher, it is necessary to examine work on competence in understanding headship.

Eraut (1994) distinguishes between three concepts in the field of competence: a behaviourist approach applied to competency-based training; a generic competence tradition, based mainly in management education; and a cognitive competence tradition, most clearly, illustrated in the field of linguistics.

It is the work on generic management competencies that has had the most impact on the assessment, training and development of headteachers in England (McLelland, 1973). The concept of competence draws together two competencies sets; the competencies demonstrated by an individual, together with the demands of the job in a particular context. Together these determine effectiveness in action or performance.

Boyzatis (1982) describes several important features of a competency. He identifies that a competency may:

- be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge which he or she uses
- exist within the individual at various levels, with motives and traits at the unconscious level, and skills at the behavioural level
- be context dependent, that is, given a different organisational environment, the competency may be evident through other specific actions.

The occupational standards approach to competence used in NPQH, differs from the personal qualities approach in that it describes the outcomes that have to be achieved in order to demonstrate competent performance. The standards thus attempt to define benchmarks or specifications against which performance can be assessed. Both the personal qualities and the occupational standards approach start from an analysis of the job. Hence the significance of the competencies based approach, since it is dependent upon an accurate and acceptable analysis of the job – in this instance headship. The National Standards for Headteachers present a particular construct of headship, with important implications for headteacher leadership. This construct is not without critics. Tomlinson *et al.,* (1999, pxx) suggests that the national training and literature is underpinned by the following characteristics:

- leadership that floats free of educational values, and professionalism reconstructed as management processes rather than an ethical commitment to children and their development
- leadership seen as a consensus and unitary-focused process in which culture is managed, rather than a professional relationship in which the realities of dilemmas and contradictions are revealed

- leadership is strongly normative and based on a construction of what ought to be rather than about the day-to-day experiences of headship
- a singular model of effective leadership exists and can be replicated
- the agency of headteachers is emphasised at the expense of the context. Contextual factors are marginalised and generic headteachers can bring this mission and vision to the school with an insistence on the right to manage legitimised
- children and teachers are constructed as objects to be managed and relegated to follower status - to be led to a better future.

Therefore given this construct of headship, how effective and influential NPQH proves to be in enabling prospective headteachers prepare for the reality of first headship is an important strand of this enquiry to transition into headship, explored more fully in Chapters 4 and 5.

The developmental nature of becoming a school leader and headteacher reflects the importance of the socialisation process. Duke (1987, p261) identifies that this process is both long-term and informal, and recognises the limitations of any training programme, such as NPQH. He states:

> *School leaders do not emerge from training programmes fully prepared and completely effective. Their development is a more involved and incremental process, beginning as early as their own schooling and extending through their first years in the job as leaders. Becoming a school leader is an ongoing process of socialisation.*

There are two aspects to the socialisation process: professional and organisational. Professional socialisation is the process of learning what it is to be a headteacher, both from personal experience and formal courses. It is the influence of the personal experience of schooling and teaching, particularly the influence of other individuals that potentially helps construct a personal construct of headship and headteacher leadership to be developed. This may have particular personal significance considerably greater than formal training. Schein (1968) identifies that organisational socialisation involves learning the knowledge, values and behaviours required to perform a specific role within a particular organisation after appointment. Potentially these values and norms may be very

different to those learned as part of the process of professional socialisation. If the mismatch is acute this potentially could result in personal cognitive dissonance, with important implications for transition into headship during the post-appointment period.

The post-appointment period

This section considers the concept of transition, the move from one job to another, in the context of beginning primary headteachers. It examines 'transition theory', and how that theory might be related to transition to headship, together with a number of key research studies into beginning headship. The section concludes by identifying implications for this study.

It is clear that contemporary primary headship is complex. In the western world, one of the most significant consequences is 'an impending crisis, where insufficient numbers of able people are willing to fill the principal's role' (Bottery, 2004, p13). This reflects a situation where 70% of incumbent principals and vice-principals identified significant issues of job satisfaction related to time management; external curriculum pressure and change and inadequacy of support staff and resource restrictions (Williams, 2001). Whilst there is therefore considerable evidence to indicate both the challenge and complexity contemporary headship presents for experienced incumbents, there are likely also to be particular implications for beginning headteachers as they make the transition into headship.

There is an extensive body of research data to suggest that beginning headteachers, although not unprepared, are not fully prepared for the job, particularly in being able to deal with the transition into a formal leadership position that is central to the concept of the post – the headteacher leadership position (Weindling and Earley 1987; Male, 1996; Dunning, 1996; Draper and McMichael, 1998; Male 2004). Many of these research studies were undertaken over an extensive period, both before and after the ERA, and identify a number of similar themes.

Weindling and Earley's (1987) research into beginning headship was the first major study into early headship. Although focused specifically upon the secondary sector, it nevertheless provides a valuable insight into transition into headship before the 1988 ERA. This extensive study found that most heads experienced professional isolation and

loneliness and reported a lack of feedback on their progress. For most, the legacy of the previous head lasted substantially longer than they expected, reflected often in surprise when existing routines were challenged.

A similar picture emerges form the more recent study of 31 new primary headteachers by Draper and McMichael (1998), undertaken during their first three years in post. The study reflects that although well prepared for headship, they were more overwhelmed by the job than they had anticipated. Three facets of overload are identified in this research: those particular to the school, such as procedures, job descriptions and budget issues; those particular to the local authority's systems, such as who is responsible for what; and a variety of general factors such as those relating to legal responsibilities with respect to pupils, parents, staff and buildings. New headteachers in the study reported they were 'bewildered by the number and complexity of the systems with which they interacted once they took up the role of head' (Draper and McMichael, p209). They identified the need to establish control of day-to-day school functions as a priority, before being able to move into the strategic dimension of leadership and school improvement.

Draper and McMichael's research (1998, p20) focused particularly upon exploring the pre-appointment expectations of newly-appointed headteachers and reality as they found it. Their research identified that for many new headteachers, there was a high degree of surprise in the difference between what they expected and what they experienced. Their preparation, which had been claimed invaluable, had not eliminated the shock of the actual. New heads found themselves to be decontextualised, and as a result deskilled, particularly when 'procedures that had worked well in their previous school did not work in their new school.' Work overload, although anticipated, exceeded expectation. Role conflict and confusion led to new heads buffeted by events, as the slow process of establishing a collegiate ethos was undertaken. Finally, a majority of new heads were surprised by the respect given to them by the staff as they settled in, an aspect of transition that they had not anticipated.

Male's (2004) more recent study of preparation for and transition to early headship, built upon his previous extensive work in this field. It identifies that beginning headteachers "are not fully prepared for the role, particularly in being able to deal with the transition to the formal leadership position that was integral to the concept of the post." (Male, 2004,

p15-16). Some significant findings from this research, particularly in the context of transition, include issues relating to a lack of preparation for headship; the time taken to feel confident and effective in post; the paucity of post-appointment training and finally, echoing earlier research by Weindling and Earley (1987), the isolation and loneliness of headship.

It is important to consider how the findings of these various studies relate to the broader literature and theory on transition to formal leadership positions such as headship. A useful approach to understanding leadership and headship development is derived from Merton's (1965, p153) work on socialisation theory, and his definition of socialisation:

> *The process whereby personality is acquired through social interaction is known as socialisation. Socialisation is the process by which conformity is assured.*

Merton's theory emphasises that socialisation is a two-way process of interaction between the new leader and the school situation, in which each is trying to change and influence the other. It is the process by which people selectively acquire the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge that are current in the group to which they have acquired membership, through their appointment as the formal leader. In his view, socialisation has two main overlapping phases; professional and organisation socialisation. This analysis reflects the work of Duke (1987) discussed earlier in this chapter.

Both professional and organisational socialisations have two main components: 'the technical component' – learning the necessary skills and knowledge, and 'the moral component' – developing values, norms and attitudes. Both components according to Duke (1987, p261) extend 'through their first years on the job as leaders' and that becoming a school leader is an ongoing process of socialisation.

There is a large body of work drawn in part from the non-educational field that suggests a number of 'stage' theories to explain the transition phases experienced by leaders. This work may provide a useful framework for analysing the post-appointment period and includes the work of Gabarro (1987), Gronn (1993) and Reeves, Mooves and Forrest (1998). Although different authors use different terminology for the various stages in the transition process, they commonly identify broadly three stages of organisational

socialisation. Hart's (1993) useful synthesis and critical analysis of the field, identifies these three stages as:

Stage 1:   Encounter, Anticipation or Confrontation

The initial arrival stage requires considerable learning on the part of a new head or principal as they encounter the people and the organisation. Cognitive approaches focus on rational interpretations and the understandings that people construct – a process of *sense making*.

Stage 2:   Adjustment, Accommodation, Clarify

The second stage involves the task of attempting to fit in. The new leader must reach accommodation with the work role, the people with whom he or she interacts, and the school culture. The newcomer looks for role clarity within the new setting. The new leader may have to cope with resistance to change from established members of the group.

Stage 3:   Stabilisation

During the third stage, stable patterns begin to emerge from socialisation. This stage is clearly visible only in longitudinal data extending over a number of years.

Similarly there are a variety of models that describe professional socialisation which again reflect a number of sequential stages. Weindling (2000) presents a more recent synthesis of the studies that inform these models of professional socialisation. A number of key themes emerge which, although again use different terminology depending upon the author, may be summarised as:

Stage 1:   Preparation

This pre-appointment stage includes a range of formal and informal learning, both through courses and through experience.

Stage 2:   Entry, orientation and immersion

Applying previous learning about the job, frequently in an unfamiliar context. Learning through formal induction provision and networking with other headteachers. Building professional alliances to support organisational socialisation.

Stage 3:   Control and action

Leading review and evaluation processes to reconfigure and reshape. Working with and through others, such as task groups and external consultants, to implement change. Building experience.

Stage 4:   Consolidation and extension

A period of sustained development, networking with other organisations, sharing experience and expertise prior to moving on, either through divestitive for the disenchanted, or reinvention for the enchanted.

Finally, in this framework of professional socialisation, Gabarro's (1987, p6) research into succession in business and industrial leadership in the US and Europe identifies the process of 'taking charge' as an important aspect of the transition process. He identifies this as:

> *By taking charge, I do not mean just orienting oneself of a new assignment. Taking charge, as I use the term, refers to the process by which a manager establishes mastery and influence in a new assignment. By mastery, I mean acquiring a grounded understanding of the organisation, its tasks, people, environment, and problems. By influence, I mean having an impact on the organisation, its structure, practices and performance. The process begins when a manager starts a new assignment and ends when he or she has mastered it in sufficient depth to be managing the organisation as efficiently as the resources, constrains, and the manager's own ability allow.*

This definition relates to the models of professional and organisational socialisation discussed earlier, emphasising as it does, the longer-term process of transition and the influence of the newcomer on the culture of an existing organisation, and the influence of the organisation on the newcomer. Gabarro (1987) identifies five chronological stages in this process:

Stage 1:   Taking hold (0-6 months)

A period of initial orientation and learning – the building of a mental model of the organisation. A period of intense management action, correcting immediate problems and identifying priorities. The first wave of organisational change.

Stage 2:   Immersion (6-12 months)

A period of deeper learning and diagnosis with little organisational change activity. Understanding grows as knowledge develops.

Stage 3:   Re-shaping (12-21 months)

A period of major change and reconfiguration when ideas from the period of immersion are developed using internal and external expertise, and a second wave of organisational change is evidenced.

Stage 4:   Consolidation (21-27 months)

A period of reflection and evaluation, dealing with unanticipated problems. The third and smallest wave of organisational change

Stage 5:   Refinement (27-36 months)

A period of fine tuning with little major additional learning. Mastery is acquired and credibility and power established or not. External change is still likely to impact.

Gronn (1993) draws together much of the literature on transition to formal leadership and suggests that new postholders need a range of personal qualities, capabilities and skills in order to meet the demands of the job. In his work on leadership succession, Gronn (1993) identifies a four stage model within the transition process : Formation, passing through accession to incumbency, and ending finally with divestiture.

There is an important dimension to the formative stage of professional socialisation concerned with early influences from a range of reference groups and contacts which, it is suggested, help shape the personality of the leader. These include family, school, and other professional and personal contacts. During the accession stage, the prospective leader makes progress to their future position by gaining and creating relevant knowledge and experience for the post. This may be a planned and deliberate accession process, and in

part reflected in formal training, or unplanned and unstructured. Incumbency is the length of time in the post whilst divestiture describes the period of leaving either for retirement, or re-invention for a new appointment. This study focuses particularly upon the first year of incumbency for those new to substantive headship, but also takes account of relevant formation and accession issues where they influence and affect the incumbency stage.

The period of incumbency is often closely associated with the establishment of identity. Tomlinson (2004, p93) argues the need for leaders to establish a secure identity in order to ensure greater control of the future and the development of both self-esteem and self-confidence. Identity, he argues, should not be confused with role, which is a different concept and he draws attention to expected behaviours, the position of the role within the structure of the organisation, and role function. Identity needs to be secure, yet not a rigid and inflexible identity that cannot be sustained. The point at which the postholder feels both comfortable and effective is the point at which occupational identity is established. It reflects the power to belong and to claim a place within the membership of the organisation. Similarly at this point in time, identity can reflect the vulnerability of belonging to, identifying with and being part of a community.

Occupational identity is therefore likely to be established in relation to both professional and occupational socialisation, and in some respects may be seen as the concept that links the two. Southworth (1995a, p177) explores the concept of occupational identity in his research subject. The psychodynamic model that he develops distinguishes between personal and social self, situational self and substantial self. He argues that whilst his research indicates that:

> *promotion from a teacher to head is a continuous process .....and involves some continuity in occupational identity ..... some changes also take place.*

One illustration is the overall responsibility the headteacher assumes for the school as an organisation, and the personal accountability for the management and administration of the school, including the financial management and relationships with governors. In the perception of staff *'he was the head'* (Southworth, 1995a, p174) – and this reflects the continuity and change to an individuals' occupational identify.

Southworth (1995a, p174-177) indicates that being a head reflects occupational identity and develops in a number of ways. Firstly, as Weindling and Earley (1987, p122-3), in their earlier study into the first years of secondary headship identified, initial socialisation into headship exaggerates the individual's sense of professional isolation.

> *'It is the loneliness of being the final arbiter upon whose word all sinks or swims. It is this power that isolates and daunts ...... For many heads, professional isolation and loneliness were part and parcel of the job itself.'*

Secondly, Southworth's (1995a) study indicates that on becoming a head, the newcomer becomes more self-referential, as larger numbers of adults and children are faced than previously experienced. This results in feelings of loneliness and a sense of self confronting a group – staff, parents, and governors. In consequence, heads feel not only alone, but reliant upon themselves as a resource. This highlights the significance of identity. Their teacher experiences of self-reliance and self-referencing begin to increase and strengthen as a headteacher. Thirdly, self-referencing develops into self-belief. This results from the process leading from selection for headship, which ratifies the new heads' educational values – selection bestows approval upon the successful candidate and encourages a head to feel secure to promote his/her beliefs. Fourthly, self-belief and a sense of licence relate to vision identified as a personal picture of a desired future conveyed by a leader to others in the organisation. Vision is likely to be central to the individual's occupational self, if not substantive self, since vision may embody social and moral principles that are central to the individual and self-defining. The head's vision must not only be personally enacted, but staff must be attracted to it and adopt it – a head's vision must become the staff mission. Fifthly, Lortie (1990) identifies part of the occupational identity change involved in taking over the authority of principal increasingly defines the role as one concerned with instructional supervision and evaluation. As monitoring and evaluation activities increase, the supervision and control of colleagues by the head extends into becoming an overseer and controller of former colleagues. Finally, Lortie (1990) suggests that beginning principals learn their craft in smaller schools and then, on the basis of their success move to larger ones. Yet different new skills may be needed to succeed in the new post and this transition may be therefore difficult for some heads to achieve, as leading through personal teaching in a small school for example, may no longer be possible, an issue likely to face all new headteachers without a

significant teaching responsibility. In summary, Southworth (1995a, p177) contends that:

> *Being a head involves continuity and change in an individual's occupational*
> *selves ..... identity is altered in terms of isolation, self-referencing, self-belief and*
> *the projection of beliefs. These appear to be inflated on becoming a head. The*
> *occupational self of teacher is combined with the occupational self of head.*
> *Neither is mutually exclusive, indeed as the very title headteacher signals, the job*
> *is inclusive of both selves. And in both selves control of others is a common*
> *feature.*

Transition to primary headship: towards a framework for enquiry and a theoretical perspective

This section focuses upon the central research question, "What factors influence transition to primary headship and leadership during the first year in post?" It identifies a number of areas for further investigation in this study and provides a framework for the enquiry process. The literature review provides:

- a theoretical perception of contemporary primary headship, and the antecedence to the current job
- an examination of how the leadership dimension of headship represents a significant part of that job, and a recognition of the complexity of headteacher leadership
- an analysis of formal preparation for headship through NPQH and a critique of the model of headship reflected in this programme
- a synthesis of the literature on transition theory drawn from both educational and other contexts, and the main research into beginning headship over the last 20 years.

The literature review suggests that a combination of factors are likely to influence transition to primary headship and headteacher leadership. These factors provide the focus for my empirical research, the design of which is described in Chapter 3 and which is presented, analysed and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. However, what does not emerge from the literature review is a coherent theoretical perspective about transition to headship.

Rather the review raises further questions which are focused through the existing knowledge base reflected in this review. The absence of an existing theory in the context of this research question therefore enables a grounded theory approach to this study to be taken, where theory is generated through data collection and analysis. This process of theory formulation inevitably is initially informed by the existing knowledge base, but not restricted by it. In summary, this literature review indicates that contemporary primary headship:

- is a complex and multi-faceted job with wide-ranging accountabilities and demands and is one of high expectations
- is a job in which power and influence remain closely associated with headteacher leadership
- is increasingly focused upon the need to secure school effectiveness and school improvement and is high profile in terms of public accountability
- is highly contextual, and remains a job that is of considerable personal influence and power
- is only partially reflected in the national standards for headteachers, which reflect only one construct of a complex job, and that construct is contestable.

The literature review further indicates that:

- discussion about the leadership aspect of headship often fails to fully articulate the moral dimension of leadership, with important implications for the approach to leadership that is adopted
- formal preparation for headship, such as through NPQH, may not fully reflect the reality of the job, and therefore has limited significance
- transition theory, when applied to beginning headteachers, offers a potentially useful, if rather simplistic perception of how professional identify is formulated during the early months in post.

It is on the basis of this analysis that the research design developed in this study has been constructed. This is explained in the following chapter which discusses the research

process, methodology, research strategy and the methods of enquiry developed in this study.

CONCLUSION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the literature relevant to this enquiry to provide a focus for the research process described later in this study. The chapter draws upon two dimensions that are key to establishing the research framework: the nature of contemporary primary headship particularly in relation to headteacher leadership; and the process of transition to headship. In drawing together these two dimensions the chapter provides an overview of the existing knowledge base that helps focus the enquiry process.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODS OF ENQUIRY

METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODS OF ENQUIRY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses upon the research process. It discusses the methodology, research strategy and methods of enquiry developed within the study and explains how the data was analysed. The chapter finally considers the main ethical dimensions of the study.

RESEARCHING THE ENQUIRY

This enquiry addresses a research question concerned with the transition of new incumbents to headship:

What factors influence transition to primary headship and leadership during the first year in post?

This question was conceived on the basis of several of the sources identified by Marx (1997), particularly personal experience, the existing literature and 'gaps between official versions of reality and the facts on the ground' (Marx, 1997, p113). It is influenced by my personal experience of headship both as a former headteacher, and, more recently as a local authority adviser working with governors to support the recruitment and induction of over 100 headteachers.

The existing extensive literature on both the process of transition to headship and that on leadership more generally provides a useful range of perspectives and interpretations into both the process of transition and headteacher leadership. This is closely examined in Chapter 2 to identify and explore any 'gap' between these perspectives and 'the facts on the ground' (Marx, 1997, p113) that might be revealed through further research reported in Chapters 4 and 5.

In formulating the research question it was realised that the findings would provide only a partial or simplified version of the full complexity of the process of transition to formal leadership. Although this is accepted as an inevitable limitation of the study, exploration of the question through both literature review and the interpretation of a series of extensive

and in-depth semi-structured interviews with a small sample of headteachers during their first year in post, provides a framework through which headteacher perceptions can be captured and further understanding developed.

It is important to clarify my relationship as researcher with the research process and to consider some of the main implications of this relationship. Through the use of case study, the research process adopts what Yin (1993, p152) calls a 'descriptive approach': in this case to provide a descriptive and analytical account of the first year of primary headship, to establish and develop a relationship over time with each headteacher.

As the researcher, it was important to establish a neutral and non-judgemental stance in relation to the emerging data. This was essential to the focus and objectivity of the research process. Over the course of the year of data gathering and series of four interviews with each headteacher, the questions that provided the structure of each interview (Appendix 1 - 4), which emerged initially from the literature review process, became increasingly focused upon and responsive to the contribution of particular participants. In this way, the scope and direction of each interview built upon earlier discussions to explore further the emerging themes, and to deepen the researcher's understanding of the process of transition in that particular context.

Research sample

The nature of the research question and the depth and scope of the enquiry has required the sample to be purposive in composition and relatively small in size. The study focuses upon the transition to first headship of three primary headteachers over their first year in post. All are in a single local authority and took up their appointments in September 2005.

The initial selection of headteachers was made from information provided by the local authority about those taking up post in September 2005. Permission in principle to undertake the study was obtained from the then County Education Officer, and in order to identify the particular headteachers who would constitute the research sample, two further criteria were applied:

- headteachers and schools with which I had had no previous personal or professional contact through my work as a member of the local authority's education advisory service

- the availability and willingness of the headteachers to take part in and engage with the research process.

The first criterion is concerned with attempting to ensure objectivity in the research process, with the removal of the persona, the emotions, knowledge and experience and the minimising of the researcher's personal values from the research process. Whilst it is acknowledged that it is not possible to achieve total objectivity in the research process, the identification of headteachers and their schools was explicitly made with this criterion in mind. The second criterion reflects the importance of headteacher co-operation and engagement with the research process, and a longer term aspiration that, through the process, they might benefit from opportunities for discussion and reflection. The three headteachers in the sample all work in the primary sector: Maggie at Brookfield Junior School; Ann at Brackden Infant School and Ben at Sunningdale CE (Aided) Primary School. Pseudonyms for both the headteachers, and their schools, have been used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Methodologies define how any phenomenon will be studied, in this instance the process of transition to headship, and may be defined very broadly, for example as qualitative or quantitative, or more narrowly, for example grounded theory or conversation analysis (Silverman, 2000, p79). The general approach adopted to this research enquiry is a qualitative enquiry that reflects the two primary criteria identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for assessing a qualitative study: trustworthiness and authenticity.

Trustworthiness as a primary criterion consists of four criteria, each of which has an equivalent criterion in quantitative research: *credibility* (which parallels internal validity); *transferability* (which parallels external validity); *dependability* (which parallels reliability) and *conformability* (which parallels objectivity). In adopting these criteria in the context of qualitative research there is an acceptance that a single absolute account of social reality is not feasible, and that there are no absolute truths about the social world. Through a qualitative research methodology, an interpretive account is revealed that

reflects both the four trustworthiness criteria, together with criteria for *authenticity*. These criteria will now be considered in order to provide a framework for the development of the research strategy.

The importance and appropriateness of the use of trustworthiness and authenticity for evaluating qualitative research reflects the perspective that a 'critical presuppose that a single absolute account of social reality if feasible' (Bryman, 2001, p272). As such a realist[1] perspective, in which there are absolute truths about the social world to be revealed, is viewed critically and rather that there can be more than one account. The importance of this emphasis upon multiple accounts of social reality is particularly evident in the first criterion of trustworthiness; that of credibility. The feasibility or credibility of the researcher's account will determine its acceptability to others. This requires that research is carried out according to a rigorous methodological approach and submitting research findings for confirmation of correct understanding and interpretation. This is known as respondent validation or member validation. The methodology adopted in this study provided for respondent or member validation through providing each headteacher with a draft account of both the individual case study and the overall research findings. This process sought to seek collaboration, or otherwise, of the account that the researcher had produced in order to ensure a good correspondence between the findings and the perspectives and experiences of the headteachers in the study. Through this process, confirmation that the researcher's findings and impressions were congruent with the participants was achieved.

The second criterion is that of transferability. The study focused upon a small group of three newly appointed headteachers, and as such, it is the depth rather than the width or scale of the enquiry that was particularly important in this qualitative research. The findings are therefore orientated towards the uniqueness of each context. As a result, what is produced is *'thick description'* (Geertz, 1973), rich accounts of the details of a culture that provides a database for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings to other situations and contexts. Hence during this study, the methodology adopted involved tape recording and transcribing over the course of their first year in post, a series of four semi-structured interviews, each of between 45-75 minutes in length with

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[1] Realism is an epistemological position that the natural and social sciences can and should apply the same kinds of approach to data collection and explanation, and a view that there is an external reality

each headteacher participant. Each transcription was shared with each participant prior to analysis, a process explained and developed further later in this chapter.

Thirdly is the criterion of dependability, a parallel to reliability in quantitative research. This requires researchers to adopt what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as an 'auditing' approach to the research process, ensuring complete and accessible records are kept of all phases of the research process, for example, problem formulation, selection of research participants, interview transcripts and data analysis. This is then open to an audit process in order to confirm appropriate procedures have been followed and an assessment being made of the degree to which theoretical inferences can be justified. All data related to this study is available for scrutiny.

Finally, in the context of trustworthiness, is the criterion of conformability. This is concerned with ensuring that, whilst acknowledging and recognising that complete objectivity is impossible in social research, qualitative research needs to demonstrate that neither personal values nor theoretical inclinations have swayed the conduct of the research and the subsequent findings. The auditing process is an opportunity for the conformability of the research to be scrutinised.

In addition to the four trustworthiness criteria, is the criterion of authenticity. This criteria is an "elusive but an important objective" (Bush, 2002, p71) for qualitative researchers. Whilst acknowledging that there is no perfect truth, a focus upon the concepts of validity and reliability[2], more usually associated with a positivist viewpoint, is nevertheless appropriate in a research tradition associated with an interpretive or phenomological viewpoint. Within the context of this study, which adopted a case study approach and which is justified later in this chapter (see Research Strategy), the concept of reliability has relevance, particularly through the use of research interviews. These are also discussed later in this chapter (see Research Methods).

Yin (1994, p146) applies the concept of reliability to case study research and emphasises the importance of findings and conclusions being replicated by later researchers, no

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[2] In a positivist viewpoint, or research tradition, validity is concerned with ensuring a research instrument measures what it is intended to measure. Reliability is concerned with ensuring that the same measure will yield the same results on different occasions, assuming no real change in what is to be measured.

minimising errors and biases in a study. For this to be possible there is an important pre-requisite to document research procedures systematically. In particular, the use of semi-structured interviews as a research method means it is more difficult to ensure reliability, since each individual is able to respond in his/her own way. Nevertheless, this deliberate strategy of semi-structured interviews, rather than pre-determined structured interviews, has important advantages of treating each participant as a unique respondent. In the context of this research this advantage was considered to out-weigh the potential disadvantage relating to reliability. Appendix 1 - 4 outlines the broad scope of each research interview.

Whilst validity, like reliability is primarily associated with positivist rather than interpretative or phenomological research viewpoints, it is nevertheless a concept which, when applied with caution, can contribute to the authenticity of the research. In an enquiry such as this, based upon three in-depth case studies, no claim is made for the external validity in the findings, in other words how far the findings can be generalised. However, in terms of internal validity, or the extent to which the research findings accurately represent the phenomenon under investigation, in this instance, transition to headship through the use of semi-structured interviews, care has been taken to minimise bias, which are 'the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent, and the substantive content of the questions' (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p282). These were achieved through developing a research strategy with an initial pilot phase undertaken two terms in advance of the main research, to trial and improve data gathering with particular attention paid to bias and the content of the questions. On the basis of feedback from the pilot phase of the enquiry, the final interview schedules were subsequently developed. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that a degree of bias is 'likely to be endemic, particularly in semi-structured and unstructured interviews and it is difficult to eliminate' (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p282). However, the advantages of this methodological approach, which potentially enables findings to 'correctly map the phenomenon in question' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p186) are considered to outweigh the disadvantages. Although authenticity may be considered an 'elusive concept' (Bush, 2002, p71), it is nevertheless an important objective for educational research. Through focusing on reliability and validity an acceptable level of authenticity can be achieved and the quality of the study secured.

The qualitative approach taken in this study provides for a grounded theory approach to the enquiry to provide a perspective on how newly appointed headteachers respond to events that occur during their first year in post. Participants' responses, in this case the headteachers in the study and their interpretation of events over the first year of headship, which when retold by participants through semi-structured interviews become reconstructions of actual events and provide the basis of theory formulation. This data was then reconstructed by the researcher in a process of theory formulation which was brought back to participants for validation of interpretation. Theory therefore evolves from the twin processes of event reconstruction and event co-construction, the latter involving engagement between the researcher and participants (Charmaz, 2000). Hence the grounding of theory in data tends to ensure it is more reflective of practical situations than speculatively derived from theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The result is a constructivist view of theory development which acknowledges 'multiple realities' or multiple ways of interpreting a specific data set (Corbin and Holt, 2005, p48). The research methods used in the context of developing a grounded theory approach in this study are fully developed later in this chapter. The focus of this study is to explain and balance the perceptions of headteachers and, through a rigorous process that is evidence based, provide an insight into headship transition.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

This section considers the strategy of case study research when used formatively as part of a process of qualitative enquiry. The research literature contains a range of definitions of case study research: Yin (1994); Stake (1995) and Silverman (2000). Bassey's (2002, p108-9) synthesis of the field identified educational case study as an empirical enquiry which is:

- conducted within a localised boundary of space and time, ie: a singularity
- into *interesting* aspects of an educational activity, or programme, or institution, or system
- mainly in its natural context and within an ethic of respect for persons
- in order to inform the judgements and decisions of practitioners or policy-makers or of theoreticians who are working to these ends, and
- such that sufficient data are collected for the researcher to be able:

(a)   to explore *significant* features of the case

(b)   to create *plausible* interpretations of what is found

(c)   to test for the trustworthiness of these interpretations

(d)   to construct a *worthwhile* argument or story

(e)   to relate the argument or story to any relevant research in the literature

(f)   to convey *convincingly* to an audience this argument or story and

(g)   to provide an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments.

This definition has some important implications that need to be emphasised. Case study is a strategic rather than a methodological choice – made with regard to that which the researcher chooses to study – the focus of the enquiry, in this instance, transition to headship. The case studies in this enquiry are set within an overall and general context of existing knowledge about both headteacher leadership and the process of transition to headship which is examined in Chapter 2. However, this study explores one aspect of headteacher leadership from an insider's perspective to provide 'thick descriptions' (Geertz, 1973) of transition to headship over the first year in post.

Bassey's definition highlights the starting point as data collection through an empirical enquiry, in this instance focused upon three headteachers in their schools during the year from September 2005 to August 2006, thus providing a localised boundary of space and time. Through case study research, testimony is taken from participants first hand, so contributing to research authenticity and ensuring an ethic of respect for participants who were willing participants in the process. Through this research strategy, the opportunity is taken to both collect data and exercise insight and judgement in handling data in order to synthesise key themes critically in the light of existing literature. The process is considered more fully later in this chapter. Finally, the case study research process provides an 'audit trail' (Bassey, 2002, p111) to test the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study's findings and implications – an important dimension of a qualitative study. What is important in this enquiry is that each individual case study acts 'as a mid-wife to perception' (Eisner, cited in Southworth, 1995a, p51), providing the basis for analysis and theorising.

Case study provides many advantages for examining the detail and complexities of singularities. However, a case study, as a research strategy is open to criticism. Some of these criticisms, highlighted by Bassey (1999) relate to the issue of generalisation, which in the social sciences generally is restricted by time and space. Clearly researchers need to be cautious before making generalisations.

Indeed Stake (1995, p12) states: "an ethic of caution is not contradictory to an ethic of interpretivism". Interpretations from case studies do however reasonably offer assertions or 'propositional generalisations' (Stake, 1995, p7-8). Bassey (1999, p12) develops the concept of 'fuzzy generalisations', maintaining something may happen but without measure of its probably or certainty. Often these perspectives will be tentative and specific to particular case studies and therefore such research is conducted in the light of the apparent 'paradox of case study research' (Simons, 1996, p36). The case study researcher provides a transparency within the data that enables the reader to consider possible wider implications (Denscombe, 1998).

In this study each case study provides a narrative of headteacher leadership in particular circumstances that enable deeper connections and meanings within each study to be constructed. These are developed within each individual study and later, within the overall analysis through consideration of the phases of transition and themes of the enquiry. Although it is neither possible, nor desirable, to generalise with certainty from such a small sample, some tentative generalisations are formulated. These are considered in Chapter 6.

RESEARCH METHODS

These are the tools and techniques for collecting data and were developed in two discrete but closely related phases of the enquiry. The first and pilot phase, undertaken two terms ahead of the main data gathering phase, involved an interview process phased over a year with two newly appointed primary headteachers to develop and refine the interview schedule for a series of four semi-structured in-depth interviews, to be used over the course of the first year of incumbency. These pilot studies proved invaluable in the research process and provided an opportunity to both refine the researcher's interviewing technique and improve the scope and management of the interview process. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, a process that enabled emerging themes to be explored and

clarification sought in subsequent discussions. The scope of the initial interviews in this process reflected the themes emerging from the process of the literature review and from the researcher's experience. This provided a common starting point, which quickly developed to reflect the particular contextual circumstances of each pilot headteacher. This experience from the pilot phase informed the main research process used with the three headteachers in the study.

During the research data gathering stage of the enquiry, a series of four interviews with each headteacher were phased at regular intervals over the 2005/6 school year: September 2005; January 2006; March/April 2006; July 2006. These provided an opportunity for the researcher to collaborate over time with the participant headteachers, whilst maintaining control of the scope and flow of the interview process. The explicit purpose of each interview was "to obtain information and understanding of issues relevant to the general aim and specific questions of a research project" (Gillman, 2000, p2). The research process was focused upon creating new knowledge, and as such the danger of 'pre-conceived notions' (Gillman, 2000, p3) was recognised and a structured, but flexible approach, to the interview process was therefore developed, with use made of emerging ideas. The structure of each interview is outlined in Appendix 1 - 4, with each lead question being developed further to provide shape and direction to the data gathering process. In essence, an interpretive interviewing approach was developed, through which issues were explored enabling participants to become active constructors of knowledge and meaning. This approach to semi-structured interviews provided a structure of questions that were sufficiently open to allow researcher and participant to exploit unforeseen lines of enquiry with improvised and theorised questioning.

As a research method, face-to-face interviews, although potentially powerful, are not without dangers and are very time-consuming for both participants and the researcher. However, their advantages as the research method in this study out-weighed their potential disadvantages. Gillman (2000, p11) identifies a 'time-cost versus data richness' analysis that usefully highlights the advantages in this context. These relate to the small number of participants and their accessibility over an extended time frame; the necessity to elicit extended responses; the potential sensitivity of responses necessitating the establishment of trust between respondent and researcher; anonymity and confidentiality; the need to

develop depth of meaning with only some approximation to typicality; and the imperative to develop insight and understanding in context.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews enabled 'the building of a theory or model of a particular reality' (Wengraf, 2001, p60). The research process followed the structure developed by Wengraf's (2001, p63) pyramid model, with the research method devised to reflect the research purpose and central research question, which in turn leads to the identification of a series of theory-questions. Within this overall structure, each interview, which lasted between 50 and 75 minutes, provided extensive data that exploited unforeseen lines of enquiry with both improvised and theorised questioning. Wengraf (2001) contends that such improvisation may account for 50% - 80% of the responses arising from initially prepared questions and that preparation for this type of research interview requires more discipline and creativity during the session and more time for analysis and interpretation later than fully structured interviews. He concludes that semi-structured interviews are 'high preparation, high risk, high gain and high-analysis operations (Wengraf, 2001, p5). Semi-structured in-depth interviews enabled questions and questioning to provide the impulse for reflective conversation, steered by the researcher's focus, but without restricting the re-construction of experiences. In each interview the purpose, scope and areas to be explored were fully shared in advance with participants to facilitate their thinking and reflection. Feedback on the interview process was regularly sought from participants.

As the series of interviews developed over the year, they became increasingly focused to reflect context, and were conversational in style. They built upon the analysis of earlier interviews and developed particular areas of enquiry, exploring implications of emerging themes. These themes of the enquiry became the focus constructed from the analysis of previous interviews. These interview conversations enabled the opportunity for checking and developing understanding, and engaging participants more fully in the process of the enquiry.

All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then analysed by numbering taking each in turn and highlighting and number coding substantive statements – those that made significant points. Through this systematic process of analysis, categories of meaning began to emerge. Transcripts were then re-read

again, and minor revisions made to the identification process already described. The highlighted statements were then reviewed to derive a set of categories for each question in order to construct a list of category headings which were then reviewed and re-constituted to remove duplication. Through this process of initial analysis, the material for the final analysis was prepared to initially inform the writing of each case study, written to reflect the phases of transition identified in the literature review. This writing up process was structured around the emerging themes, and referenced to the coded quotations on the specific transcripts.

The first drafts of the case studies were written by grouping units of analysis for each respective case study. Categories of meaning emerged to provide a consistent case study format to present the three particular experiences of headship transition. These drafts were then checked for accuracy and reliable representation with respective participants, a process identified as 'member checking' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p314).

Following this level of data analysis, was a subsequent inter-case level of analysis. This involved the identification of the phases of the enquiry, with respective themes generated from each case. This process led to each phase and theme being identified and coded, in a process termed by Lincoln and Guba (1975l p203) as 'categorisation'. These are identified in the following table (Table 3.1) and are reported in Chapter 5.

Table 3.1   Phases and themes of the enquiry

Phase	Theme
Preparation for headship	Personal motivation The nature of primary education and headship The development of aspirant headteachers
Entry, orientation and immersion	Professional and organisational socialisation School effectiveness and school improvement
Control and action	Professional and organisational socialisation School effectiveness and school improvement The emotional dimension of headship

The analysis of the interviews allowed a process defined by grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to occur, with emerging ideas and themes shared with participants to test their veracity. After this process the case studies were finalised and presented to each participant to ensure faithful representation.

Finally, inter-relationships and connections between themes were identified from the *thick description* that emerged. Speculative inferences were developed which were in turn related to the theoretical issues raised through the literature review. The outcome of this overall process is presented in Chapter 5. Throughout both the case studies, and the overall analysis, quotations from headteacher participants are coded to the transcripts against the case and particular paragraph to facilitate understanding of the audit-trail in the research process.

RESEARCH ETHICS

Ethical issues are of central importance in educational research. Knowledge confers power and as Somekih and Lewin (2005, p3) comment 'in collecting data, researchers need to be guided by principles of respect for persons and obtaining informed consent'. The research in this enquiry adheres to the professional codes of ethics of the relevant academic organisations, particularly the British Educational Research Association (BERA). A code of ethics and research protocol was developed in the particular context of this research (Appendix 5) and shared with participants as part of seeking their informed consent to engage with the research process. Participation was entirely voluntary, with permission obtained to engage with the relevant local authority and particular school. The research aims were fully explained to the participants, together with the right to withdraw. Anonymity was assured through the use of pseudonyms, together with professional confidentiality during and beyond the research process. All interviews were held in the participants' schools, an important consideration regarding perceptions of power. All participants received and approved draft copy of their relevant case study prior to the final writing of the thesis, and were provided with access to the outcomes of the completed research.

CONCLUSION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter has identified and discussed the methodological issues relevant to this study. The research question led to the development of an interpretive and ground theory approach to the enquiry that draws upon the experiences and recollections of three headteachers over their first year in post. The study is developed using a case study strategy, and uses a series of semi-structured interviews as the method of data collection. The chapter describes the process used to analyse the interview data, and the emerging themes of the enquiry in relation to each phase of the study. It concludes by identifying the main ethical issues relevant to this study, and describes how these were addressed. The next chapter reports each of the three case studies and draws upon the empirical data for this study.

CHAPTER 4

THE CASE STUDIES

THE CASE STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of three case studies and provides the first level of empirical data analysis in this study. Each case focuses upon one individual headteacher's perception of their transition to headship over their first year in post, gathered through a series of four semi-structured interviews with each headteacher over the course of that year. A full discussion of and justification for the research process is contained in the previous chapter. Chapter 5 provides an overall second level analysis of the empirical data in the case studies, and identifies a number of emerging key themes in the process of transition to headship. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the case studies for the individual headteachers and their schools to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Each study is presented in a similar framework, beginning with a description of the school's context at the time of the study, and a brief introduction to the headteacher in the context of their appointment. This is followed by the main body of each study, which considers the process of transition to primary headship over the course of the first year. This is structured to reflect a sequence of three chronological stages and the processes of professional and organisational socialisation described by Weindling (2000), and discussed in Chapter 2. These stages are identified as:

1. **Preparation** : essentially a pre-appointment stage that includes a range of formal and informal learning, both through courses and other experiences.

2. **Entry, orientation and immersion** : a period initiated upon taking up appointment and concerned with applying previous learning about the job of headship, albeit in an unfamiliar context. Learning through formal induction provision and a range of networking opportunities to build professional alliances to support professional and organisational socialisation.

3. **Control and action** : a period concerned with leading review and evaluation to reconfigure and reshape and of working with others, both internal and external, to implement change and build personal experience.

The fourth stage of Weindling's model, that of consolidation and extension, a period of sustained development involving broader networking and the sharing of experience and expertise prior to divestiture or reinvention, lies beyond the scope of the first year in post, and therefore is not included in the analysis. In each case study extensive use is made of views and perceptions expressed by the headteachers. These are presented as quotations, which are indexed, and referenced according to the data analysis methodology described in the previous chapter.

CASE STUDY 1 – BROOKFIELD JUNIOR SCHOOL

Context

<u>The school</u>

Brookfield is an average size junior school with about 300 pupils aged between 7 and 11 and serves a socially mixed catchment, with relatively high levels of social and economic deprivation. A high percentage of pupils come from the nearby army quarters (30%), and the majority of the remaining 70% come from local authority/housing association accommodation with only a small number from owner-occupied housing. Most pupils are white British (92 %), with only a small number from other backgrounds. The number of children with special educational needs, including statements, is above average (35%), and pupil mobility is high, due to the frequent and often unpredictable movement of army families. Turbulence is therefore a significant factor affecting the management of the school.

Prior to Maggie's appointment, the school had experienced a period of unsettled and broken leadership. Her predecessor had been absent from school for a number of extended periods over several years, and this had contributed to low staff morale and lack of clear direction. In addition, the position of deputy headteacher had been an acting appointment for over a year, again contributing to issues of morale and clear direction.

Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, compared to both national and contextual value-added data were low, and pupil progress across the key stage was weak. At the time of the appointment, the local authority (LA) considered the school to be 'less than effective', and together with the governing body were looking

through the headship appointment process to secure rapid improvement in both pupil progress and standards.

<u>The headteacher</u>

Maggie joined the school in 2005 following about 20 years experience as a teacher, including four years as deputy headteacher in a larger, and more successful junior school in the same local authority. This included a term's experience as acting headteacher, shortly before she took up the appointment at Brookfield. Maggie was attracted to the Brookfield headship because of the opportunities it presented. She states:

> *I think I can make a difference, the standards at the school are quite poor and we need to improve them. But the curriculum is exciting – they are in the process of making it more and more experiential, and I believe that's the best way forward.*
>
> (Interview 1/Ref 12)

In her search for a headship post Maggie, seems therefore to have been particularly attracted by the Brookfield vacancy, seeing it as an opportunity to make a personal leadership impact in a context where change and improved effectiveness were necessary. To some extent therefore, Maggie selected the school, as well as the school selecting Maggie. The discussion that follows traces Maggie's transition to headship and some of her experiences during that year.

Transition to headship : Preparation

Maggie's motivation and preparation for headship developed over an extended period of her career. Her motivation for headship developed particularly whilst a deputy, partly following her experience of reflection upon working with a number of headteachers over her career. Their influence upon her thinking about headship was significant, and central to her personal motivation to become a headteacher. Maggie's personal and professional self-confidence to become a headteacher reached a *'tipping point'* as a deputy. She states:

> *I wanted to have my own school. I got to the point of not wanting to be second in command. I thought, I think I could do that job, so I wanted to take it on.*
>
> (Interview 1/Ref 5)

Maggie didn't start her career wanting or intending to be a headteacher. She comments: *"I never started out wanting to be a head, it kind of all happened as I've gone along really"* (Interview 1/Ref 23). As her career experiences broadened and deepened, so her interest in and motivation for headship grew. Preparation for headship therefore developed over an extended period, and included both formal and informal dimensions. Formal preparation, reflected through planned and deliberate engagement in activities with a focus on eventual headship, included the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). In terms of her headship preparation, the NPQH was not highly rated by Maggie. She recalls:

> *The NPQH was not the most important part of my preparation. It didn't have much impact at all really because it wasn't enough. It is actually doing the job, and having to make the decisions, with time for reflection, that teaches you how to do the job.*
>
> (Interview 2/Ref 35)[3]

In contrast, informal opportunities to prepare for headship were provided through a range of other career development experiences, largely based upon learning 'on-the-job', including a period of valuable acting headship. Speaking of the significance of her experience in that role, Maggie recounts:

> *I wasn't sure at that stage if I wanted to be a head, but it was lovely to be around the school and influence the children from a different position. People around me were re-inforcing my belief that I could do the job – that was important to me.*
>
> (Interview 1/Ref 7)

The influence of other headteachers in her preparation for headship was significant. Observing the actions and behaviours of other headteachers helped to shape Maggie's own understanding of both the job, and how it might be done, so influencing her emotional preparation and conceptualisation of headship.

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[3] Maggie's concerns about the limitations of the NPQH reflect views expressed by a number of writers and researchers and discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, notably Jirasinghe and Lyons (1996) and Tomlinson (1999).

Maggie speaks of *"some people I've worked with that I don't think have done a brilliant job"* (Interview 1/Ref 17) and illustrates this in terms of her reflection and interpretation of their approach to the job, identifying their closed doors and lack of availability to staff and children, reflecting what she perceives as a lack of access, and potentially wider communication issues. In contrast, she recalls heads who she found to be open, accessible and motivators of staff debate and professional dialogue. Through this process of reflection, Maggie was beginning to develop a personal construct of headship. Preparation for headship is therefore conceived by Maggie as a complex process through which an individual assimilates the necessary knowledge and develops appropriate skills and personal values, to adopt a set of personal behaviours to generate sufficient self-confidence to approach the headship task and, as importantly, to convince an appointing panel of governors of readiness for headship.

Transition to headship : Entry, orientation and immersion

Entry into headship is considered to begin from the time the appointment is accepted at interview. In Maggie's case, this was four months before the post was taken up, and therefore this stage in the process of transition to headship was an extensive pre-appointment period when combined with her first months in post. The pre-appointment period was one when her understanding of the job at Brookfield deepened, and her approach to the headship task began to clarify. As such it was an important time in terms of both Maggie's organisational and professional socialisation.[4]

Maggie's entry and orientation during this period was highly school specific. It included discussions with both LA officers, and the chairman of governors, in order to gain further knowledge of the school from their perspectives, and visits to the school to meet children and staff, including the outgoing headteacher. These pre-appointment activities confirmed for Maggie her interest in this particular headship and strengthened her belief that she could *"make a difference"* (Interview 1/Ref 12). However, as her knowledge and understanding of the school both grew and deepened, and relationships began to be established, the scale and complexity of the job began to clarify.

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[4] These concepts are identified by Schein (1968) and are examined in Chapter 2. Organisational socialisation – learning the knowledge, values and behaviours required to perform a specific role within an organisation following appointment. Professional socialisation is the process of learning what it is to be a headteacher from personal experience and formal courses.

The need for the school to change quickly and to become more effective became increasingly clear to Maggie, and the imperative for this to happen appeared to be widely shared and understood within the school community. Speaking of the school's comparative performance Maggie reports:

> *The school's achievements are low. We are E and E*, and as far as the LA*
>
> *is concerned we are down there at the bottom, the chair of governors is aware of*
>
> *that as well.*

(Interview 1/Ref 20)[5]

The leadership of school improvement, and the drive to secure greater effectiveness was therefore quickly confirmed by Maggie as a key priority in this headship.

The processes of entry and orientation that were initiated prior to taking-up the appointment continued into the entry stages of the autumn term, as the period of immersion began. During her early weeks in post, Maggie gave high priority to developing her contextual intelligence and to deepening her understanding of the school's culture.

Contextual intelligence is one of nine intelligences identified by MacGilchrist, Myers and Reed (2004, p122-125) and provide a useful framework for analysing school improvement. It is particularly significant in this instance because it is concerned with the capacity to read, understand and interpret the different environments within which the school functions: internal; local; national and global. For Maggie, much of her initial work was concerned with developing her understanding of the past on current working practices – why the school operated as it did, by looking objectively at the quality of the professional relationships within the school, the school's organisational arrangements, and the opportunities provided for learning. It was a period of intense activity and learning reflecting both occupational and professional socialisation through a range and variety of encounters and experiences. Although potentially a period of high professional demand, Maggie's reflections indicate her personal ease: *"I was anxious before taking up post because I know the buck stops here, but now I'm doing it, I'm loving it"* (Interview 1/Ref 24). Certainly her contextual understanding grew quickly over the first term, but by the

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[5] These grades were used by Ofsted to indicate comparative performance on a 5-point scale A* - E* scale, with E and E* grades reflecting the lowest levels of pupil and school performance.

end of this challenging term, although still self-confident and optimistic, Maggie was increasingly reflective and mindful of the scale of the task she faced. She recounts:

It is the most amazing job. But you need to give yourself time to find out about a school, to get to know people because whatever happens in the school is dependent upon how they are and how they work together.

(Interview 2/Ref 53)

I thought when you come into a school and the standards are as low as they are and the children are really challenging, and you are told the teachers aren't that great, I thought this is going to be an up-hill struggle – it has been tough, but it hasn't been up-hill.

(Interview 2/Ref 22)

Maggie identifies a number of factors that made the period of entry, orientation and immersion 'tough'. Perhaps the most significant was the need to build working relationships in order to secure the goodwill and commitment of the workforce, whilst simultaneously beginning the process of changing the organisational culture[6] to secure improved pupil progress through higher expectations. As part of this process Maggie gave high priority to valuing people *"people – children and staff need to feel valued because they haven't been"* (Interview 2/Ref 23) and this had significant implications for her own behaviour as a headteacher. Central to this was the priority she gave over the first term to evaluating the school's current ways of working, whilst also initiating some important initial actions to tackle what she perceived to be some of the more pressing weaknesses and limitations. For example, Maggie speaks of *"not rushing to complete the self evaluation form but of getting to know the school"* (Interview 2/Ref 26); of *"initiating some classroom observation"* (2/39); of *"building a view about the school's history through talking to particular people"* (Interview 2/Ref 52) and of *"spending time learning about the staff and children, the structures and systems that are in place and then putting some work in action"* (Interview 2/Ref 2).

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[6] Organisational culture, a concept developed by Nias (1989), is an order created by members of the organisation through interaction with one another and is a deeply internalised sense of 'the way we do things around here'.

The need to focus on accelerating pupil progress soon became a key initial priority. As Maggie began to understand more about the limitations in the school's pupil tracking systems, and the absence of a coherent approach to target setting and assessment for learning, the significance and centrality of progress and standards in relation to the broader context of the curriculum and inclusion began to be increasingly apparent to her. In describing how she tackled this with staff, Maggie recalls:

> *I was a bit anxious because I didn't want to say to them you're no good and what's been going on here isn't any good. That doesn't get you anywhere .....*
> *It was a matter of saying, this is where we are at and this is how we are going to move forward from here.*

(Interview 2/Ref 9)

For Maggie, orientation and immersion were not discrete stages within the transition process. They were symbiotic and complementary processes as her understanding of the school grew quickly as she became actively involved in the reality of a fast-moving job that required action. To that extent therefore, the discrete sequencing of Weindling's (2000) stages of transition did not accurately reflect the reality and pace of Maggie's experience of contemporary primary headship. Although the stages are unique, and to a degree therefore identifiable, they appear in this instance to be better considered to be both more inter-related and compressed than Weindling's model suggests. Maggie was very quickly immersed in the job, and through the processes of orientation and immersion she began to quickly make moves into a stage concerned with control and action.

Transition to headship : Control and action

The concept of control in relation to contemporary school leadership is particularly interesting in the broader context of the power and influence of headship. Control, as an aspect of headship, was illustrated from an early stage in Maggie's transition into post, although it was not a concept with which she was entirely at ease. Maggie says:

> *I don't think of myself as a person who would want to command or control, I always think I'm a bit airy fairy, but people tell me I'm not, and probably I guess I'm not.*

(Interview 2/Ref 47)

However, Maggie recognised a control dimension to headship a term into post, and this recognition continued throughout her first year. After two terms of headship experience, Maggie reflected:

> *I would agree that control of others is a major part of headship, in the sense that you can control others in the right way to achieve a lot.*
>
> (Interview 3/Ref 37)

Maggie sees an important aspect of 'control' being concerned with establishing frameworks, systems and procedures within which the engagement, participation and contribution of others is actively promoted and encouraged. In essence, control begins to be aligned with influence. It enables and promotes, rather than limits or restricts the school improvement process and drive to greater effectiveness. In this respect, by taking control of the organisation, the headteacher is starting to influence the direction and development of the school, as fundamental notions of values and vision begin to be translated into behaviour and action.

A number of developments initiated by Maggie in her first weeks in post continued and deepen as the year developed. These related particularly to securing improved progress and standards in the core subjects, and these initiatives remained central throughout the year. As the year progressed, both the scope and complexity of her actions to tackle this issue increased. Maggie recognised the significance of the leadership of school improvement within days of taking up post and in speaking of her early impressions, she said:

> *There is no assessment as such. Assessment isn't really understood. There is no curriculum structure: simple things like staff meetings whether they were going to have one or not : What's the agenda? What shall we talk about? There are no internal management systems.*
>
> (Interview 1/Ref 14)

In the light of this evaluation, Maggie began to identify priorities for action and a strategy for tackling some of the more immediate and pressing priorities. This was not easy, and a term into post, Maggie recalls:

There was so much to do – I knew that I had to look more deeply at assessment. My assessment manager was on maternity leave, but I met her a few times and we ended up putting together a two day inset programme – she was fantastic, her willingness to do that and her enthusiasm, and us working together and me saying you are going to play a lead role. It went well.

(Interview 2/Ref 7)

From this foundation, other actions ensued. Individual pupil progress data was analysed and a tracking system established, resulting in a whole school pupil progress tracking system being compiled. Maggie recalls:

There was so much red on the tracking, reflecting inadequate progress it worried me greatly. But then I realised we had to share it with staff. They just didn't know it was like that – they were surprised, they were shocked, they were worried, particularly the Year 5/6 teachers with SATs looming.

(Interview 2/Ref 8)

The successful handling of the emotional dimension of headship generally, and of that encounter more particularly was important. Maggie reflects:

I was anxious. I didn't want to say to them it was a criticism of anyone, it's simply a fact and we need to work together; all of us will work together.

(Interview 2/Ref 9)

The implications of teamwork, under the headteacher's overall control and direction to tackle underachievement, became an on-going theme of Maggie's first year in post. Underpinned by this however, was a need to improve and sustain staff morale and secure an optimistic and positive atmosphere within the school. Seven months into her appointment Maggie commented that at a governors meeting, a staff governor reported *'the biggest change since the new head arrived has been the morale of the staff'* (Interview 3/Ref 40) – a reflection perhaps of a cultural change resulting from an increased realisation that pupil outcomes are important, and that these can be improved through collective effort to tackle identified problems. Actions to improve pupil achievement are

therefore seen as inextricably linked with actions to change school culture, and reflected as such through Maggie's actions in relation to the curriculum.

Leading change in the school's culture was complex for several reasons. One reason was that Maggie had not known the school until she arrived – she learned of it initially through the perceptions of others, through their interpretation. In part Maggie was anxious not to *"get caught up in what happened before"* (Interview 3/Ref 49) recognising that had been *"a bad experience for some people"* (Interview 3/Ref 49) but as she learned more about the school's history, that knowledge began to be helpful in ensuring staff engagement and participation in the actions to lead to school improvement.

Two terms into post Maggie said:

> *Headship involves a lot of people – it can only be successful when everybody is involved – I sort of knew that at the beginning, but I didn't realise how important that was, and how important it is to keep everyone alongside you all the time, including the parents.*

> (Interview 3/Ref 3)

Maggie's actions to lead school improvement are one significant set of actions undertaken by her during her first year in post. From these, a number of other actions were taken as part of her overall headship task. Through taking action on this wider range of elements she began to develop and establish her professional identity as a headteacher, and began to extend her influence on the school as an organisation. Of particular importance over the course of the year were the actions taken by Maggie to establish herself as headteacher – to ensure that her behaviours as a headteacher leader reflected her perception of headship. This influenced her approach to a range of actions. Maggie's motivation for headship was driven by her values and vision and wanting to put ideas into action. As she said on taking up her headship:

> *I wanted to be in the lead role, making final decisions, having a vision of where we want to go, and making it my own school. Working with everyone else but ultimately having my ideas, my values and sharing these with staff.*

> (Interview 1/Ref 6)

Informed both by her formal and informal preparation for headship, and influenced by her experience of working with a number of different headteachers over her career, Maggie reflected:

> *I've worked with people who I don't think have done a brilliant job – they've closed the door, haven't been available or walked the school. Sometimes when a head is good you don't really understand why s/he is good – the school just feels good.*
>
> (Interview 1/Ref 17)

Maggie's actions have been highly focused upon enabling the school to meet children's needs more effectively through improving provision and raising both expectations and standards. Actions taken to achieve this included the identification of a new improvement plan, significant improvement to resources, particularly in the core subjects and information communication technology (ICT), including the completion and commissioning of a new ICT suite; the appointment of a substantive deputy headteacher; the building of a more open relationship of partnership with governors and parents, and the initiation and development of a more focused approach to staff development within a stronger culture of shred responsibility and accountability.

Reflecting on her first year in post, Maggie was mindful to acknowledge her increased personal accountability for the school:

> *Before it was someone else's responsibility, it wasn't mine. I wasn't here – **but now I feel so responsible.***
>
> (Interview 4/Ref 12)

Over the year, Maggie indicates *"my self-confidence as a head has grown, and the power associated with the job has increased that self-confidence, knowing that I have the power to make a difference"* (Interview 4/Ref 26), but she remains clear of the scale and complexity of the job.

> *The school takes over your life. I have to be very careful that I manage life work balance – other people see it as an issue for me more than I do. But we've*

done so much. I worry about 'burnout'. I find I need more thinking time. I wish I could get school out of my head. It isn't the physical workload, it is the mental workload that is huge. I love the job, but I still wait up at nights, at weekends – but that is also just me – I want to talk about it.

(Interview 4/Ref 31)

CASE STUDY 2 – BRACKDEN INFANT SCHOOL

Context

The school

Brackden is a smaller than average infant school with about 170 pupils aged between 4 and 7. It serves a large and relatively prosperous urban commuter village on the fringe of a major south coast city, and has less pupils than average (8%) entitled to free school meals. Almost all pupils (93%) are from white British families with the remainder from other backgrounds. About 5% of children speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils with special education needs (17%) is below average, but has increased over recent years.

Ann, the current headteacher is the third within four years and took up her appointment in September 2005. Prior to this, the school had a period of very stable headship for about 15 years, during which the school developed a strong reputation for the quality of its work, and in 2001 was recognised as a Beacon School[7].

The school's deputy headteacher, Sue, who joined the staff as a newly qualified teacher 16 years previously, and had been internally promoted several times, was not an applicant for the headship. Staffing in the school was relatively stable. Most teaching and support staff, many of whom live locally, had worked in the school for a considerable time and had contributed to its success over a long period. Standards at the end of both the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 had been consistently above average over several years, and most pupils made good progress in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing varied from

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[7] Beacon Schools were centres of excellent practice, identified by the DfES during the period 1999 to 2004 on the basis of pupil outcomes and Ofsted findings.

year to year, but were broadly average, although at the time of Ann's appointment, writing standards continued to be an area of relative underachievement.

Through the headship appointment process, governors and the LA were looking to build upon the school's existing strengths, to address any under-achievement, and to secure the school's good reputation in the community for pupils' personal development and care and guidance, particularly in the context of the Every Child Matters agenda (ECM).

The headteacher

Ann, who describes herself as *"flamboyant, quite young and quite different"* (Interview 5/Ref 15) took up her headship with about nine years teaching experience in two infant schools in a neighbouring LA, including most recently five years as a teaching deputy headteacher. For Ann, headship reflected a career of developing and increasing experience across a number of aspects of school management including year group leadership and, whilst deputy, special needs co-ordination in school with a high proportion of children with social, emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties. Although Ann cannot identify a specific time when she *"actively decided to be a headteacher"* (Interview 5/Ref 2) she reflects that her motivation for headship clarified during her experience of deputy headship. Soon after her appointment to headship, she recalls:

> *I could see what I could do as a deputy, the impact it had. I wanted to be able to lead teachers in developing children's learning. I'm quite a logical person. I think everything should feed together: aims and values; school development; improvement planning, to one common aim. You can really only facilitate that as a head.*

> (Interview 5/Ref 3)

The opportunity to provide leadership of learning is therefore central to Ann's motivation for headship, and underpinned by her aims and values. Values grow from beliefs and allow the development of principles for action. Values therefore define standards of 'goodness, quality or excellence that under-gird behaviour and decision making' (Deal and Peterson, 1999). This case study later explores Ann's values in the context of her transition to the headship at Brackden, and how her professional identity as a headteacher develops in the school, identified by Ann on the basis of some previous knowledge of the

school and her feeling that it was right for her: *"I felt I could do something with it"* (Interview 5/Ref 14).

Transition to headship: Preparation

Ann's motivation for headship particularly developed as a deputy. Prior to that time, her preparation for headship was an accumulation of relevant on-the-job and personal experiences, a move towards headship in 'an unconscious mode' (Male, 2006, p40). This period of 'anticipatory socialisation[8] involved Ann in a variety of learning experiences : a combination of 'academic preparation, guided practice in the field and the formulation of personal and professional capabilities to cope with the responsibilities of school leadership' (Daresh, 1988).

Ann's preparation for headship through the NPQH, represented for her *"A good experience: I did enjoy it"* (Interview 5/Ref 19), but one which she largely saw as complementary to the experiences gained through 'guided practice in the field' and through engagement as a deputy in a wide range of whole school leadership activities such as improvement planning, monitoring, evaluation and budget management. For her, these experiences as a deputy were invaluable preparation for headship. Through these experiences, Ann's 'personal and professional capabilities' developed to provide 'theory based learning consolidated through action' (Argyris and Schön), 1974) as significant preparation for headship. Ann considers her final year of deputy headship as a particularly significant time of her preparation when she spent the year with a new head in post. Reflecting upon her actions she reflects:

> *I was very fortunate as my last year as deputy was spent with a new head, watching her start the process rolling. I probably learnt more from the mistakes she made. Critically it was to do with the importance of communication [the lack of clarity in sharing thinking and ideas] that was fundamental.*
>
> (Interview 5/Ref 16)

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[8] Anticipatory socialisation is a process through which a prospective postholder prepares for a post (of headteacher) through gathering social and technical experiences that will qualify them for that role. It can be both a deliberate and conscious process, or an unconscious process, leading to the acquisition of the values and orientations associated with new roles and statuses (Male, 2006, p24)

Transition to headship : Entry, orientation and immersion

The period prior to the taking-up of the appointment was an important time for Ann's contextual preparation. She visited Brackden several times for discussions with the departing headteacher, and some of the staff, including the administrative officer and the deputy. This was a period of information gathering to form a personal understanding of the school from a range of perspectives so building upon the information initially provided by governors during the recruitment process. As this understanding developed, Ann felt an increasing confidence that her initial perceptions of the school were accurate and that it was a context which, although secure, was one with considerable potential to:

> *Create a team of people who will lead children's learning and one in which there is an opportunity to build capacity, harnessing everything together to lead children's thinking. I don't think there are enough schools out there that have got children and their interests at their heart.*

> (Interview 5/Ref 5)

It was against this developing understanding of the school and her set of personal values and beliefs about education that Ann began her headship.

The early days of Ann's new job were characterised as a period of sense making, a time of intense learning as she developed her cognitive map or mental model of the organisation. For the headteacher as formal leader this not only involves a process of orientation to the organisation, but also includes a process of evaluation – an assessment of staff, understanding where the problems are, and establishing priorities (Gabarro, 1987). This view of early days in her new job is certainly a fair reflection of Ann's experience. She consciously *"started very gently"* (Interview 5/Ref 11,) and gave immediate priority to establishing dialogue, both formally and less formally with the school's internal constituents of staff, children, parents and governors, to secure both their involvement and their participation in the development process she was to lead. The views expressed to Ann reflected many points of consensus about the strengths in the school's ethos and teamwork. No major curriculum changes were identified as necessary, but a need was identified for improved communication. On this basis Ann resolved that during her first term she would:

Get in with the staff and into all classes to see what is really going on at grass
roots level, not 'clipboard monitoring' but getting to know the curriculum and
children, building up relationships with parents, governors and all stakeholders.
Communicating beyond the school that there is a new head here, and this is how it
is going to be, what my key aims are.

(Interview 5/Ref 28)

Ann made some initial relatively cosmetic changes, for example to displays in the entrance hall, in order to reflect her ideas about the need for the environment *"to be the ethos that we want"* (Interview 5/Ref 28).

One major strategic task, the process of school self-evaluation, occupied Ann's initial thinking. Although she had inherited a self evaluation form (SEF)[9] from her predecessor, Ann felt: *"It is not a robust SEF. It does need to be looked over, and that's good for me. I would have needed to have done it anyway"* (Interview 5/Ref 29). This linked well with Ann's other initial leadership and management tasks as she perceived them: to develop an improvement plan that reflects identified priorities; to review the school's internal management structure and organisation; to develop more opportunities for collaborative learning and to review the overall quality of the school's provision. In her reflections after a month in post, Ann gives continuing emphasis to the need to build and re-structure a team, but is conscious that as a leader she is, as yet, unknown to the staff:

They don't know me. I need to make my vision clear and ensure everyone is
involved in that vision. We need to build distributive leadership. In the past there
hasn't been that approach. People need to be more aware of their own capacity for
leadership. There is an opportunity to link this with children's learning through
the TLR re-structuring[10].

(Interview 5/Ref 30)

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[9] The SEF is an optional form available to headteachers since 2005 to enable them to record evidence and judgements about their school's performance. It is used by Ofsted inspectors to inform their inspection process, and the process of school self-evaluation is promoted by the DfES as an important dimension of improvement planning.

[10] TLR (Teaching and learning responsibilities) are a national change to teachers pay and conditions being introduced over a two year period to 2008 to recognise whole school curriculum leadership responsibilities.

Nevertheless, Ann is conscious that her predecessor was only in post for a relatively short period, and therefore of the need to build on, and complete some of the initiatives she had started, whilst putting some of her ideas in place. At a day-to-day operational level the school was operating effectively gave Ann *"the opportunity to make inroads in the strategic things. I'm not trouble-shooting all the time"* (Interview 5/Ref 25), but she also recognised how routine demands on her time can deflect effort from more strategic tasks. She talked of *"a lot of time being filled up with meetings"* (Interview 5/Ref 30), and the implications this raises for her personal time management. Although entry and immersion were *"quite seamless"* (Interview 5/Ref 23) Ann recognised the early weeks as untypical:

> *I'm still in the honeymoon period I think, but I know the buck stops with me. If I think about that for too long I feel quite sick. I've enjoyed the first weeks in the new job and I've been able to get on with things and really focus but the pace is fast. My brain's thinking hard that it feels it's going to explode. But I'm worried that without a class teaching commitment I could get remote. But at least I can focus on the strategic aspects of the job.*
>
> (Interview 5/Ref 27)

After a term into the appointment, 'immersion' was well illustrated in Ann's reflections. The first months had proved to be a period of intense work, when Ann had initiated, co-ordinated and driven a range of activities drawing on human resources both internal and external to the school, including LA school improvement advisers, to focus on particular initiatives. This networking, although helpful, was rather ad hoc: *"If you knew what was out there you might be a bit more effective"* (Interview 6/Ref 6) was Ann's view of the external support available to her. This reflects the perception of support for early headship identified by Male (2006, p94):

> *.....you are left to find out for yourself about the external support that is available through a process akin to osmosis, although it is more likely to be one of immersion.*

The building of relationships and through that, gaining staff goodwill for the changes she envisaged making, was an essential element of Ann's immersion phase. This included building a close working relationship with the deputy, particularly on the re-drafting of the

SEF, and with governors through sharing with them her initial perceptions of the school and encouraging their participation in her orientation process.

Towards the end of the first term Ann was increasingly confident that although 'effective', Brackden was in danger of being complacent. She shared this perception with Sue, her deputy, who agreed. Staff were *"hardworking"* (Interview 6/Ref 28) but yet the school had greater potential. With the prospect of an inspection by Ofsted in the near future, the successful completion of the SEF became a priority and was achieved during the first term, together with the completion of the staff re-structuring to reflect TLR responsibilities. Sue was seen increasingly as a significant member of staff *"in pulling the threads of things through"* (Interview 6/Ref 29) and someone who would lead by example. Her thinking complemented that of Ann and they enjoyed a constructive professional dialogue. Ann recalls, *"We bounce ideas off each other, we talk all the time : our thinking is very similar"* (Interview 6/Ref 29). By the end of Ann's first term, the agenda for the rest of the year was clear to her *"to sort out the improvement plan and job descriptions and to improve the quality of writing and reading"* (Interview 6/Ref 30).

Transition to headship : Control and action
By the second term of Ann's headship, there were increasingly clear indications of a 'control and action' phase becoming evidenced as initial activities related to entry orientation and immersion began to be completed. Ann's successful initial entry into post helped to build her self-confidence, and her re-focussing of the school's work through a *"quite deliberate"'* (Interview 7/Ref 17) and different approach to that of her predecessor, seemed to be being accepted. Commitment to building and developing teamwork remains one of her highest priorities and her recognition of the need to become part of the team herself and to *"gain acceptance by existing team members"* (Interview 7/Ref 16) reflects Ann's sensitivity to the social dynamics of the organisation. The initial support for Ann particularly that shown by Sue, her long-established and influential deputy continued into the second half of the year. This helped Ann gain personal acceptance in her drive to establish an extended and more coherent whole-school team.

Of particular importance early during Ann's third term, both to the school generally and in the context of Ann's transition to headship, was an inspection of the school by Ofsted. This had been anticipated and proved very helpful to Ann's transition. The inspection took

place at a time when Ann's personal influence could be seen, and the inspection report identified both the school's overall strengths and the headteacher's particular contribution to their development. It highlighted her 'inspired leadership and clear vision' for the school's future, combined with a shared commitment by all within the school community.

Many of the activities initiated by Ann during the first term related to team and capacity building processes; school self-evaluation; improvement planning and the deepening of her understanding of the school's culture to lead it successfully. This continued throughout the first year, but at an increasingly accelerated pace as the year progressed.

Underpinning many of Ann's actions was a wish to control what happened in the school, and the power associated with headship. Ann recognises and accepts that power in an *"inevitable"* (Interview 7/Ref 23) part of headship, but goes on to quickly emphasise:

> *It is how you treat power, whether you respect it or whether you abuse it that matters. Power is not the same as dictatorship.*
>
> (Interview 7/Ref 23)

She goes on to identify some potential dangers of power:

> *You need to be careful of getting a real buzz from it, feeling you are powerful, feeling like a bigger person from it – it's not your school, you are here and leading it and running if for a time but the school will be here, and the children, long after you've gone.*
>
> (Interview 7/Ref 23)

Hoyle's (1986, p74) interpretation of power, developed from the work of Bacharach and Lawler (1980), identifies four sources of power; two types of power and four bases of power. The four sources of power: structural; personality; expertise and opportunity may all be reflected in headship. Structural power results from the position as the senior professional within the organisation's structure or hierarchy; confirmed, for example, through job descriptions and accountabilities. Personality is a potential source of power and a function of personal characteristics, such as charisma or leadership qualities. Expertise as a source of power reflects the specialist knowledge or skill that may be

demonstrated and opportunity reflects the power that results from the occupancy of roles which provide the opportunity to exert power through the control of information of key organisational tasks.

Ann's headship illustrated all four sources of power. Staff had expectations of Ann's behaviour. As the organisation's formally identified leader, Ann had structural power associated with her position. Alongside this, she had a range of specialised knowledge, for example, about school management and curriculum organisation which she was able to demonstrate and share through the role and the leadership opportunities headship presented. All of this was mediated through her personality – the personal characteristics she demonstrated through her work.

Two types of power are authority and influence. Ann's authority, that form of power that stems from the legal right to make decision that affects others, although constrained by a range of statutory obligations, nevertheless represents a significant aspect of headship. For example, Ann had the authority to shape the school's revised internal management structure, which, although subject to approval by governors, reflected her recommendations. Influence is rather different. It may not be sanctioned by the organisation and can be observed operating in many varied ways. Influence is not therefore related to formal position within an organisation, but may be the source of personality, expertise or opportunity. Ann was careful to identify the sources of influence in the school and to engage their support. For example, Sue was likely to be a source of influence on the staff, and Ann engaged with her in a proactive, conscious and constructive way to help facilitate the changes she intended to make.

The four bases of power – coercive; remunerative; normative and knowledge are reflected in some, but not all aspects of Ann's work. None of the bases of power were dominant features of her work, but nevertheless, through her control of resources (the remunerative power base), Ann was able to direct human, financial and material resources to the priorities that she wanted to directly influence. For example, in setting the school's budget with governors to reflect the school's improvement priorities and strategic direction, Ann was using a base of power legitimised through her headship role. The activation of the improvement plan moved at a quicker pace than Ann initially anticipated. By mid-way through her second term in post there was considerable action under way. All key targets

were being worked towards and a range of actions underway. For example, a revised school prospectus was being prepared; reading twilight meetings for parents had been held, and staff were more actively and directly involved in leading the implementation of specific elements of the plan, within Ann's overall control and direction (Interview 7/Ref 2).

One feature of the third term that arose unexpectedly was Sue's resignation for personal reasons from the end of that term. She and Ann had established a close working relationship, that Ann valued highly, and her resignation was an initial cause of anxiety for Ann who reflected:

> *The person who was closest to me is leaving. We've worked very closely together for the last year, she's been very positive. She's someone who has been instrumental, and perhaps they wouldn't be the person that you would choose yourself if you were appointing, at the same time you know it is someone you've really worked well with. It is quite concerning to see who we will get in.*
>
> (Interview 7/Ref 8)

The resignation presented a recruitment opportunity that Ann managed, and later that term a replacement had been identified to take up appointment at the start of the new school year.

As Ann reflected on her first year in post, she identified five key themes that had influenced for her the second half of the year. Firstly, in the context of her own socialisation as a headteacher, learning to be a head had largely been a self-initiated process. She had made very little use of formal induction systems and had only limited contact with her identified mentor. Learning had taken pace as new situations arose in a reactive rather than proactive way (Interview 8/Ref 22) – a perspective echoed in other research (Male, 2006, p94). For Ann, her selective contact with other heads helped in part, *"There are certain individuals out there who are great and really useful to bounce ideas off, but there are others who are just no use at all"* (Interview 8/Ref 23).

The second theme concerns the scale and complexity of the headship and the associated emotional implications of the task. As Ann moved into a phase of control and action, the

size of the challenge presented by the job grew in her perception. Although not daunted by it, she nevertheless recognised that sustaining control is demanding:

> *It kind of sucks into you more than perhaps you thought it would, and there is always a sort of stress – much more so than at deputy level. It is when you stop that you notice it. It is a really interesting job. One I really enjoy. There is never a dull day.*
>
> (Interview 8/Ref 27)

Thirdly, the success of her first year, in part publicly validated through the Ofsted inspection findings, left Ann with a potential anxiety in terms of sustainability: *"I worry that you actually might lose it, and next year might not be quite so good"* (Interview 8/Ref 31). This has important longer term implications that lie beyond the scope of this study, but which nevertheless have some potential implications for the early days in headship. This partly links with a fourth, and related theme, that of developing personal self-confidence. This was certainly a characteristic of Ann's first year in post, and her self confidence developed through a combination of factors including the positive feedback she received during the year from other members of the school community (Interview 8/Ref 10).

Finally, the leadership of internal change was an on-going and recurring theme in discussions with Ann. Although her mandate upon appointment was for one of measured rather than substantial change, the first year reflected greater change than had initially been anticipated (Interview 8/Ref 4). In leading that change Ann adopted a flexible approach, initially through *"taking stock of where we are at"* (Interview 8/Ref 5) and engaging with others in that process in order to build relationships and secure involvement. By the end of the year Ann was looking to build more quickly upon what had been achieved.

> *We could be at the start of a period of more uncomfortable change – the pace of life here is quite laid back for the teaching staff. The expectations of pupil achievement will start to increase as pace and rigour build up.*
>
> (Interview 8/Ref 33)

This relates to the leadership of broader cultural change within the school, a process that will extend well beyond the first year of Ann's incumbency.

CASE STUDY 3 – SUNNINGDALE CE (A) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Context

<u>The school</u>

Sunningdale is a large primary school with about 400 pupils aged between 4 and 11, and mainly serves a socially advantaged large village and neighbouring rural locality. The majority of pupils come from owner-occupied housing with a significant and growing number of pupils (45%) from outside of the designated catchment area, attracted by the school's good local reputation. Most pupils are white British, with only a very small number from other backgrounds. Pupil mobility is low. The number of children with special educational needs is below the national average (13%) and the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals (4%) is well below the national average.

Prior to Ben's appointment in September 2005 the school had a long established head who had been in post for about 15 years. Together with her deputy, who had also been in post for a similar length of time, the school had been consistently recognised by both the LA and by Ofsted as highly effective. At the time of the headship appointment, the school was approaching the end of a significant building expansion programme, intended to increase the school's capacity by about 20% in order to respond increased demand for places from beyond the catchment area.

Standards at the end of each of the key stages, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at Level 2 in Key Stage 1 and Level 4 in Key Stage 2 had been consistently secure over many years. Overall, compared to both schools nationally and similar schools contextually, pupils achieved well. The contextual value-added profile for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 was favourable overall, although with some relative underperformance of pupils at the higher levels.

Ben inherited an experienced and very settled workforce of both teaching and support staff. A high proportion of teachers (35%) joined the staff as either newly qualified or

inexperienced teachers, a number having gained internal promotion. At the time of Ben's appointment very few staff had recent experience in any other school. Through Ben's appointment the governors, LA and diocese were looking to build upon the school's success and to secure the long-term sustainability of the enlarged school.

The headteacher

Ben joined the school with about 15 years teaching experience in four schools, including five years successful experience as a non class-based deputy in a local large, and highly effective junior school. This included two terms experience as acting headteacher shortly before taking up the post at Sunningdale. Ben was attracted to the headship at Sunningdale for a number of reasons. He was looking for headship, ideally of a large school in a village context with a strong sense of community. The school's church aided status, was not a particular attraction of the vacancy, although Ben later identified the potential opportunity this might offer. He states:

> *I'm not particularly Christian, I don't go to church, but I think it is fantastic for the children because it adds an extra dimension to their lives. The aided status was actually a worry to me about what would be expected, and I wondered if it would count me out of the running really, but it didn't and being in the school now it is great.*

> (Interview 9/Ref 20)

Ben was delighted to be offered the headship of Sunningdale. The opportunity it presented was timely for him, and it met many of his personal criteria for a headship appointment. Speaking of this motivation for the post Ben said:

> *I'm very career minded. I've a career path that's kind of mapped out, you know, I've mapped it out for myself. I just enjoy impacting as much as possible on the children really, and working with the parents and having greater responsibility for the school. I've never seen myself just stopping at an interim management level.*

> (Interview 9/Ref 2)

Transition to headship : Preparation

Although not identifying a single or particular 'tipping point' in his career when he decided to seek headship, Ben identifies the influence upon his thinking of the headteachers in his second and third schools as being particularly significant. He recalls:

> *Ian was really quite an inspirational guy and he made a lot of sense. He had a very different leadership style to my first head. Then I went to my next school. There the head was very similar to Ian and he made me realise that actually what I believe in and the way I felt about leadership was obviously very similar to these people who obviously did very well.*

<div align="right">(Interview 9/Ref 4)</div>

What is strongly reflected in Ben's thinking is the particular influence these headteachers had in shaping and confirming his thinking about headship and school leadership. This confirms a view expressed by Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002, p.154) that:

> *The lessons people get in leadership start very early in life, from observing teachers, coaches, clergy – anyone who has been in the role of leader in their lives. These models offer the first scaffold for people's own leadership habits, the original ideas about what a leader does. Then, as they begin to step into their first leadership roles ... they put those models into practice.*

This preparation does not involve explicit instruction of training in elements of leadership, but is nevertheless learning that lays down 'the brain circuitry for leadership habits' (Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2002, p155) providing a model for future leadership behaviour, which, if repeated, strengthens the neural connections for that habit. This strengthening of a habit is *implicit* learning, as opposed to *explicit* learning provided through formal courses or training.

The continuing importance for Ben of informal preparation, through work-based experience, continued and intensified in his fourth school as a deputy headteacher. Here the influence of his headteacher increased further, as Ben worked increasingly in a leadership partnership, learning about headship through that relationship. Ben recalls:

I've been very lucky really. The last five years I've been a non class based deputy, so I've the vision from my last headteacher. We led the school together. We were both called Ben, and if someone wanted something it was just whichever Ben they could find. It was fantastic for me to be involved in every aspect of school leadership. There were no gaps in my experience – involvement with external agencies, finance, strategic planning. We worked on the whole lot together in partnership.

(Interview 9/Ref 24)

This experience was extended by acting headship experience, when in the absence of his headteacher who had been seconded to lead a failing school, Ben continued and extended his work-based experience of headship prior to taking up his own post.

In addition to these leadership learning experiences, Ben engaged in formal preparation for headship, particularly the NPQH programme. His enthusiasm for this was however muted. Ben described NPQH as "*ok*" with some aspects that were "*great*" and others that he considered to be *"a complete waste of time really"* (Interview 9/Ref 25). Ben's reasons for this very mixed perception of the value of the NPQH programme largely related to his perception of the programme's inflexibility, and lack of sensitivity to, and inability to respond to personal learning needs. Talking of the on-line dimension of the programme he says:

There was no differentiation. Everybody had to go on the website every week and write something in this thing, whether it was relevant or not, so I didn't do that.

(Interview 9/Ref 27)

This lack of enthusiasm for the NPQH programme confirms other research findings, for example reported by Jirasinghe and Lyons (1996) and Tomlinson (1999). Nevertheless, for Ben, the programme was a preparatory training and development opportunity that, together with the informal and implicit learning work-place prior learning contributed to his overall preparation for headship.

Transition into headship : Entry, orientation and immersion

For Ben, this stage was preceded by a stage prior to the appointment process, a period of data gathering about the school that he inherited, before making a formal application for the headship. Ben recalls:

> *From the minute I saw the job advertised I started collecting information about the school. I downloaded their PANDA and their last Ofsted report. I've worked in the county long enough to be able to ask around. I got hold of the value-added data and the previous league tables. I was provided with a lot of information as part of the interview pack.*
>
> (Interview 9/Ref 11)

Soon after the interviews, Ben talked with a LA officer who had been involved in the recruitment process. She was able to share her perception of the job to be done. He recollects:

> *She wanted to sit down with me and talk through the issues she was concerned about. I wanted that, but it was interesting that you get the true picture once you've got the job. I can see reasons why that happens.*
>
> (Interview 9/Ref 13)

One particular dimension of Ben's appointment was that Sally, a long-established and well-regarded deputy had also been shortlisted for the post. Ben's appointment and Sally's rejection had significant immediate internal implications following the appointment decision. Ben reflects:

> *Sally had been absolutely superb with me, but didn't get it [the headship] obviously and staff were in uproar about it, or a significant number were, and caused the governors a lot of problems. Basically they told the governors they'd made the wrong decision, and governors were pretty dejected by all that. For me, I'd rather it was that way. I'd rather come into a job with people thinking I'm not up to it, than thinking I'm the best thing since sliced bread, because you haven't got to do much for people to think actually he's alright.*
>
> (Interview 9/Ref 17)

Establishing a positive relationship with Sally was a high priority for Ben. He consciously sought to publicly align himself with her, identifying in her a teacher with significant personal influence which, if not harnessed constructively, could prove counter-productive to his stewardship of the school. His view was that many staff were anxious about both the implications of the long-standing head's departure, and the non appointment of the deputy. Speaking of the staff he says:

> *It is a threatening time really. It is bound to be worrying really. I think they wanted to keep the status quo, they weren't opposed to me as a person, they were opposed to the appointment not being internal. But that's probably a good thing really because it has pushed me on that little bit more. I always work better if there is somebody looking to see me fall.*
>
> (Interview 9/Ref 19)

Limited, but constructive contact with the outgoing head during the summer term was helpful to Ben as his knowledge about the school began to deepen, but it was not until the start of the autumn term that his process of entry moved more fully into one of orientation, and quite quickly into one of immersion.

Speaking after ten days in post, Ben identified a number of his initial orientation activities intended to enable him to build his picture of the school. He saw the first half term as an important opportunity to orientate and begin to understand the school, and one of limited change initiated by him. He quickly began to reflect:

> *Sunningdale is certainly a successful school – consistently effective, yet beneath the surface there are a lot of things to be done. A big job in terms of raising expectations of staff about what children can achieve. There is a very comfortable feel about the school. It is a village school where everyone knows everyone. Many of the teachers live in the village and most have been here a long time. It is a little bit cosy, a little it comfortable. It needs a kind of push to ensure higher attaining pupils achieve more. That's the real key here. But I've a list as long as my arm of other things that I need to look at.*
>
> (Interview 9/Ref 10)

Although taking the first half term for initial personal orientation, Ben was already seeing key facets of the school emerging for action. In addition to the issue of standards, was the process of school self-evaluation, which had not been initiated by his predecessor. Together with initial concerns about the quality of the learning environment, and an apparent inconsistency in classroom organisation and pupil management Ben was already feeling *"It is not all going to be a bed of roses!"* (Interview 9 /Ref 41).

The first weeks of Ben's headship illustrate well the processes of both professional and organisational socialisation, identified by Schein (1968) and discussed more fully in Chapter 2. The process of Ben's professional socialisation, learning what it is to be a headteacher, starts to build upon his previous career experience at an accelerating pace. The process of organisational socialisation, learning the knowledge, values and behaviours required to perform a specific role within an organisation following appointment, is just beginning. As Ben starts to understand the school, with the intention of making minimal initial changes, the school is also starting to understand Ben as a two-way process of influence begins to be initiated : Ben influencing the established school he has inherited and the school influencing Ben.

The pace of school life means that the process of 'immersion' is soon evident. Finance required urgent consideration, with a new finance officer working to clarify a complex set of inherited historical data. Ben gave high priority to establishing personal contacts with a range of individuals and groups: children, staff, parents and members of the wider community and to establishing a highly visible profile in and around the school as part of a process of information gathering and assimilation. Ben described his first weeks as:

> *A whirlwind – non-stop, but brilliant. Everyday is different! I feel every emotion*
> *under the sun really. I like a challenge, it's new, so you know it's great.*

(Interview 9/Ref 34)

Transition to headship : Control and action

Taking control and action became an increasing feature of Ben's headship, and at the end

of his first term he reflected:

> *It was one hell of a term really. I guess it was summed up on the last day but one of*
>
> *the more dominant teachers saying, 'Well done, you're one of us now'. That kind*
>
> *of summed it up really but it took a long time to get to that stage.*
>
> (Interview 10/Ref 1)

As Ben intended, the term had been one when he had initiated few significant changes. It

was nevertheless *"a whirlwind in terms of taking everything in"* (Interview 10/Ref 6) in

his transition to headship. This had been helped by the positive support of the deputy,

Sally. Speaking of that help Ben reflected:

> *What helped me was the deputy. She's been very positive and talked to me all the*
>
> *time. 100% supportive. Without her there wouldn't have been anyone to pick*
>
> *their brains, to sit down and talk about issues.*
>
> (Interview 10/Ref 9)

This comment also reflects one of the emerging limitations in the school's management :

the absence of a clearly defined and effective middle management structure to play a

significant part in the school's management. Through seeking Sally's support, Ben was

able to facilitate both his occupational and professional socialisation, but this could have

longer term consequences in terms of the shift in the balance of control from Sally to Ben.

As he states:

> *As time goes on that balance will change, and it has started to change, and that's*
>
> *going to be a lot harder for her. I never really know what the staff are thinking*
>
> *because they are not going to open up.*
>
> (Interview 10/Ref 10)

At the start of Ben's second term, Mary, a member of the management team and a teacher

strongly and vocally opposed to his appointment resigned. Ben welcomed the opportunity

this created to initiate change: *"It will be very hard to make significant changes with the*

management team I've got at the moment" (Interview 10/Ref 16). This resignation created an opening for Ben to begin to exercise stronger personal influence and control, through making a potentially influential senior appointment.

During the first term a number of actions were initiated by Ben to begin to challenge and change the school's culture. One significant change was the introduction of a more rigorous and evaluative system of monitoring staff performance through classroom observation. Introduced jointly with Sally, this was accepted by staff, rather than warmly welcomed. However, as the year progressed, the processes of taking control and action became harder as Ben's personal authority was increasingly challenged by staff. The *"honeymoon period"* (Interview 11/Ref 1) of the first term, when relatively minor changes were introduced moved during the second term into a period when *"there was a lot of resistance"* (Interview 11/Ref 1) that tested Ben's resolve and slowed the pace of development. Nevertheless, his motivation remained firm. Speaking of this and his transition to headship he said:

> *I'm not regretting it [headship] – I think what is driving me is about making a difference and having an impact – it's quite a selfish thing really ..... if I do it well I help to shape something for the future, and that's quite a motivation.*
>
> (Interview 11/Ref 35)

This perspective emphasises what Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002, p119) described as the 'emotional engagement' leaders need in their self-development that requires 'connecting the effort to what really matters to them.' In Ben's case, this commitment to the intensity of the job demanded increasingly excessive motivation, with *"any meaty bits of work, any documents I've got to write"* (Interview 11/Ref 24) being done outside of school, enabling continued easy access by staff during the day to remain possible, so helping build important working relationships.

By the start of this third term Ben was feeling a clear sense of frustration:

> *I still don't feel the school is mine. I think there are a lot of teachers still digging their heels in, trying to make sure I don't feel the school is mine. I think I'll have to*

get through a whole year really before I can really feel that it is my school.

(Interview 11/Ref 41)

In particular, the first half of the previous term had proved particularly taxing, *"probably the worst term I've ever had"* (Interview 11/Ref 9). Ben went on to say:

> *At one point I was just so desolate really, I didn't know what was going on, didn't know how I was going to get through it, and then it turned almost overnight really. Just before Mary[11] left I had a couple of staff come to me and say I'm not happy with what is going on – but they are not confrontational and just went along with it. But they were desperate to make changes.*
>
> (Interview 11/Ref 11)

Gradually, as opportunities increased for Ben to have more direct influence on the school increased, Ben's feelings about the term improved, and he became increasingly confident of his ability to influence others *".....through people respecting you. As new head you have to win that respect"* (Interview 11/Ref 28).

Reflecting at the end of the year with Ben on his transition to headship, it was clear that he considered the most important dimension to his professional and occupational socialisation had been *"through experience, just day-to-day trying to keep up"* (Interview 12/Ref 45), resulting in extensive time pressures, *"I work obscene hours really: really long hours"* (Interview 12/Ref 27).

However, he felt confident that control and action had been successfully taken in many respects and the need identified by him to raise aspirations for pupils was beginning to be realised:

> *People are coming round to the realisation that we need to raise the bar and people are performing at a higher level. But a year in the life of a headship is nothing. You talk to people and they say they are going to turn it round in a term. But I think it takes three years really. A year goes scarily quite fast really. I*

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[11] Mary was the management team member who resigned and eventually left the staff at the end of the second term

could have tried to move faster, but I think I'd have left people behind and I
hope what I've done is to keep people with me, and just kept that ball rolling, and I
hope I can keep it rolling.

(Interview 12/Ref 7)

Ben reflected that positive feedback from governors *"gave me the confidence to carry on doing what I was doing"* (Interview 12/Ref 35) and that his personal and professional confidence had increased over the year, but added that *"personal confidence can waiver when you realise the kind of power you've got really."* (Interview 12/Ref 43)

This power was particularly seen by Ben in the context of shaping the school's overall strategic direction, in which he felt the influence of governors had been minimal. Alongside this however was the accountability dimension of headship. This personal accountability for the school started to grow for Ben by the end of the first term as initial changes were made and by the end of the year was a very clear dimension of the headship.

Towards the middle of the third term a further unexpected change of staff occurred. Sally resigned as deputy having obtained a new post elsewhere. Whilst valuing her support in the early weeks of his appointment, Ben clearly welcomed the opportunity her resignation presented. He reflected:

She could have dug her heels in incredibly in the first year, but she didn't. She was
a 100% supportive, a definite partnership. But she was a very strong character
with a very strong personal philosophy about what she thought primary education
was about, and it was different to mine. In the longer term, if she'd decided to stay,
things would have moved slower than they could without a doubt, because you
know my view is that I would need to get her on board first, before we then go to
staff. I don't see how that hurdle could be avoided.

(Interview 12/Ref 10)

In terms of enabling control and action, the resignation and eventual appointment of a deputy headteacher contributed considerably to Ben's influence within the organisation. Together with the appointment of Mary's successor as a member of the management team,

the overall balance of power and influence within the school's overall leadership was starting to shift.

Ben sees staff movement therefore as a positive influence in supporting the school's cultural change, *"If they hadn't left I would have been struggling now. The staff I have lost has helped, without doubt."* (Interview 12/Ref 31)

The period of control and action, although helped by staff changes, was one where Ben's personal influence on the school grew as he took increasing control of the school's strategic planning process therefore refocusing the school's priorities yet building on the school's established mission statement. Nevertheless, transition to headship was one of considerable high and low points for Ben who described the year as:

> *It's just hell really – you get the greatest highs and the lowest lows. Really, there is no doubt it is very **hard** work!*
>
> (Interview 12/Ref 39)

CONCLUSION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter provides a picture of the process of transition to headship of three headteachers over their first year in post. It draws upon their individual perceptions of that experience, and describes and analyses their particular experiences to reflect the individuality and uniqueness of each context. The chapter that follows explores the phases of transition to headship through an analysis of the empirical data from the case studies to identify the main emerging themes of the enquiry.

CHAPTER 5

THE ANALYSIS: EXPLORING THE PHASES AND THEMES OF THE ENQUIRY

THE ANALYSIS : EXPLORING THE PHASES AND THEMES OF THE ENQUIRY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reports the analysis and explores the phases and themes of the enquiry based upon the empirical data. This analysis builds upon that presented in the individual case studies and begins by considering the characteristics of each school to provide a contextual background for the analysis that follows. This analysis is structured to reflect the three chronological phases associated with transition to headship: preparation; entry, orientation and immersion; and control and action. This structure provides a consistency in approach between this chapter and both the literature review in Chapter 2, and the case studies in Chapter 4. Within each of these three phases of transition the main emerging themes relevant to that particular phase are identified and explored. Finally, the chapter ends by identifying the main outcomes of the analysis.

THE CONTEXTUAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOLS

This enquiry adopts a case study approach to the research design and subsequent detailed exploration of the work of three newly appointed headteachers presented in the previous chapter of the study. One important reason for this approach to the research design, discussed more fully in Chapter 3, is to provide an analysis of each individual headteacher's personal transition to headship in the context of their particular school, in order to emphasise the unique and particular nature of each context. This section draws on this analysis to provide an overview of these contextual characteristics.

Contextual diversity in educational contexts is frequently recognised by researchers and writers as important in determining what works and does not work within different settings. (Sergiovanni, 2001; Bennett and Anderson, 2003; Hoyle and Wallace, 2005). For this reason it is important to understand the contextual characteristics of each school in this study, since these represent the landscape within which each headteacher works. This contextual analysis is presented through four themes : school type/catchment; the recent leadership history of the school; school effectiveness and the experience of each headteacher prior to taking up their current appointment.

School type/catchment

Each case study school provides for children in the primary school (4-11) age range, although they vary in both age focus and size. Brookfield is a medium sized junior school for about 300 children; Brackden is a smaller than average infant school for about 170 children; and Sunningdale is a large CE (Aided) primary school for about 400 children.

The schools serve very different communities. Brookfield has a catchment area with relatively high levels of social and economic deprivation, high mobility and pupil turbulence, together with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. In contrast, both Brackden and Sunningdale serve more socially advantaged communities, with proportionally fewer pupils entitled to free schools meals or having special educational needs. All three schools serve predominantly white communities. Sunningdale attracts a high proportion (45%) of pupils from beyond the designated catchment area, and is seen by parents to provide an attractive alternative to other local schools. In contrast, Brackden and Brookfield attract very few out of catchment admissions, and largely serve the needs of their immediate localities.

Recent leadership histories of the schools

There are some important contrasts between the three schools in terms of their recent leadership histories. Both Brookfield and Bracken have had a period of unsettled leadership. In contrast, Sunningdale has had an extensive period of leadership stability, with the previous head and deputy having each been in post for about 15 years.

Brookfield has had a period of particularly unsettled and broken leadership. Prior to Maggie's appointment, the previous headteacher was absent from school for extended periods due to illness. Together with the absence of a substantive deputy headteacher, this contributed to low staff morale and lack of direction in the school's development, and in consequence, the school's reputation suffered. At Brackden, Ann was the third headteacher within four years, although prior to this, the school had a period of extended stability with one headteacher in post for over 15 years. During her stewardship the school developed a good reputation both within the locality and in the local authority for the quality of its work, a perception that was successfully sustained to the time when Ann took up her headship. Between the changes of headship at Brackden, a long established deputy headteacher provided an element of leadership continuity. Sunningdale has the most stable

leadership history. Ben followed a long established headteacher who had been in post for about 15 years, and he inherited Sally, an established deputy headteacher with 12 years service in the school. Further stability was provided by low turnover of teaching staff with very few external appointments to senior posts being made in the last 10 years.

School effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of the three schools is also one of contrasts. Using a range of indicators of effectiveness related to pupil progress and standards of attainment in core subjects, Brackden and Sunningdale are both successful schools. In contrast, when Maggie took up her post, Brookfield was less than effective, with weaknesses in both pupil progress and low comparative end of key stage standards and improving the school's effectiveness had been identified as a key priority for Maggie during the recruitment process. For Ben and Ann, the imperative to improve their school's overall effectiveness was both less explicit and less urgent, although both faced particular challenges related to differential performance, particularly the under-performance of higher-attaining pupils. These contextual differences had considerable influence upon the different approaches taken by Ben, Maggie and Ann to their leadership of school effectiveness, an aspect of headship explored and analysed more fully later in this chapter.

Previous experience prior to appointment to headship

All three headteachers have similar career development profiles, and began teaching in the primary sector immediately following graduation and initial qualification. None have significant experience outside of education. Their careers gradually developed, as their responsibilities beyond class teaching extended to include subject and other leadership roles. Most recently, all three gained experience as deputy headteachers in schools serving the same age range as their current schools, and completed the NPQH programme.

In the case of all three headteachers, their careers prior to headship had been highly localised. All of Ben's career had been spent in the same local authority although included work in four schools, the most recent of which was a large and highly successful junior school. Ben described himself as *"very career minded"* (Interview 9/Ref 2), and consciously built and developed his career from an early stage with the longer-term intention of eventual headship. This included two terms of acting headship. For him, Sunningdale was particularly attractive because of both the school's location and potential.

Maggie's teaching experience was the most extensive of the three, and included some work abroad, although the majority of her career had been spent in two nearby local authorities. Whilst a deputy headteacher, she successful completed a higher degree in education, and around this time decided to make the move to headship. For her, Brookfield offered a number of particular attractions, and the decision to apply for it was in the knowledge of the complexity and scale of job to be done. Like Ben and Ann she was keen to *"make a difference"* (Interview 1/Ref 12) and impact positively on standards and the development of the curriculum. Like Ben, she had some acting headship experience. Ann had the most limited teaching experience prior to taking up the headship at Brackden, having worked for nine years in only two schools in a neighbouring local authority. Nevertheless, in a relatively short time, Ann had gained a range of whole school experience relevant to potential headship. Like Maggie, she decided to seek headship whilst a deputy headteacher reflecting the growth in her professional self confidence. The career opportunity at Brackden seemed to offer Ann the kind of headship challenge she was seeking: an opportunity to extend and further develop a successful school. Unlike Ben and Maggie, Ann had no acting headship experience.

PHASE 1: PREPARATION FOR HEADSHIP

Three main themes emerge in this first phase of transition to headship. These are concerned with personal motivation; the nature of primary education and headship; and the development of aspirant headteachers.

Personal motivation

Ben, Maggie and Ann's motivation for headship developed from and built upon a range of personal experiences that combined to form a *preparatory* stage of motivation, prior to conscious preparation for headship. This preparatory stage reflects their unconscious move towards headship, ahead of the time of making a firm personal decision to seek headship based upon a combination of personal capacity, motivation and self-belief.

Ben had high motivation to seek headship from an early stage in his career, and a number of influences driving this motivation can be detected. He describes himself as being *"quite competitive"* and *"very career minded"* (Interview 9/Ref 3) and he attributes this partly to his personal interest in competitive sport. He saw headship as part of his longer-term

career intention, with his motivation driven by his wish to influence others, particularly children. He says:

> *I just enjoy impacting as much as possible on the children: working with parents and having greater responsibility. I always intended to be a headteacher and never saw myself stopping at an interim management level.*
>
> (Interview 9/Ref 3)

In contrast, Ann *"didn't actively decide to be a headteacher"* (Interview 5/Ref 2) but made her decision after some years of teaching, as she realised she was both capable and sufficiently experienced. In a similar way, Maggie's motivation developed over an extended period. She recalls a point when, as a deputy headteacher, her interest in headship was confirmed:

> *I never started out wanting to be a head, it just kind of all happened as I've gone along really. I realised I wanted to have my own school. I got to the point of not wanting to be second-in-command if you like, and thought, I think I could do this job, so I wanted to take it on.*
>
> (Interview 1/Ref 5)

In this respect, the collective experiences of Ben, Ann and Maggie reflect two of the three categories of prospective headteachers identified by Male (2006, p40): those who decide on headship early in their careers, reflected in Ben's motivation, and those who make the decision later, 'probably after some years of teaching experience, choosing to go for headship as they realise they are capable and willing' (Male, 2006, p40).

Common to securing their initial motivation for headship was the influence of other headteachers. This influence is one aspect of the process of anticipatory socialisation[12], where values and orientation are acquired, together with the technical and personal skills and capabilities, without engagement with a formal programme of occupationally focused training and development. During this preparatory stage, the inspiration to seek headship

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[12] Anticipatory socialisation is a process whereby prospective postholders prepare themselves, either implicitly or explicitly, by gathering social and technical experiences that will quality them for that role. (Taylor, 1968, Greenfield, 1985 and Eraut, 1994)

gained through working closely with experienced headteachers particularly whilst as a deputy influenced Ben. Speaking of his experience, Ben recalls:

> *We led the school together: I was involved in every aspect of school leadership.*
> *This on-the-job training was so important. We worked in partnership together.*

(Interview 9/Ref 24)

All of the headteachers in this study began headship with strong personal motivation for the job that had grown and developed over their careers. Although there was no simple single common influence, all showed a strong personal and professional drive to become headteachers, based upon their experience of teaching and the influence of established leaders. All shared a similar vision of headship, which although expressed differently, was concerned with impacting positively and constructively on the lives of young people, emphasising a perspective on headteacher leadership driven and defined by individual value systems, rather than managerial concerns. This motivating force and how it influences transitional behaviour during the first year in post will be examined more fully later in this chapter.

The nature of primary education and headship

One important aspect of preparation for headship is concerned with the development of personal understanding of the nature of primary headship. For all of the headteachers in this study, this understanding developed during their careers through a combination of influences. These influences enabled each aspirant headteacher to develop a personal construct of the nature of primary headship, which provided a basis of personal understanding from which to embark upon headship. There are two inter-related dimensions to this understanding. The first is concerned with the nature of contemporary primary education, the second with the nature of primary headship and headteacher leadership.

The nature of contemporary primary education is important because it provides the overall context within which headship is undertaken. Context can be considered at a range of levels, at one extreme that which is highly school specific and localised, and at the other, a systemic contextual level, for example, the national context that influences and impacts on contemporary primary education.

In terms of their preparation for headship, the three headteachers all developed a personal construct of the contemporary systemic context within which headteachers need to learn to operate. All adopted a pragmatic approach to the high contemporary political interest in education, which has important implications for both school effectiveness and school improvement. Nevertheless, all three headteachers were keen to ensure that national priorities were customised and focused to reflect school specific development and their vision for the school. Speaking early in his headship of this potential tension between central control and local initiative Ben said:

> *You've got to stand your ground and get to know the initiatives as they come in –*
> *not just jump on every bandwagon. You've got to decide what's right for the*
> *school.*

(Interview 9/Ref 7)

This view has important implications for the headship task. Within it are clear implications for headteacher leadership, and in particular, the headteacher's influence over the school's direction and development. Decision making and the exercise of influence are therefore likely to emerge as primary activities of headteachers as they make the transition to headship, whilst they recognise the need to remain operationally focused on the management of the organisation. How this balance develops in reality for the headteachers in this study will be explored later in this chapter.

The development of aspirant headteachers

The period of headship preparation is one of learning characterised through a process of anticipatory socialisation. During this time, aspirant headteachers with a range of previous life experiences engage in a variety of pre-service activities as part of their formal preparation for headship.

Since 1997, one important element of formal preparation for headship has been the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) programme. This qualification, developed following the identification of the National Standards for Headteachers, is the only statutory pre-appointment requirement or qualification for aspirant headteachers in this country. Although NPQH has been revised several times since its inception, research undertaken into the impact of NPQH by Male (2001) identifies some important

implications. Although the majority of respondents in Male's survey perceived themselves to be 'well prepared' or 'extremely well prepared' for the different aspects of headship as identified by the National Standards, particularly the skills element of the role, the formation of values and attitudes and the knowledge and understanding required for the post, the majority attributed this mainly to experience, rather than to training. It was only in relation to the increase in knowledge, that a third of respondents indicated that a mixture of training and experience was a major contributor to their preparation for headship. Overall, Male's survey findings indicate that 'training was deemed minimal by respondents in all categories' in terms of headship preparation (Male, 2001 p467).

A review of further research into the contribution of NPQH to the development of aspirant headteachers indicates the picture to be inconclusive. More recent research by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL, 2004), shows that NPQH can have a positive impact on the perception of candidates to engage with the demands of headship, However, self perception is only one measure of effectiveness, and 'there is little evidence to support the claim that these perceptions lead in turn to improved performance' (Male, 2006, p68). Any pre-appointment training provision for aspirant headteachers is likely to have limitations. In particular Male argues, 'the development of a necessary range of personal qualities is more likely to happen after appointment than during preparation' (Male, 2006, p68). He concludes that 'NPQH can be shown to be moving in the right direction in terms of building knowledge and experience' but that it 'does not provide a rigorous curriculum in terms of practical experience' (Male 2006, p69).

The empirical evidence in this enquiry provides a further perspective to the contribution of NPQH in the development of aspirant headteachers, since all of the headteachers in this study were graduates of the programme. Although the perceptions they present are mixed, there are some strong similarities both in their individual views and in relation to Male's findings. Overall, none of the headteachers in this study saw NPQH as making a significant contribution to their preparation for headship. Ben was the most critical of the provision, describing it at best as *"OK: in certain aspects it was great, but in others, it was a complete waste of time"* (Interview 9/Ref 26). He felt the better and more useful aspects of the programme were concerned with gaining information and new knowledge, a strength similarly identified in Male's (2006) research, together with work on vision and values. Ben was particularly critical of the way the content of the programme lacked any

attempt to personalise the learning process to reflect varying needs and experiences of delegates. His views were closely echoed by Maggie, who reported *"I don't think I learnt anything new from NPQH – I learnt more through working with the good role models I've had"* (Interview 1/Ref 15). Ann saw NPQH as a reinforcement of her on-the-job learning and a useful preparation for the headship selection process, rather than headship:

> *It prepared me more for the interviews than it did for headship. I'd already had many of the experiences presented in NPQH, although it did provide some theoretical background to some of the practical experience. That was probably a useful way round.*
>
> (Interview 5/Ref 18)

The influence of other development and preparatory activities as part of the bigger process of anticipatory socialisation has potentially both conscious and unconscious dimensions. Male (2006, p41) emphasises that:

> *Very few aspects of their preparation equip new headteachers to make the transition to effectiveness immediately on completion of their pre-service training and development.*

Daresh's (1988) study of the preparation of American educational administrators, identified the need for preparation and support for aspirant administrators to reflect equal attention being paid to strong academic preparation, realistic guided practice in the field, and the formulation of personal and professional capabilities to cope with the ambiguities associated with school leadership. Daresh's research indicates that in a pre-service or aspirant stage, all three aspects of learning are important, and potentially can complement each other. His work highlights the need for beliefs and values to be formed and secure, if the transition to headship is to be managed effectively. Although this American research is not necessarily directly applicable to contemporary headship in this country, the development of a knowledge-base, through field-based and informal learning, together with NPQH accreditation, is a feature of headship preparation in this country.

All of the headteachers in this study had considerable opportunity to gain some in-school experience of leadership and management responsibilities prior to taking up headship.

Ben, as a deputy headteacher without a significant class teaching responsibility, appears to have particularly benefited from such opportunities. These, combined with his acting headship experience, provided a broad and valuable base of pre-service experience. Similarly, both Maggie and Ann engaged in a range of whole-school leadership work, and were guided and encouraged by their respective headteachers to play a significant part in school leadership, for example through engagement in activities such as school self-evaluation, improvement planning and work with governors. Through these experiences all three headteachers engaged in a learning process that was largely self-directed, and with the exception of the NPQH, internal to their own school-base. There was little opportunity for the kind of field-based learning beyond their own schools described by Daresh (1988). The significance therefore of their experience base in providing a valuable set of pre-appointment opportunities for learning for aspirant headteachers, should not be under-estimated. However, what it is not possible to experience ahead of taking up headship is the overall degree of personal accountability that is associated with the job. Learning to be a headteacher prior to appointment is therefore largely an unconscious learning experience – one of work-related anticipatory socialisation.

PHASE 2: ENTRY, ORIENTATION AND IMMERSION

Two main themes emerge in the analysis of the second phase of headship transition: professional and organisation socialisation, and school effectiveness and school improvement. This phase of transition starts following successful interview, possibly some months before the appointment is actually taken up and continues until the third phase, that of control and action, becomes evidenced.

Professional and organisational socialisation

During this phase, newcomers to headship apply previous learning about headship, generally in a new and unfamiliar context. It is a time when learning and the socialisation process continues through formal induction and networking, and when professional alliances are built to support organisational socialisation[13]. Weaver-Hart (1993) considers this phase illustrates a double socialisation experience for the new incumbent – when

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[13] Organisational socialisation begins immediately following appointment, and involves a three stage process of entry or encounter (becoming familiar with the new school), adjustment (fitting in or reaching an accommodation with the workload and existing culture) and stabilisation (a stage when conflicts are resolved about how their approach fits into the organisation).

professional socialisation to school leadership continues alongside organisation socialisation, as familiarity with the work setting is established and developed.

For the headteachers in this study, the entry process began immediately following interview. All established some contact with their predecessor, some members of the governing body including the chairman, and with representatives of the local authority. These contacts were opportunities to gain further insights into the school, to clarify thinking and to further develop understanding. All headteachers found these contacts helpful, but Ann in particular had some reservations about contact with the outgoing headteacher. Her view reflects thoughts similar to those echoed by Maggie and Ben. She recalls:

> *I worked for two days with (the outgoing head) and she and the administrative officer had put together two files of everything that you need to know. It was well meaning, but was a mixed blessing. I had the chance to talk to (the outgoing head) but it was all in the file. She shared with me her perceptions, but I didn't want them to influence me too much.*

(Interview 5/Ref 21)

The potential for the outgoing headteacher, either consciously or otherwise, to influence the thinking of his/her successor is an important aspect of organisational socialisation. At one extreme, contact with the outgoing head could be an opportunity for the newcomer to be assimilated into the school's existing mode and pattern of working, potentially leading to few changes in behaviour, as the inherited past would continue to dominate at both the individual and organisation level, leaving the new leader appearing similar to their predecessor (Weaver-Hart, 1993). All three headteachers were aware of this danger and as all were keen to change and innovate in their schools, were keen to avoid it.

However, one significant difference facing the new headteachers was the urgency for change and innovation in their schools. This led to marked differences in how each headteacher managed this second phase of transition to headship and in particular, the pace of their move towards control and action, particularly reflecting the significance of contextual factors.

Maggie inherited a school where the urgency for fundamental change was both particularly significant and accepted by all associated in the school. Nevertheless, in spite of this clarity and shared understanding, Maggie was careful to pace her entry, and to take time to understand the school from her own perspective. Her priorities included being visible, accessible and involved in the day-to-day life of the school, and in so doing, building professional relationships across the school community. After two weeks in post she said:

> *My primary job is to make everyone feel valued, children and staff, because there has been a head here who has been quite poorly, often away, so they haven't had the leadership they need, people haven't felt valued, they've hung on in, but the structure has been lost, we need to put some structures in place.*

> (Interview 1/Ref 13)

Ben took a similar approach, giving high priority to establishing his personal presence in order to both gain acceptance, and to begin to understand the school's culture at a deeper level. However, in contrast to Maggie, who was largely welcomed by staff and seen to be filling a leadership vacuum, Ben found himself entering a potentially hostile environment. This was because of the particular circumstances associated with his appointment, with important consequences for the process of organisational socialisation at Sunningdale. Sally, the long established deputy at Sunningdale, and an unsuccessful applicant for the headship post, was a popular member of staff with considerable staffroom support. Ben reflects on the implications of this in terms of his own incumbency:

> *Every member of staff has been fantastic, supportive. Some a bit more standoffish than others. It is a threatening time for them really. They've had the same head for 14 years, the same deputy for 12; it is bound to be worrying. I think they wanted to keep the status quo: they weren't opposed to me as a person, but they were opposed to the appointment not being internal.*

> (Interview 9/Ref 19)

Although being sensitive to the situation, Ben felt it important to manage it. He consciously established a close working relationship with Sally, publicly recognising and acknowledging her established contribution to the school, and involving her in much of his

initial thinking. For example, during the first term he began to establish with her, a programme of classroom observation to indicate both his own, and Sally's high visibility.

Ann also gave high priority to establishing relationships, and like Ben gave considerable emphasis to developing her working relationship with Sue, her long established deputy. Although not an applicant for the headship post, Sue was both a popular and well-established member of staff. Ann recognised the need to secure Sue's support for any change or innovation and from an early stage shared her emerging and confidential perceptions with her of the school as being *"complacent"*. (Interview 6/Ref 28). Sue, was in agreement with this view, and aligned herself with Ann, who consciously encouraged her participation and engagement in a range of whole school issues. Both Ben and Ann began to build working relationships with their deputies, and to establish a wider set of internal networks as part of the process of entry, orientation and immersion.

For Maggie the situation was different. The absence of a substantive deputy in the school left her potentially more isolated. She sought to build alliances across a range of internal contacts, both to deepen her knowledge and understanding of the school, and to confirm her own position as the new headteacher. She worked with a number of staff, particularly the assessment co-ordinator, to plan and initiate staff development activities focused on meeting some of the immediate priorities she had identified. Through this she was consciously broadening and extending the participation and engagement of staff, and in so doing signalling a change of approach to school leadership.

Learning about their respective schools through the process of professional and organisational socialisation, was a high and time consuming initial priority for all three headteachers. Ben particularly began his first term in post keen to survey the landscape carefully, before making too many changes. Ann similarly decided to take the same measured approach. For Maggie, the greater sense of urgency to tackle issues of school effectiveness and school improvement, and to challenge issues of school culture, necessitated a more rapid and immediate response.

School effectiveness and school improvement : leading cultural change
The leadership of school effectiveness and school improvement in a context of securing cultural change emerged for all three headteachers as a key feature of their entry,

orientation and immersion into headship, and is the second theme is explored within this phase.

The twin fields of school effectiveness and school improvement are central to contemporary primary education and primary school leadership and have important implications for the process of transition to headship. Chapter 2 of this study examined both concepts, particularly in relation to the implications for the work of headteachers in their management of a centrally initiated policy agenda.

The three headteachers in this study all faced a variety of issues related to school effectiveness and school improvement, and each recognised the need to address these as part of their leadership of cultural change. The 'culture of an organisation is demonstrated through the ways those who belong to the organisation feel, think and act' (MacGilchrist, *et al.,* 1995, p40). MacGilchrist contends this is expressed through a combination of professional relationships, organisational arrangements and the opportunities for learning for both pupils and adults. This three dimensional model provides a useful framework within which to analyse how each of the headteachers in this study approached the leadership of school effectiveness and school improvement during this phase of their transition to headship.

Professional relationships

For Maggie, issues of school improvement and school effectiveness were immediate priorities, and dominated much of her work throughout this and subsequent phases of her transition. In order to begin to tackle these issues, Maggie took a number of early and conscious decisions, many of which were set within the bigger context of managing cultural change. She gave high priority during the first term to *"getting to know the children and staff, looking at areas for development and the strengths of the school"* (Interview 1/Ref 29). This *looking into* the organisation enabled Maggie to build a range of interpersonal relationships in the context of the school's 'micro politics' (MacGilchrist, 2004, p40). Maggie knew that a variety and range of changes were going to be necessary to secure improvement and greater effectiveness and that for these change process to be successful would need what Fullan (2007, p41) identifies as "a basis for action" and result in attitudinal, behavioural and methodological change. Cuban (1988) identifies that if sustained behavioural and methodological change is to be achieved, and shallow, short-

lived improvement avoided, then ensuring attitudinal change is crucial and Maggie's approach reflected that perspective.

Maggie sought to secure attitudinal change through leadership concerned with 'building and maintaining an organisational culture' (Schein 1985); 'establishing a mission for the school, giving a sense of direction' (Louis and Miles, 1992) and 'doing the right thing' (Bennis and Naus, 1985). She recalls:

> *I need to demonstrate my personal vision – through assemblies, training days, sharing ideas and thinking in staff meetings – just the way I am around the school. And through formal meetings, such as in the senior management team.*
>
> (Interview 1/Ref 10)

In her first weeks of headship she saw her priority as *"Getting to know the people first – children and staff. Then I'll get around to the more formal data and reports. I haven't done that yet"*. (Interview 1/Ref 20). A term into her work, reflecting about her experience, she further confirmed the importance of this approach:

> *This is the most amazing job. But you have to give yourself time to find out about the school, get to know the staff, parents and children. They are your key people. Whatever happens in the school is dependent upon how they are and how they work together.*
>
> (Interview 2/Ref 53)

This view illustrates an important implication for Maggie's work over her first two terms. Her prime focuses was looking *into* rather than *out* of the school, to building internal alliances and re-shaping the school's culture. Half way through the year she recalls:

> *I haven't really looked out. I've been too busy looking in. It just hasn't been possible. My focus has needed to be here. There are so many things that need to be done. Having said that, next term I'm going to send some teachers out to see other schools.*
>
> (Interview 3/Ref 11)

Ben and Ann both gave similar high emphasis to establishing internal professional relationships. As with Maggie, their actions were closely related to signalling a change of orientation and direction for their schools, but the urgency for them was less acute. Sunningdale and Brackden were more effective and therefore the external pressure for change was much less. Ben and Ann firstly had to encourage the internal motivation for change and therefore their management of attitudinal change was an important dimension to their work.

Ann consciously *"started very gently"* (Interview 5/Ref 11), seeking to *"encourage staff to have an input into what they felt about change"* (Interview 5/Ref 11). She established mechanisms to consult widely with staff, children, parents, governors and the wider community, to both seek views and to build consensus about the way ahead. This process identified no thirst for immediate or major change, perhaps reflecting the complacency Ann had already identified in the school, and emphasised the necessity for her to build professional relationships if attitudinal change was to be secured. She began this process over the first term by encouraging both behavioural and methodological changes, underpinned by the establishment of professional relationships. Through the introduction of these behavioural and methodological changes, Ann was leading cultural change by encouraging greater engagement and participation in school leadership. She recalls:

> *The priority here is to build a team. They don't know me. I need to be clear and communicate my vision for the school and ensure everyone is involved in that vision. There is a need to build distributive leadership. In the past there hasn't been that approach. People need to be more aware of their capacity for leadership.*

> (Interview 5/Ref 9)

Ben's approach to the leadership of attitudinal change was strongly influenced by the context of his appointment. High priority was given to establishing and sustaining his professional relationship with Sally, his deputy. Initially this went well. However, mid-way through the year, he was beginning to reflect an increasing degree of personal frustration. Although most of the staff gradually grew to accept the implications of his appointment, they were not readily receptive to attitudinal change, and during the first term used their collective influence to restrict the introduction of relatively minor

behavioural and methodological changes they saw as significant. Indeed, a term into post, Ben wondered *"if the staff had moulded me to the way they really wanted"* (Interview 10/Ref 2) as he reflected on *"one hell of a term"* (Interview 10/Ref 1) and his perception of staff resistance and complacency.

In managing this resistance and complacency, Ben identified Sally's continuing support as crucial, but the absence of a secure and effective middle leadership structure, through which to re-configure collective thinking was proving to be problematic. A term into post he reflected:

> *It is very hard to get things moving and it will be very hard with the leadership*
> *team I've got at the moment. It is a nightmare – it doesn't work as a leadership*
> *team. I haven't worked out why (name of teacher) is on the team. He just is. He's*
> *not effective at all.*
>
> (Interview 10/Ref 16)

Shortly after this interview, the mould began to break, when one teacher on the leadership team resigned unexpectedly. This provided a welcome recruitment opportunity Ben had not anticipated. He recalled, *"Her resignation, I'm pleased really. Absolutely. I haven't indicated that to anyone, not even Sally"* (Interview 10/Ref 17). As the staff team began to change, Ben anticipated new opportunities to lead attitudinal change.

Organisational arrangements

Ben, Ann and Maggie all began to make changes to organisational arrangements during this phase of their transition to headship. These developed at varying rates, largely due to contextual differences, often relating to staff recognition and acceptance of the need for change.

All three headteachers introduced organisational changes to focus upon what were emerging as key themes for longer term development. Maggie centred her organisational changes on establishing better systems of internal communication, and initiating improvements to the tracking and monitoring of pupil progress. This was a high priority for the school and closely related to the development of both pupil and adult learning discussed later. She recalled:

I need to put some structure in place. There are no systems, no assessment as
such – it isn't really understood or shared. Simple things like staff meetings
– they didn't know whether they were going to have one or not, what the agenda
was, what they were going to talk about. It was very much deciding it at the last
minute.

(Interview 1/Ref 13)

Ben and Ann inherited systems and organisation that were more effective and therefore
there was less urgent need for immediate changes in organisational arrangements and they
largely left these unchanged.

<u>Opportunities for learning for pupils and adults</u>
During this phase of transition, all three headteachers focused upon developing
opportunities for learning for pupils and adults, and saw this development as an important
facet of their approach to their leadership of cultural change. In focusing upon the cultures
of their schools, the headteachers were seeking to influence what Nias *et al.*, (1992)
describes as the shared beliefs and sense of unity of each organisation, in order to reshape
the values and beliefs which, although intrinsic to organisational life, become refocused to
reflect a leader's preferences. In order to initiate this process, each headteacher began to
establish a range of approaches to build leadership capacity within their schools, primarily
with adults, but indirectly with pupils.

Building and extending leadership capacity in each school involved significant cultural
change and a re-alignment of decision making and a move away from one of centralised
decision making to a transition towards shared leadership. Although Ben, Maggie and Ann
all shared similar intentions, because of contextual differences in their schools, they
adopted different strategies to build leadership capacity.

Ben initially felt his opportunities to broaden and strengthen internal leadership were very
limited. The school's lack of an effective formal leadership structure, other than the post
of deputy head, and absence of developed leadership roles were a source of frustration to
him. He recalled, *"There is no organisational structure. It is a nightmare..... There are*
not the personnel around" (Interview 10/Ref 18). However, the unexpected resignation of

a teacher with a post of significant responsibility, and the resulting opportunity to recruit into the vacancy, enabled Ben to begin to change the structure he inherited.

Similarly Maggie inherited a staff with little experience of distributed leadership. For her, the challenge was to provide leadership learning opportunities whilst establishing herself as headteacher, and providing a sense of personal direction and purpose to the school community. In the absence of a substantive deputy head, Maggie sought to actively secure the involvement and participation of staff in a range of learning processes relating to school improvement. She spoke in particular of a training closure during her first term, led by her in partnership with the school's assessment co-ordinator, to secure improved assessment and tracking procedures:

> *The teachers were very positive about it because they are the sort of people who want to make a difference, but actually no time has been given to data because the previous head didn't like it. So they were happy with the closure. We had two days rather than one, so we got a lot of work done – with targets for individuals and groups. They've never had those before.*
>
> (Interview 2/Ref 11)

Ann particularly focused upon extending staff engagement in shaping the school's strategic planning processes, an area she saw as under developed by her predecessor. A term into post she said:

> *You won't get distributed leadership unless people are involved. If it ends up with you or the deputy you'll never go anywhere really. You've got to get the whole culture right if you are going forward.*
>
> (Interview 6/Ref 27)

During this phase of transition, opportunities for influencing learning for adults were more strongly apparent in the work of the new headteachers than direct opportunities for learning for pupils. Their influence on pupils was apparent, largely indirectly and through their influence on adults, for example, through encouraging new approaches to pupil grouping. None of the headteachers maintained a significant regular personal teaching commitment, other than through whole-school activities such as assembly. Nevertheless

the headteachers were not without indirect influence on pupils and their learning, through their work with adults to initiate cultural and organisational change.

PHASE 3: CONTROL AND ACTION

The two main themes identified in Phase 2 continued into this third phase: professional and organisational socialisation; and school effectiveness and school improvement in the context of cultural change. In addition, a third theme emerges from the analysis of data, the emotional dimension of headship. This section discusses each of these three themes as they developed during this phase of headship transition over the second half of the year. The chapter concludes by identifying some longer term implications for the three headteachers.

There is no single point in time when Phase 2, concerned with entry, orientation and immersion ends, and Phase 3, concerned with control and action, is initiated. Rather the emerging evidence suggests that although discrete phases with particular characteristics can be identified, the third phase emerges from the second at different points in time, according to both context and circumstance, and the particular dimension of analysis. In many respects, elements of control and action were reflected at a point early in the year. What changed during the year however was the developing and cumulative impact of actions over time, in order to enable influence to be increasingly evident and the phase of control and action to be fully and coherently identified.

Professional and organisational socialisation

Learning about headship through the application of learning to support organisational socialisation continued and deepened during this third phase. It followed a period of initial familiarisation and adjustment to headship in context.

For all three headteachers, the pace of their learning accelerated quickly as first year progressed, the demand of the job increased, and the complexity of issues deepened. This section analyses the main dimensions of professional and organisational socialisation, drawing upon data from the second and third terms of incumbency, leading to the

development of occupational identity[14]. This analysis is particularly concerned with the learning process in the context of headship and headteacher leadership. During this phase of transition, the headteachers were increasingly working in what West-Burnham (2001, p2) identifies as 'contexts of high complexity and high significance' which, as a consequence, requires 'a nexus has to be created between the elements of knowledge, experience, skills and qualities.' This results in the establishment of a mental model or map, which helps the individual make sense of the environment and decide a particular course of action. The resulting high order deep and profound learning identified by West-Burnham is illustrated by high personal engagement, a sense of autonomy and the capacity to act. Responses are formulated, tested and applied and at times there is re-definition of problems and solutions. Change leadership in the context of school improvement and school effectiveness, is one illustration of such learning.

Learning to lead, and therefore the establishment of occupational identity, requires a range of strategies to be in place. These will now be examined theoretically, and illuminated from the experiences of the headteachers in this study. The structure used in this discussion draws upon West-Burnham's (2001) analysis of deep and profound learning which is illustrated through the work of the headteachers in this study.

Firstly, the development of a range of cognitive skills. The skills of analysis, logic and the interpretation of data were particularly important aspects of work for Maggie and Ben. Both needed to understand their school's previous performance and to begin to engage with others in that process of analysis, in order to help identify future goals and strategies. But their challenges were different. For Maggie, the priority was to improve the school's overall effectiveness. For Ben, the priority was to tackle issues of differential performance and under-achievement of higher-attaining pupils. In raising expectations and aspirations there was a need to engage with others in a development process focused on pupil outcomes. Maggie reflected at the start of her third term on the necessity for wide involvement in her approach to leadership.

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[14] The establishment of occupational identity, sometimes known as professional identity, is an important point in the transition to a formal leadership role, such as headship. In the context of this study, the definition used is an individual assessment by the headteacher of the point where s/he feels confident and competent in the job, and is effective with regard to the demands of the job. This draws on the definition developed by Wenger (1988) and the formation of 'a locus of social selfhood'.

I sort of knew at the beginning that headship involves a lot of people, but I didn't realise how important that was, and how important it is to keep everybody alongside you all the time.

(Interview 3/Ref 3)

Ben's growing understanding and awareness of his school was partly achieved through his raising of questions about established practice and procedures. This understanding accelerated during this phase, as he sought to check-out his initial impressions and began to challenge established ways of work. Through this process of analysis, Ben began to confirm his thinking about the school, clarify his intentions, and develop his strategic thinking. In engaging in this process, Ben began to shape his occupational identity, as he challenged the school's historic ways of working. He recalls:

I knew the staff were going to be challenged. I certainly don't want to be that sort of head that dominates, but certainly I don't want to be a head that the staff think they can manipulate and be a pushover.

(Interview 11/Ref 31)

During this phase, Ben was beginning to establish his position within the school, moving from a period of entry and encounter, to one of adjustment moving towards one of stabilisation. However, he was not simply accepting the inherited social context, and in so doing, becoming absorbed by it. He was consciously working to move and develop the context on the basis of his developing understanding.

It was a similar experience for Maggie and Ann, who each recall having to work to gain personal acceptance whilst also challenging established inherited organisational practices and procedures. Like Ben, both were able to review and build upon some initial successes of their leadership during the second phase of their incumbency. As Maggie recalled when speaking of the school's new management systems, *"establishing these has been a high priority and they are now helping to improve standards"* (Interview 3, Ref 7).

Secondly, in developing strategies for learning to lead, the headteachers found themselves engaging in activities based on what West-Burnham (2001, p2) calls 'problem-solving in real life situations.' Although the complexity and significance of these situations varied,

each provided an opportunity for learning through the application of familiar skills in new situations. The problem-solving process became increasingly central to that of analysis. One important dimension to this process was that the context for problem-solving had an important school-specific boundary. Often the problem would have originated within the school, perhaps a pupil or staffing issue, but even when the problem appeared to be external to the school, the headteachers found themselves having to interpret that problem in the specific context of their school. For example, whilst accepting that both internal demands and external pressures exist in varying proportions in different contexts, all three headteachers worked to reconcile these demands and pressures in a way that was relevant to their particular context by drawing upon their previous career experience. The impact of this particularly challenging aspect of work was summarised by Ben who recalled the impact of the job: *"It is just hell really – you get the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. Really there is no doubt, it is very hard work"* (Interview 12/Ref 39).

Finally, it needs to be remembered that these, and other strategies developed in the process of learning to lead, are developed in a context of developing 'a sense of moral purpose, a vocation and a search for personal authenticity' (West-Burnham, 2001, p4) through processes that have implicit implications for personal working patterns, particularly personal and collective review processes; reflection; discussion; networking; coaching and mentoring. These implications are discussed more fully later in this chapter in the context of the emotional dimension of headship.

School effectiveness and school improvement : leading cultural change

This theme emerged as a priority in Phase 2, and continued to be important during the third phase of transition. However, there were some important differences within this third phase which reflected how each headteacher was able to apply their strategies for learning to lead in their own particular contexts of school effectiveness, school improvement and cultural change.

Ben faced a particularly complex situation in this respect. His initial analysis led him to the view that Sunningdale, although broadly successful, was complacent and underachieving in terms of outcomes for some pupils, in particular the higher-attaining. This therefore became the focus for his attention. He sought to develop a change process for school improvement that would establish a longer-term approach to the development

of the conditions that support and enhance school development (Hopkins, 2001). The outcomes of Ben's early observations of teaching and learning, and the overall quality of provision, confirmed his view of complacency, but with a well-established staff he found changing approaches difficult:

> *During my second term the honeymoon of term 1 ended and trying to make some changes I met a lot of resistance. I expected it, but a few staff just dug their heels in and things were not moving at the speed I wanted.*
>
> (Interview 11/Ref 1)

Ben perceived an inward-looking culture, with a staff having limited professional experience beyond the school. He recalled:

> *The majority of teachers haven't taught anywhere else, most came as NQTs and don't want to move. They are very comfortable – we've been good so why do we need to change is that they ask.*
>
> (Interview 11/Ref 8)

Ben's challenge therefore was to begin to focus on securing meaningful and sustained improvement from within (Hopkins, 2001), rather than relying upon an 'urgency' for improvement from an external momentum (Earl and Lee, 2000). This required him to build and sustain the school's internal capacity for change through his leadership of attitudinal change. The mid-year resignation of one member of the leadership team reported earlier was followed, three months later, by the unexpected resignation of his long-established deputy headteacher. Ben welcomed this resignation as a further opportunity to reduce resistance to change, and to enable attitudinal change, and he reflected at the end of the year:

> *Challenging complacency has been the hardest part. It proved really difficult, especially after Christmas. The school doesn't need any major changes but I was still meeting a lot of resistance. It has been a popular and successful school and this led to resistance to change. Staff movement is starting to help. If they hadn't left I would have been struggling now. The loss of staff has helped, without doubt.*
>
> (Interview 12/Ref 31)

At Brackden, Ann also faced a similar challenge of improving particular aspects of the school's performance with an established deputy and stable staff and a school community largely satisfied with the school's achievements. During the third phase, she also built upon her initial assessment of the school, and in particular, continued her focus upon team building. Through this, she consciously sought to lead cultural change by encouraging increased engagement and participation in school leadership. However, two events during Ann's third term in post were significant in this process: Sue's unexpected resignation for personal reasons as deputy headteacher, and an Ofsted inspection of the school.

Ann had built a successful working relationship with Sue, and initially regretted her decision to resign. Ann reflected: *"She was the person who was closest to me. I am anxious about who we will get in"* (Interview 7/Ref 8). Although keen to maximise upon the opportunity this resignation presented, Ann was also anxious that a change of deputy headteacher would need to be both constructive and developmental for the school.

Around the same mid-year point, Brackden was inspected by Ofsted. This inspection gave strong testimony to Ann's work as headteacher, both in establishing herself as the school's new formal leader, and in the way a broad base of involvement in helping to shape the school's future direction had been secured through her leadership. By the time of the inspection, Ann had already implemented a number of school improvement processes with a strong focus upon learning and teaching, reflecting Hopkins' view (2001, p68) that a major goal of school improvement 'is to help teachers become professionally flexible so that they can select, from a repertoire of possibilities, the teaching approach most suited to their particular content area, and the age, interests and aptitudes of their students.'

In contrast to Ben's experience, Ann reflected that the pace of change had been both faster and easier than she anticipated it would be:

> *People are really clear what the plan is for and how they can contribute. We've linked governors into the plan too, so it has been a huge turn round for governors. It is now so much easier to distribute responsibility.*

> (Interview 7/Ref 2)

By the end of the third term, Ann had successfully completed the recruitment process for a new deputy headteacher and was confidently looking ahead to her second year in post.

School improvement and school effectiveness remained central to Maggie's work in this phase of transition. The significance of the challenge she had initially identified continued into this third phase. Most of her efforts continued to be focused internally, and like those of Ben, directed towards continuing to re-shape the school's culture and to improve the school's effectiveness. However, Maggie felt she was making more rapid headway. She continued to give high priority to improving staff morale and to sustaining professional relationships. She recalled:

We've predominantly spent our time looking in – I haven't really looked outside – it hasn't been possible. There are so many things that need to be done.

(Interview 3/Ref 11)

Consolidation of work initiated during her first term, particularly in assessment and tracking, and in mathematics, continued for the remainder of the year. New management systems introduced earlier became established – *"this has been a high priority to enable us to improve standards"* (Interview 3/Ref 10), and in common with Ann and Ben, a substantive deputy headteacher appointment was made, confirming the acting temporary incumbent to the permanent post, thereby building on the working relationship that had already been established.

In encouraging cultural change, Maggie seemed to be able to harness goodwill and enthusiasm. For Maggie, *taking control* occurred at an early point in her stewardship, as she recognised the need for action to address critical performance issues and recalled: *"Someone had really to take it by the scruff of the neck and say this is where we are going"* (Interview 3/Ref 15). In doing this, Maggie was careful to build understanding and to forge internal networks that would support identified developments. She was keen to *"take people along"* (Interview 3/Ref 1) and build and develop the contribution of a leadership team, although her personal drive, vision and enthusiasm remained significant in securing the school's increased effectiveness.

The emotional dimension of headship

This third theme considers the emotional dimension of headship, which particularly emerged during the *control and action* phase of transition. Writing about emotion and leadership Crawford (2007, p521) comments 'views emotions as the language of relationships' and sees 'emotion as inherent to the practice of leadership rather than separate from it.' This perspective is confirmed through the experiences of the headteachers in this study. Their collective experiences during this third phase of transition to headship are analysed using a framework of Emotional Intelligence Domains and Associated Competencies developed by Goleman (2002) from his earlier work in this field[15]. This reflects the significance of the emotional dimension of leadership, and hence the emergence of this third theme of analysis. Goleman's framework of Emotional Intelligence Domains and Associated Competencies (Appendix 6) is presented through four domains of analysis: self-awareness and self-management (concerned with personal competence) and social awareness and relationship management (concerned with social competence). In reality, it is the inter-play of these domains and the competencies within and between them that provide the synthesis of how emotional intelligence (EI) is demonstrated through the work of leaders. However, for clarity, the analysis has been structured to reflect Goleman's framework of the four EI domains. The competencies within each are learned abilities which have a unique and particular contribution to making leaders resonant and effective. Within this analysis points of both similarity and difference will be identified from the case studies of headteachers during this phase of their transition to headship.

Personal competence : self-awareness

During this phase of transition, all three headteachers demonstrate a high degree of self-awareness in their behaviour and, in particular, their developing ability to self-assess and their growing self-confidence. Self-awareness becomes strengthened during the third phase of transition, as experience of headship extends and deepens and the learning process moves from one of theoretical preparation into practical application. This process is both accelerated and enhanced within this phase as professional and organisational socialisation processes enable new incumbents to achieve occupational identity. Through

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[15] Emotional Intelligence (EI) is concerned with *how* leaders go about their work. his is seen as the primal task of driving emotions in the right direction, to ensure that what the do works as well as it could or should The leader's task is to *'clear the smog created by toxic emotions'* and to *'push enthusiasms to enable performance to soar.* The EI competences are the vehicles of primal leadership.

encounters of 'high complexity and high significance' (West-Burnham, 2001, p1) intense personal engagement in the school's life deepens as problems are re-defined and solutions sought. This process of learning to lead, brings together the application of a range of cognitive skills alongside a range of personal competencies. It is this inter-play that enables the application in specific contexts of learned abilities. Several dimensions of self-awareness emerge from the data. In different ways, all of the headteachers identify the significance of their guiding values in providing the basis of and foundation for their work as they identify the big picture in a complex situation.

Reflecting on this aspect of self-awareness, Ann identifies a perspective shared by Maggie and Ben. She recalls *"It is a gut instinct. It is knowing what you want to do, having a clear vision and knowing how to go about it"* (Interview 8/Ref 21). This high degree of personal conviction and commitment reflects a deep and fundamental belief about the moral dimension of head leadership concerned with the 'fundamental issues of values and the moral issues of schooling and the principalship' (Earley and Weindling, 2004, p85).

Self-assessment and self-confidence are both closely inter-related and inter-dependent, since knowledge of abilities enables leaders to play to their strengths and to know when to seek learning experiences. All three headteachers self-assessed their personal readiness for headship, an assessment confirmed through the recruitment process. However, this threshold-assessment was quickly built upon and extended once in post as the reality of the job emerged and new and unfamiliar situations were encountered. This learning process accelerated at different rates depending upon the particular context, and was a process supported for all headteachers in different ways through professional mentorship. In the main, this was a largely responsive and unstructured process, where timely interventions from other colleagues helped support growing self-awareness. The importance of feedback was closely linked with developing self-confidence. For Ann, external feedback and validation of her stewardship of the school through the mid-year Ofsted inspection was important. She recalls: *"The inspection helped develop my self-confidence and provided a real seal of approval"* (Interview 8/Ref 9).

Similarly, Maggie reflected on the importance of feedback from staff, parents and governors in helping sustain her during the year:

There is still a feeling of mystery to the job, but less than at the start of the year.
My self-confidence has increased over the year. The job was overwhelming
initially, but not more than I expected.

(Interview 4/Ref 51)

For Ben, feedback from governors and parents was important in helping his self-confidence develop, particularly in the absence of extensive positive feedback from staff due to the particular contextual circumstances. For all three headteachers, their developing self-confidence helped establish their identity through the socialisation process associated with transition to formal leadership.

Personal competence : self-management

This domain of EI has a number of important competencies including those concerned with transparency; achievement and initiative. All three headteachers gave high importance to establishing transparency and displaying honesty, integrity and trustworthiness in their day-to-day work. Although initiated early in their incumbency, this strengthened as the year progressed and more complex situations developed. Establishing an *open-culture* was one illustration of this, and engaging staff more extensively in a variety of whole school strategic issues and decision-making reflects the transparency that was fostered. Goleman (2002, p254) contends that 'leaders who are transparent live their values' and defines transparency as 'an authentic openness to others about one's feelings beliefs and actions allowing integrity.' The importance of personal guiding values, already identified as an important aspect of emotional self-awareness, become a regular and consistent feature of headship behaviour, as leadership learning depends, mistakes are made and unacceptable behaviour challenge. Achievement is an important dimension of self-management, one that is closely related to transparency. For all three headteachers the drive to improve performance in their schools 'to meet inner standards of excellence' (Goleman, 2002, p39) was an important aspect of their work. For Maggie, improving performance was central to her work in school improvement and school effectiveness. To lead this thinking she reflected *"you need to be a creative thinker"* (Interview 4/Ref 29) when speaking of the need to challenge the school's culture and history of under-achievement. For Ann and Ben, tackling the differential performance of particular sub-groups reflected their high expectations and the 'setting measurable but challenging goals' (Goleman, 2002, p254) reflected their personal commitment to improving performance.

Initiative and the readiness to act and seize opportunities was demonstrated by all three headteachers. For all their personal initiative was central and pivotal to what was achieved during this phase of the transition process. In part, this reflects Maggie's view of the need to be a 'creative thinker' (Interview 4/Ref 29) but goes beyond this into seizing and, at times, creating opportunities in order to shape the future. One illustration of this is concerned with re-culturing through opportunities taken by Ben and Ann in their recruitment of new senior staff.

Central to the notion of initiative and self-management is the accountability dimension of headship, and the demands this makes on headteachers. All three headteachers report on the intensity of the job and the need to manage anxiety, identified by Gronn (2003) as key dimensions to the emotional aspects of leadership. Maggie reflects: *"The accountability of the job is frightening and results are a pressure – a big pressure"* (Interview 4/Ref 13).

Ben comments on his increased personal accountability in this third phase: *"You think you have this lovely honeymoon period and then you are accountable for everything"* (Interview 12/Ref 13).

Speaking of the workload associated with the job, similar views are expressed by all three headteachers. For Maggie, it is an important psychological dimension:

> *I wake up at night and at weekends thinking about what I have to do. But there is a bit of me, because I love the job that wants to talk about it as well.*
>
> (Interview 4/Ref 31)

Ann recalled a similar and intensifying view as she moves into her second year of headship:

> *The personal workload now seems to be increasing. I think that is because we've got so many things going that need to be maintained.*
>
> (Interview 8/Ref 17)

The initiative or drive for these activities was often self-generated, rather than the consequence of an external directive, and as such the momentum for development

accelerates as the period in post extends. The third and fourth domains of EI relate to social competence and in particular social awareness and the management of relationships.

Social competence : social awareness

In the context of this study, this domain is particularly concerned with organisational awareness and empathy. Developing clarity in organisational awareness, an important dimension of earlier phases in the transition process, became critical in this third phase of control and action. Through establishing and then using 'a keen social awareness' (Goleman, 2002, p255) leaders are able to better understand an organisation and begin to re-shape the culture. This was important in this phase for all three headteachers, as they built upon their initial understanding of their schools to establish longer-term developments. Goleman (2002, p39) talks about 'reading the current, decision networks and politics at the organisational level.' For Ben and Ann this was illustrated well through their need to identify and work closely with their long-established deputy heads, both of whom in different ways, had strong staffroom support, and in the case of Ben's deputy, had been an unsuccessful applicant for the post. Through the building of these professional alliances, both Ben and Ann were demonstrating organisational awareness in order to ensure popular support and the effective management of relationships. Maggie also needed to demonstrate organisational awareness through her developing understanding of the school's internal politics, and how that influenced the second important aspect of this domain, that of empathy.

In this context, empathy is concerned with a leader's ability to attune to a wide range of emotional signals and to build constructive professional links. As newcomers to their schools, all of the headteachers needed to demonstrate a degree of initial empathy in order to begin to establish social awareness. During the third phase of transition this began to develop more deeply and became an implicit dimension of social competence in the broader management of relationships.

Social competence : relationship management

This domain is concerned with a number of significant competencies: inspiration; influence, change leadership; conflict management and the building of team work and collaboration. It is pivotal to head leadership and is particularly important during the third phase of transition, when control and action become increasingly evidenced.

'Leaders who inspire both create resonance and move people with a compelling vision or shared mission' (Goleman, 2002, p255). The headteachers in this study all demonstrated significant personal influence in guiding the development of their schools and motivating others to engage in development processes. In many respects they each represented the principal source of ideas in their schools, and whilst working to develop greater involvement through more distributed approaches to leadership, were responsible for setting both the pace and direction of travel. Direct and active governor involvement was low in all three contexts, although their support and approval for development was secured by each headteacher through regular reporting and dialogue. Developing and sustaining a sense of common purpose was achieved during this phase in a variety of ways, and was a process that intensified during the second half of the year. Maggie reflects: *"It is important to influence thinking through discussion and to lead through example: to demonstrate what you are thinking"* (Interview 4/Ref 4).

Similarly Ben recalls:

> *Headship is about leading and managing people – ensuring everyone understands where the school is heading and what you want to be achieved. I think it is people first, the work second. To me that is the crux of headship.*
>
> (Interview 12/Ref 1)

These comments relate closely to a second facet of relationship management – that of influence. Goleman (2002, p256) identifies that influence is concerned with 'knowing how to build buy-in from key people and a network of support for an initiative.' Ben's work illustrated how he deliberately and consciously established and developed a professional relationship with his deputy. Ann worked in a similar way with her deputy to ensure shared thinking and a joint perspective. Although without a deputy, Maggie sought to build buy-in from a range of staff as the year progressed. In so doing, all the headteachers were seeking to develop a culture of teamwork and collaboration. This process was developed to build commitment to a collective effort and build spirit and identity. This approach had other advantages, particularly in terms of managing potential conflict resulting from alternative viewpoints, although resistance to change was not eliminated.

In particular, Ben expressed this resistance most sharply: *"I think they all resented someone coming in and not saying this is a wonderful school, let's carry on "* (Interview 12/Ref 30).

For him, staff changes were a significant opportunity to forge new relationships and accelerate the process of cultural change he was keen to encourage. Speaking of these opportunities, he recalled:

> *If they hadn't have left I would have been struggling now. Even the most insignificant changes were challenged. Looking back I could have tried to move faster, but I think I would have left people behind.*
>
> (Interview 12/Ref 7)

The leadership of change inevitably involves managing a range of emotional responses involving both fear and anxiety. Internal change leadership at the level of the individual school occurs within a much bigger picture of change and requires principals who Fullan (2001, p342) identifies need to be 'more attuned to the big picture, and think more sophisticated at conceptual thinking and transforming the organisation through people an teams.' The implications of this perspective for the emotional intelligence of school leaders and their leadership of change are central to successful transition to headship.

CONCLUSION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter has drawn upon the empirical evidence of the research, and followed the journey of three headteachers during their first year in post. It has built upon the analysis in the case studies, the first level of reporting in the study, and used a similar chronological sequence to reflect the phases of transition from preparation; to entry, orientation and immersion, to control and action. Within each of these phases the main themes that emerge from the data have been identified and analysed. The chapter highlights the importance of context as new headteachers wrestle with the particular complexities of their work, and strive to become established and successful school leaders. The final chapter draws together the main findings of the study, and reviews the progress made by the research in achieving the initial aims of the study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS TO THE STUDY

CONCLUSIONS TO THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarises the study's findings and reviews the progress made in achieving the aims of the enquiry. It reflects critically on the research process and identifies the main professional implications of the study.

This research contributes to our understanding of the process of transition of new headteachers to primary headship. It focuses upon the work of three headteachers over their first year in post, and through their perceptions and reflections on their work over that period, provides in-depth accounts of their experiences as they move into the formal leadership associated with headship. The study draws upon those case studies to provide an overall analysis which further explores the phases and themes of the enquiry. This analysis and exploration is focused by the research question (p9), which highlights the identification of factors that influence transition to primary headship and headteacher leadership. This chapter summarises how the investigation has developed and where it has led. It presents the findings under the following headings:

- Preparation for headship: moving towards formal leadership
- The first year of headship: phases of transition
- Reflections on transition: "new heads on the block"
- Towards a theory of headship.

The chapter concludes by reflecting on the research process and identifying some of the practical applications of the enquiry. The study has been undertaken at a time of increasing leadership shortages, falling numbers of applicants for headship posts (Ward, 2004; Howson, 2005; Brundrett *et al.,* 2006), and growing national and international interest in leadership succession planning and management (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2006; NCSL, 2007). It is therefore both a timely and important enquiry, since it presents an interpretation of perceptions of the process of recent headship transition, and in so doing contributes to a growing understanding of a key phase of professional development.

FINDINGS

Preparation for headship: moving towards formal leadership

The evidence from this study indicates that preparation for headship is a long-term, continuous process with both conscious and unconscious dimensions. It is a stage of career development and progression that builds upon a range of previous personal and job experiences, yet promotion to headship represents a point of significant development in occupational identity. This reflects the scope and complexity of contemporary headship and the demands it presents. This section summarises the demands of contemporary headship, and the issues this raises for headship preparation and transition to formal leadership.

Headship is 'the combination of leadership, managerial and administrative behaviours and actions that are appropriate to the given circumstance' (Male, 2006, p4). This concept of headship reflects a trilogy of actions, and emphasises the importance of the contextual dimension of the job. Whilst each headship is unique, there are some important similarities to headship in different contexts, particularly within the same phase of education. These include the headteacher's high personal accountability for the school, particularly in relation to the local authority and governing body, and the political context of operation particularly in relation to central control and range of national initiatives focused upon improving standards.

Effective headship requires achieving a balance in actions over time across the range of behaviours – a balance that will be different in different places at different times. Increasingly, effectiveness is judged by outcomes on a wide-range of indicators, including pupil progress and educational standards. The headteacher's internal operational accountability for identifying and achieving the school community's agreed outcomes lies at the heart of the headship task. This again reflects the complexity of the leadership, managerial and administrative dimensions of the job, and their inter-play together.

Headship preparation is a process concerned with moving towards formal leadership, a process of anticipatory socialisation that is both conscious and unconscious. The headteachers in this study were all promoted to headship following successful careers as teachers and most recently as deputy headteachers. As such, their move to headship reflected a continuous process, with some continuity in occupational identity, whilst also

requiring an alteration or change in the individual's situational selves. This is considered more fully in the next section. From the point of view of headship preparation, the process of anticipatory socialisation is critical, since it is through experience of a range of life experiences and engagement in a variety of pre-service activities, that aspirant headteachers start to come to terms with the job.

The evidence from this study confirms the importance of anticipatory socialisation in headship preparation and identifies a range of influences upon that process. Particularly important for all the headteachers in this study were the opportunities they engaged in during their careers prior to appointment to headship to broaden and deepen their leadership, management and administrative knowledge and experience, especially whilst deputy headteachers.

For all, their deputy headship experiences were a significant preparatory opportunity, particularly when extended to include an acting headship experience. This opportunity to assume overall responsibility for their schools gave both Ben and Maggie an experience that helped motivate, encourage and build professional self-confidence. This professional growth and the chance 'to make happen something you believe in' (Barth, 2003, p62) confirmed their personal interest in and motivation for headship, an essential pre-requisite in their process of preparation and eventual transition.

The influence of other people on the aspirant headteachers, particularly the headteachers with whom they worked during their teaching careers, was a significant factor. In different ways, all three headteachers identified the significance of the mentoring and coaching opportunities these professional relationships provided, and how they helped shape their thinking and develop their understanding about headship. This finding echoes other research in the fields of preparation and induction (Tomlinson, 2004; Male, 2006; Rhodes and Brundrett, 2008).

Far less influential in the process of preparation for headship was the formal dimension of preparation provided through completion of the National Professional Qualification for Headship programme (NPQH). Although the views of the three headteachers in the study varied, none saw NPQH as a significant dimension of their overall headship preparation, although some aspects of the programme were identified as being more useful than others,

particularly those concerned with the articulation of values, and the chance to consider the headship selection processes. NPQH presents a particular perspective of headship, and presents a concept of the job that is reflected in a model of training and assessment underpinned by an occupational competencies model based upon the national standards. As such, the model inevitably reflects a particular construct of headship, and like the headteachers in this study, has critics (Tomlinson *et al.,* 1999, pxx) who see the programme as having important limitations, including an absence of education values and an ethical commitment to children, an insecure conceptualisation of leadership, and an underemphasis upon the contextual factors in headship.

This study's findings identify the inevitable limitations of pre-appointment preparation, as well as the important and influential aspects of the long-term conscious and unconscious processes of anticipatory socialisation. Transition to formal leadership as characterised by headship, introduces a significant set of challenges that build upon previous learning experiences that may be 'configured by personal attributes or a personal history' (Male, 2006, p16), and which continue through early incumbency. The literature and research about the succession of leaders, managers, and administrators, provides a useful analysis of the process of transition to headship, but cannot reflect the unique circumstances relating not only to occupational expectations or standards, but also to the personal and organisational dimensions of transition to headships. This chapter now explores those dimensions on the basis of the empirical data.

The first year of headship: phases of transition

Transition to headship and to formal leadership takes place within a context within which the new postholder has demonstrated, through a selection process, the range of professional and personal capabilities, skills and competencies deemed necessary for the job. This study has identified and reported the analyses of several studies of leadership succession, and for the purposes of providing a framework for the analysis of the empirical data in the case studies, adopted that developed by Weindling (2002) discussed in Chapter 2. This framework identifies three chronological stages that trace the processes of professional and organisational socialisation: preparation; entry, orientation and immersion; and control and action. This section summarises the second and third of these phases, which occur during the first year of incumbency starting from the time the appointment is confirmed by the selection panel. It draws upon the data presented in the

case studies (Chapter 4), and the overall analysis (Chapter 5) to highlight the main research findings.

Entry, orientation and immersion

The evidence from this study indicates this to be a professionally demanding and challenging phase, and one of intensive professional growth and development. Although there are contextual factors specific to each headship that are not insignificant, two main themes common to all three headteachers emerge during this phase of transition: the continuing influence of the processes of professional and organisational socialisation and the leadership of school effectiveness and school improvement.

Once in post, the new headteachers applied their previous learning about headship in their new, and unfamiliar schools. As their learning deepened, and the socialisation process through formal induction and networking became established, a process of organisational socialisation was initiated. The period was essentially one of making sense of the new context and developing an understanding of the culture of the inherited organisation, including recognising the influence of the previous incumbent and encouraging the exploration of alternative structures and systems as the culture of the school began to be influenced.

All of the headteachers in this study gave high priority to deepening their organisational understanding before making important decisions and taking significant actions, and to securing initial personal acceptance and credibility through their actions and behaviour. Their priority to establish relationships, particularly with potentially key and influential colleagues, provided an opportunity to begin to understand both school dynamics and culture. It also provided an important opportunity to begin to share their personal values and vision.

This phase of transition lasted for much of the first term. In their different ways, all of the headteachers reported a degree of initial shock both about the intensity of the job, and the relentless demands on them to address a range of complex immediate issues. This reflects findings reported in earlier studies (Draper and McMichael, 1998; Male, 2006). Essentially this had two main practical implications. Firstly, that initial attention was focused on internal school matters, and to *looking-in* rather than *looking-out*, and that

issues related to immediate managerial issues took priority over longer-term issues related to strategic planning and development. Secondly, personal time management issues began to be increasingly apparent, particularly for headteachers in those schools that lacked a well developed structure of devolved responsibility and decision making. This added to the pressure and intensity of early incumbency. Although by no means unprepared for the job, this stage of transition brought a variety of challenges for all the headteachers in this study, particularly in the context of their leadership of school effectiveness and school improvement. This was an important dimension of work for all three, and each recognised the need to address issues of school effectiveness and school improvement as part of a bigger picture focused upon the leadership of cultural change. For Maggie, this was an immediate and pressing priority which dominated both this and later phases of transition. From the basis of building personal relationships she began a process to secure attitudinal change through re-focusing the work of the school. Whilst acknowledging the impact of the school's recent leadership history, she was keen not to accept that as an excuse for under-performance. This delicate balance was achieved through a process involving both support and challenge, and the provision of practical guidance to staff, both directly and indirectly about how the school's work might be successfully re-configured. Her leadership was both welcomed and appreciated, as was that offered by Ann, which again was built upon the basis of establishing personal relationships. In contrast to Maggie, both Ann and Ben had a less clear mandate for change. Their schools were more effective than Maggie's, yet needed to focus on specific aspects of differential performance. Ben met the greatest and strongest resistance to the leadership of cultural change, which he found both annoying and frustrating during this phase of transition. However, his attempts to re-shape the school's organisational structure were helped by the unexpected resignation of two senior and influential staff, so providing a welcome opportunity to recruit new thinking and different experience into a relatively static staffroom.

Control and action

The two themes identified earlier, professional and organisational socialisation and school effectiveness and school improvement, continued during the second half of the year in this third phase of transition: control and action. In addition, a third theme emerged from the data in this study, the emotional dimension of headship.

In this third phase of transition, the work of the headteachers in this study was increasingly characterised by the establishment of occupational identity and were increasingly working in "contexts of high complexity and high significance" (West-Burnham, 2001, p2) as their initial orientation activities and job immersion enabled greater depth to develop in the context of their 'sense of moral purpose, a vocation and a search for personal authenticity' (West-Burnham, 2001, p4). In this phase of their transition, the processes of networking, coaching and mentoring were again evident, as they had been earlier. Through these processes, professional and organisational socialisation continued, as the headteachers became increasingly secure and confident in their work, and professional identity became confirmed.

Leading school effectiveness and school improvement remained high profile work. Contextual factors began to be increasingly important in influencing the pace of cultural change, and the reluctance of staff identified by Ben to change established practice was only broken by further staff movement during the second half of the year. For Ann, external validation of her work and the school's improvement and increased effectiveness by an Ofsted inspection provided a welcome acknowledgement of the success of her stewardship.

Although initially reluctant to accept the concept of 'control' in relation to their leadership, all of the headteachers increasingly grew to accept the usefulness of the concept in relation to their work. However, in their different ways, all were keen to emphasise the need to *"take people along"* (Interview 3/Ref 1) and to build alliances of internal support in order to encourage increased distribution of leadership and shared accountability.

During this phase of transition the emotional dimension of headship emerged as a new and increasingly powerful theme. The evidence from this study confirms the importance of the emotional dimension of leadership, and the inter-play of the four domains of emotional intelligence; self-awareness and self-management and social awareness and relationship management. The self-awareness of all the headteachers strengthened during this third phase of transition, as experience of headship extended and deepened and the theoretical learning that was the focus of preparation, moved into practical application. At this point

the process of professional and organisational socialisation contributed to the formation of occupational identity.

Self-management, reflected through transparency, honesty, integrity and trust, strengthened during this phase of transition as participation in strategic thinking and planning was extended and involvement increased. Self-management had a strong outcomes or achievement dimension, and was therefore often closely linked with school effectiveness and challenge to the inherited culture. The headteachers were keen and confident to seize initiatives in the interests of their schools, and to be increasingly entrepreneurial, taking the thinking of others with them, yet within a context of organisational awareness and empathy. In this instance, the building of internal alliances was particularly important for them as the move was made in this phase from initial empathy to the establishment of social awareness.

Finally in this context, is the significance of relationship management. The headteachers demonstrated significant personal influence in guiding the development of their schools and motivating others in that process, and in so doing influencing thinking through the work of others. As a consequence a culture of collaboration and co-operation was encouraged, and this was an important aid to building the capacity for sustained improvement in the schools.

Reflections on transition: "new heads on the block"

Moving to headship is potentially a formidable challenge. This study indicates the scope, scale, and complexity of this challenge, and also the potential opportunities. Headship can be identified as a unique occupation in terms of its demands. Firstly is the potential personal exposure of the job resulting from legal, systemic, political and societal demands. In moving to headship the new incumbent moves from a position of relative professional obscurity to one of professional prominence and public accountability. Secondly, headship has enormous parts of the job for which there exist no discernible, transferable skills (Draper and McMichael, 1998) from the previous job of teaching. New skills learned in pre-appointment development are developed rapidly through application in the work place.

Thirdly, headship is fast-moving, with an implicit expectation that newcomers will instantly be familiar with and responsible for the school community they have inherited, thus generating a pressure to act and respond in a way which at times may not prove timely. The headteachers in this study took time to make personal sense of their contexts – time that seems to be wisely invested.

Fourthly is the challenge for headteachers to move towards the establishment of occupational identity. This process requires a 'transformation in views of the self and a coming to terms with how others perceive you' (Male, 2006, p21) and in part reflects the potential isolation and loneliness of the job. In their search for an identity, new headteachers may model their behaviour to mirror others they have seen, subsequently modifying this behaviour to align it more closely with their beliefs, values and preferred behaviour (Mahoney, 2004).

Throughout the process of successful transition to formal leadership is the concept of professional socialisation. This is initiated during the preparatory stage through anticipatory socialisation, and later extended into the process of organisational socialisation, which gives emphasis to processes that assist newcomers effect successful transition to the job of formal leader. Weaver-Hart (1993) contends incoming headteachers face the challenge of satisfying the expectations of the school community or being able to adjust and shape expectations through changing the criteria by which they are to be judged: "new heads on the block!"

Towards a theory of headship transition

Male (2006, p12) contends that 'formal school leadership involves both art and science and is a combination of behaviours that can be understood and learnt'. This study has demonstrated the increasing complexity of headship and the demands it makes upon all who undertake that job. For newcomers, making the transition to headship for the first time, the first year in post is a time of accelerated professional learning and personal growth. Should the first year prove less successful, then it could mark the end of a career. It is therefore a time of high risk, both personally and professionally, both for the individuals making that journey as new incumbents, and those working with them in their schools.

This study has analysed the art and science of headship transition. In moving to identify a theory of headship transition, the evidence highlights the importance of pre-appointment preparation, and in particular, the need for aspirant headteachers to engage in and learn from a conscious process of anticipatory socialisation to reflect the personal, organisational and occupational demands of the headship. Through engaging in a range of learning experiences, prospective incumbents develop self-confidence to facilitate initial transition to headship. Completion of NPQH can contribute to this process of anticipatory socialisation, particularly in respect of specific skills training, but the process is both bigger and more complex, and involves a judicious mix of other experiences including mentoring, coaching, job-shadowing, and reflection on practice. Engagement in such activities makes systemic demands on other professionals that need to be orchestrated to provide a personalised approach to the learning of potential headteachers. Having said that, much of the formal leadership task associated with headship cannot be fully simulated or experienced prior to appointment, therefore making the first months of incumbency crucial.

In taking up an appointment to headship, the process of occupational socialisation begins and the move towards occupational identity is initiated. The evidence from this study indicates that this initial phase of transition, associated with entry, orientation and immersion, is one of high pressure and demand intensity. It is potentially a period of cognitive dissonance, as a new school culture starts to be understood and personal value sets are potentially challenged. The risk of professional loneliness and isolation is high, alleviated in part through networking, coaching and mentoring opportunities, support from outside agencies such as local authority officers, and other induction activities. Nevertheless, headteachers remain largely self-directing at this time, with relatively low active governor involvement in the process of occupational adjustment.

New headteachers, although constrained by legislation, have considerable freedom in their approach to the job and in particular to identify particular courses of action. This is especially so in schools not causing concern to central or local government, and for this reason, the approach to leadership that is adopted, can have significant influence and impact on the transition process. Gaining the commitment of colleagues through the identification and understanding of key goals therefore becomes a crucial process for new headteachers, and emphasises the importance of vision, values, communication, internal

networking and the building of professional alliances. How this is achieved is contingent on local circumstances, again highlighting the significance of context. High personal accountability is emphasised in contemporary headship, and can only be fully discharged through timely decision making in a political environment that recognises the influence of multiple school stakeholders: pupils, parents governors, the community and both local and central government. The process of headship transition involves discrete stages of preparation, transition and eventually consolidation. Once the initial shock of entry recedes, higher order skills of leadership need to be activated and the longer term process of learning to lead can be initiated.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Reflections on the research process

Bassey (1999, p38) contends that "Research is systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry which aims to contribute towards the advancement of knowledge and wisdom." This study has sought to be honest to this definition, and reflect a connectedness about the planning and integration of design, process and outcomes. The methodological integrity of the study is both explicit and open, and reflects a set of clear decisions based upon analysis of the methodological options. Inevitably however, all research is subject to professional critique, and has a never-ending nature. That raises the issue of closure, since the study has set up a point of closure – the end of the first year in post – which to a degree is arbitrary.

The study set out to focus on headteachers perceptions of the process of transition. In so doing the focus of the study has been both maintained and sustained, ensuring depth rather than width in the findings. The series of interviews undertaken with each teacher at strategically phased regular points over the course of the year captured their perceptions about their personal transition to headship. It is important to be cautious in generalising from the singularities of a small sample and this methodological approach. However, the findings of the study have contributed to the theoretical base, a deeper understanding of each context, and enable some common themes to be identified.

The research process that is developed in this study draws upon interview data from the perspectives of the participant headteachers. Inevitably this raises some important

methodological issues with both the scope of the data and more general methodological issues about the use of interviews as a research tool.

The decision to restrict the scope of the research data to the headteachers' perceptions was made for a number of reasons. In focusing and developing the research question there was a need to address a number of key concepts that 'fundamentally impact on their utility as methods to be employed by researchers' (Somekh and Lewin, 2005, p40) relating to the status that can be given to the words of others, including truth, reality and trust. These concepts 'problematize' (Somekh and Lewin, 2005, p42) interview discussions as natural ways of obtaining data and require strategies to be available in order to ensure data are useful and reveal real and trustworthy representations, experience and beliefs that can be analysed objectively without any judgemental stance being taken on the part of the researcher.

To achieve this, I consciously adopted the stance of listener and to 'parallel the language and manners of the interviewee' (Somekh and Lewis, 2005, p43) I sought to build trust with each participant in order to encourage open responses and to enable data to be revealed that would deepen my understanding of their experiences. In adopting this approach to the research, my intention was to manage constructively the power and social dimensions of the interviews, to consciously and openly to value and encourage the contribution of participants, and to check regularly for meaning in my interpretation of the views they offered.

The decision to limit the data to the perspectives of the participant headteachers was done consciously in order to help build mutual trust between myself as researcher and the headteachers as participants. A broader base of perspectives, to reflect the views of other members of the school community for example, could have led to issues of confidentiality and hindered the establishment of trust with the headteachers, which was considered to be of central importance in my research.

Although it is not possible to be completely confident that any research process fully reveals reality, my research did illuminate some aspects of transition that were unexpected. These included the very limited contribution of governors to the process of headteacher transition, the low profile of formal programmes of induction and, in the case

of the church aided school in the study, the low involvement of the local diocese during the first year of "Ben's" appointment.

The research design was constructed to 'evoke' rather than impose upon the realities of people's experiences (Somekh and Lewin, 2005, p43-4) and as a result, decisions were made to reflect issues of access to participants; the ethics of data collection, processing and use; and representation of the experience of the research process and the experiences of those associated with the research participants. My research process was therefore consistent with a grounded-theory approach, based on data gathered through fieldwork observing headteachers in situ, and developing understanding of their experiences through observation and discourse.

Professional application

The study has important potential professional application. The findings provide a new perspective on the process of professional development that are of importance to both practitioners and policy makers.

For practitioners, particularly those directly and personally involved in the process of transition to headship, the study provides a commentary and critique of that personal and professional journey. It provides a view of the reality of the transition process from the perspective of headteachers, and highlights the complexity and uncertainty of that journey, so extending and broadening the existing experience and knowledge base. The study identifies the significance of context, and traces the process of professional growth that occurs during transition to headship.

For policymakers, the study provides a perspective of transition rooted in the direct experience of recently appointed headteachers. It provides some direction to how successful transition can be achieved, and in so doing, reduces the risk of transition failure. The importance of on-going networking, coaching and mentoring has potential resource implications in terms of both finance and opportunity, and is increasingly reflected in the range of provision both nationally and locally. Increasingly transition to headship is being seen as one part of a much more extended and extensive headteacher development pathway, but it will remain both particularly critical and significant, as retirement rates continue to impact, and there are more "new heads on the block!"

Interview – Schedule 1 (September 2005)

The purpose of this schedule is to:

- provide an outline framework for the first research interview with each headteacher participant
- provide a structure for that interview that reflects emerging themes from the literature review
- allow headteacher participants scope to focus their responses to reflect their particular contexts and circumstances.

Each lead question is to be developed further by appropriate questions to prompt and probe further.

1. Motivation and personal aspiration for headship

   - professional history, career path, origin of interest in headship
   - influences on professional motivation
   - interest in this particular headship
   - preparation for headship.

2. The purpose of primary education

   - what is it for you?
   - implication? influences?
   - personal vision vis a vis centralist agenda.

3. The purpose of primary headship

   - what is the job about for you?
   - accountability
   - national factors and their influence.

4. The school and the context for this headship

   - what is perceived as the job here?
   - first impressions of the school
   - implications of those impressions for headteacher leadership
   - initial actions
   - any particular contextual factors
   - emerging priorities for action
   - readiness to meet the challenges, including pre-appointment preparation
   - induction issues/needs
   - reflection on the first days in headship.

Interview – Schedule 2 (December 2005/January 2006)

The purpose of this schedule is to:

- provide an outline framework for the first research interview with each headteacher participant
- provide a structure for that interview that reflects emerging themes from the literature review
- allow headteacher participants scope to focus their responses to reflect their particular contexts and circumstances.

Each lead question is to be developed further by appropriate questions to prompt and probe further.

1. Re-engaging

    - reflections on the first term in post
    - implications for this term of those reflections.

2. Entry, orientation and immersion

    - the entry process
    - implications of the entry process
    - orientation: key factors emerging
    - establishing identity
    - emerging contextual issues and their implications
    - leadership processes
    - management implications
    - induction issues.

3. Leading cultural change

    - implications of the process
    - practical dimensions/implications
    - the emotional dimension
    - strategic thinking and planning
    - establishing direction.

4. School specific issues from interview 1, including critical moments.

Interview – Schedule 3 (March 2006/April 2006)

The purpose of this schedule is to:

- provide an outline framework for the first research interview with each headteacher participant
- provide a structure for that interview that reflects emerging themes from the literature review
- allow headteacher participants scope to focus their responses to reflect their particular contexts and circumstances.

Each lead question is to be developed further by appropriate questions to prompt and probe further.

1. Re-engaging

   - reflections on the first two terms in post
   - implications for this term of those reflections.

2. Entry, orientation and immersion

   - how this process is developing
   - establishing priorities
   - contextual issues
   - time management issues: strategic and operational leadership
   - personal perception of headship
   - induction issues
   - development of identity.

3. Leading cultural change

   - building capacity for development
   - leading curriculum/staff development
   - leading structural change
   - strategic planning
   - power and influence of headship.

4. School specific issues from interview 2, including critical moments.

Interview – Schedule 4 (July 2006)

The purpose of this schedule is to:

- provide an outline framework for the first research interview with each headteacher participant
- provide a structure for that interview that reflects emerging themes from the literature review
- allow headteacher participants scope to focus their responses to reflect their particular contexts and circumstances.

Each lead question is to be developed further by appropriate questions to prompt and probe further.

1. Re-engaging

    - reflections on the first year in post
    - implications for beyond the first year.

2. Control and action

    - is this description helpful?
    - how is it demonstrated?
    - what illustrates it?
    - influence of school factors vis a vis central government's influence
    - pressures, demands, opportunities
    - accountability
    - governance.

3. Leading cultural change

    - what has been the particular challenge?
    - influences?
    - evaluation of impact
    - building capacity
    - leading structural change.

4. School specific issues from interview 3, including critical moments.

Protocol for conducting and reporting research

- all the participant headteachers will be fully aware of the nature and scope of the study before agreeing to participate, and this should be the basis of their consent;

- anonymity of the participants and their schools, will be maintained throughout. In the final report they shall only be referred to by pseudonyms. Nevertheless the context of their schools will be described and biographical details may form part of the case studies;

- confidentiality will be maintained as to the source of the material obtained. No context from the interviews/discussions will be used outside of the context of the research and/or form the basis of any professional judgements appertaining to the work of the headteacher or the school;

- permission will be sought regarding the use of any direct quotations taken from the audio recording;

- during the course of the enquiry the researcher will not be acting as an officer or adviser of the LA, but as a student researcher from the University of Southampton. This distinction will be maintained throughout, in both the collecting of evidence and the presentation of findings;

- first drafts of the case study, compiled from transcribed tape recordings of the interviews, will be shared with the participating headteacher for comment and correction of fact. The nature of the research necessitates that where there is any difference of interpretation within case studies, this difference will be resolved, wherever possible, through negotiation. If not possible the differences will be recorded within the case study;

- the researcher will have ownership of the analysis, findings and conclusions of the final report;

- access to the final report will be through the regulations and controls of the University of Southampton library;

- summative feedback of the overall findings, will be prepared and distributed to all the participants;

- the researcher as authority, and the University of Southampton, reserves the right to publish the research within the strict guidelines of this protocol and after consultation with the participants.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: Leadership Competencies

SELF AWARENESS

- *Emotional self-awareness.* Leaders high in emotional self-awareness are attuned to their inner signals, recognizing how their feelings affect them and their job performance. They are attuned to their guiding values and can often intuit the best course of action, seeing the big picture in a complex situation. Emotionally self-aware leaders can be candid and authentic, able to speak openly about their emotions or with conviction about their guiding vision.

- *Accurate self-assessment.* Leaders with high self-awareness typically know their limitations and strengths, and exhibit a sense of humour about themselves. They exhibit a gracefulness in learning where they need to improve, and welcome constructive criticism and feedback. Accurate self-assessment lets a leader know when to ask for help and where to focus in cultivating new leadership strengths.

- *Self-confidence.* Knowing their abilities with accuracy allows leaders to play to their strengths. Self-confident leaders can welcome a difficult assignment. Such leaders often have a sense of presence, a self-assurance that lets them stand out in a group.

SELF MANAGEMENT

- *Self-control.* Leaders with emotional self-control find ways to manage their disturbing emotions and impulses, and even to channel them in useful ways. A hallmark of self-control is the leader who stays calm and clear-headed under high stress or during a crisis – or who remains unflappable even when confronted by a trying situation.

- *Transparency.* Leaders who are transparent live their values. Transparency – an authentic openness to others about one's feelings, beliefs, and actions – allows integrity. Such leaders openly admit mistakes or faults, and confront unethical behaviour in others rather than turn a blind eye.

- *Adaptability.* Leaders who are adaptable can juggle multiple demands without losing their focus or energy, and are comfortable with the inevitable ambiguities of organisational life. Such leaders can be flexible in adapting to new challenges, nimble in adjusting to fluid change, and limber in their thinking in the face of new data or realities.

- *Achievement.* Leaders with strength in achievement have high personal standards that drive them to constantly seek performance improvements – both for themselves and those they lead. They are pragmatic, setting measurable but challenging goals, and are able to calculate risk so that their goals are worthy but attainable. A hallmark of achievement is in continually learning – and teaching – ways to do better.

- *Initiative.* Leaders who have a sense of efficacy – that they have what it takes to control their own destiny – excel in initiative. They seize opportunities – or create them – rather than simply waiting. Such a leader does not hesitate to cut through red tape, or even bend the rules, when necessary to create better possibilities for the future.

- *Optimism.* A leader who is optimistic can roll with the punches, seeing an opportunity rather than a threat in a setback. Such leaders see others positively, expecting the best of them. And their "glass half-full" outlook leads them to expect that changes in the future will be for the better.

SOCIAL AWARENESS

- *Empathy.* Leaders with empathy are able to attune to a wide range of emotional signs, letting them sense the felt, but unspoken, emotions in a person or group. Such leaders listen attentively and can grasp the other person's perspective. Empathy makes a leader able to get along well with people of diverse backgrounds or from other cultures.

- *Organisational awareness.* A leader with a keen social awareness can be politically astute, able to detect crucial social networks and read key power relationships. Such leaders can understand the political forces at work in an organisation, as well as the guiding values and unspoken rules that operate among people there.

- *Service.* Leaders high in the service competence foster an emotional climate so that people directly in touch with the customer or client will keep the relationship on the right track. Such leaders monitor customer or client satisfaction carefully to ensure they are getting what they need. They also make themselves available as needed.

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

- *Inspiration.* Leaders who inspire both create resonance and move people with a compelling vision or shared mission. Such leaders embody what they ask of others, and are able to articulate a shared mission in a way that inspires others to follow. They offer a sense of common purpose beyond the day-to-day tasks, making work exciting.

- *Influence.* Indicators of a leader's powers of influence range from finding just the right appeal for a given listener to knowing how to build buy-in from key people and a network of support for an initiative. Leaders adept in influence are persuasive and engaging when they address a group.

- *Developing others.* Leaders who are adept at cultivating people's abilities show a genuine interest in those they are helping along, understanding their goals, strengths, and weaknesses. Such leaders can give timely and constructive feedback and are natural mentors or coaches.

- *Change catalyst.* Leaders who can catalyze change are able to recognise the need for the change, challenge the status quo, and champion the new order. They can be strong advocates for the change even in the face of opposition, making the argument for it compelling. They also find practical ways to overcome barriers to change.

- *Conflict management.* Leaders who manage conflicts best are able to draw out all parties, understand the differing perspectives, and then find a common ideal that everyone can endorse. They surface the conflict, acknowledge the feelings and views of all sides, and then redirect the energy toward a share ideal.

- *Teamwork and collaboration.* Leaders who are able team players generate an atmosphere of friendly collegiality and are themselves models of respect, helpfulness and co-operation. They draw others into active, enthusiastic commitment to the collective effort, and build spirit and identity. They spend time forging and cementing close relationships beyond mere work obligations.

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