



Purdie, Jacqueline (2014) Key factors in early headship development in the Scottish secondary school sector: an analytical autoethnography. Ed.D thesis.

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Key Factors In Early Headship
Development in the Scottish Secondary
School Sector: An Analytical
Autoethnography.

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education

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November 2014

Abstract

This professional doctorate research focuses on the early headship experience of a small group of female secondary school head teachers in Scotland. A key feature of the research is that the researcher is a head teacher and her narrative of headship is considered in an analytical autoethnographic approach, alongside the experiences of the sample group of head teachers. The autoethnography is included, as an appendix, as it provided a major data source, which was considered within the context of the literature. This in turn provided a framework that allowed the generation of areas for exploration in open-ended interviews with the other head teachers. This is an important feature of the research as it allowed the head teachers to co-construct the areas of investigation and expand on the topics explored, which permitted the surfacing of key challenges in early headship allowing the participants to make explicit how they felt and how they coped with these challenges.

The research focuses on the interface of professional socialisation and the development of professional identity, especially in the reaction to specific ‘crisis’ situations in the early days of headship. Individual career trajectories on the journey to headship have also been considered. The complexity of the conceptual framework of career trajectories, socialisation and identity, lies in the interaction of these areas and with individual responses to the varying factors which influence them, particularly individual differences relating to specific school contexts as well as to the different personalities of head teachers. A conceptual framework for head teacher development was developed, suggesting that head teacher preparation should extend into the first year of appointment.

Head teacher development can therefore be viewed in two phases: pre and post appointment. The head teacher is shaped by her individual career trajectory and personal and professional socialisation prior to taking up post, all within a specific policy context. Having been appointed, her professional identity is shaped by these aspects as well as her conception of the role and her values and relationships. Her reaction to and reflection on a crisis situation will subsequently impact on her professional identity.

By considering individual experiences of early headship, this study has revealed:

- The influence of role models and previous SMT experience for head teachers;
- The emotional intensity and all-consuming nature of the job, particularly in the early days in post;
- The inevitability of an early critical incident;
- The impact of legacy issues on head teachers' early experiences;
- The role of emotional intelligence in headship, in particular the need for self-awareness, resilience and finely tuned interpersonal skills;
- The importance of self-reflection in successfully building head teacher identity;
- The need of support from head teacher colleagues.

Of particular importance has been the emergence of the inevitability that there will be a crisis situation during the early years of headship, the handling of which will impact on the head teacher's developing identity, as well as the staff's perception of the new head teacher, both of which are intertwined.

The back-drop to the research was the influence of national policies and the impact of the performativity and accountability agenda on the role of head teacher, as well as the international challenges of recruitment and retention of head teachers. By a detailed consideration of early headship experiences, it will contribute to the discussion on recruitment and retention, in that if new head teachers are more prepared and supported in post others may be encouraged to apply.

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Definitions/Glossary

A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century: The agreement reached with unions, following the McCrone report, outlining reforms to the teaching profession, including conditions of service.

Act up: The term used to describe the situation where an individual substitutes for someone else, usually in a position at a higher level than the one they currently hold.

Best Value: is the framework for ensuring continuous improvement in public services, paying due regard to efficiency, effectiveness and economy.

Career Deputies: Depute Head Teachers who have decided not to move into headship.

Flexible Routes to Headship: an alternative route to achieve the Standard for Headship, based on experiential learning and coaching.

Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education: an executive arm of the Scottish government, responsible for inspecting the quality of education. Historically known as HMI, it has now been incorporated within Education Scotland.

National Debate on Education: a debate launched in 2001 by SEED on schools for the 21st century.

Standard for Headship: defines the professional actions and values of effective head teachers. This has now been incorporated within the revised Standards for Leadership and Management

Scottish Qualification for Headship: a postgraduate qualification in school leadership, led by universities in partnership with local authorities. This is the validated route to achieving the Standard for Headship.

List of Abbreviations

APT	Assistant Principal Teacher
AHT	Assistant Head Teacher
CAP	Creative Analytical Processes
DHT	Depute Head Teacher
EIS	Educational Institute of Scotland
EFQM	European Foundation for Quality Management
FRH	Flexible routes to headship
GTCS	General Teaching Council of Scotland
HMIe	Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education
HGIOS	How Good Is Our School
HR	Human Resources
HT	Head Teacher
ISSPP	International Successful School Principalship Programme
MERU	Management of Educational Resources Unit
NCSL	National College of School Leadership
NPF	National Performance Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PT	Principal Teacher
QIs	Quality Indicators
SEED	Scottish Executive Education Department
SFH	Standard for Headship
S1	Secondary 1, the first year of secondary school in Scotland
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SMT	Senior Management Team
SSTA	Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SQH	Scottish Qualification for Headship
STACS	Standard Tables and Charts
TP21C	A Teaching Profession for the 21 st Century
WTA	Working Time Agreement

Acknowledgements

There are many people I am indebted to for their help in completing this research.

Professor Christine Forde provided much valued guidance, support and encouragement throughout the writing process. I could not have had a better supervisor.

Margaret Martin has been a valued critical friend throughout my career in school leadership and her belief in me during the EdD journey provided reassurance and inspiration.

The head teachers who shared their stories were generous both with their time and their candid responses. Without them this thesis would not have been written.

Finally, my grateful thanks must go to my parents for providing my writing haven in Spain.

Author's Declaration

I certify that this thesis is my original work and that all references to, and quotations from, the work of others contained therein have been clearly identified and full attributed.

Where I have drawn commentary from work submitted for previous modules within the EdD programme this has been noted.

Chapter 1 The genesis of the research

Chapter 1 outlines the rationale for this research and the background to it, with a particular focus on the influence and impact of the policy context in which Scottish head teachers currently operate. As a professional doctorate, this research focuses on my professional context as a head teacher, and it is thus related to my own field or professional practice and to my working life (Bourner et al. 2010: 71). These authors further indicate that professional doctorates often focus on an area of professional practice that presents a problem requiring investigation or resolution, and that they make a research-based contribution to practice. As a head teacher undertaking research, the aim of this study was to consider in some depth the early headship experiences of a small group of female head teachers, extrapolating from this qualitative data any possible issues or areas which could influence the issue of recruitment and retention of school leaders, a problem which exists at an international level (Ponte et al. 2008). The research questions I addressed were:

1. What are the significant factors in the progress to headship?
2. What are the pivotal experiences in early headship?

By examining early headship experiences in depth I have identified some of the challenges and have suggested how these may be addressed. A number of disincentives to headship have previously been identified by MacBeath et al. (2009) and I wanted to consider these, particularly in the context of early headship experiences, with the intention of making recommendations for headship preparation. Thus I am addressing a problematic area, which is related to my profession with the intention of influencing future practice.

1.1 Introduction

The recruitment and retention of head teachers¹ is problematic, not only in Scotland, but in the international arena too (MacBeath et al. 2009: 9; Pont et al. 2008: 30). This is concerning for those responsible for the smooth running of education systems because head teacher posts are key positions in education, particularly as school leadership has long been linked to the improvement agenda (Cowie and Crawford 2007: Pont et al. 2008: 9).

¹ Since this research is set within a Scottish context, I use the terms head teacher and headship to refer to the school leader. In other contexts this may be principal or administrator.

The problems of recruitment and retention are likely to be further exacerbated by the current financial constraints which have caused some local authorities in Scotland to abandon the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH), which has until now been one of the main training planks for prospective head teachers. Of particular concern is the emergence of career deputies (MacBeath et al. 2009: 10). These are deputies who have made the decision not to move into headship despite having the necessary experience, and in some cases the appropriate qualification for headship. This post is the usual recruiting pool for secondary heads and the field of suitably qualified personnel will be reduced if deputies decide to remain in their substantive posts. Equally concerning is the decision taken by some individuals who have had the opportunity to ‘act up’ (substitute) in a head teacher’s job only to decide that it is not the job for them (Draper & McMichael 2003, Gronn 2009; MacBeath et al. 2009). Amongst the contributing factors which result in decisions such as these, MacBeath et al. (2009: 50) mention the ‘all-consuming nature’ of the job and its impact on work-life balance. If these factors are discouraging recruitment to head teacher posts, then an exploration of how they are dealt with by existing head teachers is important and is one of the key areas of this research. Furthermore if, as MacBeath et al. (2009: 24) contend, there is a mismatch between the perception and reality of headship this too is an important area for consideration.

This research focuses on the early headship experience of a small group of female secondary school head teachers. A key feature of the research is that the researcher’s narrative of headship is considered in an autoethnographic approach, alongside the experiences of the sample group of head teachers. My autoethnography is included, in appendix E, as it was a major data source which, having been interrogated in the context of the literature in chapter two, provided a framework that allowed me to generate areas to explore in open-ended interviews with the other head teachers. This is an important feature of the research as this method allowed the head teachers to co-construct the areas of investigation and expand on the topics explored. This approach to the research, using an autoethnographic study, considered in the context of the literature, followed by autobiographical interviews, therefore permitted the surfacing of key challenges in early headship which were encountered by practitioners, allowing them to make explicit how they felt and how they coped with these challenges. The study examined routes to headship and experiences of the early years of headship. These individual narratives of

this group's experiences were analysed and a range of emerging issues relating to their journey into headship were identified. These issues included:

- the contribution of role models;
- establishing themselves in post;
- their construction of themselves as head teachers;
- their perception of the post;
- their experience of the post and how they handled the complexities and the emotional intensity associated with it.

The issues were considered both within the policy context in which Scottish head teachers operate and in the context of the wider relevant literature on headship. The back-drop to the research was the influence of national policies and the impact of the performativity and accountability agenda on the role of head teacher. By explicitly discussing some of the early challenges facing new head teachers, and head teachers' coping strategies, this research will contribute to the discussion related to the concerns on how best to support aspiring and newly appointed head teachers. By a detailed consideration of early headship experiences, it may contribute to the discussion on recruitment and retention, in that if new head teachers are more prepared and supported in post others may be encouraged to apply.

1.2 Background

The report 'The Recruitment and Retention of Head teachers in Scotland' (MacBeath et al. 2009) was influential in shaping the areas I chose to explore in this study. In particular, it encouraged me to consider further the question as to what prompts teachers to seek to become head teachers and what keeps them in post. These areas are crucial when considering the international challenge in the recruitment and retention of heads (Pont et al. 2008). In exploring these areas, I wanted to consider further any possible mismatch between the perception of the role of head teacher by heads before and subsequently after appointment. These questions were considered in the context of my own experience, and that of a group of other secondary head teachers with the hope of generating data which could be used to address some of the concerns which at present seem to be discouraging people from applying for headship. These concerns have been identified by MacBeath et al. (2009: 48, 50) as the following:

- salary;
- current job satisfaction;
- being content in their current post/school;
- the high visibility of a headship role;
- the all-consuming nature of the job and
- the pressures of the job and coping strategies.

For non-aspiring depute heads, concerns relate to finance, personnel issues and work-life balance, as well as to increased distance from the classroom (MacBeath et al. 2009: 48-9). Their study extracted data from interviews and questionnaires. This current study has a deeper, biographical focus, considering the lived experiences of a small group of head teachers. Thus it makes a specific contribution to the research in this area by providing an in-depth analysis of the early experience of headship, which may help to address some of the current disincentives to headship. In using data generated from the lived experience of head teachers, and thus using biographical data, I intended to contribute to Gronn's (1996) call for:

... more and better leader-watching or on-looking, longitudinal, naturalistic and biographical investigations, particularly the latter, to better enrich knowledge of where leadership comes from and to ascertain what leading and following look like when scrutinized in any depth (Gronn 1996: 163).

My research focused on the Scottish context and experience, and so it has built on the research of MacBeath et al. (2009), by considering the individual experiences of a group of Scottish head teachers in some detail (with an emphasis on their early experiences in post). The report by MacBeath et al. (2009) indicated that:

Without a body of systematic evidence as to incentives and disincentives to assuming headship and as to satisfiers and dissatisfiers of those in post, it is difficult for the Scottish Government, local authorities or schools themselves to address what is perceived by media and professional associations to be a growing recruitment problem (2009: 9).

MacBeath et al. (2009: 9) cite the 'Improving School Leadership – OECD Background Report: Scotland' (SEED 2007: 84) and amongst some of the factors identified as inhibiting applications for headship, there are two which relate directly to this research.

Firstly, they indicate, the feeling that training and support do not balance with the experience of headship, and secondly, a need for greater articulation of ‘the leadership agenda’ and what is actually expected of head teachers. Drawing on a large body of research evidence, the authors identify nine factors, which seem to make headship an unattractive prospect. These factors are as follows: intensification of stress and time factors; unrelenting change; increasing pressures from a variety of sources; attrition in dropping out of qualifications such as the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH); the choice to be career deputies; the selection process; the unrelenting and demanding nature of the job, pressure from supra-national bodies, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to raise standards and the mismatch between expectations and experience of the post of head teacher (2009: 11). These dissatisfiers link closely to the two issues cited from the OECD (2007) Background Report on the Scottish context as well as to the question raised by MacBeath et al. (2009) as to what head teachers think about their role. An element in my study explored the extent to which training and support were important to the head teachers interviewed, and perhaps more importantly, how the head teachers coped with the unattractive aspects of headship, given that their work is described as ‘greedy work’ as it is time consuming and unrelenting in its demands (Gronn 2003: 146).

In exploring the experience of headship, it was also important to take into consideration the wider policy context, as this is the foundation on which the experience of headship is built as it sets the agenda within which individual heads must operate. I therefore considered the impact key policy documents from Her Majesty’s Inspectors (HMIe) and the Scottish Government may have had on the development of experiences of headship and whether or not these policies privileged any particular leadership practice, thus defining what constitutes an effective head teacher.

1.3 Professional context and significance

As a school leader, seeking both to build leadership capacity in the next generation of head teachers and to encourage them to rise to the challenge of headship, it is concerning that those who are not head teachers perceive so many disincentives to the post and are therefore choosing not to apply and remain instead as career deputies (MacBeath et al. 2009: 11). Some urgency is required in finding a solution to this situation, given the fact that ‘the principal workforce is ageing and large numbers of school leaders will retire over

the next five to ten years' (Pont et al. 2008: 29). As a serving head teacher, I am intrigued by the apparent reluctance of other teachers, particularly existing depute head teachers, to assume the role of head teacher. In discussing headship, I frequently encounter people who say they could never do my job. In probing further, this decision appears to relate to what they perceive existing heads to be doing or what they hear them saying. Thus it is possible that individuals are being dissuaded from headship by what they think the job is about, rather than how it is experienced by serving heads. Many head teachers, myself included, would say that this is the most fulfilling post we have ever held, but this does not seem to be what we portray to others. I therefore share MacBeath et al.'s (2009) concern that the perception of the role by others may be different to the actual experience, both my own experience and that of the group of fellow head teachers interviewed in this study. I therefore agree with Gibbs (2008), that there is a need for school leaders to talk up their job.

In the conversations I have had with prospective head teachers, they are generally interested in my personal experience of the job, and my 'story'. This 'human interest' relates to the narrative of my experience. Stories of headship could be of interest to those who are not yet head teachers but would consider it as a future possibility. Exploration of the stories generated in this research has provided additional qualitative data to complement the data generated by MacBeath et al.'s (2009) research. As a serving head teacher, I am conscious that this narrative of headship does not begin on being appointed to a post. Rather, the appointment is but a step on the journey to actually 'becoming' a head teacher; it is a point of departure rather than arrival. Fidler and Atton (2004: 159) contend that the 'moment of conception for a head is when the decision is taken to apply for headship'. I would suggest, following Gronn (1999), that the conception of a head teacher begins in the formation stages from birth, and includes all experiences and influences, which shape character development and personal values. 'Becoming' a head teacher encapsulates the sense of being a head teacher. This is more than a question of identity or an individual being defined by their job title. In my experience, being a head teacher is not just about a role or a position. Headship is all consuming, not simply in terms of the workload or the tasks and responsibilities associated with the post, but in terms of my 'person'- the intertwining of the role and who I am as an individual. I am the head teacher of the school I lead, but my personality, vision and values are different to those of the head teacher in a neighbouring school. Earley and Jones (2010: 92) note that in England one of

the categories encompassing the competencies for headship is entitled ‘being’. This includes self-awareness, resilience, emotional maturity, integrity and personal drive. Because of individual difference in these and other areas, no two head teachers will live out their headship in the same way, even though both are likely to have been appointed after a broadly similar selection process built on a competence based framework encompassing the ‘Standard for Headship’ (SFH) (Scottish Executive 2005). The fact that there are individual differences in head teachers contributed to my decision to focus on early headship experience and the consideration of commonality of experience, particularly in the early days in post, despite such differences.

On assuming the role of head teacher, an individual takes on board the public expectations and responsibilities which come with the post. A head teacher is a figurehead and has a responsibility to fulfil the expectations of the post, including the professional standards of behaviour the public expect of people in such positions. Indeed the General Teaching Council, Scotland’s (GTCS) ‘Code of Professionalism and Conduct’ states that teachers must ‘uphold standards of personal and professional conduct, honesty and integrity so that the public have confidence in you as a teacher and in teaching as a profession’ (GTCS 2012: 6). These expectations are arguably greater at head teacher level, where an individual assumes the responsibility to ensure that these standards are upheld in the school they lead. Within ‘The Standards for Leadership and Management’ (GTCS 2012: 7) trust and respect, as well as integrity are amongst the professional values described as being at the core of being a teacher and school leader. In delivering these expectations and responsibilities, each head teacher brings individual strengths, weaknesses, interests and experiences to her headship. These characteristics have grown and developed through each individual’s particular journey and life experience. Head teachers in this research were therefore asked how their journeys to headship influenced their subsequent experience of headship and whether or not this was a developmental journey, which began prior to appointment and how this development continued into the early experience of headship. They were asked to consider if there was any similarity between their perception of the role before taking up post, and their subsequent experience of that role. Within this framework I considered the impact head teachers’ early experiences in post had on how their headship subsequently played out. This involved a consideration of any significant defining moments such as any specific situations which may have necessitated particular action and on which staff within the school could have made a judgment about the

individual as head teacher and how this may have shaped the subsequent leadership approaches and personnel management of the heads. These may or may not have been situations that could be defined as crises. The crucial factor was that for the head teacher they were significant.

In exploring these areas, I used my own experience and that of the other head teachers to provide narratives of the lived experience of headship. I used the stories of a group of six female head teachers, at different stages of their career. Their experiences encapsulated a rich mine of data, which I used alongside my own personal experience, to explore the significance of key experiences in the early years of headship and how these could be used to address some of the issues which may be discouraging others from making the transition to headship. From this exploration of the developmental journey of existing head teachers, with an emphasis on their early days in post, in the final chapter I will discuss implications for future head teacher development, which will address some of the challenges of headship. Very importantly, if the early days in post are significant in shaping how an individual's headship plays out, then this research will have future implications for the support of new head teachers and may subsequently impact on issues of retention and recruitment.

1.4 Policy context²

It is important to consider the experience of headship in the context of the policies within which head teachers operate, since the extent to which head teachers implement these policies influences how effective they are judged to be in carrying out their role. An overview of the policy background and the current policy context is therefore important to this study as these policies could also influence individual head teachers' conception and construction of their role and consequently impact on their experience of headship. Primarily these policies are at a national and international level. They also sit within an historical context, and for head teachers carrying out their role in the twenty-first century, the impact of ten years of Conservative policies during the 1980s and 1990s, together with New Public Management³ has allowed a culture of performativity to become an accepted norm within Scottish education:

² This section draws from my studies in module 2 of the EdD programme, Educational Policy.

³ New Public Management describes the policies devised to modernise the public sector, with an emphasis on making them more efficient. It is generally characterized by accountability, measurement of performance and competition (Ball 2008).

...the functions of the state in the West have been restructured in the face of a new political orthodoxy requiring public services to become efficient and effective by adopting the practices and approaches used in the private sector (Reeves et al. 2006: 18).

Although this emphasis on performance and accountability is generally attributed to the Thatcher regime, Ball (2008: 73) states that James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech of 1976, criticising teachers, head teachers, unsatisfactory standards and educational inefficiency, paved the way for the performativity agenda. Taken together with the Black Papers (Amis: 1969), teachers and schools were clearly under attack. The stage was set and the Ruskin speech 'opened up a set of policy agendas that were vigorously pursued by the Conservative governments of 1979-97' (Ball 2008: 74). This neo-liberal approach emphasised the importance of market forces and individualism; inefficiencies caused by bureaucracy had to be remedied and this would be done through the adoption of business models within education. Self-evaluation, development planning and benchmarking soon found their way into the lexicon of educational policy, and continue there to the present day, setting the context in which the head teachers in this research operate. That this would transfer to policy documents in Scottish education was inevitable. In the foreword to 'Effective Secondary Schools' (HMI: 1988), the then Chief Inspector of Scottish Secondary Schools stated that the 'importance of good management and of achieving value for money in education was recognised in the establishment early in 1985 of the Management of Educational Resources Unit (MERU) within HM Inspectorate'. This document further identified three additional factors responsible for increasing the emphasis on monitoring the quality of education: public accountability, securing value for money and improving the quality of learning and teaching. It is perhaps unsurprising in the context of the 1980s that learning and teaching comes last.

The performativity agenda evolved in the 1990s with 'Taking a Closer Look at Quality in Schools' (HMI 1999) which attempted to link the performance indicators used by inspectors at that time, to the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) system, used by many local authorities to evaluate aspects of Best Value. This placed an emphasis on performance indicators, quality assurance, evaluation and development planning. It is interesting to note that the language used to secure improvement is strongly managerial, with little emphasis on vision or leadership:

There are three core elements in the approach to assuring and improving quality in schools: school development planning, school self-evaluation using national performance indicators, and staff development and review (HMI 1999: section 1).

The main ramification of these influences was the creation of ‘market forces’ (Reeves et al. 2006: 18) within the public sector. One of the key consequences of this for schools was the emphasis placed on standards, attainment and accountability, which continues to the present day, albeit that Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive 2004) recognises the importance of wider achievement, as do current school inspections. The publication of examination results and the freedom for parents to make placing requests to schools has created a market, where schools compete for pupils via their results. Gerwitz and Ball (2000: 253) refer to this as the ‘marketisation of educational provision’. Head teachers thus operate within a highly competitive context and it is in such a context that the head teachers in this research have gained their leadership experience.

Within ‘Effective Secondary Schools’, whilst considerable emphasis is placed on management tasks, effectiveness is equated with self-evaluation and accountability. The document concludes perhaps prophetically:

In any future external judgment of the effectiveness of a school, one consideration will undoubtedly be whether it has effective mechanisms for evaluating its own performance on a continuing basis (HMI 1988: 38).

In the new model of inspection, a school’s ability to self-evaluate is at the heart of the current inspection process. It is therefore unsurprising that this function figures prominently in the current principles of inspection, where HMIe state ‘Our approaches to inspection and review have increasingly focused on the ability of an establishment or service to evaluate itself, which is referred to as “self-evaluation” ’ (HMIe 2011: 5).

Tony Blair’s election as British Prime Minister in 1997 saw no shift in focus in terms of this emphasis; indeed he referred to some of the Conservative reforms as ‘necessary acts of modernisation’ (Blair 1999: 5), so it is not surprising that the standards and accountability agenda continued to evolve. If anything, the focus on self-evaluation has intensified with the Scottish Government’s publication of the National Performance Framework (NPF) in 2007, which was the government’s approach to monitoring how public services were performing. School performance was specifically mentioned: NPF indicator 11 looked to

‘increase the number of schools receiving positive inspection reports’. Others referred to improving school leaver destinations, the number of Scottish graduates, and literacy and numeracy (Scottish Government, Scottish Budget Spending Review 2007). In response, HMIe quickly stated ‘The NPF indicators will be included in the new models of inspections which will be introduced from September 2008’ (HMIe 2008: 1). By 2011 their ‘Principles of Inspection’ stated:

The principles have been developed in the context of Scottish Government policy on scrutiny improvement and in line with the UK Cabinet Office principles for inspection bodies and for better regulation (HMIe 2011: 1).

When David Cameron was elected as Prime Minister, with a government formed through coalition between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, there was no cessation of the performativity agenda. The Schools’ White Paper continued the emphasis on standards and accountability: ‘So we propose to re-focus Ofsted inspections on their original purpose – teaching and learning – and strengthen the performance measures we use to hold schools accountable’ (Department of Education 2010: 4). In 2012 he stated ‘I don’t want the word “satisfactory” to exist in our education system. Just “good enough” is frankly not good enough’ (Coughlan 2012). Notwithstanding a separate educational system, governed and administered through the Scottish Government, the same trend is evident in Scotland and there is no doubting the reality that the accountability agenda remains both a major driver in Scottish education and a major challenge to which head teachers must respond.

An additional factor underpinning the accountability agenda, and influencing the policy context in which head teachers work, relates to economic competitiveness. In the current climate, where knowledge is the new capital (Druker 1966), knowledge and education are business products; intellectual products are assets, and consequently the leadership of education is of utmost importance since education is tied to economic success. This is particularly crucial in the present stage of economic development where ‘information and knowledge are replacing capital and energy as the primary wealth-creating assets’ (Ball 2008: 19). Information and knowledge (as economic assets) are clearly allied to the human capital theory developed by Shultz (1961) and Becker (1964) and cited by Peters (2002: 72) as one of the most significant influences on educational policy in the last thirty years. In ‘Improving Scottish Education 2005-2008, Her Majesty’s then Chief Inspector, Graham Donaldson, stated:

Scotland's future economic prosperity requires an education system within which the population as a whole will develop the kind of knowledge, skills and attributes which will equip them personally, socially and economically to thrive in the 21st century. It also demands standards of attainment and achievement, which match these needs and strengthen Scotland's position internationally (HMIE 2009: section 1).

Given the importance, then, of success in education as a key contributor to economic competitiveness, the emphasis on attainment, accountability and performance management is perhaps understandable, but this undoubtedly further increases the responsibility and accountability of head teachers.

An additional important influence on the context in which head teachers work, emanates from groups such as the OECD, which as a think tank exerts considerable policy influence on the context within which head teachers operate. The OECD plays a key advisory role to policy makers at the highest level internationally, using its research work and 'supranational information management' to do so (Ball 2008: 34). This comparative analysis, covering many areas, promotes competition between countries and Ball (2008) goes on to cite the contention of Henry et al. (2001) that it reinforces performativity and neo-liberal thinking. Indeed, since 2003, the OECD has published results from its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), creating further market forces at an international level as countries compete; whoever 'tops the table' immediately becomes a focus of interest for policy makers throughout Europe, as has been the case for Finland in recent times.

In examining the managerial context in which head teachers now operate, Gerwitz and Ball (2000) provide an interesting heuristic to conceptualise the shift in emphasis from 'Welfarism' to 'New Managerialism' (2000: 254). They recognise that within this construction, ideal type discourses are identified, where the 'welfarist' head teacher is broadly learner centered, collegiate and fair whilst the 'new managerialist' approach emphasises the instrumental purposes of schooling such as performance and standards as measured by hard indicators, for example, examination results. In examining the list of characteristics the authors assign to each type of head teacher, however, their heuristic (whilst useful) is perhaps now over simplistic and over a decade later, is in need of updating. We are moving to an era of 'Managerialist Welfarism' where the need to raise standards is partnered with an emphasis on values such as social justice and the need for

collegiality. Such ‘Managerialist Welfarism’ is arguably reflected in Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive 2004) where the emphasis on the four capacities, which young people will develop (successful learners, effective contributors, responsible citizens and confident individuals) underpins the curriculum. The expectation that standards will be improved continues, but within the curriculum there is scope to recognise wider achievement and greater flexibility for individual schools to shape the curriculum to best meet the needs of their young people. Arguably, the four capacities are those necessary for individuals to be successful in society, but particularly so in the twenty first century. It is interesting to note that the role of society and an individual’s contribution to it has been given prominence, in accordance with the values of the Third Way⁴.

A key document which has influenced views on school leadership in Scotland to date is ‘Leadership for Learning: The challenges of leading in a time of change’ written by Her Majesty’s Inspectors (HMIe: 2007a). This publication followed ‘Improving Scottish Education’ (HMIe: 2006a), which evaluated the quality of leadership across all school sectors. More than 85% of leadership was classed as good or very good in inspection reports and consequently, 15% was weak or unsatisfactory. The policy is an attempt to redress this weakness by highlighting aspects of successful leadership, although by no means providing a clear conceptual framework of leadership. ‘Leadership for Learning’ is derived from HMIe inspection findings and previous publications such as ‘How Good Is Our School’ (HMIe 2007b) (HGIOS) and the ‘Journey to Excellence’ (HMIe 2006a). It thus illustrates aspects of good practice rather than giving a summary of current theories of leadership. School leaders are leading the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence (2004) and many of the practices described in ‘Leadership for Learning’ (HMIe 2007) are intended to assist in this process, particularly the emphasis on distributive leadership. The implementation of this curriculum is a considerable factor constituting the ‘time of change’ referred to in the document’s title, impacting on the context in which head teachers operate and again reflecting the political agenda.

‘Leadership for Learning’ sets its context explicitly within globalisation stating that one of the main influences resulting in the renewed focus on leadership is ‘the impact of globalisation and the challenges of up-skilling those in work to prosper in increasingly

⁴ The Third Way Values are equality, protection of the vulnerable, freedom as autonomy, no rights without responsibilities, no authority without democracy, cosmopolitan pluralism and philosophic conservatism.

competitive markets' (HMIe 2007: 16). This demonstrates the contention that education policy has been 'dominated by the perspective of economics' (Ball 2008: 11) and clearly situates 'Leadership for Learning' within the knowledge economy and human capital theory. However, another set of seven additional influences driving change is also outlined within the document, including social justice, inclusion and equality as well as accountability and performance. There is also considerable emphasis on services working together 'across educational boundaries' (HMIe 2007a: 16) to address these issues. Together, these influences constitute the considerable change which has had to be addressed by school leaders. It is interesting to note that these priorities clearly echo the Third Way values listed by Giddens (2008: 66) and serve again to highlight the reflection of key political priorities in education policy. They also help illustrate 'Managerial Welfarism' in attempting to reconcile social justice and aspects of performance management. These wide ranging influences further contribute to the challenging landscape within which head teachers operate, particularly when so many major issues have to be addressed whilst simultaneously continuing to focus on accountability and performance.

HMIe outline that their approach to leadership is cross-sectoral, asserting that 'the principles of effective leadership are common to all sectors' although the contexts may differ (HMIe 2007a: 2). They draw on evidence from inspections of pre-five establishments, schools and community learning and development, using the appropriate suite of quality indicators (QIs) relating to leadership (HMIe 2007b: 46-49)⁵ which they claim to exemplify in the report. Thus, the document is established from evidence based on inspections which will have measured schools, or other establishments, against the leadership section of 'How Good is Our School' (HMIe 2007b). Observed good practice has subsequently been written up as exemplification of what HMIe expect to see as effective leadership when evaluating establishments against the leadership QIs. It is thus descriptive rather than theoretical or conceptual. Weir (2006: 153) claims that this method of publishing a document based on the findings of inspections, results in solutions to challenges which are 'technicist or managerialist' in approach. Indeed, there is some evidence of this within the policy, for example 'Change is complex but often small, cumulative technical changes can have a profound effect on the culture of an

⁵ The leadership QIs relate to Vision, Values and Aims, Leadership and Direction, Developing People and Partnerships and Leadership for Improvement and Change.

establishment' (HMIe 2007a: 7). 'Leadership for Learning' (HMIe 2007a) is a policy whose formulation has clearly been shaped by the political and economic context of the last thirty years. It manifests elements of neo-liberal accountability and performativity whilst recognising the values, and using the rhetoric, of the Third Way. It stresses the importance of globalisation and the need for young people to be equipped with the skills required of them in the knowledge economy. It outlines the role of leadership in creating the conditions in which these skills can be developed. An analysis of the discourse reveals considerable emphasis on current theories of leadership relating to managing change, creating an appropriate climate and distributing leadership. However, tensions and contradictions arise between the construction of models of distributed leadership which are presented and the accountability agenda, with its continued emphasis on the measurement of performance, which sits within the hierarchical structure of schools where accountability ultimately lies with the formal leader, that is, the head teacher. This ultimate accountability is perhaps one of the greatest challenges of headship.

Fullan (2003b) contends that performativity, with a focus simply on results, as measured by exam success, severely curtails the role of head teachers because it does not recognise the crucial role of the leader in mobilizing the 'deep cultural change' (Fullan 2003b: 41) that inspires others to close the attainment gap. This is recognised in 'Leadership for Learning' and the 'Standard for Headship' (Scottish Executive 2005) and the Revised Standard for Leadership and Management (GTCs 2012: 4) as the ability to articulate a strategic vision, which commands 'ownership' and a 'collective drive,' (HMIe 2007a: 33). In plain terms, 'Leadership for Learning' somewhat simplistically translates this into the ability of staff to describe what they have done on the improvement journey and what will be different in the future. Staff who can do this have grasped 'the big picture' and have exhibited a 'shared sense of purpose' (HMIe 2007a: 33). The role of the head teacher in achieving this is pivotal and the demands associated with achieving that deep change proposed by Fullan are great. Thus the policy context provides a challenging backdrop against which head teachers carry out a complex role and attempt to address a plethora of issues and priorities arising at times from the political rather than an educational agenda. This is particularly so with the demand for improvement in attainment while addressing the learning needs of all which in turn is set against an economic demand for high cognitive and technical skills. Negotiating their way through such demands is crucial for all head

teachers, hence part of the focus in this research is on the coping strategies of heads, particularly in their early days in post.

Having outlined the policy context within which head teachers operate as one of the levers impacting on early headship experience it was also important to consider what other levers may have had an influence and these emerged from the focused literature review.

Chapter 2 Focused literature review

Since this study was about the lived experiences of head teachers, particularly in their early days in post, a very focused review of selected literature was undertaken. This was a deliberate choice as the study was not about particular styles of leadership or strategies to manage change but rather it focused on that lived experience, which included preparation for the post of head teacher and assuming and undertaking the role, that is, it had an experiential focus.

2.1 Head teacher socialisation and early headship experiences

The literature indicates that there are many factors impacting on the early socialisation of head teachers. These include professional identity (Benaim and Humphreys 1997; Restine 1997; Fidler and Atton 2004; Rhodes 2012; Thomson 2009), conception of the role (Brown-Ferringo 2003; Crow and Glascock 1995; Earley and Weindling 2007; Kelly and Saunders 2010), experience (Draper and McMichael 2000; Earley 2009), preparation programmes (Bush and Glover 2005; Bush et al. 2006; Cowie and Crawford 2007; Cowie and Crawford 2008; Cowie and Crawford 2009; Crawford and Cowie 2011; Crow 2006; Holligan et al. 2006; MacBeath 2011; Menter et al. 2005; Reeves et al. 2005; Rhodes et al. 2009), personal attributes and resilience (Reeves et al. 1997) and the handling of early critical incidents (Briggs et al. 2006; Crow 2007; Murphy 2007; Quong 2006; Walker and Qian 2006; Weindling and Dimmock 2006). Whilst these factors may be considered separately, the complexity of the socialisation process of head teachers is perhaps due to the simultaneous interaction of these factors, rather than the individual factors considered in isolation. In this research I have explored these interactions and have identified some key concepts which could inform headship preparation programmes. These concepts relate to the interaction of professional and organisational socialisation. This includes a response to an early critical incident, which subsequently impacts on the emerging professional identity of the novice head teacher. Clarity of role conception is vital in such situations. In handling this early crisis situation the emotional intensity of headship is often evident as is the importance of emotional leadership. Examining these interactions required a conceptual framework and this chapter explores the key elements of that framework.

The factors impacting on early headship experiences can be broadly categorised into three areas:

1. head teacher socialisation;
2. emotional labour of headship;
3. current constructions of headship, including metaphors of leadership.

This review of literature focuses on these areas, and not the wider literature relating to theories of leadership, since these areas are pertinent to the early stages of headship. The policy context outlined in chapter one, particularly the performativity agenda, must be also be borne in mind as it is the background against which head teachers must perform their role.

Headship is a complex process and added to this is the impact of the specific conditions of the educational establishment in which the individual headship is being undertaken. Therefore, any conceptual framework must take cognisance of the impact of the policy drivers operating in a given society at a particular time, as well as the specific circumstances within each establishment which impact on head teachers. This is especially true when head teachers are expected to carry out a challenging role in the context of particular social, political and economic trends, over which they have no control, as discussed in chapter one. Furthermore, they do this in a climate of performativity and increasing accountability, where the challenges of society are to be addressed within schools. This is summed up by Hess (2003) cited by Walker & Quian (2006: 298), who states that head teachers are expected to:

... leverage accountability and revolutionary technology, devise performance-based evaluation systems, reengineer out-dated management structures, recruit and cultivate non-traditional staff, drive decisions with data, build professional cultures and ensure that every child is served (Hess 2003 in Walker & Quian 2006: 298).

It is in this context that Stevenson (2006) attempts to develop a conceptual framework for career trajectories of head teachers, constructed around three areas:

1. Individual career trajectories, based on an individual's past, present and future roles considered within an objective social context such as that outlined above. This is

made more complex by the subjective role of individual agency. Therefore, career trajectories develop from an interaction of the objective and the subjective; all individuals do not respond to the same circumstances in the same way, (Ball & Goodson 1985, cited by Stevenson 2006: 414).

2. Personal socialisation processes, which include professional socialisation, built on all school experience to date. As well as this, there is a degree of role socialisation, or learning about the role of head teacher, through headship preparation programmes such as the SQH and working with existing head teachers as a member of a school leadership team.
3. Developing professional identities, which includes both of the above as well as aspects of organisational socialisation gained whilst executing a particular role in a specific context, up to and including the role of head teacher.

These three broad areas provide the basis of a structure within which the early socialisation of head teachers may be considered. I have focused in particular on the interface of professional socialisation and the development of professional identity, especially in the reaction to specific ‘crisis’ situations in the early days of headship. This is because there has been little investigation into this key area of head teacher development or to the turbulent time of early headship. However, I have also considered individual career trajectories on the journey to headship. The complexity of the conceptual framework of career trajectories, socialisation and identity, lies in the interaction of these areas and to individual responses to the varying factors which influence them, particularly individual differences relating to specific school contexts as well as to the different personalities of head teachers. These areas all interact within the policy context.

The development of professional identity merits serious consideration because it is a key aspect of being a head teacher and because it is closely linked to self-image and self-belief or to how successful head teachers see themselves as being. There has been no significant investigation into how this identity is developed, although the impact of head teacher preparation programmes has been considered (Bush, et.al; 2006; Cowie and Crawford 2007; Menter et al. 2005; Cowie and Crawford 2009). Those aspiring to the post of head teacher have successfully risen through the ranks from classroom teacher; in Scottish

secondary schools this will usually include time as principal teacher and depute head teacher. For some, posts of assistant principal teacher and assistant head teacher may also be relevant.⁶ In Scotland, some may also have undertaken head teacher preparation programmes such as the SQH. Around 96% of respondents to a recent survey found the SQH to be very effective or effective in preparing them for their first head teacher post (Donaldson 2011: 79). Such development programmes seem to play an important role in forming professional identity, as well as in the socialisation process, particularly in creating a clear conception of the role of head teacher. This clarity is important because as Crow and Glascock (1995) contend:

...the meaning administrators attach to their actions differs between those who are effective and ineffective. Effective administrators have a broader vision of their actions and tasks, which include values and beliefs that prioritise tasks, a determination of the ultimate purpose of their role, and an understanding of how they fit into school reform (p23).

Clarity of role conception, therefore, seems to be an important prerequisite to the development of a strong professional identity and to a successful headship. This is reflected in Scottish approaches to head teacher preparation programmes and is an area given priority within the SQH. In the opening section of the Standard for Headship (2005) the role of head teacher is clearly defined for aspiring heads:

The head teacher acts as the leading professional in a school and as an officer of the local authority. He/she provides appropriate vision, leadership and direction to ensure high standards of education for all the children and young people in their care so that they can become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. To achieve this, the head teacher works with and is accountable to others to ensure that the school is organised and managed to meet its aims and targets, and is a creative, disciplined learning environment (Scottish Executive 2005: 2).

The Standard for Headship has since been updated. However, the clarity of role remains. In the opening section of the 'The Professional Actions of Head Teachers' (GTCS 2012) the role is again clearly defined:

⁶ This would apply to individuals who had these posts prior to the McCrone Agreement, A Teaching Profession for the 21 Century, which set up new management structures in Scottish schools.

The Head Teacher acts as the leading professional in a school and as an officer of the local authority. The Head Teacher also plays a pivotal role within the broader children's services network.

Head Teachers lead the whole school in order to establish, sustain and enhance a positive ethos and culture of learning through which every learner is able to learn effectively and achieve their potential (GTCS 2012: 17).

Crow (1995) further argues that role conception is derived from social values, relationships with teachers, colleagues, the local authority and the community, all of which interact to create demands and expectations which may at times conflict. How the new head teacher deals with these components will impact on their experience of the role and on their construction of their professional identity.

As an individual moves to the post of head teacher in a new school, she⁶ moves into an extremely challenging situation where she usually has little or no currency in her 'emotional bank account' with staff on which she can draw (Covey 1992: 188). This is in addition to the fact that she is assuming a role where the expectation is that she is in charge and therefore knows everything about the school. Little recognition is taken of the fact that she may be in charge, but if appointed to a new school, she may well have no experience of the particular institution and this can result in organisational socialisation at its most testing, where the leader is the least experienced person in the school, in terms of her knowledge of that particular school. Although mentors and friends may offer advice, they are not living in the context of that specific school with its own particular characteristics, nor can they share the weight of responsibility for any decisions the head teacher makes. Thus, there is a degree of dissonance between the head teacher's perceived competence of herself in previous roles to the temporary 'incompetence' experienced in being a new head teacher. Fidler and Atton (2004) indicate that making discoveries, finding issues which require decisions, as well as managing the expectations of staff can result in feelings of inadequacy, where survival becomes the main priority (p153). There is an inherent complexity in the most senior post holder within the institution (head teacher) being inducted into a new school through the process of organisational socialisation, which I will discuss later.

⁶ I use the feminine personal pronoun throughout, as all of the head teachers in this study are female.

Much of the literature relating to the socialisation of head teachers examines early career experiences and influences (both reported at the time by new head teachers through journals or recalled for later interview), professional development or preparation for headship and the contemporaneous experience of ‘becoming’ a Head teacher (Barrett-Baxendale and Burton 2009; Weindling & Dimmock 2006; Cowie & Crawford 2008). Within these, a number of constructs of socialisation are evident.

Firstly, Weindling & Dimmock (2006) cite Merton’s (1963) socialisation theory, which includes, professional socialisation (learning what it is to be a head teacher prior to taking on the role) and organisational socialisation (learning how to perform the role in a specific context, which begins on appointment). They contend that ‘post-appointment processes, dominated by organisational socialisation, create the interactions that legitimate and validate a new school leader within a school, preparing the way for her or him to exert influence’ (2006: 334). Crow (2007: 52) indicates that these two forms of socialisation may generate conflict for the new head teacher as they frequently have conflicting values. It is in the legitimisation process, or conflict, that a key issue in discussing the interaction of the three areas of Stevenson’s (2006) framework (individual career trajectories, personal socialisation processes and developing professional identities) may be found. This potentially is the crucial stage if how a head teacher deals with critical incidents then shapes the outcome of a particular headship. Fidler and Atton (2004) refer to these as trigger points which

...test the ability of the head teacher to see beyond the presenting problem to potentially deeper issues and to respond appropriately. This response will shape future decisions and will have an important effect on other stakeholder’s attitudes to the head (Fidler and Atton 2004: 168).

Weindling & Dimmock (2006: 335) believe that in response to such incidents professional identity is formed, as the individual shapes her sense of herself as head teacher. This is a crucial stage in early headship and has implications for head teacher preparation.

Secondly, socialisation is similarly broken down by Rhodes et al. (2009), referring to US research by Browne-Ferrigno (2003), which outlines four elements in the transition to headship: role conceptualisation, initial socialisation, role-identity transformation and purposeful engagement. All of these factors sit comfortably with Stevenson’s (2006) development of professional identity and again highlight the importance of the interaction

of role conceptualisation, socialisation processes and the reconstruction of the head teacher's professional identity before she can actually move on to purposefully directing the establishment.

Thirdly, Kelly & Saunders (2008) recognise the complexity of head teacher development and use Duke's (1987) process of socialisation which has the following three aspects: professional socialisation (learning what it is to be a head teacher), organisational socialisation (learning the values and behaviour necessary to perform the role after appointment) and occupational identity (where head teachers feel confident and competent to gain control).

Thus there is broad agreement on most of the aspects of head teacher socialisation outlined by these authors. There is no doubt that this is a complex process, but there is a further question as to whether the success of headship depends on how the new head teacher's professional identity is formed and the extent to which it is influenced by the organisational socialisation which takes place and if there is any conflict between the two. To explore this question, it is helpful to consider what Weindling & Dimmock (2006) outline as a key element of organisational socialisation. This involves the head teacher attempting to take charge and bring about school improvement whilst at 'the same time the school is changing the school leader' Weindling & Dimmock (2006: 334). Indeed, the point where the head teacher influences the socialisation processes is crucial and it is possibly in this iterative process of the head being influenced by the organisation and vice versa that the key to successful headship lies. As new head teachers take up post and begin with an idea of what they want their school to be like, they then need to make sense of this when the school does not match their blue print and they must adjust their expectations accordingly, or affect change on the organisation to address the mismatch. Crow (2007) states that new head teachers socialise 'personnel to new values and approaches while simultaneously being socialised to the new values of headship' (Crow 2007: 56). This process may produce an early crisis situation if the individual head teacher is perceived to breach an aspect of the organisation's value system.

Weindling and Dimmock (2006: 338) further indicate that a key transition comes when the head teacher has to produce a tailor-made response to a particular situation and it is in this response that their professional identity as head teacher begins to be shaped. Fidler and

Atton (2008) refer to such transitions as ‘opinion-forming occasions... when the new head has to respond to a first major challenge. How it is dealt with will set the scene for success or failure in the future’ (Fidler and Atton 2008: 171). This is what I would refer to as an early critical incident. Such is the importance of these early days that Weindling and Dimmock (2006) state that, in terms of head teacher training: ‘More attention to the induction or taking-charge stage is needed, because it invariably is problematic and requires careful analysis and action *in situ*’ (Weindling and Dimmock 2006: 335). This relates to the work of Schön (1987) on reflection in action, which I will discuss in chapter six. Fidler and Atton also refer to Earley and Weindling’s (2007) stages of headship, and state that stage one (entry and encounter) is critical, as the new head teacher’s notions of headship meet the reality, something which Walker & Qian (2006) exemplify with the image of principals ‘balancing atop a greasy pole’ where they observe that the ‘rigors involved in the climb not only continue but actually accentuate during the first few years of principalship’ (Walker & Qian 2006: 297). Reeves et al. (1997) further refer to the ‘isolation and overload’ experienced in the early stages of headship. It should also be remembered, that in juggling the demands of their new post, the head teacher continues to be accountable for the performance of the school. During this period, Stevenson (2006) also indicates that the values of the head teacher may come into conflict with management imperatives coming from the local authority, for example. This potential conflict is another instance of an early crisis situation which may arise, the handling of which may subsequently impact on the development of a headteacher’s professional identity and to how her headship subsequently unfolds.

The contexts in which these early experiences of socialisation occur will vary. However, studies looking at early headship experience have identified certain common difficulties experienced during the first year in post, the major one being handling the legacy of a predecessor (Weindling & Dimmock 2006). Some of the problematic legacy issues identified include: difficulties caused by the style and practice of the previous head, the school buildings, communication and consultation with staff, creating a better public image of the school, coping with a weak member of the senior team, dealing with incompetent staff and low staff morale (Weindling & Dimmock 2006: 329). Lack of central support, a sense of isolation and the realisation that the buck stops with them, were also identified as concerns for head teachers (Walker & Qian 2006: 301). These authors also indicate that surviving these early experiences necessitates a range of strategies including seeking

feedback from stakeholders, clarifying and articulating values, building alliances and personal capacity, as well as picking appropriate battles to fight. This is further evidenced in the Scottish study where MacBeath et al. (2009: 20) concluded that new head teachers 'found their enthusiasm tempered by the complexity of responsibilities with which they were faced'. Thus it is evident that the early days of headship are possibly the most turbulent.

2.2 The emotional labour of headship

Onlookers may observe head teachers undertaking a variety of complex tasks and engaging in numerous interchanges involving countless individuals or groups, from the early hours of the morning until late into the evening. The tasks associated with headship can be delineated in job descriptions; the competences and standards required outlined in the SfH. What cannot be delineated, however, are the emotional demands made on head teachers on a day-to-day and cumulative basis. Such demands relate to the emotions spent in dealing with challenging situations within the school and its community, as well as handling emotions in themselves and others. These emotional demands contribute to the 'emotional labour' (Gronn 2003) of headship. This emotional labour may include, for example, the head teacher presenting an outward appearance that does not necessarily reflect what she is feeling on the inside, absorbing the emotions of others (quite often negative) and dealing with crisis management in stressful and often highly visible situations, often with media involvement. During such times, the head teacher is the figurehead and focus of attention as she embodies the hopes, dreams and aspirations of the school, as well as providing emotional leadership in crisis situations. How the head behaves or reacts will be mirrored in the cascading relationships within the school. When times are hard or traumatic, all eyes turn to the head for support, encouragement and guidance, at a time when she too is challenged as an individual. This may be particularly significant if such situations arise in the early stages of headship, which for most of the head teachers in this research was indeed the case. These emotional demands are significant, and possibly most intense in this stage of headship, when the individual is becoming established as a head teacher and dealing with several situations which they may have inherited from their predecessor.

In considering the emotional aspects of headship, I will focus on three main areas:

1. handling emotions in others;
2. handling emotions in self;
3. handling emotions in the context of the school (emotional leadership).

The first two have been popularised by Goleman (1996) and are now readily recognised as ‘competencies’ for those seeking leadership positions. Indeed, the Standard for Headship provides an illustration of what is expected of a head teacher:

...head teachers display self-awareness, confront difficult issues and deal positively with criticism, are assertive and calm in a crisis and defuse potential problems. They understand issues from the point of view of others including children and young people and value the views and feelings of others and take them into account. They demonstrate consistency and optimism, remain interested, committed, enthusiastic and well-informed, have a sense of humour and encourage creativity and participation (Scottish Executive 2005: 11).

More recently, this has been updated in the revised ‘Standard for Leadership and Management’ (GTCS: 2012), but the emphasis on emotional intelligence remains:

Leaders continually develop self-awareness; they regularly question their practice through processes of reflection and critical enquiry. They manage self and others effectively, with a commitment to collegiate practice...They display confidence and courage in the way they deal with criticism and conflict (GTCs 2012: 9).

2.2.1 Emotional leadership

Whilst these examples may be statements about leadership behaviour, what is not readily discussed is the more complex area of handling the emotional leadership of the school, and this will therefore be a focus of the literature review and the investigation. Emotional leadership (Gronn 2003: 134) of the school is the extent to which an individual head teacher shapes the emotional context of the school by the way she treats others and the extent to which her behaviour is congruent with her values and vision. Included in this is the sensitivity required in leading challenging schools, which may be handling ‘repetitive change injury’ (Harris 2007: 25), reflecting the volume of change and developments with which schools are currently dealing. This could be due to the impact of the turnover of

staff or being ‘shaken’ by the constant demands of the accountability agenda, or dealing with major curricular innovation such as Curriculum for Excellence (2004) in the Scottish context. Thus, headship is indeed ‘a complex synergy of emotion and leadership’ (Crawford 2009: 2) where the head is dealing with her own emotions, particularly in the early days in post, whilst managing the emotions of others and the wider ethos of the school.

Emotional leadership merits consideration particularly in relation to the policy context previously discussed in chapter one, where head teachers are managing a performativity and accountability agenda. Gronn (2003) refers to educational leadership as ‘greedy work’ (p246) requiring a great deal of time and personal commitment. In addition, considerable emotional intensity is attached to such a high stakes occupation, where the success or failure of a school equates to the success or failure of the individual head teacher; thus the individual head teacher becomes identified with ‘her’ school. It is perhaps unsurprising that this is a stressful occupation. Further challenges in emotional leadership for head teachers leading schools in the 21st century, are outlined by Day and Gu (2010: 25), who refer to the ‘new teaching environments’ within which staff are now working. They state that, internationally, reforms in schools have six features in common, which include being driven by governmental desire to raise standards and address the fragmentation of social values. They also indicate that these reforms inevitably increase teacher workload and are driven by deficit views of teachers and that, unsurprisingly, they take little account of any emotional impact on staff. It is left to head teachers to manage the emotional impact of this general trend within each school, whilst also managing the emotional demands of each unique local situation.

Dealing with legacy issues left by predecessors has already been highlighted earlier in this chapter as an issue for head teachers in their early days in post. More specifically, Harris (2007: 90) indicates the danger of new head teachers being ‘caught up in the web of historical power relations’ when competitors vie for supremacy in gaining the trust of the new head teacher. In the context of early socialisation, it is crucial that these potential conflicts are handled sensitively, both in terms of the individual head teacher’s own feelings and in recognising the feelings of the staff in the new school; there is only one opportunity to make a first impression and the new head teacher has to ensure that this is a positive one. Fidler and Atton (2004) stress how important this is:

In headship the first staff meeting and the first assembly are when staff and pupils form their initial opinions about the new head teacher. Having formed a first impression, they will then test this out, looking for evidence that it was right (2004: 164).

It is important, therefore, to create a positive first impression particularly in dealing with any conflicts that arise. In doing this, self-protection is important. Smith (2011), in her study of forty female secondary teachers, including ten head teachers, indicates that her participants placed considerable emphasis on positive relationships and had developed emotional self-protection skills. These included, for example, the ability to manage relationships for the benefit of the school, the ability to de-personalise negative experiences and the capacity to view unpopularity with detachment. These emotional self-protection skills are crucial for head teachers at any stage, but possibly more so during the intense period of organisational socialisation, where the new head teacher is coming to terms with their new context, their new role and their changing professional identity. A further emotional demand on head teachers is outlined by Crawford (2009), who elucidates Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour. In this construction 'head teachers may have to put on what they believe to be the appropriate emotion for a head teacher' (Crawford 2009: 21). There is considerable strain in attempting to portray emotions which may not be those actually experienced by the head teacher at the time. Head teachers require endurance and resilience to handle the emotional dissonance in these situations and present emotional coherence for the school (Crawford 2009: 84). This is not to suggest head teachers are being devious or deliberately misleading; rather it is recognising that as the formal leader of the school there are expected norms of behaviour which have to be adhered to, sometimes at some personal cost, when it may not be appropriate for the head teacher to display her own feelings. Gronn also refers to the emotional labour of headship, where feelings are commodified in the interests of the performance of a task or function (2003: 131). He cites a vivid image from James and Vince (2001) where head teachers 'carry invisible rucksacks on their backs into which various people around them deposit rocks' which are the burdens of others' emotions, behaviour or expectations. This unburdening usually takes little or no notice of the rocks the head teacher may already be carrying, whether of a personal or a professional nature. Harris (2007: 41), again citing Hochschild (1983), speaks of the 'hard emotional labour' of school leadership and stresses the importance of self-care. She argues:

Developing emotional fitness and literacy is not a one-off task- it is about creating a climate in which people feel safe enough to learn and grow in their capacity to value themselves and others, to relate effectively and to lead.... The primary skill involved is to be aware of self in the moment-by-moment experience of relating with another and to take full responsibility for one's own experience (Harris 2007: 42).

A number of authors highlight various aspects of emotional intelligence for head teachers, whether this is in terms of inter-personal skills (Smith 2011; Barret-Baxendale & Burton 2009; Weindling & Dimmock 2006;) or, very importantly, in an understanding of self:

Moulding a new professional identity as a head requires the formation of a new sense of status, image and self-worth in the role and in the career; it means establishing values, priorities and what one stands for – an “educational platform” (Weindling & Dimmock 2006: 338).

Constructing this new professional identity is crucial to a successful headship but it is possible that early experiences may undermine a new head teacher's sense of self-worth as she manages the many facets of organisational socialisation whilst simultaneously constructing her new professional identity. Thus, it is important that head teachers are resilient and have emotional self-protection skills. In analysing the journals of new head teachers, Cowie & Crawford (2008) indicate ‘The emotion of headship can also be viewed as a process that requires continuous conscious and unconscious management’ (Cowie & Crawford 2008: 682). They go on to state that maintaining a sense of perspective is critical in difficult situations. Harris (2007) contends that one way this can be achieved is by head teachers' awareness of their own personal and professional stories, and particularly an awareness of their vulnerabilities or emotional triggers. This is particularly true when handling negative emotions, where the ability of the head teacher ‘to respond to the negative emotions of staff... kick starts the process of re-culturing and creating a climate of trust’ (Harris 2007: 44). The head teacher, at this point, begins to set the emotional tone of the establishment and how she behaves at this time will inevitably be compared to their predecessor.

Flintham (2003a: 3), in a study of twenty-five existing head teachers, appositely summarises the key emotional aspects of the post:

The successful head teacher, through acting as the wellspring of values and vision for the school thus acts as the external ‘reservoir of hope’ for the institution. In the face of burgeoning demands for change, colleagues look to the head teacher for spiritual and moral leadership, to provide the necessary coherence and unity of vision and to maintain its underpinning integrity of values.

Spiritual and moral leadership are not necessarily about religion, but are instead concerned with ‘whatever gives the individual their foundations of ethical behavior and bases of belief’ (Flintham 2003a: 3); in other words, their fundamental values and motivation. It is perhaps the case that a strong inner motivation will relate to a strong ability to maintain perspective and to possessing resilience in general. Flintham (2003a; 2003b) touches on the latter when he states that head teachers also need to sustain an internal reservoir for themselves, which they have to refill. Ethical behavior and sustaining this internal reservoir will perhaps be supported by authenticity where the head teacher operates in an open and transparent way, sharing not only facts and figures but also her reasons, judgments and intentions for decisions (Harris 2007: 100). However, this is further complicated in those situations where head teachers must mask their true feelings for the benefit of the school.

A number of characteristics relating to the affective domain have been identified as being important in successful school leadership (Day et al. 2010). The findings of the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) suggest that ‘schools that are person-centred, and where the functional is for the sake of and expressive of the personal are both morally and instrumentally successful’ (Day and Leithwood 2007 cited by Day and Gu 2010: 146). This follows Fielding’s (2006) thesis cited by Day and Gu (2010: 146) that the functional (organisational productivity) should support the personal (enriching the human experience) and perhaps echoes the ‘Welfarist’ and ‘New Managerial’ dichotomy outlined by Gerwitz and Ball (2000) discussed in chapter one. It is therefore important that both the functional and the personal work together; a focus on the personal without an emphasis on the functional could lead to organisational dysfunction. ISSPP concluded that successful head teachers could apply combinations of the personal and the functional⁷, with different emphasis, according to the situation, for example, ‘building person-centred communities which are functionally successful’ (Day and

⁷ The authors enumerate the following: Sustaining passionate commitment and personal accountability. Managing tensions and dilemmas and maintaining moral purposes. Being other-centred and learning focused. Making emotional and rational investments. Emphasizing the personal and the functional.

Leithwood 2007: 17 cited by Day and Gu 2010: 148). Day et al. (2010: 8) build on this earlier research, asserting that the sensitivity with which leadership practices are applied to the context is crucial to success. Perhaps the key to successful emotional leadership lies in the ability of the head teacher to read the situation and to know which combination and emphasis to apply, supporting my earlier contention in chapter one that ‘Managerialist Welfarism’ may be the context of present day headship.

2.3 Gender and leadership

Although the starting point for this research was not gender but early experiences in the journey to headship, having completed my analysis of the head teacher interviews I became aware that there were common responses from the head teachers taking part in this research which were possibly linked to gender. I thus became interested in exploring the use of a gender lens to consider headship ‘from the standpoint of being female’ (Gosetti and Rusch 1995, cited by Coleman 2002: 10). This would allow me to interrogate the data and explore ways in which gender may have impacted on my experience and the experience of the head teachers in this study. I therefore gave some consideration to the literature relating to gender and leadership. Coleman (1996) in particular provides what is now a useful historical context of gender related issues for female head teachers. She discusses the male orthodoxy of leadership where ‘women are generally less likely than men to be head teachers of secondary schools and where the expectation is that the leader will be male’ (Coleman 2003: 6). Coleman, returning to earlier research carried out in the 1990s found, fourteen years later ‘Women remain less likely to plan careers that include senior roles, and still appear to have less confidence in applying for promotion than their male colleagues’ (Coleman 2007: 387). Ozga notes the ‘circuitous’ routes many women take to educational leadership (Ozga 1993: 1). Coleman (2007) highlights the fact that women are less likely to plan their careers, whereas men tend to have early thoughts about senior leadership. Ozga (1993) indicates that women put themselves forward for promotion less frequently than men. Young and McLeod (2001) found that the school leaders in their study had not planned to be in that position but had ‘evolved into it’ (2001: 485). This was similar to the experiences of the head teachers in this research and perhaps reflects the ‘typical’ female trajectory of looking to the next stage, rather than to the ultimate leadership position and therefore reflects an apparent lack of career planning

(Coleman 2002: 30; Coleman 2007: 387; McLay 2008; Ozga 1993; Young and McLeod 2001).

Research relating to emotional intelligence and leadership now places importance on the role of the affective domain. As Day states, leadership requires ‘an intelligent head and an intelligent heart’ (Day 2000: 123), thus challenging the stereotypical view which assumed a secondary head had to be a strong male (usually for discipline reasons), by recognising the importance of interpersonal skills. In general terms, females are sometimes considered more collaborative in their working approaches. An essentialist feminist view, for example, would contend that females function in more collaborative ways to males, with an emphasis on nurturing approaches (Coleman, 2002: 9). Whilst not wishing to polarise or stereotype the approaches of males and females, feminine/masculine descriptors of behaviours may provide a useful shorthand for discussing particular leadership behaviours.

Historically and currently, men have dominated leadership roles in education and consequently masculine models of leadership have been accepted as the norm. In terms of management style, Gray’s (1987) gender paradigms, cited by Coleman (1996: 165) describe the masculine paradigm as follows: highly-regulated, conformist, normative, competitive, evaluative, disciplined, objective, formal; basically traits associated with male leadership stereotypes. This is in contrast to the nurturing/feminine paradigm, which is described as: caring, creative, intuitive, aware of individual difference, non-competitive, tolerant, subjective, informal. In historical terms, it may have been useful to delineate traits in this way to show that there was an alternative approach to the masculine model of leadership, involving what were regarded as more feminine traits which could be effective in leadership positions. A polarised view is not necessarily helpful as individuals are likely to exhibit a blend of approaches from both paradigms (Coleman 1996). Such a polarisation may also give rise to claims of superiority for one approach or gender. Indeed, Coleman (1996: 165, citing Bem 1974) indicates that the most effective leaders are androgynous, drawing on descriptors from both masculine and feminine characteristics. This is evidenced in Coleman’s 1996 research, where the female head teachers were presented with characteristics without gender labels. They identified not only with the feminine descriptors but also the masculine ones of evaluative, disciplined and objective (Coleman 1996: 166). Such androgyny may relate to the range of leadership tasks that must now be undertaken, both in the context of performativity and within the current

orthodoxies of what constitutes good leadership, where there is an emphasis on collaboration and participation (HMIe 2007: 66). Although I broadly identify with this definition, I would contend that the androgyny relates to emotional intelligence, and the ability to choose the most appropriate approach for a particular situation, rather than blending male and female paradigms. This concurs with Smith's (2011) study. In examining the narratives of ten head teachers she reveals:

In enacting their leadership roles, all of the head teachers were conscious of having a repertoire of leadership styles on which to draw, and of changing their leadership style according to the situation and the context being managed... Their narratives showed how they drew on a repertoire of behaviours spanning traditional masculine and feminine paradigms (p 522).

In discussing survey data from more than 1,000 secondary head teachers in the late 1990s, as well as in-depth interview data (2002: viii), Coleman contends that:

The existence of traditional, stereotyped views about women, men and management is confirmed by the majority of women and some men head teachers. The women reported examples of overt, direct and indirect discrimination and even sexual harassment... The message here is that despite a gradual change in the numbers of women head teachers, basic attitudes are slower to change (2002: 150).

In the intervening twenty or so years since this data was gathered, the picture seems to have changed. The responses of the head teachers in this study concurred with Smith's discussion of the narratives of ten female head teachers who displayed 'positive, agentic perspectives on school leadership, underpinned by essentially child-centred values' (2011: 516). Like Smith's participants, all of the head teachers in this research spoke of the satisfaction they derived in seeing young people achieve and in being able to make a difference, as discussed in chapter four. Likewise, they had a similar perspective on the fact that at times they had to be tough and make difficult decisions:

They saw that their roles required an ability to take a tough approach at times, but also that it required an ability to be gentle, caring, consultative and collaborative. The two were not seen to be mutually exclusive... (Smith 2011: 521).

Historically and currently, men have dominated leadership roles in education and consequently masculine models of leadership have been accepted as the norm. In

secondary headship this has been particularly so and males continue to be over represented as secondary school head teachers. However, it has been suggested that particular leadership contexts privilege particular approaches (Blackmore 1999, cited by Coleman 2007: 391; Mandell and Pherwani 2003). The current emphasis on collegiality and distributive leadership as effective leadership strategies, may also favour female approaches. Drawing on Gerwitz and Ball (2000) in chapter one, I contend that head teachers are now operating in a context of 'Managerialist Welfarism' where the need to raise standards is partnered with an emphasis on values such as social justice and the need for collegiality, but with a continued focus on outcomes. This necessitates strong interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence and an emphasis on the softer skills perhaps favours what have traditionally been regarded as feminine models of leadership. This is not to say that the increasing number of female head teachers is due to these changes, but rather the changes have supported the recognition of the diversity of leadership approaches which can be effective.

2.4 Current policy constructions of headship/school leadership

In exploring influences on early experiences of headship, conceptions of leadership are important; we all carry preconceptions of how we think a leader should act and behave. Indeed, Fidler and Atton (2004: 156) indicate that, under pressure, new head teachers may revert to behavior they observed in their previous heads, abandoning their own skills and knowledge of leadership. These inner beliefs, as well as their previous head's behavior, may therefore influence the behavior of new head teachers, particularly when under pressure. They may also be influenced by current ideas of what is presently on the agenda as 'good' leadership (usually the construction of leadership privileged in policy at any given time). Current constructions of school leadership embedded in policy will therefore be the focus of this section. Gronn (2003: 1) outlines three major trends which influence current thinking on what it means to be an educational leader in the twenty-first century: 'designer leadership, distributed practice and difficulty in recruitment'. I will consider these in the Scottish context, along with any additional influences, which may impact on head teachers' perception of 'good' leadership.

2.4.1 Designer Leadership

Gronn (2003) maintains that designer leadership is very much a product of the standards and accountability agenda of New Public Management: ‘Central to the notion of designer-leadership is the determination of standards and competencies for the preparation and development of educational administrators’ Gronn (2003: 7). He further argues that the accountability agenda provides a vehicle for supervising the performance of employees (head teachers) within the illusion of individual schools, which are largely self-managed. This is an apparent paradox of headship: heads in Scotland are leaders of their individual establishments but they operate within tightly controlled boundaries and are accountable for the performance of their school to parents, the local authority and HMIe, amongst others. They are accountable for the performance of the school even though they may have no direct control over staffing, for example. Hence, the important emphasis in the Standard for Headship on head teachers being able to inspire and motivate others as well as being able to communicate effectively (Scottish Executive 2005: 2; GTCs 2012: 10).

There is no denying the fact that the SQH could be open to the charge of designer-leadership. It is competency based, reflecting perhaps some of the demands of the times in which it was first written, although it has subsequently been substantially revised, with the current Standard outlining the five professional actions of head teachers. These actions are defined as:

- lead and manage learning and teaching;
- lead and develop people;
- lead change and improvement;
- use resources effectively ;
- build community (Scottish Executive 2005: 4-5).

In the revised Standard (GTCs 2012: 17) these are redefined as:

- establish, sustain and enhance the culture of self-evaluation and school improvement;
- develop staff capability, capacity and leadership to support the culture and practice of learning;

- ensure consistent high quality teaching and learning for all learners;
- build and sustain partnerships with learners, families and relevant partners to meet the identified needs of all learners;
- allocate resources effectively in line with identified strategic and operational priorities.

Although these actions are listed separately, it is acknowledged they are interdependent. However, there is more to the SQH than a competency framework, as it also has a clear focus on vision and values. It should also be remembered that demonstrating that these competencies have been achieved is no guarantee of the successful application of them once an individual head teacher is in post. Success can be attributable to the negotiation of the complexities of the organisational socialisation process discussed previously.

The competence based framework for leadership also omits a crucial aspect of the process of leadership ‘the understanding of leadership as a relationship, the connection among leaders and followers... the process whereby leaders and followers relate to one another to achieve a purpose’ (Rost 1993: 5). It is headship as a process and a relationship which appears to lie at the heart of successful leadership and this relationship begins as soon as the head teacher is appointed, perhaps even earlier, hence the importance of early experiences in headship. Although there is significant research on what successful head teachers do (Townsend and Bogotch 2008; Pont et al. 2008; Scheerens and Bosker 1997; Teddlie and Reynolds 2000; Townsend 2007) there appears to be little research on the actual process of becoming or growing into the role of head teacher. Hence my emphasis in this study was on the early headship experiences and their contribution to the development of the individual head teachers.

2.4.2 Leadership for learning

As noted above, the Standard for Headship makes clear the role of the head teacher in leading learning and teaching. Sergiovanni (2001) indicates that leadership for the new century must be linked to learning:

The new century will not be kind to leaders who seek to change by the sheer force of their personality. Nor will it be kind to leaders who seek to change things by the sheer force of their bureaucratic authority. Instead,

we will need leadership for schools themed to learning, to the development of civic virtue, and to the cultivation of self-management (Sergiovanni 2001: 38).

Within Scottish education, this focus is perhaps illustrated in the explicit title of ‘Leadership for Learning’. This document has previously been considered in chapter one, with reference to its contribution to the policy context. In this chapter, its influence in reiterating current orthodoxies of leadership will be considered. HMIe recognise what much of the literature on system improvement states that improving structures will not of itself improve outcomes for young people, but rather an emphasis on learning and teaching is required, Levin and Fullan (2008: 301). This emphasis is reflected in the considerable focus in ‘Leadership for Learning’ on classroom practice with a reiteration of current thinking about what leaders do to encourage learning:

Leadership for learning is about initiating changes that improve the chance of all learners to achieve well. There is a common sense of purpose... learning and teaching need to be at the centre of everyone's thinking (HMIe 2007: 11).

2.4.3 Transformational leadership

HMIe also recognise the crucial transformational role of leadership in persuading hearts and minds. This art of persuasion, which is related to the articulation of a strategic vision, has become important in distinguishing leadership from management. Thus rather than simply carrying out managerial functions, the role of leaders in articulating a strategic vision is recognised as increasingly important because of the crucial role of the head teacher in changing the culture of a school (Das 2008; Hallinger and Heck 1998). This distinction, between leadership and management, is further discussed by HMIe in ‘Leadership for Learning’. However, HMIe are quite clear that effective management systems have to be in place to ensure the realisation of the vision, so leadership and management are seen as mutually dependent (HMIe 2007: 47). ‘Leadership for Learning’ further states ‘Effective leaders help everyone to make an impact on the quality of learning’ (HMIe 2007: 13) and that they do this by providing opportunities for staff and pupils alike to discuss learning and teaching, achievement and pupil progress. Thus, the processes of learning and how this is led are very much on the agenda, as opposed to managerial functions or structures.

Ball (2008: 139) highlights that this shift in focus from management to leadership reflected a ‘cultural turn’ in management theory, which was subsequently reflected in policy (such as ‘Leadership for Learning’) where persuading hearts and minds became the prime focus of transformational leadership, rather than a managerial process with an emphasis on tasks and structures. This turn is perhaps witnessed in the introduction of the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) in 1998, which asks candidates to measure themselves against the Standard for Headship. Whilst the Standard (later revised to take account of the national debate in education and to include reference to the four capacities) recognises management functions, vision and leadership are given prime position:

If head teachers are to be effective, they require both to lead and to manage. Leadership develops shared vision, inspires and creates commitment and embraces risk and innovation. Management develops systems, which limit uncertainty, even out differences, and improve consistency and predictability in delivering the service (Scottish Executive, 2005: 4).

The authors of the original Standard viewed leadership and management as interdependent, a view maintained in the revised Standard, which explicitly links the two in the title ‘Revised Standards for Leadership and Management’ (GTCs 2012) and states:

Leadership is central to educational quality. Leadership is the ability to

- ❖ Develop a vision for change, which leads to improvements in outcomes for learners and is based on shared values and robust evaluation of evidence of current practice and outcomes
- ❖ Mobilise, enable and support others to develop and follow through on strategies for achieving that change

Management is the operational implementation and maintenance of the practices required to achieve this change (GTCs 2012: 4).

Once more vision and self-evaluation are predominant, as is the key role of the head teacher in motivating others through distributed leadership. The revised Standard continues the emphasis on transformational aspects of leadership but the inclusion of the second bullet point indicates the historical trajectory with the current emphasis on distributed leadership. Whilst not yet a mandatory qualification, the SQH is frequently listed as a ‘desirable’ criterion in person specifications for head teacher posts and

applicants for headship must demonstrate that they have overtaken the Standard, even if they have not attained the formal qualification. Leadership is thus firmly on the agenda, but so it would seem is management.

2.4.4 Distributed leadership

‘Leadership for Learning’ upholds the current emphasis given to the concept of distributed leadership, or, as HMIe define it: ‘sharing the responsibility for leadership’ (HMIe 2007: 17). Clearly, in developing this approach to leadership, emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in effective communication for any leader. Distributed leadership can perhaps be recognised, simplistically, as a reaction to the one-man band model of heroic leadership. However, it is also indicative of changing work patterns, which reflect teamwork and the division of labour (Gronn 2003: 30). In a time of major curricular change in Scotland with Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive 2004), teamwork is particularly important as no one heroic leader could devise the content required to deliver the experiences and outcomes of the new curricular model. Successful implementation requires staff in schools to work together, outwith their own specialist areas, to deliver interdisciplinary learning as well as the cross cutting themes of literacy, numeracy and health and well-being. Distributed leadership is pivotal as the idea behind it ‘is that the complex nature of instructional practice requires people to operate in networks of shared and complementary expertise rather than in hierarchies’ (Elmore 2000: 24) and that to secure large scale improvement there has to be:

concerted action among people with different areas of expertise and a mutual respect that stems from an appreciation of the knowledge and skill requirements of different roles (2000: 35-6).

Nothing could be more apposite for the curriculum in Scotland at the present time. Networks of professionals are undoubtedly essential to improving learning, but in terms of accountability, hierarchies appear to be paramount and this is perhaps the major tension in creating a culture of collegiality within a context of accountability. This tension is evident in ‘Leadership for Learning’ where there are apparent contradictions between collegiality and shared responsibility for leadership, and the continued emphasis on the ultimate accountability of the person in the position of ‘formal authority’ (HMIe 2007: 23). This

tension of collegiality in the context of accountability adds to the complexity of headship and to the challenges faced by head teachers.

These contradictions come into sharper focus when considered in the context of Gronn's view on designer leadership. He is critical of the notion of the 'doctrine of exceptionalism' (2003b: 281), with its description of leadership traits or behaviours, because it privileges, 'individualistic and transformational' conceptions of leadership (2003: 16). Spillane (2006: 4) further contends that there are four fundamental problems with this 'heroics of leadership doctrine': it focuses on the head teacher; it ignores the practices of leadership, focusing on 'structures, functions, routines and roles' rather than 'the *how* of leadership'; it concentrates on the actions, or inactions, of the leader and it is defined in terms of outcomes. Thus there is now a greater emphasis on shared leadership, albeit the head teacher retains ultimate responsibility. It would appear that throughout 'Leadership for Learning' although HMIe support the notion of distributive leadership they continue to perpetuate the belief that there is a list of discernible leader behaviours. Listing successful leadership characteristics is possibly attributable to the challenge of accountability in a public service. As HMIe state, 'Accountability is ultimately tied to the person who leads up the organisation' HMIe (2007: 23). Thus, whilst the responsibility of leadership may be shared, and the concept of distributive leadership acknowledged as a successful leadership strategy, accountability ultimately rests with the head teacher (and therefore a hierarchical structure), and it is thus no surprise that the checklist approach is perpetuated. Although a description of leadership actions can be helpful, for Spillane (2006) it should also be supported by an emphasis on leadership practice, or the 'how' factor. If it is not, leadership is reduced to a series of actions or behaviours and there is a danger that the whole area of leadership as 'influence', which may not necessarily have a measurable outcome, is ignored. Although 'Leadership for Learning' attempts to illustrate the 'how' factor of leadership, by describing positive examples of successful leadership, these descriptions cannot convey the interaction of the leader and the context in which they operate as head teacher. It is in this interaction, or leadership process, that the leader's influence exists and this interaction begins in the early stages of headship.

'Leadership for Learning' recognises that one of the main challenges for leaders is the management of change, a fact that has long been acknowledged (Fullan 2003b: 66; Fullan 2010). It lists the changes in the curriculum and staffing structures as particular areas of

change (HMIE 2007: 10), referring to ‘A Curriculum for Excellence’ and ‘A Teaching Profession for the 21 Century’ (TP21C) as being two of the major changes facing leaders today. They are also two of the major challenges. TP21C flattened management structures in secondary schools, removed many leadership positions, but also highlighted the leadership role of all stating specifically that teachers would have responsibility for ‘developing the school curriculum’ (A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century, 2001: Annexe b). The reality of this in many schools is the perception that posts have been removed and staff are therefore being asked to assume responsibilities (such as curriculum development) which may previously have been the responsibility of someone in one of these deleted posts. This is presently the case in Scottish schools where faculty arrangements exist and a curricular leader may have responsibility for an area outwith their subject specialism, thus they must rely on unpromoted subject specialists to develop the curriculum. The concept of distributive leadership could be regarded as expedient in this context: remove certain leadership roles and give everyone leadership responsibilities. There is therefore a challenge for leaders in simultaneously dealing with staff morale and driving forward a major change agenda for the curriculum. To this can be added the challenges faced by the recession and budget cuts, both of which intensify the challenges resulting from these two major initiatives.

To this point I have considered the experiences of early headship and the construction of leadership in policy. In this study the focus is on the exploration of early headship through the experiences of a group of head teachers. Within this, a critical aspect is how head teachers construct their experience of headship. One way to access these constructions is through an examination of the metaphors people use to describe these experiences. Lumby and English (2010) consider metaphors of leadership. In considering the metaphors in the construction of headship, I was influenced initially by my own background as a teacher of English and by Richardson’s (1997) discussion of guiding metaphors in writing.

2.5 Metaphors of headship

Metaphors are powerful figures of speech. Lumby and English (2010) use metaphors of leadership as heuristic and deconstruct the common metaphors used in educational leadership. They do this to illustrate the ‘toxic’ effect of metaphors, which have slipped into common usage and have become accepted as literal terms, having a significant impact

as they subsequently shape views of leadership. The metaphors they use provide a commentary on the current context of headship. Amongst the most powerful is ‘leadership as a machine’ which ‘is so ubiquitous in education that it often passes unnoticed’ (Lumby and English 2010: 13). This is perhaps indicative of the extent to which the performativity agenda has permeated the minds of school leaders with systems, processes, bench marking and quality control now being an accepted part of the school improvement agenda and forming part of the on-going challenge of school leadership. Other metaphors they use are largely negative in connotation⁸ perhaps reflecting the current context and representing some of the dissatisfiers of headship. These dissatisfiers are listed by MacBeath (2008), as stress, workload, accountability and bureaucracy, personal and domestic concerns, salary, social factors, the teacher supply line and lack of succession (2008: 24-5). MacBeath et al. (2009: 27) comment on the vivid language used by the heads they interviewed to describe school leadership. Terms such as ‘firefighting’, ‘battles’, ‘ground down’ and ‘hammered’ echo the perspective of some of the negative metaphors used by Lumby and English (2010) and are perhaps indicative of the prevalence of such ways of thinking.

There are however, more positive metaphors of headship suggested. MacBeath (2008) discusses Greenleaf’s (1977) term the ‘servant leader’ who has such a highly developed sense of self they have ‘no need for deference, adulation or reinforcement’ (MacBeath 2008: 26). Such leaders foster leadership of others and develop the practice of distributive leadership, beyond simple delegation of tasks. Lumby and English (2010) look to leaders as stewards or teachers to suggest possibilities for views of headship, which preserve values and look to leaders who develop the education of the whole person. In discussing the process of school leadership, Townsend and Bogotch (2008: 3) argue that ‘leadership is artistry,’ where: ‘knowledge and performance meet’ (Townsend and Bogotch 2008: 4). That is, the skills and knowledge of the head teacher are in tune with the shared values and attitudes of the school. Schön (1987: 13) speaks of ‘artistry’ in terms of wisdom or intuition and not technical, rational skills. It is applied in situations where these are out with the norm of existing practice where, if the situation is to be dealt with competently by the professional ‘she must do so by a kind of improvisation, inventing and testing in the situation of strategies of her own devising’ (Schön 1987: 5). Developing understanding of this metaphor of artistry as it works out in early headship was examined in this research

⁸ These include leadership as war and lunacy.

by considering the impact of crisis situations. It also contributes to a greater understanding of the process of headship and will assist in the support of new head teachers.

2.6 Issues emerging from the focused review of literature

There are a number of areas emerging from the focused literature review which have shaped the formation of this research project. Following Crow and Glascock's (1995) outline of the factors impacting on role conception and the possible conflict they may create, how novice head teachers adjust and adapt to possible feelings of inadequacy or perceived incompetence (because they do not as yet know the new context) may impact on their self-esteem, as they make the transition from the mastery of a previous role to that of novice head teacher. This influenced my decision to focus on early headship experiences in the present study, as this is where perceived incompetence is most evident. Furthermore, given the importance of the socialisation process, and its potential for creating conflict if the head teacher's blue print does not match the reality of the school, it was also important to consider how any crisis situations may have impacted on the outplaying of the individual headship. Following Schön (1987), if the artistry of headship is developed in dealing with situations outwith the norm, it was crucial in this research to consider how novice head teachers dealt with these situations. In this study, it was in these circumstances that emotional intensity, in particular, was felt. Given this emotional intensity and the need for self-protection skills, it was important to consider if head teachers could articulate the strategies they used to deal with challenging situations, whilst protecting themselves emotionally. In this research, emotional intensity also included the dissonance experienced when heads had to portray emotions they were not feeling, particularly in the handling of early critical incidents in headship experience. This intensity was also apparent in the use of language by head teachers in this research, both when asked specifically about metaphors they would use to describe headship and, more revealingly, in examining the metaphors they used in the course of the interviews.

Chapter 3 Methodology and methods⁹

In addressing the questions: what are the significant factors in the progress to headship and what are the pivotal experiences in early headship, this study is clearly focused on early experience in headship, a significant but under researched area. What is known about this area, as noted in chapter two, is that it is challenging. There is therefore a need for research exploring the complex process of headship- of becoming a head teacher and building identity as a head teacher. In exploring these significant areas, I required an approach which would provide methods of gathering rich description (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 12; Cresswell and Miller 2010: 126). Given that this is a professional doctorate and that I am undertaking it as a head teacher, it was important in the research design that I gave due consideration as to how my own experience could be utilised within the data. In this chapter I explain that this was the main reason for adopting an autoethnographical methodology. It is important to note, that the study was not conceived simply as my story of headship, but my story interrogated in the context of the literature and related to the experience of a group of other head teachers. This was largely for purposes of triangulation. This is illustrated below:

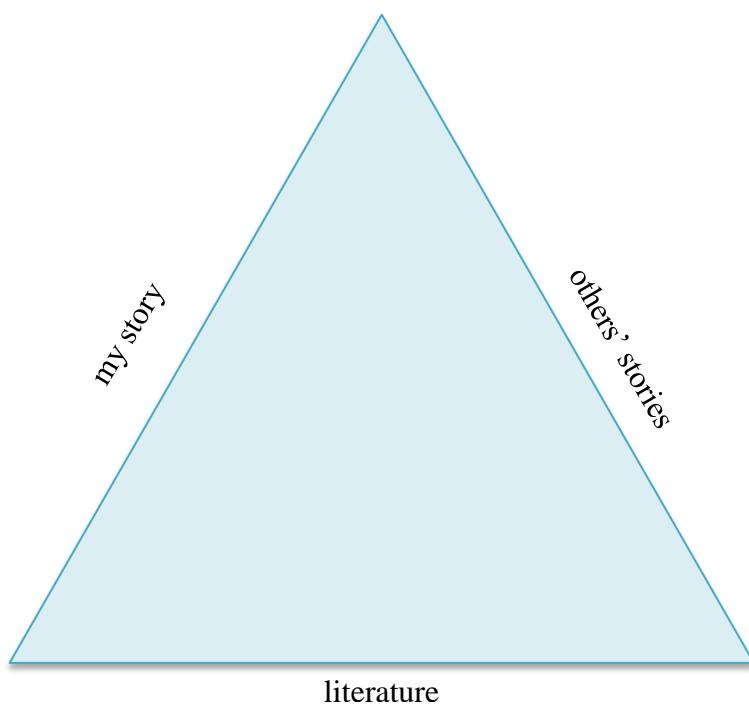


Figure 1: Methodological diagram

⁹ This chapter was influenced by the work I undertook in the Open Studies modules of the EdD programme.

This chapter therefore considers how I could use my early experience of headship as a data source, whilst also incorporating data from the experience of other head teachers. It outlines the process of building rich descriptions by describing the methods of data collection and analysis I used in the study as well as discussing the nature and challenge of autoethnography and issues of reliability and validity as well as criteria for judging its success. Given that this research has been shaped within constructivist and participatory paradigms, I also outline the steps I have taken to maintain trustworthiness and authenticity, within a constructivist paradigm, and the congruence of experiential knowledge, appropriate to a participatory paradigm (Guba & Lincoln 2005: 196).

3.1 How to explore personal experience: considering the possibilities

In answering the research questions, the process of headship and ‘becoming’ and ‘being’ a head teacher from the perspective of head teachers lay at the heart of the study. In considering my research approach, I wanted a methodology which would allow me to incorporate my own experience as a major data source. I wanted to do this because, in talking to prospective head teachers, it is always my story or experience of headship they are interested in; or more specifically my coping strategies for what they perceive to be an impossible job. This interest relates to the process of headship, or actually being a head teacher, as discussed in chapter two. This is more elusive than the tasks of headship and therefore possibly more difficult to articulate. Many theoretical texts on leadership and headship exist (Day et al. 2010; Gronn 2003; Spillane 2006), but these do not, to my knowledge incorporate personal narrative. However, I did not wish to focus entirely on my own lived experience and wanted to include the experience of other head teachers in the study. This would allow me to consider if there were common threads, as well as differences, across our experience which could be explored. Subsequently this would contribute to an understanding of the nature of early headship which could in turn be used to assist aspiring head teachers in their journeys to headship and new head teachers in their early days in post.

I considered that the focus of living theory and the production of a living portfolio, which could include data generated from a range of sources including journals, memos, email correspondence or video (Whitehead and McNiff 2006) would focus too much on me personally. I then read Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), and became intrigued by the

notion of CAP ethnographies (creative analytical processes), ethnographies which moved outwith traditional social science writing and were both creative and analytical (Richardson and St Pierre 2005: 963). This approach privileged the postmodern claim that authors are always present in their writing, no matter how hard they try not to be (Richardson and St Pierre 2005: 961). This was an enlightening moment as my previous experience of academic writing had taught me that it should be detached and written in the third person. I knew that I wanted to be present in my writing and that I wanted to write in the first person and not in an abstracted third person voice, as I wanted the authenticity of my experience to be evident. However, I did not want my research to be based solely on my own experience, as I felt it would have greater credibility if there were a number of participants whose experience of early headship was also explored and any commonalities or differences identified.

As I read about personal narratives and autoethnographies (Dyson 2007; Holt 2003; Quicke: 2009) and ‘writing stories’ as: ‘narratives that situate one’s own writing in other parts of one’s life... they offer critical reflexivity about the writing self in different contexts as a valuable creative analytical practice’ (Richardson and St. Pierre 2005: 965), I began to consider to what extent I could use ‘writing stories’ in the exploration of my own leadership journey. I was encouraged by Richardson and St. Pierre’s statement that:

The ethnographic life is not separable from the Self. Who we are and what we can be- what we can study, how we can write about that which we study- are tied to how a knowledge system disciplines itself and its members and to its methods for claiming authority over both the subject matter and its members (2005: 965).

I wanted a vehicle to allow the exploration of personal experience of early headship within the current theoretical and political context. Richardson’s (2001) elucidation of her top ten thoughts on writing, in a call to others to use ‘writing-stories’ gave me further encouragement to move beyond the traditional mode of academic writing (Richardson 2001: 34). After Rose (1992), Richardson discusses ‘wording the world’ or writing as a method of discovery, where writing and redrafting become a method of inquiry. I began to wonder if, in the process of writing about my leadership journey, I would find something new which could be useful to other people, particularly aspiring or novice head teachers, or if I would find areas to explore with the head teacher sample in this research, and, if ‘wording’ their individual journeys would cause the head teachers to discover something

new which would contribute to the knowledge of early headship experience. This also relates to what Richardson outlines as the post structural view linking ‘language, subjectivity, social organization and power... language produces meaning and creates social reality’ (Richardson & St Pierre 2005: 961). This could be applied to the discourse of leadership and, importantly, to the language leaders use and the language used in policy to privilege particular views of headship as discussed in chapter two. I took further courage in using my own story from ‘Fields of Play’ (1997), where Richardson states:

Narrative is unavoidable; human values, sensibilities and ambiguities continuously reassert themselves in “plain” social science writing. Narrative cannot be suppressed within sociology because it is ineluctably tied to the human experience; trying to suppress it undermines the very foundation of the sociological enterprise (1997: 29).

In considering my methodology, I was also influenced by Jean Barr’s (1999) work where she reviewed her research journey and wrote herself back into research she had completed at an earlier stage of her career. In reviewing her journey as an adult educator, she reassessed research reports she had previously written ‘in the light of current concerns and ideas which were not available at the time’ (Barr 1999: 11). Barr’s text gripped me in a way I had been gripped by no other academic text and this was due to the way in which she blended the theoretical and the personal. In describing a dream of discarding layers of clothes and attempting to hide them Barr linked this to her research and wrote:

The metaphors we choose to use, usually unconsciously since they are embedded in our preferred (and available) theories and methodologies are in themselves revealing. When I review my own research and writing work to date it is clear that notions of masking and unmasking, implicitness and explicitness are central to much of it....Yet despite my predilection for unmasking... I was reluctant to apply the same technique to my own work... (pp. 67-68).

I wanted to review my leadership journey in a similar way, reflecting on and reconstructing my early experiences with the benefit of hindsight, but also understanding how this past experience may have influenced my present experience. In reviewing this journey I wanted to consider it in the context of the literature to generate themes which could be explored with the other head teachers and which could be used to contribute to the understanding of the early experience of headship.

3.2 Autoethnography

As my reading liberated me from my previous belief that ‘real’ research had to be detached and objective, I realised that I did not know of any research that welded personal and theoretical knowledge of school leadership from the perspective of a serving head teacher. Having frequently spoken to groups of participants completing head teacher preparation programmes, it was apparent that what they wanted to know from me was the story, that is, my day-to-day experience of the job. Thus I began to consider the use of autoethnography as a possible methodology to pursue the issues I wished to research. Autoethnography ‘allows the author to write in a highly personalized style, drawing on his or her experience to extend understanding about a social phenomenon’ (Wall 2006: 1) and therefore facilitated my aim of using my own experience. In adopting this methodology, my research extends understanding of early experiences in headship and has implications for headship preparation and the support of novice head teachers.

Reed-Danahay (1997: 2) states that the term autoethnography can refer to an ethnography of a group to which the writer is a member or to autobiographical writing which is ethnographic in intent and content. Thus autoethnography can be either a self-ethnography or an autobiographical ethnography. I wanted to consider my own autobiographical experience but also that of a group of head teachers to which I belong so I was therefore fulfilling both of these characteristics. For Chang (2008), self is a lens to look through to gain understanding of others and crucially ‘autoethnographers use their personal experiences as primary data’ (p49). Autoethnography was thus emerging as an appropriate way forward for this research.

Ellis and Bochner (2000) define autoethnography as:

...an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations (Ellis & Bochner 2000: 739).

Autoethnography would provide a vehicle which would allow me to explore my personal experience as a head teacher both in the wider policy and cultural context as well as in the

context of the experience of a group of other head teachers. It was my intention that this more personal approach would also engage prospective and novice head teachers in considering their own journey into headship, perhaps making it a less daunting prospect. In their 2000 article, cited above, Ellis & Bochner wanted to show the process of autoethnography in the course of writing a chapter for a handbook on research, where the conventions ‘militate against personal and passionate writing’ (2000: 734). In showing the process of writing they wanted ‘a form that will allow readers to feel the moral dilemmas, think with our story instead of about it... and consider how their own lives can be made a story worth telling’ (2000: 735).

I wanted a research methodology that would allow those who read it to engage with the process of early headship. I wanted to provide insight into what early headship meant as a lived experience, and in the case of aspiring head teachers, hopefully encourage reflection on the next step in their own professional journey.

3.3 Autoethnography: a contested area

As I read more deeply, however, I discovered that autoethnography was a contested area (Anderson 2006; Ellis and Bochner 2006; Delamont 2007). My initial introduction to autoethnography was to what I would term the ‘purist’ autoethnographers such as Ellis (1999; 2009) and Ellis and Bochner (2000) who advocate the positioning of the author within the text. Indeed, writing together, they state:

Our enthusiasm for autoethnography was instigated by a desire to move ethnography away from the gaze of the distanced and detached observer and toward the embrace of intimate involvement, engagement, and embodied participation (Ellis and Bochner 2006: 433).

Their approach came to be defined as evocative autoethnography, where the personal story of the researcher engages the reader by establishing an evocative connection. In comparing their approach to analytical autoethnography (Anderson 2006) they state: ‘we want to dwell in a flux of lived experience; they want to appropriate lived experience for the purpose of abstracting something they call knowledge or theory’ (2006: 431). Whilst I very much wanted to use my own experience within my research, I knew that I did not want to dwell on the ‘flux’ of headship in terms of communicating the emotion of headship experience; my aim was to explore early headship experiences rather than expressing the

emotion related to them, thus I would be ‘abstracting’ from the experience or using the experience as a data source to generate understanding. Therefore, my approach would be more accurately defined as analytical autoethnography. Anderson (2006: 378) indicates that there are five key features of analytical autoethnography:

- complete member researcher status;
- analytical reflexivity;
- narrative visibility of the researcher’s self;
- dialogue with informants beyond the self and
- Commitment to theoretical analysis.

This approach reflected what I wanted to do:

- I was a complete member of the group I was researching;
- I had analytically reflected on my experience;
- I was visible in this research;
- I have had dialogue with other head teachers to generate data and
- I was committed to analysing this data to generate new knowledge.

I was therefore meeting the criteria of analytical autoethnography. Furthermore, analytical autoethnography provided a means of incorporating my reflection on my own experience, the literature and the experience of other head teachers in the study. These were key components in the construction of the study and were crucial in providing triangulation of data to assist in addressing Delamont’s (2007) charge that autoethnography is ‘intellectually lazy’ which I discuss in section 3.4 .

James (2012: 556) indicates that no single definition of autoethnography exists. She describes a range of approaches from performances of artistic pieces to critical autoethnography. My own approach was not intended as a performance but it did draw on a journal I kept in my early days in post and the story of my own journey into headship. I could have chosen to write my story in a creative form, such as a poem or a play. I chose not to, however, as I wished to maintain the authenticity of my experience and not erect a potential barrier to authenticity by using a creative portrayal which could imply an element of fiction. Having my journal allowed me to do this.

Duncan (2004), in discussing autoethnography in her own research context of hypermedia design, states that she required an approach which allowed systematic reflection, ensured a scholarly account and enabled discovery (2004: 3). She also stated that for her, autoethnography should not consist solely of the researcher's opinions but should also be supported by other data for triangulation, such as participant observation, reflective writing, interviewing and gathering documents and artifacts. These aims were similar to my own and also position Duncan's autoethnography within analytical rather than evocative autoethnography. This is in marked contrast to Ellis and Bochner (2006) who emphasise that for them autoethnography is not simply first person narrative, but writing which reveals the vulnerability of the author showing 'struggle, passion and embodied life, and the collaborative creation of sense-making in situations in which people have to cope with dire circumstances and loss of meaning' (Ellis and Bochner 2006: 433).

Whilst I hoped to convey some of the challenges of early headship, my approach aligned with the more analytical one of Duncan (2004) rather than that of Ellis and Bochner (2006), whose emphasis was on evoking emotion in their readers by writing narratively. In their view, my approach would be described as realist ethnography, where the researcher is clearly positioned in the text, but not necessarily exposing her vulnerable self. Analytical autoethnography best captured the aims of my research in extending understanding of early experiences in headship rather than focusing on the 'vulnerable self' and my emotional response to headship.

The essence of the analytical/evocative debate focuses on the extent to which the researcher theorises or generalises within the autoethnographic approach; for the evocative autoethnographer the story is valid and valued in itself. Atkinson (2006), in responding to the debate around evocative and analytical autoethnography, contends that '...all ethnographic work implies a degree of personal engagement with the field and with the data' (p401) and the debate is bluntly, about the ethnographer becoming more important than the ethnography. Therefore, I sought to ensure that my autoethnographic data sat alongside the data gathered from the sample and that my experience did not become more important than that of the other head teachers. This has been achieved by:

1. reviewing my experience in terms of the literature;

2. using this to inform the prompts for discussion;
3. using only data derived from the interviews;
4. systematic analysis of this data.

3.4 The challenges of autoethnography

Although I had found a methodology that would best serve my research purpose in discussing the process of becoming a head teacher from the perspective of existing head teachers, autoethnography was not without challenges, which I had to take into consideration. On a personal level, how much of my story I would reveal and the extent to which I could be placing myself, or the school I lead, in a vulnerable position had to be considered. Delamont (2007) asserts that autoethnography is ‘intellectually lazy’ and lays six main arguments against it, which it was important for me to address to reassure myself I was not being ‘intellectually lazy’. Along with difficulties relating to familiarity with the context and ethical concerns, Delamont argues that research should be more than experiential. She contends that the aim of social science research is to study the social world (not to study introspection) and to move the social sciences forward by collecting data which will ultimately change society. I did not want my study to be solely experiential focusing on introspection. To address this, and to ensure that I had a means of triangulation, it was crucial that I considered how my own reflection on my early experience of headship related to the literature and subsequently to the experience of others. This was important in ensuring the focus was not introspection but an analysis of data drawn from experience (my own and others’) and the literature. Furthermore, it was also important that the study was constructed within a social context, which was, secondary headship in Scotland during a specific period spanning the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This in turn was set within a specific policy context and discourse, as discussed in chapter two. The construction of the study aimed to contribute to the understanding of early experiences in headship to assist others in their journey to headship by surfacing the pivotal experiences which could be used to inform headship preparation programmes. Therefore, the construction of the study was designed to be more than experiential since it sought to generate understanding from practice, for consideration by prospective and novice head teachers and those responsible for their development and support.

I was therefore concerned with an exploration and analysis of the personal stories of early headship experience. However, as a member of the group of head teachers I had to give considerable thought to the theoretical framework underpinning this research. The starting point of the study was to begin with my own experience in early headship, set within a policy context and interrogated in the context of the literature. The next step was to gather individual stories of early headship experience from other head teachers which I could then use in an analytical autoethnography. These stories were then examined in the context of the literature, looking for any similarities or differences, to address the research questions. Thus it was not a positivist approach designed to find generalisable truths. It was rather, as Guba and Lincoln (2005: 194) indicate, falling within constructivism with an inquiry aim of understanding or reconstruction; I was seeking an understanding of early headship experiences. The research is, however, also participatory, perhaps reflecting the ‘blurring of genres’ noted by Geertz (1998, 1993) and cited by Guba and Lincoln (2005: 191), since my voice is ‘manifest through aware self-reflective action’ and ‘secondary voices’ (those of the participants) are used to illuminate theory (Guba and Lincoln 2005: 196). This blurring is reflected in my approach with the use of my own voice and experience in tandem with that of other head teachers.

Delamont further states that autoethnography abrogates the duty to collect data. However, she seems to define data within a strict positivist framework. In terms of my own autoethnography I had access to a wealth of data which had been generated in the course of my time as head teacher. This ranged from my journal of my early days in post to staff, pupil and parent questionnaires, as well as assignments completed for the SQH which were written well before I was appointed head teacher. As I have already indicated, in constructing this study it was never designed to be purely introspective or typical of evocative autoethnography. Its design was constructed around experiences of early headship. The data from my own story provided the first source which was then analysed through the lens of the second data source, that of the relevant literature. This analysis was used to frame the prompts for discussion for the interviews with the head teachers which was the third data source.

Although the data from the participants was subjective, since it was about their individual experience, within my overall approach, it was analysed and used ‘to offer lessons for further conversation rather than undebatable conclusions’ (Ellis & Bochner 2000: 744). I

agree with Ellis and Bochner 2000) that analysis of experiences in terms of their meaning within a social context, referenced to relevant literature can be considered as data. The methods used within an autoethnographic approach assisted in triangulation.

3.5 Judging the success of autoethnography

Given the subjective nature of autoethnography, it was important for me to work to criteria, which would provide guidelines for success. These criteria follow Ellis & Bochner (2000) who indicate that autoethnography should demonstrate validity, generalisability and reliability. Although these categories are used to judge research in the positivist tradition, within autoethnography, the interpretations may be different and have a specific application. Thus the validity of autoethnography lies in the ‘... verisimilitude; it evokes in readers, a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable and possible’ (Ellis & Bochner 2000: 751). From my own perspective, the verisimilitude in this research lies in the provision of rich data surfacing the significant factors in the progress to headship and the pivotal experiences in early headship. In examining these key areas in this way others will perhaps be encouraged to take the ultimate step in school leadership. Ellis & Bochner (2000) further hold that the generalisability of autoethnography lies in the extent to which it speaks to the reader about the experiences of others and the extent to which these experiences are believable. I wanted my own story to speak to others. Ellis et al. (2011: 282) explore reliability in autoethnography, where it relates to the narrator’s credibility and answers the question ‘Could the narrator have had the experiences described?’ Hence the experiences described have to be believable. Therefore, those who read my autoethnography will judge its success in their answer to this question.

Richardson (1997: 92) discusses validity as ‘crystallization’ railing against the positivist tradition of triangulation because there are more than three sides by which we approach the world. Crystallisation, therefore, reflects the complexity of analysing experience where, ‘What we see depends on our angle of repose’ (Richardson 1997: 92). Richardson therefore surfaces the idea that in post-modern research, the ‘fact’ of absolute objectivity is called into question. Ellis et al. (2011) state that:

... autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t

exist' (Ellis et al. 2011: 274).

Thus this research includes the subjectivity of my experience but also considers the experience of others, the policy context and the relevant literature and it therefore creates many angles from which the reader can view headship.

In judging the success of autoethnographic writing, Richardson (Richardson & St. Pierre 2005: 964) outlines four criteria she uses to judge the success of CAP ethnography: substantive contribution to the field, aesthetic merit, reflexivity and impact. In considering my own autoethnography, three of these areas were at the forefront of my mind as I was writing. These were: contribution to the field from the perspective of a practitioner, reflexivity and impact. I did not focus on aesthetic merit, since my autoethnography was not a piece of creative writing; I had not rewritten scenes from my head teacher journey or portrayed discussions with the head teachers in the sample as dramatic dialogues. Instead I quoted directly from the transcribed interviews, without the need to reconstruct dramatic dialogue, in keeping with my research as analytical autoethnography. I gave particular attention to reflexivity, the extent to which I was both a producer and a product of the text. Reflecting on my own early days in headship, as well as the experiences of the other head teachers, continues to impact on my on-going development as a head teacher. I contend that this reflexivity is lacking in school leadership literature, although there is some autobiographical writing (Loader 1997; Stubbs 2003; Tompkins 1996), hence the methodological approach I have adopted. By providing stories of personal experience of headship, within a theoretical context, this research contributes to the debate on head teacher preparation and support for head teachers during their early days in post. The unique feature is the fact that the research is conducted by a current practitioner and will therefore be of interest to prospective head teachers or those responsible for headship preparation programmes.

In using my autoethnography as the starting point for the research I was firstly considering the experience of one head teacher, and using it to examine the extent to which it was similar to the experience of others as well as existing research (Ellis et al. 2011). In writing my autoethnography, the standard checks of validity, reliability and generalisability were considered in the ways discussed in this section. I consider these more specifically in terms of the research paradigm in section 3.7. I have written factually from actual experiences some of which could be factually substantiated, for example, the day on which

the S1 pupil died. Whether or not my autoethnography has verisimilitude will rightly be judged by those who read it.

3.6 My Approach to autoethnography

There are different kinds of autoethnography, in terms of style and approach, as outlined in section 3.3. In choosing analytical autoethnography my narrative was central to my approach in providing a major source of data. With the literature, it generated the prompts for discussion with the other head teachers. This was important in addressing Anderson's (2006) requirement for analytical autoethnography to contain dialogue with informants beyond the self. In adopting this approach I was clearly privileging my own experience. This was the case as the research focuses on the early experience of headship from the perspective of head teachers and the starting point for that was my own experience. I then wanted to explore the extent to which my experience was similar or different to the experience of other head teachers. How I did this is illustrated below:

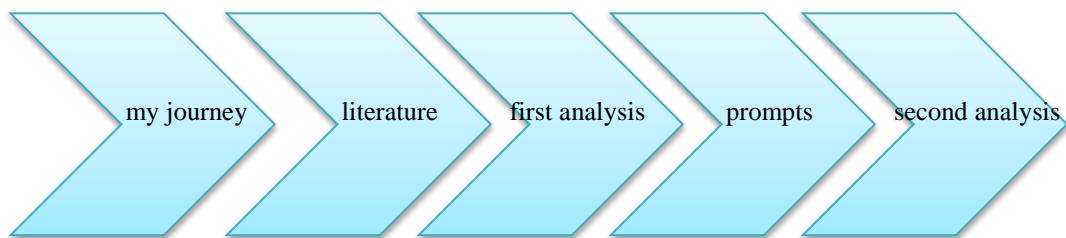


Figure 2: Diagram of analytical autoethnographical approach

In writing my own narrative, I followed Ellis (1999), who advised one of her research students, to begin the process of autoethnography by writing her own story saying 'Think of it as making retrospective field notes on your life' (1999: 675). Therefore in 2010, as I was entering this research process, I began to write my story of my journey into headship as this would provide a useful starting point in exploring early headship experience. Over the years I had reflected on my own professional journey in a variety of contexts, including during the early stages of my doctoral studies (Brookfield: 1995) as well as in preparation for talks given to various groups of SQH candidates. In addition I had a detailed journal, which I had kept during my early years in post. From these materials, and my own remembered experience I wrote my journey to headship, which is included in

appendix D (p190). At this point, I thought that the early crisis situations I faced were unique to my own experience. The literature review altered this view as I became aware of aspects of socialisation discussed in chapter two. Having completed the literature review I analysed my story and noted on my narrative, using the notation (HT question) on any areas I thought would be worthwhile pursuing with the other head teachers in the study. This was my first analysis.

My autoethnography is a first person narrative piece of writing reflecting on my early headship journey, framed around a chronology of my experience. This is reflective writing and not fictional or imaginative prose. Drawing on Dewey (1910 reprinted 1993), Hatton and Smith (1995: 34), state that ‘reflection may be seen as an active and deliberative cognitive process, involving sequences of interconnected ideas which take account of underlying beliefs and knowledge’. Schön (1987: 13) writes of the need to learn from ‘the competence by which practitioners actually handle indeterminate zones of practice’.¹⁰ I was considering my experience at a particular time, with the benefit of hindsight and greater experience in, and knowledge of, the world of education and school leadership. Through the process of creating my story, I was ‘in conversation with myself’ as Ellis and Bochner (2000: 748) term this type of reflection. I was also, as Richardson (1997: 88) indicates ‘wording the world’ viewing writing as ‘a method of discovery’ as I was making explicit thoughts and experiences which I had perhaps not openly articulated at the time they occurred.

3.7 Considerations of trustworthiness and authenticity

In section 3.3 I have outlined the criteria against which I was continually measuring my analytical autoethnography (complete member researcher status; analytical reflexivity; narrative visibility of the researcher’s self; dialogue with informants beyond the self and commitment to theoretical analysis). Section 3.5 considered the criteria used to judge the success of autoethnography, in particular Ellis & Bochner’s (2000) definitions of validity in autoethnography as verisimilitude, generalisability as the extent to which it speaks to the reader about the experiences of others and reliability answers the question, could the narrator have had these experiences (Ellis et al. 2011).

¹⁰ Indeterminate zones of practice refer to unique and problematic situations that have no technical solutions and rely on the practitioner using intuition or artistry (Schön 1987: 13)

Beyond these specific criteria relating to autoethnography, given the highly subjective nature of this research I had to consider how I would ensure the trustworthiness and authenticity and the ‘congruence of experiential knowing’ (Guba & Lincoln 2005: 196) in my study within its constructivist and participatory paradigm. In outlining how I did this, I by necessity anticipate some of the methods I employed in carrying out the research. These will be discussed more fully in subsequent sections of this chapter. Creswell & Miller (2000: 126) delineate trustworthiness as: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability and authenticity as: fairness, the enlargement of personal constructions, improving the understanding of constructions of others and stimulating and empowering action. They further highlight a number of possible checks on these areas using a variety of lenses which I incorporated in to this study. The starting point for this research was my own journey to and early experiences of headship. This was then analysed through the lens of the literature and the analysis was subsequently used to structure the prompts for discussion for use with the other head teachers. These prompts were deliberately open ended. This then underpins triangulation and my means of ensuring validity: the experience of one person, the literature and the experience of others. As this afforded triangulation across the data sources, analytical autoethnography was an appropriate vehicle for this study.

The lens of researcher reflexivity provides a further validity procedure and I have clearly positioned my research paradigm within the study and have constructed the study around it. Arising from this, however, is the possibility of bias and in the case of this research I agree with Smith (2012) that researcher involvement and bias has to be managed. There were a number of steps I took to manage this within this study. Firstly there was the consistency of my relationships with the participants in that they were all known to me in a professional context, although I had known them for varying amounts of time. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, I used only the data generated only from the transcribed interviews (or from subsequent emails) and not from any prior or ensuing knowledge about the head teachers which I may have had. I did not use data I may have had from other sources, such as conversations outwith the interview context of third party information, thereby reducing the halo effect Cohen et al. (2007: 144). I also followed the prompts for discussion which had been shaped from the literature and the analysis of my own narrative.

The third lens in ensuring validity involved the participants. Member checking was a further validity check I employed, whereby the transcripts of the interviews were checked and agreed with the participants. No alterations were required. Furthermore, in discussing themes emerging during the interviews, collaboration with the participants also contributed to credible data (Cresswell & Miller 2000: 128). A draft of the study was also read by two head teachers and one depute head teacher, all of whom indicated that they could identify with the authenticity of the situations described by the head teachers. Whilst not quite a formal peer debriefing (Cresswell & Miller 2000: 129) this provided an external lens of individuals who were familiar with the field of study, that is the journey to headship and early experiences of headship. It also hints at transferability in that the experiences described resonated with them. Larger scale transferability will necessitate reading by a wider audience. Turning to authenticity, the transcripts were checked by the participants to ensure that what they said had been captured accurately. They were analysed individually to identify key factors in the journey to headship and the pivotal experiences in early headship I also ensured fair representation of all of the participants using tabular forms to categorise and analyse the data, thus all of the participants voices were represented.

3.8 Consideration of the ethical issues of insider research

There are many definitions of insider research. In short, insider research refers both to someone researching within their own institution or someone undertaking research within a group to which they belong (Adler and Adler 1987; Brannick and Coghlan 2007; Ellis and Bochner 2000). I consider myself an insider within this particular research in many ways: I am a member of the group I researched, I share an interest in and experience of the areas we discussed and I am the same gender as the other head teachers. However, we do not work within the same institution although we operate broadly within the larger organisation of Scottish state education, although some of us may have done so at different periods of time. The fact that the head teachers were not all based within the same institution removed some of the tensions relating to status within an organisation, that is, there was no manager subordinate relationship with the subsequent issues of power and authority to negotiate (Smyth and Holian 2008: 38). We were equals in terms of our roles, but it has to be acknowledged that I had power in my role as researcher.

This research could be described as ‘intimate’ insider research (Mercer 2007: 4) because I am known professionally to all of the participants. The ethical considerations in this research were significant and these were addressed in the ethics process, prior to undertaking the research. An obvious consideration was the fact I am clearly identifiable because the research carries my name, therefore the school I lead is also identifiable, even though it is never mentioned by name. Therefore, it may be possible for certain individuals to be identified by association and I have endeavored to represent such associates in a manner which pays due regard to their anonymity. In the data I have removed any potential identifiers from interview responses. I have had to give consideration to the extent to which I place myself, and those with whom I have worked, in a vulnerable position by writing an autoethnography. Tracy, cited by James (2012: 556), highlights the angst and trepidation which is commonly shared by those who adopt an autoethnographic approach because it involves ‘subjective experiences, hopes, fears and vulnerabilities’ (Tracy 2010: 842 cited by James 2012: 556). Sikes (2006: 106) indicates that insider research can also have career implications as well as implications for personal integrity. Perhaps more importantly, I have also had to give significant consideration to maintaining the anonymity of the other head teachers who participated in the research, protecting their vulnerabilities too. Thus I have removed any specific information which could perhaps identify them or their schools. This helps maintain my integrity as a researcher conducting insider research. However, what I have not been able to ensure, is the extent to which the participants have maintained their own anonymity. A number of other head teachers were aware that I have been undertaking this research and some participants have indicated their involvement.

In selecting an analytical autoethnographic methodology, insider research was necessary. As discussed earlier in this chapter, insider research was necessary to fulfill Anderson’s (2006: 378) key features of analytical autoethnography: complete member researcher status, analytical reflexivity, narrative visibility of myself, dialogue with my participants and commitment to theoretical analysis. This could not have been achieved without my insider status. Indeed, I concur with Toma (2000) who states:

The act of assessing what are good data- both in terms of what researchers find and how they find it- therefore becomes an evaluation of the product of the interaction between the researcher, the phenomenon, and people under consideration, and the data being gathered. Thus it makes sense that more

intense interactions strengthen end products in qualitative research. Getting closer to your subjects makes better qualitative data (Toma 2000: 179).

Toma's argument centres round the crucial aspect of having a genuine personal interest in the area being researched, both in terms of the subject matter and the people involved and subsequently engaging the participants in meaningful discussion. However, albeit I was close to my topic of research and the participants and therefore had the opportunity to generate rich data, in adopting this approach I have had to grapple with the double-edged sword of insider researcher, which Mercer (2007: 17) explores. This double-edgedness includes the advantages of access, rapport and shared frames of reference weighed against the challenges of the preconceived ideas of both the researcher and the participants, of each other and the issues. Hence Sikes' (2006) comment that: 'Methodologies which are unapologetically subjective ... are especially dodgy' (Sikes 2006: 112). I would contest that an awareness of these issues prior to the research being undertaken allowed me to put checks in place to address possible challenges to validity and reliability which could have arisen from my insider status. The use of prompts for discussion is one example of such a check. The prompts allowed me to indicate a general area for discussion but permitted the participant to respond as she saw fit. Giving the sample head teachers the opportunity to review the transcribed interview, provided a further check that they were happy with the record of their responses.

In presenting the case for insider academic research, Brannick and Coghlan (2007) state:

In considering insider-research projects, potential researchers, through a process of reflexivity, need to be aware of the strengths and limits of their pre-understanding so that they can use their experiential and theoretical knowledge to reframe their understanding of situations to which they are close (p72).

A potential limiting factor of my research could have been that my closeness to the participants might lead me to make assumptions as I was researching experiences of a post I hold amongst a group of head teachers I knew. However, I was aware of this possibility at the outset and this meant I was conscious of it throughout the interview process; like Smith (2012), I was aware that I had to manage potential bias within my research. Thus, the prompts for discussion were informed by the literature and were constructed to be fairly open-ended and non-directive, allowing each participant to respond in whichever way was important to her. Furthermore, as stated earlier, the analysis focused only on the

transcribed interviews and not on any other information I may have had. However, I have to acknowledge the fact that as I drew up the prompts for discussion I was essentially in control of the process. A crucial advantage of my ‘insider-ness’ in conducting this research was the fact I was able to articulate and use tacit knowledge (Brannick and Coghlan 2007: 60). However, by using the literature this knowledge has been extended and made explicit and has thus has been reframed as theoretical understanding, through analysis. This for me is the greatest strength of my approach: I have utilised insider experience in the pursuit of understanding, which will assist in supporting head teachers in their early headship experience and assisting those who prepare them.

The issue of closeness to research participants is further discussed by Mercer (2007: 4) who contrasts her experience of insider research in two different contexts, one where she and her views were well known to her participants and the other where she was less well known. In the former situation she states that she often commented on participants’ contributions in an attempt to establish rapport and that in so doing she at times put words in their mouths (2007: 9). She provides a useful overview of the debate around varying levels of researcher engagement with participants, ranging from a highly structured more distant approach (Brenner: 1981), which ensures all questions are answered and that the researcher does not reveal her thoughts or feelings, to a more personal approach with interviewers sharing their experience (Oakley 1981; Logan 1984) to build trust, and demonstrating the ‘reciprocal nature of the research process’ (Griffin 1985: 102, cited by Mercer 2007: 10). In my interview context, it would have been artificial and overly formal for me to maintain a non-responsive role with my participants, since we were already acquainted. Thus ‘interview reciprocity’ (Mercer 2007: 8), was very much part of my approach, with the prompts for discussion designed to open conversation and allow the participant to discuss anything she believed to be relevant to the question. Mercer (2007) also acknowledges Smith’s (1995: 15) view that a conversational approach can provide more extensive data in interview and this was important for me. Thus Drever (1995 in Mercer 2007: 12) states that: ‘people’s willingness to talk to you, and what people say to you, is influenced by who they think you are’ and further, Smith (2012: 490) notes: ‘Empathy and shared experiences should be acknowledged as positive attributes in the research relationship’. My contention is that the participants were more open with me because they knew me as a fellow head teacher (who had empathy for our shared experiences) and not as a detached researcher. The key issue was therefore establishing

rapport and engaging with the other head teachers without leading them. Engagement, I would argue, is crucial in gathering data and co-constructing knowledge through discussion. I would contend that the head teachers in this research contributed to the knowledge base of early headship experience by allowing me to use their stories and by engaging in dialogue with me to analyse and explore that experience together. Discussions during the interview process provided understanding and experience (data) that was then further analysed in the wider context of the experience of other head teachers and in the context of the relevant literature.

Cupido et al. (2007) indicate that managers conducting research within their own organisations need to consider the researcher, the organisation and the broader community. Whilst I was not conducting research within my own establishment, I was conducting it within my wider world of work. Therefore it was important to consider how I engaged with the research process and how it could impact on the school I lead as well as the local authority within which it is located. It was also important to consider how the research could affect the head teachers in the sample and their schools and how it could impact on the wider body of aspiring head teachers. The crux of the ethical dilemma was to ‘balance and leverage the interests and rights’ (Cupido et al. 2007: 2) of these groups. I took a number of steps to mitigate against any concerns the other head teachers may have had about how they were represented and about their anonymity. They were given an overview of the purpose of the research and an indication of the areas for discussion before giving their consent to participate. They were described as coming from one geographical area within Scotland and not identified by particular local authorities or by schools. They had an opportunity to review the transcripts of the interviews and make any required amendments or to clarify or expand on issues. No alterations were made. Also, as previously mentioned, any specific information, which may have been used to identify individuals was removed.

There is no doubting the fact that insider research has many ethical concerns. Some of these issues reflect the fact that, as Mercer (2007: 6) highlights the ease of access to data makes it difficult to know where research stops and life starts. Thus there were implicit ethical considerations, relating to the extent to which I could distinguish between conducting this research and carrying out my role as head teacher. I have interacted with the participants, outwith the interview situation, and had to ensure that the analysis I

completed, reflected the interview data and not any other knowledge I may have had. One further aspect of insiderness which I have had to consider is the fact that I have also been shaped by my experience so I may carry knowledge from sources of which I am no longer conscious. Finally, there are ongoing interactions with a range of head teachers who were not participants in my research; whilst not formally involved, I am aware that, in discussion, I often informally refer to my research or measure the experience someone describes against my findings.

3.9 Generating the data: my story

This section reviews how the data was gathered and organised for analysis. Having decided on a methodological approach I subsequently had to identify methods which would support the gathering of data. Following Ellis (1999) my first task was to write my own narrative of my journey to headship, thus providing my first set of data (appendix D, p190). This was subsequently analysed, in conjunction with the literature reviewed in chapter two in a first level analysis. The emerging themes important to the research questions were identified. The analysis of my story also forms part of my autoethnography. It too is a first person reflective piece of writing, which, in conjunction with the focused review of literature, subsequently informed the areas for discussion with the other head teachers and contributed to the shaping of the prompts for discussion. Any areas for possible discussion with the other head teachers are identified in the text using the notation: (HT Question). This notation took place subsequent to the review of literature.

The emerging themes were: preparation for the post of head teacher, the importance of emotional intelligence, growing into the role and metaphors of headship. These were then used to frame prompts for discussion (or frames for writing) for use with the other head teachers taking part in this research. Analysing my own story in terms of the literature was an important step in ensuring the prompts for discussion did not simply focus on matters arising from my own narrative. Smith's reflections on an earlier study (2012) used life history narratives to form the basis of a literature review and subsequent analysis and discussion; I used autoethnography to inform the literature review and shape prompts for discussion to elicit further data from other participants for analysis and discussion.

3.9.1 Data analysis part 1: reflecting on my autoethnography and identifying emerging themes

In analysing my autoethnography (appendix D, p190), I continued to adopt a reflective approach, immersing myself in the content but importantly, relating it to the literature, in what Ellis et al. (2011: 278) refer to as a ‘layered account’. This was especially so in terms of the literature relating to the socialisation process of new head teachers discussed in chapter two. It was important to do this as it allowed me to consider my lived experience in a wider context thus contributing to triangulation of the data. Without this, my autoethnography would have simply remained my experience. Important though that was, in relating that experience to the literature I discovered that although my individual experiences may have had unique aspects, they did relate broadly to the conceptualisation of socialisation outlined in chapter two. Prior to the literature review I was unaware of this concept of early headship as a process of socialisation, which I subsequently used in shaping the prompts for discussion. Therefore, the literature was important in the identification of emerging themes from my own experience, which could then be explored with the other head teachers. The emerging themes are noted in the following table.

preparation for the post of head teacher
the importance of emotional intelligence in establishing relationships and in handling emotions in myself and in others
growing into the role as the figurehead of the establishment and conducting myself accordingly
metaphors of headship

Table 1 Emerging themes

These themes are explored in more detail below, in a reflective analysis of the data in my autoethnography.

3.9.2 Preparation for the post of head teacher

One statement in my autoethnography struck me as particularly crucial concerning the meaning of headship,

It is a process; one of refinement and evolution where the person you are and the head teacher you become, grow and develop together.

Being a head teacher is more than a job description; it is an on-going developmental experience, often negotiating new and unknown territory. It is clear from my autoethnography that I had no career plan to become a head teacher:

Had I always wanted to become a head teacher? The answer would be no.

I subsequently discovered that this was similar to many female head teachers (Coleman 2007; Ozga 1993)¹¹. My career path clearly shows that for me promotion was about having greater influence and changing things for the better:

I felt I could change things for the better. Thereafter, my career journey was about extending that influence.

As I worked with people in more senior posts to mine, I developed a growing belief in my own capabilities. This was true up until the post of head teacher. At this stage, as I observed head teachers with whom I worked, I began to compile my list of things to do or not to do as a head teacher. This indicates the importance of experiential learning on my journey to headship. When I looked at what I saw head teachers doing I could not imagine myself being able to or even wanting to undertake that post.

There was no grand plan to become a head teacher. At each stage as I carried out my own responsibilities and worked with those at the next level I generally thought, "I could do that," and so would apply for a further promoted post. The only exception to this was head teacher. I looked on at head teachers I knew and thought, "I couldn't do that."

This perspective changed following a period of acting headship:

It was not until I had a period covering for an absent head teacher that I actually decided that I wanted to be a head teacher. This experience gave me the opportunity to carry out the responsibilities of the post in a "safe" environment and I found that I actually enjoyed

¹¹ This was one of the initial threads of gender, which resulted in subsequent consideration of this area in chapter six.

it and realised that I could do it in my own way, rather than trying to live up to images of what I thought a head teacher should be like!

This was important in building my confidence in my ability to operate at this level; I demonstrated, to myself more than anyone else, that I could at least complete the tasks required of a head teacher and, as my confidence grew, I could do it in my own way rather than attempting to emulate others. This experience was pivotal in encouraging me to move forward to headship, and as my autoethnography indicates, it was because I was able to carry out the functions of the head teacher in a secure environment where I was already well established as a depute head teacher. However, Draper and McMichael (2003: 189) indicate that although acting experience provides an opportunity for development and the accrual of skills which inform future career decisions, it can actually dissuade individuals from pursuing a permanent post because of its relatively unstructured and unsupported nature. In my experience, however, it was acting as ‘practicum’ where I had the opportunity to ‘learn by doing’ (Schön 1987: 37), which was important for me.

3.9.3 Emotional intelligence

The posts and responsibilities I have held and the various schools in which I have worked have all had some influence on my professional development and are part of the process, which has contributed to my on-going development as a head teacher. At each stage I was able to apply and enhance my professional skills and abilities in a new context, which allowed my confidence in my ability as a leader to grow. As my own narrative indicates, much of this relates to interpersonal skills and the ability to handle emotions in others as well as myself:

My early experiences of leadership in secondary schools were in situations where I was promoted over individuals with considerably longer service than me and in some cases considerable acting experience. Thus I had displaced people in securing new positions. These were challenging situations and I made a conscious decision not to get drawn into the emotion; I had no control over how others reacted and the only reaction I could control was my own.

Dealing with challenging situations, whilst not easy, further contributed to my self-belief, as did reflection and professional reading, within the context of the SQH. It was at this point I began to imagine what I might do as a head teacher. When I began the acting position, I felt some sense of security in knowing I had demonstrated the competences

required for the Standard for Headship... all I then had to do was successfully apply them in the acting context. I therefore had some sense of security derived from having completed a head teacher preparation programme (Cowie and Crawford 2008; Holligan et al. 2006; Rhodes et al. 2009).

Having been appointed, in establishing myself as a new head teacher, my first meetings were not only attempts to build rapport with the young people and staff, but were also an attempt to establish my own credibility as I laid down my professional credentials, as it were. The activity in my early days in post indicate the emphasis I placed on the importance of relationships and the time I invested was welcomed in the response I received from staff:

In those early days in post I had no ‘to do’ list so spent a great deal of time walking around the school meeting people. I had much positive feedback about my ‘manner’ in these early days and I believe that this created a sense of resonance in the school; staff were on-board and ready for change.

3.9.4 Growing into the role of figurehead

The first crisis situation within the school (the death of a pupil) occurred within two weeks of my arrival and although I may have felt some inner panic at how we would handle the situation as a school, and how I would handle it as a head teacher, I knew I had to be calm, well organised and clear in communication to ensure the normal life of the school carried on as much as possible. I am uncertain if I was aware of it at the time, but staff were making judgements at that point about my abilities as a head and on my handling of that particular situation. Fortunately, the feedback I received was positive but it could easily have gone the other way.

I knew communication was crucial and had a staff meeting as well as pupil assemblies. Members of staff later thanked me for briefing them in this way and this has now become an established pattern; if serious events take place, the staff expect to be called together.

It is interesting to reflect now, that much of the feedback related to the fact that the way in which I handled the situation was unlike the approach of my predecessor. Again, I was fortunate that this was a positive response. It could have been the opposite; because what I see now is that this was not necessarily about my handling of this particular situation on its

own, but about me and how I compared to my predecessor and how he may have reacted (Weindling and Dimmock 2006). Thus I was dealing with a legacy issue (my predecessor) without actually being aware of it at the time. My autoethnography also reveals my awareness that in those early days, everyone was getting the measure of me and that I was '*on show*' and that I was very conscious that I had to model the behaviour and values I expected, and at times I was presenting a calm exterior which did not mirror my internal state. Fidler and Atton (2008: 171) refer to this stage as 'opinion forming' when staff are forming their opinion of the new head teacher. Analysing my own journey also emphasises for me the need, as a head teacher, to accentuate the positive in dealing with many of the difficulties associated with the post.

3.9.5 Metaphors

In looking at the metaphors I associated with headship, my initial thoughts were around a journey, but as I explored in my autoethnography, this was too linear and straightforward to encapsulate my experience in headship. The three legged stool certainly helps portray my view of what was and is important in my own headship experience but the metaphor of headship as an adventure undoubtedly encapsulates the unpredictable nature of the role as well as the tremendous thrill it brings in seeing young people achieve and a school grow and develop an ethos under a shared vision.

3.10 Widening the scope: constructing prompts for discussion

On reflecting on my autoethnography, having reviewed the literature and having identified the emerging themes which were important in my own journey to headship, I considered how I could explore these with other head teachers. My own experience and the literature had indicated that the early days in post (the first year) were important in shaping how my headship developed (Fidler and Atton 2008; Reeves et al. 1997; Walker and Qian 2006; Weindling and Dimmock 2006), and that my experience prior to taking up headship was also important. I was interested in exploring to what extent this was also true for other head teachers. The prompts for discussion (or frames for writing) were divided in to three sections focusing on:

- preparation for headship;

- early days in post;
- being a head teacher;¹²

as these were important areas identified in my own experience and the literature.

3.11 Selecting participants

Since the aim of this research was to explore early experiences of headship in an analytical autoethnography, it was crucial to widen the scope beyond my own experience. I therefore required a number of head teachers who would be willing to share their journey into headship and their early experiences. For ease of access, the head teachers were drawn from within one geographical area in Scotland. A written invitation was sent to prospective participants and a plain language statement issued, along with a consent form¹³. Importantly, the consent form detailed the purpose of the research and ensured that the participants entered into the research freely and willingly, knowing and understanding what they were agreeing to take part in, and indicating that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time if they chose so to do. Unlike Smith (2012) all of the candidates were known to me in a professional context, so there was little variance in terms of my relationship to the participants.

To allow me to explore experience of headship over time, and following Ellis (1999), I therefore selected six female participants who covered a range of experience as head teacher. Five head teachers were interviewed and one elected to write her responses. This was a small sample but the intention was to use it to explore and interpret early headship experiences in some detail rather than seeking generalisable information. Given that I was researching early headship experience, it was important for me to compare my experience to that of a similar group of people thus the head teachers participating were all female. This was also important given the historical under representation of females at head teacher level in the secondary sector despite the notable increase in the appointment of women to these roles in recent years. This would be regarded as ‘purposive sampling’ (Cohen et al. 2007: 115) where I was seeking in-depth information from head teachers who were able to provide it.

¹² The prompts are printed in full in Appendix C

¹³ Appendix A and Appendix B

The selection of head teachers had a range of experience, covering a three-decade time span, as well as a range of time actually spent in post. This therefore afforded the opportunity to consider how early experiences of headship may have changed over time. I was in the middle group, in terms of service as head teacher. Their career journeys are outlined below.

3.11.1 Career journeys

Participant 1, Linda

Linda's journey to headship took her through four schools, before becoming a head teacher in her fifth school. She taught for seven years before voluntarily transferring to another local authority* where she went on to secure her first promoted post in her second school as APT Curriculum. She returned to her first local authority as a Principal Teacher Curriculum, and then secured the post of Faculty Head Curriculum, over an eight years period in her third school. During this time she was seconded for one year as a Curriculum Development Officer for the same authority. She became DHT in her fourth school and third local authority. She remained in this post for three years before moving on to headship within the same authority. She had been in post for two years, at the time of interview. Linda's journey to headship took approximately 24 years, with three years in senior management.

Participant 2, Debbie

Debbie had been a head teacher for just over a year at the time of interview. Her journey to headship had been through pastoral care. She secured her first promoted post as APT Guidance, two years into her teaching career, subsequently becoming PT Guidance and behaviour support coordinator. Her experience included a secondment working on enterprise and citizenship, as well as being an associate member of her school's SMT. Debbie had extensive experience of leading authority working groups and for six years undertook whole school responsibilities which would generally have been those of an AHT. Subsequently, she secured an appointment as DHT in her second school, after 18 years in her first school. This was in a second local authority. Although her promoted

posts were pastoral, Debbie continued to be heavily involved in curriculum development. She subsequently secured her headship in a third school in the same authority. Debbie's journey to headship took just over 22 years, with just over two years as a substantive DHT.

Participant 3, Karen

Karen also came to headship through the pastoral route. She was a teacher for seven years, including a period acting APT Guidance to cover a maternity leave before her first substantive promoted post of APT Guidance in her second school, a post which she held for seven years. She was subsequently, PT Guidance in her second school for three years. She spent ten years in these roles before promotion to AHT (six years) and subsequently formal DHT (three years). After 9 years in senior management she moved authority and became head teacher in her third school. She has been in post for six years. Karen's journey to headship took approximately 26 years.

Participant 4, Martha

Martha taught for three years before having a career break and returning to work part time, in her second school, after four years. During her career break she did further study as well as working as a tutor for a correspondence course. She worked part-time for six years before returning to work full time in the same school, securing a Principal Teacher Curriculum post in her third school after five years. After seven years she became an AHT in her fourth school and second local authority where she also undertook a secondment. She remained in this post for five years before securing promotion to senior DHT within this authority. This was her fifth school where she worked for three years. Her promotion to headship was to a third authority. Martha's journey to headship (excluding her career break) took approximately 28 years. Martha refers to herself as a 'late starter' in terms of promotion but having secured her first promoted post she was a head teacher after 15 years, having been a senior manager for eight and has currently been in post for five years.

Participant 5, Rosemary

Rosemary's career saw her working in six schools across three authorities, before assuming substantive headship in her seventh school and fourth local authority. She taught

for two years before moving authority and after eighteen months was made APT, remaining in this school for a total of four years, when she secured appointment as a PT Curriculum in her third school. After two years she had a career break and returned to a different PT Curriculum post in her fourth school, during which time she had a further career break abroad. She remained in this post for approximately 8 years when she was appointed AHT to her fifth school, a post she held for five years before her promotion to senior DHT in her sixth school. After five years, including a period acting, she moved authority and was appointed head teacher in her seventh school and was in post for 10 years. Rosemary's journey to headship took approximately 29 years, including career breaks and she was a senior manager for ten years

Participant 6, Maria

Maria taught for two years before transferring to another authority, where she was appointed APT Guidance after one year. She was subsequently appointed PT Curriculum, in the same school two years later and this was a post which she held for nine years. She was appointed AHT in her third school and moved into headship in another authority after six years in senior management. Her journey to headship took approximately 20 years. Maria was head teacher for 17 years.

*The term local authority has been used to represent different educational areas. At times these would have been known as divisions.

3.12 Gathering the head teachers' stories

I wanted to consider if there were any similarities or differences in my story and that of other head teachers, therefore I had to find a suitable means of gathering their stories. Although our contexts of headship were different, as were our personalities, I wanted to elucidate what similarities and differences there were in our experience of early headship. As I had had time to reflect on my own story, it was important that the other head teachers had the required time and space to share their stories, without the influence of others so I chose not to use focus groups. I also rejected my initial thoughts of involving the head teachers in reading each other's stories and subsequently discussing these as a group as

losing anonymity may have resulted in less candid and open responses. It was important that each individual had the opportunity for ‘intense’ interaction without being inhibited or potentially influenced by the stories of others (Fontana and Frey 2005: 705). Continuing to follow the recommendations of Ellis (1999), I adopted an ‘intensive interview’ approach which had been suggested by Ellis to one of her students researching breast cancer survivors. This approach involved having five or six participants and conducting individual interviews as interactive conversations. The group was this size because the interviews had the possibility of becoming intense. Provision was also made for individuals to have an opportunity to write their story rather than discuss it. This was the model I too chose to follow as it provided a method of generating rich data, and also allowed a written response, should any of the participants prefer this approach. An early trial of the prompts for discussion, including one written response and one interview with transcription, indicated that there were no major issues with the questions or the areas for discussion. The recorded interview did, however, highlight the need for the interview to take place in a quiet area, away from background noise. All of the subsequent interviews took place in the head teachers’ offices, other than the retired heads, who both came to my office.

Given that the head teachers in this sample were drawn from a pre-established group of female head teachers, who knew each other within a professional, and for some social context, the ideas suggested by Ellis to her student were developed for my own context. As I was also a member of this pre-existing group, the idea of ‘intensive interviews’ as ‘interactive conversation’ seemed appropriate (Ellis 1999: 679; Ellis et al. 2011: 279) as the other head teachers viewed me as a colleague rather than a researcher. I had also had many previous conversations with them on a range of subjects, thus a formalised interview situation would possibly have introduced a layer of artificiality into the discussion. Therefore, using prompts for discussion, rather than a strict interview schedule provided a method which allowed the discussion to cover general areas, but also gave participants freedom to focus on any specific areas if they chose to. By adhering to the prompts I endeavored to ensure some consistency across the interviews, whilst allowing for individual stories to emerge.

From my epistemological stance, where I believe knowledge is gained from experience and co-created with others, this type of interview as method was a good fit. In my

constructivist and participatory paradigm, the interview is a heuristic process and not designed simply to transfer information. An interview is, as Kvale (1996) states:

... an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data (Kvale, 1996 in Cohen et al. 2007: 355).

Oppenheim (1992), cited by Cohen et al. (2007: 354) suggests that exploratory interviews are not designed to gather facts and figures but to discover and develop hypotheses. He further contends that this type of interview is particularly suited to topics, which may provoke emotion and that it supports ‘candour, richness, depth, authenticity and honesty’ (Oppenheim, 1992 in Cohen et al. 2001: 354). The interview method I adopted supported the co-construction of knowledge with the head teachers in the sample through the exploration of our shared experience of early headship. It did this by providing the opportunity to discuss early experiences, initially emerging from my autoethnography and literature review, to generate rich data. Fontana and Frey (2005: 697) discuss empathetic interviewing where the interviewer ‘becomes an advocate and partner in the study, hoping to be able to use the results to advocate social policies’. As a researcher carrying out the same role as the head teachers in this research I would be regarded as an empathetic interviewer with the intention of influencing support available for head teachers in their early years in post, as well as demystifying headship for prospective head teachers.

The prompts for discussion were influenced by my experience and the literature so although the interviews were open, by dint of framing the points for discussion I was, to a large degree, in control of the interview. The interviews were not totally open ended. This was a pragmatic decision: time is precious for head teachers, therefore it was important to have some structure to the interview and this was provided by the prompts for discussion. The prompts also provided an agenda for the interview and allowed the heads to prepare beforehand if they wished. I was therefore in control of the interview but would contend that the co-construction of the data lay in the sharing of our experience, which subsequently generated the data. Smith (2012: 488) highlights the fact that it is difficult to claim equality or collaboration when the researcher is in a position of power. Like Smith, collaboration was achieved by returning the transcripts to the participants for their comment but ultimately I had control over how the data was used. Therefore, it could be argued that the extent to which the head teachers were co-creators of knowledge was

limited. I would contend, however, that because I was also a head teacher we were exploring our shared experience of the early days in post and because I was generating questions from my own experience, examined through the lens of the literature, the other head teachers were adding to this knowledge base through the consideration of their own experience and to this extent we were collaborating. To ensure reliability and to maintain authenticity for the participants, the construction of the prompts for discussion was crucial as they had to be open-ended. This was also important to counter the potential criticism that I asked questions to which I knew the answer.

The semi-structured interview format provided scope for an ‘interactive conversation’ which seemed to come close to the natural professional conversations we were accustomed to having as head teachers. Together with the writing frame, the prompts allowed each head teacher to reflect on her leadership journey, within a broadly similar context, that is the same prompts were offered to all of the participants. Adhering to the prompts helped guard against information I had, outwith the interview situation, intruding into the data. Head teachers, therefore, had the choice of whether they wished to be interviewed or write their own story. This was important because an element of choice gave the head teachers the option as to how they wished to tell their story. I was aware that I personally benefited from writing about my journey and thus did not want to preclude others from having this experience by insisting on interviews. In the event, only one person chose to write. All of the participants were sent the questions in advance of the interview, allowing them time to reflect on the answers. Some made notes in preparation for the interview. The interviews produced a set of narratives, which were subsequently analysed.

Given that I knew all of the participants, I already had a pre-established rapport with them which facilitated open communication and allowed the head teachers to talk freely. This is not uncommon in autoethnography. Ellis et al. (2011: 281) indicate that autoethnographers ‘maintain interpersonal ties with their participants’. However, it was important that the prompts were followed to ensure some consistency in discussion and to temper the familiarity we already had, which could possibly have skewed the data. For example, it was important that I did not make assumptions about what the participants were saying and it was therefore important to check understanding and to ensure the participants were happy with the discussions. The conversations were therefore taped, transcribed and returned to the participants for comment, alteration or reconsideration.

The narratives produced from the transcriptions of the interviews were subsequently analysed. There were no additions made to the transcripts or to the written response.

Bochner (in Ellis & Bochner 2000: 746) claims ‘...personal narrative is part of the human, existential struggle to move life forward’ and whilst the narratives and reconstructed accounts recounted by the head teachers in this research may not be accurate factual descriptions of what happened at a precisely dated historical point in time, the reflection, interpretation and narration of them, constitute meaning which is important to the person recalling the experience. This is crucial since it assists in reflection and sense making of particular experiences. This reflection is important in making sense of particular experiences and in deepening the understanding of practice. It will also be relevant to the wider audience of those considering headship, new head teachers or those responsible for developing headship programmes. Thus the personal narratives unpicked in this research will benefit the development and support of new and aspiring head teachers. Following Rorty (1979), Bochner also contends:

No strong case could be made that human knowledge was independent of the human mind. All truths were contingent on the describing activities of human beings. No sharp distinction could be made between facts and values. If you couldn't eliminate the influence of the observer on the observed, then no theories or findings could ever be completely free of human values. The investigator would always be implicated in the product. So why not observe the observer, focus on turning our observation back on ourselves? And why not write more directly, from the source of your own experience? Narratively (Ellis & Bochner 2000: 747).

The contribution this research has made to the field lies in the fact that it examines the early experience of headship, through the narratives of a group of head teachers and in the context of the literature outlined in chapter two, and uses this analysis to make recommendations for headship preparation and the support of novice head teachers.

3.13 Data analysis part 2: synthesising the data

The stories of the head teachers were the core of this research and I wanted to maintain the centrality of individual head teacher experience whilst analysing the data. Following Cohen et al. (2008: 368) I aimed to generate natural units of meaning, categorise these and

subsequently interpret the data. However, whilst the experiences of the head teachers were as individuals, I wanted to know if there was any commonality to that experience across the group. I firstly analysed each head teacher's interview individually. They were analysed after all of the interviews were completed to ensure the interviews were not influenced by the analysis. I read and re-read interviews, listening to them several times, steeping myself in the information and reflecting on it and referencing it to my own experience and to the literature. I highlighted and annotated sections of the transcripts. I chose to analyse the data manually as being a member of the same group as my participants meant that at times we spoke in professional 'restricted code' or at times, informal language. My analysis was interpretive rather than numerical, in that I was not counting the frequency of responses. To facilitate the analysis I used a coding system, which identified themes broadly, but not uniquely, within the three sections of the prompts for discussion. This pre-ordinate categorisation (Cohen et al. 2007: 475) was the starting point for the analysis.

Section	Coding
Preparation	
The journey to headship	Prep (preparation)
	TP (tipping point)
Early days	
The first meeting	ID (building identity)
	Cred (establishing credibility)
Legacy issues	L (legacy)
	Crisis
Being a head teacher	
	E (emotion)
	EI (emotional intelligence)
	Persp (maintaining perspective)
	Cop (coping)
	Chall (challenge)
	M (metaphors)
	Ess (the essence of headship)

Table 2 Coding of transcripts

The coding was used on individual transcripts and these were then grouped together, thematically, in tabular form to allow me to look for any similarities and differences in responses. In adopting this method the ‘richness and context-groundedness’ (Cohen et al. 2007: 481) of the data was retained to maintain the emphasis on the experiential nature of the head teachers’ stories. Furthermore, the use of tables in a systematic analysis allowed me to ensure that all of the participant voices were represented to guard against ‘insider blindness’ (Taylor 2011: 15).

3.13.1 Generating categories

In chapter two I highlighted the fact that the literature indicates that there are many factors which impact on the early socialisation of head teachers, including: professional identity, conception of the role, experience, preparation programmes, personal attributes (including emotional intelligence) and the handling of early critical incidents. The prompts for discussion used in the head teacher interviews reflected these and were framed in three sections: Preparation for Headship, Early Days as head teacher and Being a Head Teacher. From the interviews, I took all of these areas and grouped them into four broad headings:

1. The Journey to Headship;
2. Establishing Credibility as a Head Teacher;
3. Building Identity as a Head Teacher;
4. The Emotions of Headship.

To allow me to make the data manageable, I used tables, identifying the participants by pseudonym and noting each participant’s response accordingly. The tabular data was considered under broad headings and subdivided into more specific categories relating to the research questions:

1. The Journey to Headship
 - a. constructing self as head teacher
 - b. role models
 - c. head teacher preparation programmes

2. Establishing Credibility as Head Teacher
 - a. the first meeting with staff
3. Building Identity as Head Teacher
 - a. early crisis situations
 - b. the impact of legacy issues
4. The Emotions of Headship
 - a. emotions in self
 - b. metaphors and figurative language
 - c. emotional labour
 - d. coping strategies
 - e. emotions in others
 - f. emotional leadership
 - g. the essence of headship

I analysed the contents of the tables looking for similarities, differences and patterns and considered these in the context of the relevant literature. This has contributed to the structure of the analysis in the next chapter, which considers the head teacher's responses in each of these areas.

Chapter 4 Discussion of findings

This chapter discusses the broad themes in early headship development identified at the conclusion of the last chapter. These include:

- the journey to headship;
- establishing credibility;
- building identity and
- the emotions of headship.

The chapter contains a conceptual map (p134), summarising the key features of head teacher development pre and post appointment. As outlined in the previous chapter, the data in this research was gathered from my own early experience of headship, the literature and the experience of a group of other head teachers. As discussed in section 3.13, the stories of head teachers were the core of this research and I wanted to maintain the centrality of these individual head teacher experiences whilst analysing the data. To do this I at times selected lengthy quotes from the head teachers which captured the issue being discussed but also gave some sense of the individual. However, whilst the experiences of the head teachers were as individuals, I wanted to know if there was any commonality to that experience across the group so at other times I use shorter quotes which further illustrate the themes. Further quotes illustrating the main themes are listed in tabular form in appendices E-J.

4.1 Journey to headship: constructing self as head teacher

In response to a specific question, about whether they always wanted to be a head teacher, all of the participants were quite categorical that this was not something they had always planned (appendix E, p196). This is illustrated by Linda, who had been in her post for two years at the time:

No. I did not. I never really thought about being a head teacher. I think when I started teaching that was just what I focused on in terms of being a good classroom teacher and then opportunities rose for promotion or I felt I was ready for promotion and I guess that is just the pattern I have gone into. When I first got a depute's post I thought I would never be a head teacher because it seemed like such a scary job, but here I am a few years later as a head teacher. I started off in Business Education as a class room teacher. That

was my first job, and then wanted a change. I had been there for about eight years and saw some jobs. I do not know if you remember, you used to be able to move jobs...Then I got the chance to be an Assistant Principal Teacher. Then I was looking for a PT post because I knew that I could do it... I got a job in ninety eight as Principal Teacher.

Maria indicated that she too had not always wanted to be a head teacher:

I was trying to think about this last night and I thought, 'Was it?' And I thought, 'No, it wasn't'. I think I never actually had either the ambition or even the self-confidence to think that's what I wanted to do. I knew I always wanted to be a teacher; I was quite comfortable with that and I suppose in the early stages of my career I thought, 'This is it. This is where the rubber meets the road. This is it; I'll love it – just love it.' Loved the kind of total immersion in the kids and what they were doing. But I did remember, even early on – maybe it was because I taught French – I always knew that the content of what I was teaching in the east end of Glasgow was maybe not the most relevant thing in these children's lives. So although I wanted them to do well in my subject, and I wanted them to pass the exam or whatever, I also knew that what I was doing there was more about trying to create young people with a positive attitude, you know, all the words that we just take as clichés now. So no, I didn't always want to do that. From there though what happened for me was that there was sudden expansion in the guidance system. And at the time I thought, 'Should I do something like that? And I quite liked that but I realised that I'd have more control over what was actually happening in the classroom, which is where I thought it was really most important of all if I went the other route as well; if I went for the curriculum job. So eventually that's what happened.

Given that the responses of the head teachers to the question as to whether they had always wanted to be head teachers were emphatically negative, there is then the question as to the tipping point, which ultimately encourages an individual to apply for the post of head teacher. From the data, there are many factors that could influence this, such as external circumstances or a change in self-belief. Being a member of an SMT seems to play an important role. All of the head teachers in this study indicated that they became familiar with some of the tasks undertaken by head teachers when they were SMT members and it seems that at this point they began to consider the role as a possibility for themselves, as they carried out their own duties as deputies and observed what their head teachers did. Four of the participants highlighted that once they became a member of an SMT they began considering the possibility that they could become a head teacher. For some this may have been about extending their influence as again indicated by Linda:

I realised the important job a head teacher does and I realised the scope and ability, or the opportunities you have to change things.

Or, for Rosemary:

...very early on in being an AHT I thought, yes I'm glad I did this. At first I hated it, and then I thought I quite like this... You can influence more than just a small group or department... and I saw these men and I thought, I could do that.

This comment also reflects the under representation of women at head teacher level. For others, the encouragement of members of their SMT, in terms of positive feedback was important in encouraging their journey into headship, as was the SQH, as Karen indicated:

I think that doing the SQH while I was depute/then formal depute made me realise that I could do it, and feedback from colleagues... encouraged me to apply for posts.

The SQH and encouragement from colleagues were also important for Martha:

When I was a senior depute it dawned on me that I could actually be a head teacher. That's when I did the SQH and my head teacher was really supportive of me and allowed me to do lots of things.

There are therefore a number of factors emerging from the data that encouraged participants to make the transition to headship:

- experience at SMT level;
- encouragement from others;
- headship preparation programmes;
- the desire to have wider influence.

4.1.1 Role models

Like many females, the head teachers in this research did not have direct career plans to become head teachers (Coleman 2007; Ozga 1993). The question therefore arises as to what eventually made them apply for this post. From the data it seems that tipping points included the encouragement of colleagues and the completion of a qualification such as the SQH which contributed to their confidence and belief that this was indeed a job they could do. In constructing their identity as head teachers, role models both positive and negative, seem to have had an important impact, as noted by all of the participants. This was highlighted, particularly with regards to the behaviour of these role models towards other people. All of the participants commented on behaviours they had observed in head teachers, which they would not wish to emulate. Linda perhaps captures the important

influence of other head teachers on a prospective head teacher's construction of her identity:

There were three head teachers that I observed and each of them had strengths and each of them had areas for improvement... I try and focus on the good bits in each of them to try and keep me focused on how I behave as a head teacher.

This was echoed by Martha who stated:

I learned different things from all of them. Sometimes the impact was that I would model their behaviour. This was because I thought their behaviour was right and/or I noticed that their behaviour had a good outcome... Sometimes it was clear to me that I would not model their behaviour- either because I thought it was wrong, or because I noticed that their behaviour had a poor outcome... I was influenced by their values.

Debbie commented at length on what she learned from role models and how this has influenced her behaviour as a head teacher:

The importance of relationships with all stakeholders, the positive aspect, so the positive role models, people who have demonstrated their commitment to relationships with pupils, staff, parents and the wider community.

Also integrity, how important that is as a head teacher. If you get that wrong once, and just watching that whole agenda and I've seen that in positive and negative role models. People having very strong integrity, and people not; and for me, I watch constantly. I watch people and I try to learn from them. So integrity, calmness in very difficult situations, positive role models have taught me that. Be very calm in difficult situations and don't rush in to making decisions.

Also respect and honesty, again positive role models. Head teachers who are able to get the best from their staff to empower them and give them the freedom to spread their wings. Also my previous head teacher pushing me out of my comfort zone, so that for me is what I want to do to my staff. I want to give them the opportunity to go out there 'cause I know myself how empowering that was to me as an aspiring head teacher.

However, what is also clear from the data is that some of the participants also learned what not to do as a head teacher, particularly concerning conduct towards others as Debbie noted:

I've seen Heads maybe behaving in a manner that was [sigh] very challenging towards a member of staff and just looking at how you can devastate people's career and also their home lives and their family lives, so for me, but that was a learning curve for me because I can be quite forceful and I can be quite direct but again reflecting on how I treat people and how I expect people to treat me.

The data shows that working with head teachers, therefore, provides an opportunity to observe, at close range, the actions of head teachers and the impact of these actions on others. Three head teachers specifically mentioned this. Debbie quoted above talks about the impact on the individual. Linda talked about a negative role model of observing a situation dealt with in such a way that '*... people feel devalued*'. Noting the impact on principal teachers' meetings of a head teacher who had an autocratic and directive style, Karen commented:

My first head teacher was very autocratic and directive and nobody would say a word at principal teacher meetings because if it was wrong or you said something that was incorrect you were shredded. What did that teach me? That's not how I want to be, that's not what I would be comfortable [with]. So there were things I learnt from head teachers that I thought, 'No, I never ever want to be like that.'

There were, however, positives to be learned, in terms of relationships and procedures, as Rosemary stated about her head teacher:

She taught me the nuts and bolts of good systems and procedures and the importance of relating to staff and kids and parents.

Additionally, learning how to approach situations in a variety of ways, was an important developmental point for Maria:

And what I learned from him was more about there's more than one way to go at this; you don't need to put your head down and run at it... and that was really good for me, to learn to be patient.

Whether the head teachers were consciously constructing their own identity as heads while observing their previous head teachers in action is not clear but once in post, the head teachers were able to articulate ways in which they believed their previous school leaders had influenced them both positively and negatively. Debbie and Martha also cited other role models who had influenced them, such as members of the directorate:

I worked with lots of people in the authority, especially when I was in [my previous authority] and... you're directorate. People who maybe gave me the confidence, maybe gave me the opportunity to be involved so you're directorate have such an important role to aspiring head teachers and also new head teachers coming in the door.

At HTs meetings I usually find myself comparing the meeting (Director talking to HTs) with our Leadership and Management Team meetings (me talking to PTs/SMT). Some HTs

meetings a few years ago definitely influenced the way I run LMT meetings. I work very hard to structure the meetings so that the 'them and us' mentality is minimised. Also, [the director's] constant focus on children is influential when I am planning presentations, e.g. at in-service days/staff meetings.

Tutors on the SQH, as was the case for Linda, were also influential:

I think, if you are talking about when I was learning through the SQH if there was somebody, the writer, who was significant it would be Michael Fullan and his leadership. I got an awful lot out of that in managing change and just what to consider when you are doing these things. Leadership of people and working with people is really important to me and I think if you get that bit right you can get most of it right and if you make mistakes people are supportive of you because you have got really good relationships. I think Margaret Martin actually on the SQH, there was a couple of things that she said that just hit you right between the eyes and it was about you are paid to make difficult decisions, you are paid to be brave you are not paid to not take things forward and that always stuck with me. It is if you want to do this kind of job then you need to face up to the reality of the job, and you need to be able to articulate your view in difficult situations and make decisions that you know that not everybody is going like, but if they know why you have made the decision then you get their respect from that and the agreement to move forward, so I would say that they were probably two quite significant people.

Michael Fullan was also mentioned as an influential author by Karen, as indicated in the next section.

4.1.2 Head teacher preparation programmes

The data suggests that constructing themselves as head teachers, as opposed to deputies, began for many of the participants during the SQH, which four of the participants had completed. The other two head teachers had completed other qualifications as their appointments predated or coincided with the introduction of the SQH. Undertaking the SQH provided the space and structure, which allowed participants to reflect on themselves, headship and leadership. Debbie gave a detailed response indicating how she had benefitted from the programme:

The biggest thing for me is that SQH taught me to be a reflective practitioner and not to rush into making decisions. I also enjoyed looking at the theory of leadership and looking at, there was an awful lot of theory which I found quite challenging to start with but in actual fact when you get into difficult situations, actually to pull on the theory part of it is actually I found really useful but the reflective practitioner and helping others to become reflective practitioners, I think was the key part for me. Also becoming much more politically aware. I thought I was really good at things until I put out my 360 degree

analysis and then it was really helpful when people were honest and then you actually see how others see you. For me to develop and to change my ways and to seek improvement, for me that was really useful. Also engaging with people from other authorities and other schools and seeing how things work in other places and knowing that one system in one school doesn't necessarily work in another. So gaining that experience from talking to like-minded people. Also being like a life long learner, that very much gives that impression to people and people understand that obviously I'm striving to improve all the time and to learn and develop new things.

Reflection, looking at the theory of leadership and becoming more politically aware, as well as opportunities for networking were crucial points for Debbie. This was echoed by Karen, who also added that it provided greater understanding of the role and encouraged her to read:

It forced me to look at, reflect on myself as a professional, it gave me a framework because of all the skills in the areas that you would expect it to be able to deliver on. It gave me a framework, I suppose, for understanding something that although you have some experiences in this, as an assistant head or a depute you actually don't realise what it's all about when you're at the end of it. So I suppose it gave me that.

I found the SQH one of the first things apart from the certificate in guidance I'd done, and the diploma in guidance, that actually was applied learning, and so I was actually learning and using, learning and using, and I think that probably suits me.

I also thought that the project based work that you had to do where you had an internal assessor and an external assessor was absolutely super and that helped me a lot because I was able to take something that I would be running with in my remit... I suppose the other thing it did for me was force me to read, and when I had two children and a full-time job that was something that I didn't find particularly easy to do. So I was forced into that, and because of that I then discovered people who had never lectured me, like John MacBeath and Michael Fullan and whatever, who just speak such sense as far as I'm concerned, so it helped me with the reading as well.

Further comments on the value of the SQH related to the understanding it gave of the strategic or political aspects of the role of head teacher as highlighted by Linda:

I think the sort of main issue it had an impact in was political awareness, I was not really up to speed on what was happening at the authority level and the influence that councillors could have on decision, I was still very much working at, I think, quite an operational level, and I think the SQH helped me to sort of come out of that and look at a strategic, have a strategic vision and focus rather than just this is your job, you know that your strategy for your remit, but it was to look beyond that and to see the bigger picture I think. That was one of the main things that the SQH helped with.

The blending of theory and practice, was outlined by Martha:

The SQH helped me to think and plan, applying theory to practice. It probably improved my skills and knowledge of evaluation... The SQH also made me think more about my educational values. It helped me clarify these in my own mind.

It is perhaps not surprising that comments such as these were made, as they reflect the analysis of the role of head teacher within the ‘Standard for Headship’, where there is considerable emphasis on strategic vision and values. At a point where they were participating in the SQH, before becoming heads themselves, the head teachers in this study were being challenged to reflect and articulate their views on headship and leadership. The tasks undertaken, and the discussion and reflection with other SQH candidates, required prospective head teachers to articulate their vision and values. If these early experiences begin to allow head teachers a platform on which to consider themselves as head teachers, the question arises as to how and when they begin to construct themselves as head teacher. In preparation for interview for a head teacher’s post, time is invested in thinking themselves into the school and visualising themselves as head teacher of the school for which they are being interviewed. Martha said:

At each interview, members of the panel were in no doubt that I truly wanted to serve their school.

It is possible, then, that when they are considering applying for a post they are already beginning to think of themselves as head teachers. Maria described how she believed her skill set matched the school to which she was appointed:

If ever a school needed all the things that I’m talking about, this is it. This is the one... I just felt it was tailor-made for me and although I hadn’t been thinking about making a move right then, I thought...I’m just going to go for it.

4.2 Establishing credibility as head teacher: the first meeting with staff

Once in post, there is the important issue of how head teachers build their professional identity. From the data, establishing their credibility as a head teacher seems to be important in this process. One of the important elements in this is the first meeting with the staff of their new school. There appear to be two key aspects to this for the head teachers in this study. The first was to convey some sense of themselves as people, demonstrating effective interpersonal skills and some sense of their own personality and

the second was to establish their credibility, by briefly outlining their career journey or their qualifications. That is, they were demonstrating they had earned the right to become a head teacher, not least because of their previous experience. This was consistent across all of the head teachers, as outlined in appendix F. This is illustrated in the following quote from Martha who was in post for five years at the time of interview:

The head teacher had been ill and was not in school, so I was able to go through all the paperwork and get a feel for the school. I wanted to project myself as someone who had credibility (because I had heard that one of the PTs had addressed a visiting speaker with the comment 'Are you qualified to speak to us about this?') I also wanted staff to get a sense that I knew about the school. And also that I was a listener.

During the summer I happened to meet a lot of staff who were in the school and I was friendly and interested in them. A week before the first in-service day, we had an SMT meeting and fine-tuned the programme for the two in-service days (they had been prepared by my predecessor), and gave a greater focus to learning, including having some staff share practice with colleagues. I wanted to send the message that learning was important, and that I knew that some very good practice was going on in the school, and that it should be shared.

At the meeting I said, 'My name is Martha Brown and as of five minutes ago, I am the new head teacher'. Then everyone cheered and applauded. A nice welcome, you might say. I told them three things: Briefly about my job history and academic history (so that they would know that I knew the theory at least); that over the summer I had discovered loads of evidence about great things happening in the school, but I was concerned that not enough people 'out there' new about it; that I was committed to partnership working-pupils, staff, parents, social workers, health, etc. etc., and that I genuinely felt that we must all work together to keep improving the school.

Debbie spoke of her rehearsal of her speech which underlines some of the nervous anxiety felt by the head teachers at this first meeting:

I was turning up on the first day and I rehearsed and rehearsed my speech what I was going to say so I knew it perfectly. I'd learned it for six weeks,

But also the importance of getting the speech right, because as Debbie again said:

*... You only get one shot at this, you're not going to get another shot to do this again in *** [name of school removed].*

This was similar to Rosemary:

You've spent hours and hours thinking about what you're going to say and how you're going to say it, and I knew that it had to be just right, because there was a lot of alienated staff in there ... who had been there for years, were complacent, were very happy thank you very much with the way things were, so there was a lot of staff in there that weren't too happy.

As they built their identity as head teachers, the new heads wanted to show that they had good interpersonal skills, for example, in the way they dealt with having as a member of the SMT, someone who had been an unsuccessful applicant for the head teacher post. They wanted to demonstrate their consideration for the school and their colleagues. This will be discussed more fully in section 4.4 on the impact of legacy issues. They also, however, illustrated their interpersonal skills by showing sensitivity in choosing when to say or do something and reined in their initial enthusiasm for immediate change, as summed up by Maria:

... The important thing is I've now got to go in here and really let them know, allay their fears and also to give them some kind of notion about what kind of person has come. And I thought, 'I'm not going to set out my agenda for change or anything else. I'm just going to go in and present myself as a person who is looking forward to meeting them all... I said that I would be round all the departmental meetings, said that I would hope to meet and get to know each and every one of them and hear the things that they like about the school, their hopes for the future, and (I said) 'I'm going to be listening a lot to what you're saying because this is a tremendous school; it's got a fabulous history and I want to build on that'. I kind of restrained myself, although I had in my head a thousand things I wanted to say about, we'll do this, we'll do that, we'll do the next thing.

Karen highlighted the fact that she had to accept that 100% was not always appropriate, and at times she had to support others in doing something she could possibly have done better herself, in order to build capacity :

Sometimes I've got to help others navigate through and I think there's a lot of frustration can build up because you could have done it faster, better, but you also know that you're not going to be here one day and you need to create sustainability in your organisation and therefore you have to develop others, it's the only way it works. So I suppose that for me was one of the hardest things, and letting go of the fact that 100% wasn't actually appropriate. To get it right all the time... I had to be a bit more chilled about the fact that I would actually have better relationships, and therefore a better long term prognosis as a leader if I actually ... accepted that, rather than try to drive people on the way I would drive myself on.

This was echoed by Rosemary, who commented on the fact that the head teacher may know the direction in which the school has to go, but for successful forward movement an

appropriate pace has to be set, even though it generated a degree of frustration for the individual head teacher:

Sometimes you know where the school has to go, and you've got to take people with you but you've also got to be careful they don't stop you getting to that, and I think sometimes in my headship I always would have wanted to go a lot faster than I was able to go, but I didn't have the capacity [off staff] to let me get there. So I think I got frustrated a lot of the time and impatient

For Martha, this also meant not immediately promoting excellence:

I was probably too worried staff would think I was criticising them for not being excellent enough. It wasn't until the STACS¹⁴ analysis came out that I shared with staff that the school was actually under-achieving.

Thus from the data it seems that in establishing credibility, new head teachers were particularly keen to show they had effective interpersonal skills and that these were demonstrated in their early days in post by their sensitivity to their new environment.

4.3. Building identity as head teacher: early crisis situations

The head teachers in this study were conscious that ‘all eyes were on them’ during their early days in post and of the fact that they had only one opportunity to make a first impression. Early in their headship, most of the head teachers interviewed had a crisis situation to deal with which had an impact on how their headship developed or how their school community and the wider local authority perceived them as a school leaders. For many the outcome of the crisis was positive, particularly their handling of the situation, which in turn meant they were perceived in a favourable light by their staff, the authority and the wider community. It should be acknowledged, however, that the heads may have chosen to outline situations which did have a positive, rather than a negative outcome. Nevertheless these were situations which were in their view significant as Karen noted succinctly:

You come out the other end... they had, I suppose, more confidence and respect in me as a leader... They trust you.

¹⁴ STACS refers to Standard Tables and Charts and is the data used in the analysis of examination results. STACS are a key element of benchmarking in Scottish Schools.

Despite the warm reception Martha received at her first meeting, an early crisis where her motive to do something which would benefit the staff backfired:

In my previous schools, some of the Staff Absence budget had been used to employ invigilators who would supervise the prelims. I now realise that the reason there had been money available to do this, was that the budget would never be fully spent, because (1) it was often very difficult to find supply teachers, and (2) no-one mentioned or seemed to know about any arrangement whereby a supply teacher would be brought in after a certain number of days' absence. I knew about the Staff Absence Cover Agreement, (i.e. bring a supply teacher in on the 4th day of absence), but was ignorant of its significance. I suggested to the SMT that it would be a good idea to ask staff if they would like us to use a bit of the staff absence cover budget to pay for invigilators for the prelims, so that they didn't have to do it. The SMT thought this was a good idea, so I sent a memo to all staff asking them what they thought. Oops- without discussing it with the EIS and SSTA reps first. The EIS rep sent all staff (copied to me) a stinker of an email saying that she was concerned that the head teacher was taking it upon herself to propose changes to a democratically agreed arrangement. Then some stuff about risking the goodwill of staff. I was (naively) quite shocked that she sent this without speaking to me first. That day, I realised the importance of keeping teaching union representatives involved and informed and consulted about anything which could be remotely contentious. So I now schedule monthly meetings with the EIS/SSTA reps to discuss anything and everything, as well as the working time agreement etc.

This scenario exemplifies organisational socialisation as discussed in chapter two and signifies how novice head teachers can be caught off guard.

Many of the crises experienced by the head teachers were due to situations they had inherited from their predecessors, particularly related to personnel issues where certain behaviours amongst staff had not been confronted (this will be discussed in section 4.4), or difficult situations with Trade Unions. This was the case for Debbie, who had to negotiate the working time agreement (WTA)¹⁵ with ten members of staff as the school union representative had resigned:

The initial difficulty was negotiating the working time agreement with the staff because it had gone to arbitration, so we didn't have that (one) so having to sort that out... was quite a challenging first three weeks... the EIS Rep had resigned and what they had was an EIS committee so here was me, the new head teacher going up to negotiate with 10 of them and what they wanted and. So I had to give a little to get a bit back but I knew that at that point if I gave in at that stage then I would have lost it on the first goal. But that was a make or break deal with the staff in terms of relationships and professionalism and respecting their professionalism but at the same time making sure that they respected my

¹⁵ 'A Teaching Profession for the 21 Century' (2001) outlines the agreement reached to improve the conditions of service and pay for teachers, requires each head teacher to negotiate a WTA for the use of collegiate time.

professionalism. So that was weeks and weeks of negotiation, but we did it. We came out the other end and that was a positive and I was delighted about that.

How they handled these early crisis situations was important in establishing their credibility with staff and in building their confidence and professional identity; it was akin to a test situation, where they demonstrated to themselves and others they could handle challenging situations. The situations described by the head teachers were difficult and varied. For Linda, this was an early visit of HMIE:

I arrived in the August and the inspection was in the November, so I had a very short time, I had a very sharp learning curve, I had a very short time to get to know the school, and I think that is maybe what gelled the management team together so quickly as well because we had to rely on each other. I did not understand the history of the school so I had to ask, so it was very much that kind of approach... the inspection, I think that definitely benefited me because it gave me the opportunity to lead from the front

Declaring 19.5 staff surplus was Rosemary's challenge and for Martha, dealing with the death of a pupil where '*... it was a challenge to deal with it in the right way.*' All of the head teachers believed they had emerged stronger from the crisis. The head teachers had not created any of these situations; many were inherited or were related to an external issue over which the head teacher had no control. Of themselves the situations were complicated and challenging and the emotional impact on the head teachers should not be underestimated, as summed up by Maria who described the challenges of her first year:

It was an exhausting year because it did seem to me that everything was a challenge; I did feel like that. I was glad when I got to the end of the year because I thought, 'Well there's no more spectres waiting. There's no other skeletons in this cupboard'... I had to watch all the time how I was being perceived... I had to be perceived as somebody who was taking in to account their concerns, and yet who had an inner confidence and a view and a vision of what we together could do with this school and where I saw it going. I had to keep reminding people of what we were trying to do... in a very straightforward way.

Most of the situations could not have been predicted and perhaps the only certainty emerging from the data is the likelihood that most new head teachers will have a crisis situation to handle early on in their headship. It would seem, however, that with time in post, gaining experience in handling difficult situations, most head teachers grow in confidence and their belief in their own ability as head teacher increases. After a whole school session, Debbie stated:

This August I was much more confident... this year I was much more passionate about results.

The question therefore arises as to how this increase in confidence develops. Clearly, the successful handling of difficult situations contributes to this, but consideration as to what other elements may contribute to the head teacher's perception of herself is necessary. In chapter 1, the impact of the accountability agenda on head teachers was examined. Therefore, improvement in hard indicators is a crucial area of feedback for head teachers, and a huge weight of responsibility rests on their shoulders for examination results. Linda was clear on the impact the early school inspection:

... that would be the most significant thing that helped me to get the whole school on board and get the parents on board and get the community on board. So that would have shaped how I was viewed by other people.

In the interviews, the head teachers indicated that they were acutely aware of the fact that they are constantly being watched and judged by a whole range of people. They were also judging themselves and self-reflection appears to play an important role in this process of building identity. Many of the participants commented on this when discussing the SQH, but Karen highlighted the role of self-reflection in helping to establish her identity as a head teacher:

Probably you don't get to this level unless you're that type of person [reflective] by nature... I've grown all through my career and it's because I have been very self-aware.

Rosemary commented on the value of reading and reflection in her development as a head teacher:

I think reading's very beneficial, because not only does it give you new ideas, but also you look at yourself and you think, I do that already. It's quite encouraging, because a lot of the things that I read about leadership, I thought, I do that naturally, that's good, and therefore... it wasn't overwhelming. You didn't feel as if, oh my God I don't do this, this, this and this, I have to do that, you thought, that's okay, I can do that.

One participant was in her second headship and was able to articulate that her previous experience in a head teacher post had increased her confidence:

I think I possibly was not as nervous the second time around because I knew I could do it.

This is a key statement in gaining some understanding of the complexities of taking on a high profile leadership position: as DHT an individual does not know they ‘can do it’ as head. The same head teacher further elucidated that although the same approach had been adopted in both schools, in her first school she was possibly more tentative:

I did that [asked staff to outline the strengths and development needs of the school] but not to the same extent because I was nervous about it... So I think the fact that I'd been through the process before, I think I was more ready for that, more relaxed.

Therefore, as head teachers gain experience their confidence grows and they apply what they have learned in handling one crisis situation to any subsequent crises, for example. For Debbie this was about developing a ‘sixth sense’ having handled a few challenging situations. Martha stated, after her second year in headship:

... like all those before me I've developed my own style and values by watching others and by learning from my mistakes.

This raises a pertinent issue. Given that these roles are high profile questions arise as to how head teachers are to ‘learn from mistakes’ when they are in the spotlight and how can they be supported in doing this. Head teachers may have been very successful in a series of promoted posts but whether or not that will be translated into a successful headship is unknown until the person is actually appointed. If mistakes are made during the handling of an early crisis situation, for example, this could have a negative impact on the credibility of the head teacher and her subsequent experience in post, as well as impacting on her self-belief and construction of her professional identity as a head teacher.

Thus there appear to be a number of factors impacting on how head teachers construct their professional identity: from the earliest stages of preparation for the post through the SQH, through the selection process, the impact of role models and growing in confidence through experience, particularly the successful handling of a crisis situation. Throughout all of this, however, the head teacher must convey confidence and a clear sense of direction, even if this does not necessarily reflect her feelings at the time.

4.4 The impact of legacy issues

When head teachers are appointed they assume responsibility, not only for an institution, but also for a series of multi-faceted relationships, systems and processes, including legacy issues inherited from their predecessor. They take over a school at a particular point in its developmental journey and follow the personality, idiosyncrasies and ‘spectre’ of their predecessor (Fidler and Atton 2008; Weindling and Dimmock 2006). This was an issue, which emerged in the data, and Maria articulated it as follows:

... everybody does the job in the circumstances they've got, but sometimes your predecessor's way of dealing with things would be just to... come down and say, 'Right this is what's happening and I want it to happen now' so you had to deal with the mistrust that would've come from that.

This raises the question of the influence of legacy issues on head teachers’ early experiences in post, and what contribution they make, if any, to how the new head teacher’s identity is constructed. An important legacy issue highlighted by head teachers in this research was related to establishing a relationship with their new SMT. This was particularly challenging if the team was not seen as high performing. Rosemary, who was a head teacher for ten years, was possibly at the sharp end of this:

I met a senior management team who had been doing the same thing for a long time. Who were very complacent. Who had never heard or were not familiar with leadership, self-evaluation, school improvement planning, and who quite frankly didn't really want to know about it either. They were like self-evaluation, leadership were almost a dirty word. So I met a difficult senior management team. Very nice people and some of them who worked reasonably hard in their own way, but I also met a monolith of middle managers who had been autonomous if you like. Senior management team left them alone. They just said there's your money. You just do what you have to do. There was no looking at exam statistics or anything like that and they were just, they were wee fiefdoms in their own right. So I think these were my two major challenges.

And as to whether or not she ever changed that situation:

I don't know if I ever really cracked some of the senior managers. I got them on side, and they would do what I asked them but I don't think I ever really changed them. The middle managers, however, were slightly different, because ... there were about seven retiring from the middle management and that was huge, and I was able to appoint seven motivated, seven of my own people really, motivated, enthusiastic, creative, movers and shakers, and in a way I kind of carried my senior managers. I couldn't do anything about them. All I could do was get the best out of them I could.

An additional challenge was faced by five participants who outlined the fact that they had to deal with an SMT which contained a depute head teacher who had been unsuccessful in their application for the headship of the school. Handling this situation sensitively placed an additional emotional demand on the head teachers, requiring them to demonstrate strong interpersonal skills. Debbie indicated how difficult this was in the early days when she was establishing herself and building her credibility:

... because one of my deputies had been in for the job, I could never let my guard down, I could never say I didn't know something.

She also indicated that it took some months for all parties to feel completely at ease, something echoed by Maria:

The depute head had been acting head teacher for over a year and he took what seemed like a long time to come round. However, he was essentially a good person and wanted to be seen to be doing a good job. I decided the best strategy was to work to his strengths and keep on my toes until we trusted each other.

The head teachers spoke about being sensitive to these DHTs and Martha indicated that:

*building, a relationship with *** [name removed for confidentiality] who had been interviewed for the head teacher's post,*

was one of her initial priorities. Linda commented on the personal qualities of the unsuccessful candidate, saying that these qualities made the situation easier:

I was really lucky though because although that situation was there, the person was a very, very nice person... and got over the hurdle very quickly but I know it could equally have gone the other way and somebody could have been quite difficult for a long period of time, so I would say I was very fortunate.

Karen (like Linda and Maria), highlighted the fact that it takes a little time for everyone to feel comfortable:

**** [name removed for confidentiality] was very gracious about my success and after a few months of him 'checking me out' has always been 150% supportive.*

Being appointed over an internal candidate, therefore, can bring a further emotional nuance the new head teacher has to negotiate, as the depute who was the unsuccessful candidate for head teacher is often well established with the staff in the school and frequently has their sympathy and loyalty. The new head teacher has to navigate her way through these loyalties whilst simultaneously building her own relationships.

The legacy of working with an SMT, usually appointed before the head teacher, and taking account of their working practices, was mentioned by all of the participants. The practicality of managing the team to ensure the smooth running of the school was important, as described by Martha:

... the SMT included two acting DHTs. I wanted to make sure the practical things were dealt with, e.g. training for the new SQA¹⁶ coordinator.

So, on entering a new post as head teacher, the head herself was simultaneously supporting novice members of her team. Establishing new ways of working for a team can be a challenge for a new head teacher as mentioned by Debbie:

... they were expecting me to make all of the decisions... that is most definitely a culture I have inherited, but it's certainly not the culture I'm used to.... I'm driving that forward... I want to empower them.

The experience of a head teacher can be influenced by the strength of the senior leadership team inherited. For Linda this meant investing more time than anticipated in supporting them:

I think, depending on the strength of your team, you can find that you need to maybe spend a lot of time coaching in terms of leadership and reassuring in terms of remit.

What lies beneath these observations, however, is the importance of establishing relationships and the realignment of the team under the leadership of the new head teacher. As Karen stated, her focus was:

... trying to get the SLT to realign their thinking as to their relationship with their new head teacher.

¹⁶ The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) is responsible for national examinations in Scotland.

From the data it is evident that this is emotionally demanding and does not happen overnight; it is particularly challenging when members of the team may not be up to par as this is the group with whom the head teacher works most closely as indicated in Rosemary's earlier description of the team she inherited. This is a considerable challenge, as the strength of the senior team within a school is important to the head teacher and the school as a whole.

By far the greatest legacy issue emerging from the data related to personnel issues, whether these were dealing with difficult staff competence matters or the formal procedures which subsequently had to be followed when standards were not as they should be. This was mentioned specifically by half of the participants, and all made reference to the fact that matters had been allowed to develop under their predecessor. This could be a difficult person who was unchallenged by their predecessor, as was the case for Debbie:

This person has been allowed to grow and grow in confidence instead of being nipped in the bud.

This was echoed by Linda, who also highlighted how time consuming such incidents are:

... there had been similar circumstances in the past which I do not think were dealt with as formally as they should have [been], so I got to the point where I was saying right, this is a formal situation, there needs to be an investigation and there has to be a decision as to whether this goes to a hearing and whether it goes to a disciplinary, and I think that could have been done in the past and I do not think I would have had that situation if it had been done in the past. I had another very difficult situation, which was the same thing; a person who had not been challenged by anybody and I was the first person that challenged, and that took two years to resolve.

The head teacher holds the most senior position within the school and ultimately, at times, has to conduct formal procedures when dealing with certain personnel issues. Coping with this challenge can present further emotional demands on the new head teacher.

Absence management was another challenging staff issue, highlighted by Karen who had:

... several very, very big HR issues, from attendance issues that hadn't been dealt with beforehand and were having a huge impact on colleagues and young people.

For Linda:

Challenges? Personnel issues. I think that whole area of legislation around the code of conduct and the LNCT circulars kind of came and whacked me in the face because I have had very good relationships all through my teaching career and all through all the posts and then you get into this Head Teacher role and there is really difficult challenges that you have. You maybe have to have an investigation and you have to have a code of conduct interview where you have got to decide, that happened really early, but I had to decide... what sanction was being basically applied to a member of staff. Not a lot of training around that, you do not get to sit in and watch (observe), like you (to interviewer) are experienced but I never got to sit in and watch you do something like that for obvious reasons, but I think these kind of things are really difficult, particularly if you do not have a history of dealing with these situations and sometimes you are just going what is going on here, and why has the situation even got to this point? But it has got to this point and you are the one that has got to wrap it up.

She described how dealing with personnel issues in terms of the management circulars using the metaphor ‘whacked me in the face’ to highlight the surprise and shock. This metaphor perhaps illustrates the impact of such situations, where the head teacher has to ensure the formal procedures are adhered to as well as handling the emotions of the staff involved and the subsequent impact this may have on the rest of the school. She also highlights how becoming a head teacher changes the nature of relationships because the head teacher is the person who ultimately makes decisions relating to staff and sometimes this has to involve formal procedures. Debbie further highlighted her disappointment at not being able to resolve matters without resorting to formal procedures. This was because she had been accustomed to being able to resolve matters as DHT:

I can honestly say I've always been able to resolve situations. Might not be 100% amicably but I've always been able to resolve it. This one I haven't been able to resolve. I felt a bit disappointed that that's been the case as head teacher.

Linda commented on the difficulties associated with the changing nature of relationships at head teacher level:

Understanding the history of the school and where it was in terms of its own development featured as a legacy issue head teachers had to face, not specifically because of any individual situation but because it created the context in which they were operating (appendix G). All of the head teachers commented on the need to get to know their new schools, appreciating where it was currently, and importantly getting an understanding and appreciation of its history, as Rosemary said:

I think I took the first six months listening, looking, learning and formulating.

This history could relate to social norms within the school, such as the head teacher not going into the staffroom, as Maria indicated:

It wasn't normal for the head teacher to go into the staffroom.

Or to more complex matters relating to the decision making process and interactions within the SMT. Karen described a hierarchical situation she had inherited. Where the SMT were particularly deferential to the head teacher:

The comment I got there was we were handmaidens. I mean they weren't used to the head teacher going into them. So of course at first it was, oh, just sit there, we'll come, we'll come, and I was saying, no, I'll come out. So I suppose they've had to realign the way they think of me, and I've had one or two who've called me, Ma'am, and I'm not into that at all.

As well as attempting to understand the history of the school, some head teachers also had to deal with outside perceptions of the school which were quite often negative. This was the case for half of the head teachers. As she indicated at her first meeting with staff, Martha noted that people outside of the school were unaware of the good work being done by the school. For Debbie, this involved a potentially negative public consultation:

**** [name removed for confidentiality] Primary School is a school close-by but none of the young people come here. They tend to go to the other authorities but obviously there was a consultation to have that primary school associated with [Debbie's school]. That was very difficult because it was very public and there were lots of negative things going on out in the community and lots of things being said so, [sigh] I'm a very passionate and emotional person and put a lot of effort into that, and some of the stuff that was coming out was quite hurtful, so having to reign myself in and just behave in a professional manner. So dealing with HMIe, dealing with all the consultations, the Parent Councils, attending *** Primary, that was big because it was something I'd never done before.*

For Maria, dealing with negative perceptions of the school was important:

The perception of the school outside and inside was that it was a school that had had its day.

All but one of the participants had taken over from male predecessors and although there were few references to gender specifically, differences in approach to their predecessors were mentioned.¹⁷

There are therefore significant legacy issues, requiring careful handling by novice head teachers which could have the potential to impact negatively on a new head teachers' early experience in post. Many of the issues were demanding of the new head teacher and carried substantial emotional content.

4.5 The emotions of headship

Although one section of the prompts for discussion (being a head teacher) asked about matters concerning the emotions of headship, it is striking that comments relating to the emotional labour associated with being a head teacher were actually woven throughout many of the other responses. This emotional labour relates to handling emotions in self, in other people and the emotional aspects of leading the school as a whole. It is interesting to note that although there were more than twenty years between the appointment of the most experienced head teacher and those with the least experience there is a commonality in their comments relating to the emotional intensity of headship which perhaps suggests that this is a key element of headship. Karen, who had been in post six years, spoke of the challenge of dealing with the process which ultimately resulted in the dismissal of a member of staff:

So not that long ago I had to go through the process and eventually one of my members of staff was dismissed. Lost their job after twenty odd years in teaching, because of attendance which hadn't been addressed but I had to start addressing and no matter what I had done to try and support and whatever else. But there came a point where I had to let go of that emotion and say, no, the damage has been done to successive cohorts of young people. The impact it has had on, and I'm not just talking about results, I'm just talking about their experience of learning and those who might have wanted to go and excel and have careers in those areas and maybe didn't because of their experience, and on colleagues... enough was enough, and I had to go through it. And that was hellish, absolutely hellish.

¹⁷ Gender issues will be discussed in chapter 5.

The rawness in Karen's language expresses the emotions involved in such situations, even after some years have elapsed and reflects the extent to which head teachers bury their own feelings for the benefit of their schools.

4.5.1 Emotions in self

Working with other head teachers when they were still deputies allowed the head teachers to view some of the tasks associated with headship and some of the interactions between head teachers and members of staff. However, in discussing the impact of the role models, none of the candidates specifically mentioned anything about learning about the emotional aspects of headship, although one did state that she learned to depersonalise as a depute:

Do you know I think I learned a lot about de-personalising the situations when I was a Depute. I would say that that was the sharpest learning curve in that, because all of a sudden you had gone from being in this fairly tight team in a faculty or a department to suddenly you were ... Then there was the ultimate shock when a decision went out and there was maybe a wee bit of backlash or somebody did not agree with what you were doing and I think I learned to de-personalise at that point that it was not me it was perhaps a decision or a situation and I have just tried to carry that through. (Linda).

The head teachers in this research frequently mentioned emotions, even when not specifically asked about them, perhaps indicating the emotional intensity of the post which they had not anticipated. As Maria stated:

I didn't know it would be quite as varied and emotionally challenging as it turned out to be. I thought it would be intellectually challenging but ... I didn't really expect, I think, to find it quite as emotionally challenging as it turned out.

The early days in post make emotional demands on new head teachers. Their first meetings were clearly of critical significance to the participants. For example, as we saw earlier, in section 4.2, no head teacher had any difficulties in recalling their first staff meeting. All of the participants were clear in what they wanted to present and what sense of themselves they wished to convey. Usually, the first experience of publically handling emotions for new head teachers is when they address that first meeting with staff. Debbie stated:

I was quite nervous standing up there. I was nervous and I knew obviously there had been a girl who'd applied for the job, and all eyes were on me, they were all watching to see

what's she going to do, what's she going to say, everybody was there, all the office staff, everybody, the whole sort of family in the school.

Clearly, however, it was important that those nerves were managed by the head teacher to portray an outer confidence. For Linda the sense of expectation, on the part of staff, was what she remembered:

I still remember coming in and everybody was on time and there was this great buzz in the room and it was like they were just waiting for me to stand up and deliver, and you are just thinking, okay, here we go.

That first meeting seems to be imprinted in their minds. The longest serving head teacher, and longest retired head teacher said of it, 'So crucial,' and had clear memories of it, albeit they were now reconstructed at a distance:

I just made it all very restrained ... anything that I'm going to do, I'm not going to do by myself. I'm one wee woman as you can see, so I can only do this in partnership and that means you.

Three head teachers referred specifically to the loneliness of the post. Debbie actually articulated the fact that she did not understand the loneliness of the post when she was still a depute:

I always saw the vastness of the job and that's the main similarity I saw but also at times being lonely. I've heard people talking about that... I was actually someone who thought, how can it be a lonely job, you're always talking to people?

Linda stated:

... the job can be quite a lonely job at times and it can be quite isolating.

Rosemary also echoed this loneliness and isolation:

... it's a lonely job. You're isolated a lot of the time. You're very public and you meet lots of people, but you're also at the end of the day, you're on your tod [alone].

The emotional aspects of the post emerged as an important theme in the data when discussing how the participants perceived the role of head teacher before taking up post

and how they actually experienced it. All of the participants commented on this in some way. For Debbie, this was the pressure of being the person ultimately in charge:

But all of a sudden when you're making decisions and you maybe made them as a team and then all of a sudden people are like "phew that didn't quite work out" then that's where the job becomes lonely because you're the person sitting in the hot seat and you're the person that has to take responsibility for decisions that you make.

A number of participants commented on the fact that although the role was exciting it was at times stressful:

It is an exciting job but sometimes that does not mean that you do not have times when you think what is this job about? But I would say that I enjoy coming to work every day, although some days can be really stressful and you think why am I doing this, but it is the most exciting job in education that I have had.

It was also draining, as Karen outlined what most surprised her about the job:

I think just how emotionally draining HR issues are... And I suppose despite the fact that I'm very, I think, resilient as an individual personally; I find that very, very draining.

Unless a sense of perspective is maintained the role has the potential to '*totally overwhelm you,*' in Rosemary's words. For Martha, the emotional intensity related to the fact that she was not being accepted on face value:

I didn't expect to encounter so much mistrust. Things are better now but I was unused to the teaching union culture. Then I went to a school where it seemed as though several people assumed I was trying to manipulate them or 'get' them.

From the data then, it would appear that the emotional intensity of the post does have to be experienced to be fully appreciated. This is a significant challenge in headship preparation which, will be discussed in the final chapter.

4.5.2 Metaphors and figurative language of headship

Although the head teachers were asked specifically about metaphors or images they would use for headship, it is interesting that other metaphors or figures of speech arose during the course of the interviews and that these related to the emotional aspects of the job. These

included controlling their own emotions, being on edge, dealing with challenge, reacting to other's emotions, being ultimately responsible but unable to control everything and dealing with change. These are listed in appendix I (p200). In total, eighteen different figures of speech referring to some of the emotional challenges of headship were used throughout the interviews. It is perhaps unsurprising that this was the case, given the responses head teachers gave when discussing how they dealt with crisis situations and the difference between their perception of the post and their experience of it.

When asked specifically to choose a metaphor for headship, and having had time to reflect on the metaphor chosen, there was less emotional intensity in the images selected by the head teachers. Some of those selected, tended to represent the leadership role of the head over some kind of joint effort such as rowing a boat or conducting an orchestra, thus portraying the teamwork involved in headship. However, their further comparisons included references to the unpredictability of headship, so conducting an orchestra became a jamming session where each person responded to the other. Maria described this at length:

Oh, it's conducting an orchestra or if not an orchestra, maybe a jazz band because they're improvising... because what you're trying to do is you're trying to make sure that it sounds good, that everybody's playing their part and you want a bit more from that department, you want a wee bit less here and I was really going for this notion, and I thought... but you're not always playing somebody else's tune. So maybe that's not it. Is it a jamming session and you're trying to pull together and you're trying to make something that is your own and you want your own unique sound; is it maybe that? And I thought, 'Yes, but what about the audience because they're not just an audience?'

So I've got a couple of images and I don't know which one I would go for. I would love it to be conducting the orchestra but the shortcoming in that is that not everybody's going to like all this music so it would need to be a pretty flexible band you were conducting; one that took special requests and was able to meet all these needs and one that maybe let the audience, well definitely let the audience join in so that they could come and they picked up the instruments spontaneously... So everybody brought to the party, to the orchestra what they had; their voice, their kazoo, whatever, and you got the best sound out of that. And it wasn't just – it wasn't something by Bach or Mozart or something else, beautiful though that might be, it was our tune. It was a jamming session.

Oh, I just love the thought of everybody working together. I love the thought of there being a perfect sound that this group could make. It might not be the same sound that (another school) made but it's our sound and I would like that.

Similarly for Rosemary, a calm sailing image developed to encompass stormy weather:

First of all I thought of a sailing boat because that sounded quite sort of romantic with the wind and all that kind of thing, and then I thought maybe rowing, but then I thought that's too calm, rowing, because it is kind of steering a boat through choppy waters and you don't know what the weather's going to be like and the wind and the tides and all that kind of thing, but that's what makes it challenging. That's what makes it so great.

Karen spoke of seeing herself as one of the cogs when the back is removed from a clock and although she did not see headship as hierarchical, she did concede that there had to be someone at the end of the decision making process so perhaps she was the watchmaker:

You take the back off a clock and there are all the cogs in it and they might see me as one of the bigger ones, but in actual fact the size is irrelevant. Unless we all work together the hands don't turn... I don't see it as hierarchical, and yet I do see it as you need to be the person at the end, at the end of that decision making, and you're the one that creating the framework for everything else to happen. So am I the watchmaker? Maybe.

Further metaphors related to the process of headship, portraying perhaps the busy nature of the post and the need to have a '*finger in every pie*' or a '*finger on the pulse*' as used by Debbie. Linda further depicted the unpredictability of headship as a:

... roller coaster because you are never quite sure what is going to happen to you in a day... You can come in and it can just completely not be what you had planned (Linda).

The same head teacher, however, also spoke of headship as:

... a tree which bends in the wind because you need to be really flexible at times, but then you need to be able to stand firm. Or a mirror... because you are always reflecting, you are always walking in somebody else's shoes, that is not always easy

Headship was also described as '*wading through treacle*' (Martha) indicating challenge and slow progress, but the same head teacher also described it as '*an incredible privilege.*'

Thus while the metaphors used by head teachers in the course of interviews reflected the challenges and labour of the post, those constructed at a conscious level tended to represent headship as teamwork but they did also highlight some of the challenges.

4.5.3 Emotional labour

Two prompts for discussion focused specifically on dealing with emotional issues, although this was also a theme that emerged across the data. The first of these related to rationalising or depersonalising any negative reactions received as head teachers. It is interesting to note that head teachers found depersonalisation challenging and although it may be something they learned to deal with, it was still something they found difficult. In environments which can at times be emotionally charged, head teachers can become the focus of staff reactions to circumstances that may or may not have originated within the school. As previously noted, Linda indicated that the process of depersonalisation began as a depute head but, as Maria highlighted, depersonalisation remained a challenge:

Sometimes you would go in and think, ‘God, I’ve got to face so and so and I know they weren’t pleased about this,’ and I don’t like things that drag on and on and I hate division you know, so I found that pretty difficult. So, did I deal with it? Well I did because I got through it, but I found it hard, I found it tough... I suppose my way of dealing with it was to try and depersonalise it, but that’s really hard.

Many of the head teachers felt that they were able to depersonalise negative reactions and that this was something they learned to do with experience but it still had an impact on them as Debbie noted:

... I have managed to rationalise that in my own head ... but it still hurts, still hurts a wee bit.

Head teachers also talked about the need to reflect on the decisions or situations which may have caused any negativity and that if, on reflection, they wished to change the decision they had to have the courage to do that, as Maria stated:

Well, you’d question your decisions; was the decision the right one or was it not? And if it was not the right one, well you had to get out of your office and get it sorted.

Martha indicated:

... if I receive a negative reaction unexpectedly, I have to work harder. I would probably question my decision again, and possibly speak to colleagues, and the people who gave the negative reaction, to check whether the decision was in fact correct. I might still take this personally, but time is a great healer.

Questioning their own decisions and then taking whatever action is required to put the situation right is a further example of the emotional demands of headship and of the need to be courageous and show integrity in leadership.

The need to be modelling the behaviour they expect in others and an awareness that the reaction of the head teacher can influence the whole situation was highlighted by Karen:

... if I'm off the wall and I over-react to things and personalise things, then in actual fact it will never be a win-win situation.

The ability to compartmentalise negative reactions was mentioned by Rosemary, along with a pragmatic statement that '*... I suppose as a head teacher you kind of get tough.*' Thus, although negative reactions can be hurtful, handling them and learning to depersonalise them were seen as part of the job.

The second prompt for discussion that related to emotional issues was the extent to which head teachers maintained an outer appearance, which did not necessarily reflect what they were feeling on the inside. The emotional labour of headship extends to situations where heads must mask their own feelings when handling an emotionally charged situation. The situations described by the head teachers were those which have previously been discussed including a difficult Trade Union negotiation, a difficult staff or parental matter or a crisis situation such as the death of a pupil or member of staff. There is some overlap here with the situations described in the discussion of legacy issues in section 4.4. This is perhaps not surprising given that the greatest emotional intensity seems to be experienced in the early days of headship, when head teachers are perhaps most acutely aware of the legacy they are following. The head teachers talked of maintaining a persona, not showing personal opinion, modelling behaviour they wanted to see and letting go of the emotion, all to ensure they did the best thing for the school. It is this facet of sacrificing personal emotions for the good of the institution, which perhaps makes the greatest emotional demand on a head teacher. The intensity of this was apparent in almost all participants, particularly in the language they used to describe their feelings (appendix J, 201).

A further situation where personal feelings have to be masked was mentioned by two of the head teachers. Linda highlighted the fact that, at times, she was required to present a view on behalf of the local authority which was not necessarily her own:

I think you do have to remember you work for the authority and sometimes you have to put an authority perspective across that you do not actually agree with... you have got to field questions and you cannot show what your personal opinion is.

Maria also stated:

But sometimes the hardest things were the ones which came from... outwith the school. You know if there's something coming in from the authority that you maybe weren't 100 per cent desperately keen on yourself and you had to present that this is what we're doing, that was always quite a tough one... there were things like that that were quite difficult sometimes.

All participants were able to speak at length about the emotional labour of headship. The data indicates that this is intense, particularly in the early days in post. It requires heads to handle challenging situations and maintain a sense of composure throughout, which may not necessarily be what they are feeling.

4.5.4 Coping strategies

Given this emotional intensity, there is an issue about how head teachers cope. In response to a specific question about coping strategies all of the head teachers mentioned, amongst other things, the support of fellow head teachers including informal social gatherings which allowed them to share experiences and challenges. Martha summarised this succinctly:

Colleague head teachers really understand what it is like.

The data indicated that receiving the understanding of others who are doing the job was a very important support mechanism for all of the head teachers. The shared experience of headship seemed to bring some reassurance as highlighted by Debbie:

... having the support there from other head teachers is absolutely vital for me in getting it right and when things go wrong, that wee reassurance to say, look it's not the end of the

world, you know things do go wrong and just keep talking it over and keep looking for ways to make it better so the support of other head teachers is really very reassuring.

This was similar to the findings of MacBeath et al. (2009: 27). The ability to share experience and discuss matters frankly with people who have a similar issue is also significant as Linda indicated:

.. if you have got a really difficult personnel issue somebody has probably had one that is ten times worse than you, and you think well actually that is okay, that is not too bad, I do not feel that this is only happening to me and lots of people have gone through it..., they do help you deal with the job and you do get a good laugh and you can talk to somebody about an issue and you know that they will probably have faced the same as you.

Rosemary spoke of the importance of having a mentor:

I had a mentor.... a very experienced head teacher. He was about seventeen years [in post] and he was a lovely, lovely man and... he just listened. I just ranted and rambled and said what was bothering me and because he had been, he was so experienced, he was able to say, well have you thought of this, have you tried this, or whatever. So he was, I think he was a rock to me in my first couple of years. So much so that we kept meeting for about five years and I kind of mentored him towards his retiring. He was fundamental, and I think that is essential for new head teachers, that they have that support.

Although, the support of peers was the most frequent support mechanism cited by the head teachers, support from family and friends was also mentioned because, as Maria said:

It's just important to talk to somebody you trust.

Support from their management teams and colleagues with whom they had previously worked were also important to the head teachers.

A number of the participants also spoke about the importance of building in time for themselves and three of the participants spoke of having to make a conscious decision to stop working:

... building in time for yourself, to just say work is finished, I am going home, I am going to do something that I like to do, I am going to relax and leave this behind and I will pick it up tomorrow... I do not know that you can do that all the time and I think you can sort of train yourself to do that (Linda).

Look after yourself. Easier said than done, but make a little time for yourself (Martha).

One of the things that did help me was to try and make sure my working day did end; that I didn't just go on and on and on because when you've got so much to do and when you're kind of feeling that if I'm not careful here I could get overwhelmed, I think it's very important that by such and such a time I'm stopping, because the temptation [is] not to stop (Maria).

Maintaining a positive outlook was a further coping strategy mentioned by several of the head teachers. Karen talked about being an optimist and highlighted the importance of resilience:

I suppose I've always been an optimist. Always, throughout my life, I think I was born an optimist. Thank Goodness... I do a job I've always loved. So it's not really that hard. I suppose the hardest things for me are the frustration about not always getting it right, about having to do those negative things to other human beings because they're not hitting the professional mark, but you still know they're humans. So how do I do it? I don't know. I think it's just in me. I'm emotionally resilient, and I think if you have those things to start with then you're a couple of steps up the ladder.

Rosemary spoke of ‘... *the ability to stay positive no matter what.*’ Debbie specifically mentioned looking for the positive when things were challenging:

So when I go round the school and I look at the hard work that's going on... I'm not going to let a few negative responses make me lose sight and whenever times are tough and you've had a rough day or whatever, I try to reflect on that and I say to the team, 'Come on, we need to lift ourselves'.

For the head teachers, therefore, the rewarding aspects of the role perhaps provide a counter-balance to the demands of emotional labour. Amongst the rewarding aspects, those mentioned most frequently were the ability to make a difference and influence things for better, thus improving learning and opportunities for young people.

4.5.5 Emotions in others

Although the discussion so far has focused on head teachers handling emotions in themselves, an additional factor contributing to the emotional labour of headship lies in dealing with the emotions of others (Crawford 2009; Gronn 2003; Harris 2007). Frequently, as outlined in Chapter two and earlier in this section, this requires the head teacher having to mask her own feelings in order to portray an external appearance which

is incongruent with her inner feelings (Crawford 2009: 21). The range of situations where this may be necessary is wide and is perhaps reflected in the responses of the head teachers in the section 4.5.3 on emotional labour. Given that the head teachers frequently spoke about people in the course of interview, it is perhaps unsurprising that considerable emotional energy is required in constantly engaging with people and winning hearts and minds to influence what is happening in the school. All of the head teachers recognised how central the head teacher is to the quality of relationships within the school and how important it is for the head teacher to consider other people:

I think the head teacher is actually crucial to relationships which exist in the school (Debbie).

An extract from a previous quotation from Linda stresses seeing the perspective of others:

... always reflect on walking in somebody else's shoes, I think it brings you a lot of success if you can appreciate somebody else's point of view...

Whilst Rosemary highlighted the need for honesty and integrity:

... your staff have got to believe in you, they've got to trust you, you've got to have integrity, if you say you'll do something, you do it, but you've got to take them with you.

The unanimous view of the head teachers interviewed was that:

The job is all about people- keeping pupils at the centre of the planning, motivating staff, working with parents etc. (Martha).

The multi-dimensional and the exhausting nature of this aspect of the job was articulated by Karen:

... everything comes at you, whether it's the angst of young people, the parents, the carers, the staff, the partners... despite the fact that I'm very, I think, resilient as an individual personally, I find that very draining.

Maria outlined the challenges of winning hearts and minds, which is key to an individual's success as a head teacher:

It's so time consuming to try and consult and bring people with you that sometimes you're tempted to take the shortcut and especially in the early days you don't have, you maybe don't have that much behind you to be able to do it. Maybe you can do it later on, but I think I learned that you don't; you've got to keep on doing that.

Karen, who had had a particularly challenging crisis situation, further described a tense moment:

*I had three members of staff in shouting at me and calling me all sorts because of what I was saying about *** [name removed for confidentiality], so there was an awful lot to deal with personally and professionally...*

The same head teacher acknowledged that this was something:

I think a lot of head teachers probably would never have to deal with and therefore there was nothing I'd done in my SQH or in my experience.... that prepared me for that.

This is a vital point: being a head teacher seems to involve dealing with unpredictable situations, not simply by having processes in place but also by having the requisite emotional intelligence and resilience to cope with the unexpected and guide yourself and the school through whatever challenge arises.

Whilst depute head teachers are a source of support to head teachers, they too make their own emotional demands on heads. Encouraging and supporting the SMT was mentioned by Debbie:

That's one of the other big challenges of the job that you've got to lift your SMT.

This was echoed and extended by Linda:

I think depending on the strength of your team you can find that you need to maybe spend quite a lot of time coaching in terms of leadership and reassuring in terms of remit.

Karen referred to keeping '*the school lifted up*' during challenging times.

From the data, therefore, it seems that much of what head teachers do appears to centre on managing the emotional reverberations in the life of a school. It is thus unsurprising that

many of the early experiences in headship already discussed also shared this emotional intensity.

4.5.6 Emotional leadership

The head teachers in this research were conscious of their role in setting the tone within their schools and in building relationships. The fact that they could readily identify situations in which they had to mask their true feelings perhaps exemplifies how aware they were of the importance of their role and the weight of expectation it carries. Perhaps too, they had learnt from previous role models the negative impact of a badly handled situation or an overly emotional reaction, as outlined in section 4.1.1. As well as this, however, three of the participants explicitly mentioned the fact that, as head teachers, they had to model the behaviour they wished to see in the school:

It's about setting the right tone, the ethos...How you treat people, how people treat me and what is acceptable behaviour and what's not acceptable behaviour (Debbie).

... I know the importance of me modelling the behaviour I expect in the young people and my staff (Karen).

It does bring you back to integrity; to your values and what you think is important.... Having a vision, sharing this vision and modelling it. I think the head teacher has got to model all the time. There's no use talking about values (Maria).

In considering the head teacher's emotional leadership within the school, the formal platform for this is sometimes their relationship with the Professional Associations or Trade Unions. Whilst head teachers may have strong interpersonal skills and may have built alliances with individual members of staff within the school, they still have to face the official union agenda, dealing in their own schools with issues which may be driven by a national agenda and not necessarily pertinent to their precise situation. Martha sums this up:

I had come from schools where I was known and (I think) trusted. Then I went to a school where it seemed as if several people assumed that I was trying to manipulate them.

She went on to explain the challenge of:

... Dealing with teaching unions. Not getting upset when my intentions were (deliberately?) misunderstood. Learning to develop a relationship with the representatives.

A head teacher can inherit a difficult relationship with the trade unions; building a working relationship in this context is a challenge, demanding great reserves of emotional resilience as well as emotional intelligence:

I did have a very challenging trade union group when I first arrived. From the very word go I had decided, just because that's how I work, I always met with trade unions... I can remember the reaction of the senior management team to that. That was, why on earth would I do that, and I thought why on earth wouldn't you? (Rosemary).

The McCrone¹⁸ agreement has further intensified this relationship, as head teachers must negotiate annually the working time agreement (WTA), which outlines how collegiate time in the school will be spent. If no agreement can be reached the WTA goes into arbitration with the local authority. Negotiating this agreement was an early challenge for Linda as discussed in the section 4.3 on building identity as a head teacher. However, most of the head teachers found ways of working with their Trade Unions, exemplifying their collaborative approaches and perhaps their high levels of emotional intelligence. Another very public aspect of emotional leadership for a head teacher comes with a crisis situation when the head becomes the focus of the emotional well-being of the institution, at a time when she is also attempting to come to terms with the emotions of whatever crisis the school may be facing on an individual basis. Quite often this can be the death of a pupil or a member of staff. Maria perhaps summed this up cogently:

I suppose when it's like that, you've just got to go with your gut reaction. You've just got to go with what you think is right and I know I had to do that on a lot of occasions ... You can't actually let your personal feelings come in, yes, because you just want to run away and say, 'Oh God, what do we do now?' Whereas you've got to say, 'Right', you've got to maintain this air of, 'Right, I know what we're doing here. We'll be fine.'

That crises will come is inevitable; all of the head teachers could recount crisis situations, particularly from their first year. The retired heads perhaps encapsulated this best when they stated:

¹⁸ In 2000, The McCrone inquiry into teacher conditions was published, resulting in the publication of 'A Teaching Profession for the 21 Century' (2001), which outlines the agreement reached to improve the conditions of service and pay for teachers.

I think as a head teacher you become immune to things like crises, because they happen all the time and you just expect it as part of your job.

In attempting to recall particular crisis situations, it was interesting to note the fact that the language of the retired head teachers played down the extent of the crisis, perhaps indicating the acceptance of crisis management as part and parcel of the role:

There was nothing major... I had people having affairs, but never anything huge.

Or,

There were obviously a number of times when things were pretty difficult; there was a fire, there was a wall falling down...There were all sorts of things like that.

In this context, it is perhaps apposite to consider that some of the head teachers made specific reference to being courageous in headship, whether that was courage in making difficult decisions:

You are paid to make difficult decisions. You are paid to be brave. You are not paid to not take things forward (Linda).

Courage in dealing with the demands of the job was also mentioned:

You do need to be courageous (Karen).

As the data indicates, given that crisis situations will arise, courage and the ability to deal with events in a non-emotional way are certainly a requirement for head teachers in shaping the emotional leadership of the school.

4.6 The essence of headship

Given the discussion so far, it is perhaps unsurprising that when asked about the essence of headship, all of the participants spoke about relationships and people, directly or implicitly, with considerable emphasis on inspiring and motivating them. Maria spoke at length about this:

They're all clichés now but it is leading learning and it's or being the lead learner and I think it is so important for a Head to continue to learn and to continue to be challenged, because if you're not learning, if you think you know it all, well that's it; the school's going nowhere. You've got to continue to be excited by change, not just for the sake of change but for the sake or improvement. But I read, or I spoke at one point to this American chap that I did find quite influential in my thinking, and he came to talk to me about if there was such a thing as an institution of integrity. And I found that such an interesting idea; I had a lot of time thinking about that and thinking, 'What is an institution of integrity'....and it began to actually pray on my mind that maybe that's what it is; maybe that's what Headship is as well. What is the thing that makes this? What is the integrity, in this community, this school; what is it? And it's, well it is about learning isn't it and learning to grow and learning to grow as a community.... it does bring you back to integrity; to your values and what you think is important and what you think you're actually doing here. So maybe that's, it's being the lead learner but also having – having a vision, sharing this vision and modelling it. I think the Head Teacher has got to model all the time. There's no use talking about values. You model them.

Linda emphasised leadership and building leadership capacity:

For me it is being a people person, it is being a leader, it is encouraging distributed leadership and trying to spot talent within your staff and help that talent along.... Being emotionally intelligent.

For Martha, the essence of headship was:

To inspire. To persuade, promote, motivate the school community to live out the school values... I try to inspire by letting people (staff, pupils, parents etc.) know that I value what they do; yet encouraging them to keep improving. I try to have a balance between letting them know that I appreciate them, and not letting them become complacent.

Added to this was the need for the head teacher's own personal qualities, as described by Rosemary, for whom the essence of headship was about:

... having a vision of what you want to do... but I think in order to do that ... your staff have got to believe in you, they've got to trust you, you've got to have integrity. If you say you'll do something you do it, you deliver, but you've got to take them with you.

A number of the participants commented on the fact that it was important for a head teacher to keep on learning:

... it is leading learning... or being the lead learner and I think it is so important for a head to continue to learn and to continue to be challenged, because if you're not learning, if you think you know it all, well that's it; the school's going nowhere. You've got to continue to be excited by change, not just for the sake of change but for the sake of

improvement... it's being the lead learner but also having – having a vision, sharing this vision and modelling it (Maria).

It's about leading and managing learning and teaching in the school... You are the most senior leader in the school. It's about setting the right tone, the ethos. It's also about demonstrating my commitment to life-long learning... leading and developing people (Debbie).

Added to this was an awareness of the power and influence associated with the role, which brings an imperative to continually update and develop skills and knowledge:

I suppose it's being able to lead, influence, develop others... It's about understanding the impact and the influence that you can have, and continually developing your skills and your knowledge and whatever so that you can be as good as you can be (Karen).

The head teachers were acutely aware of the imperative for them to keep on learning and their role in helping others grow and develop. People were central to the vision of the head teachers interviewed and to what they did on a daily basis; there was no mention of systems, tasks, and processes or of the daily minutiae which can be associated with the job when they talked of the essence of headship. Karen perhaps summed this up when she came to the realisation that:

... we're all human and it honestly doesn't matter whether it's Ross [a pupil] I'm sitting with, or a member of staff... In actual fact I am using the same people skills. I'm using very similar strategies and it comes from them believing that you actually want to help them move forward and that you value them. But without being mushy, help them develop their strategies and take it forward.

Despite the emotional intensity of the post, and the fact that this was a theme running through the interviews, in describing the essence of headship, the participants did not mention this aspect of their role. They talked about leading, influencing or inspiring but not about the intense emotional demands they faced. Thus although emotional labour appears to be a huge part of their role as head teacher, it did not seem to define how the heads viewed the post, which was as hugely positive, influential and inspirational.

The emphasis on people continued through the advice the participants would offer to new head teachers, particularly in seeking the support of head teacher colleagues, which was mentioned specifically by four of the participants. There was also an emphasis on

expecting the unexpected, looking after themselves and significantly, a focus on what is important:

... catch people doing good things, tell them it's good and build on it... the minutiae doesn't really matter. And learn what's important and what's not important and that's quite hard as well (Maria).

Very importantly there was an emphasis on what the job is really about:

Year after year, a new set of teenagers, with all their hope, enthusiasm and potential, come through our doors. Somehow make the time to enjoy their successes, and remind yourself why we all came into this profession (Martha).

There was also a focus on service and on headship as a vocation:

I suppose the important thing is if you're going there for an ego, if it's about ambition for self, I don't think you'll be successful in the end or have a happy fulfilled staff, because I think that can sometimes get in the way. I think you have to remember that first and foremost you are a servant and you're in there helping to provide a service, that it's a crucially important service (Karen).

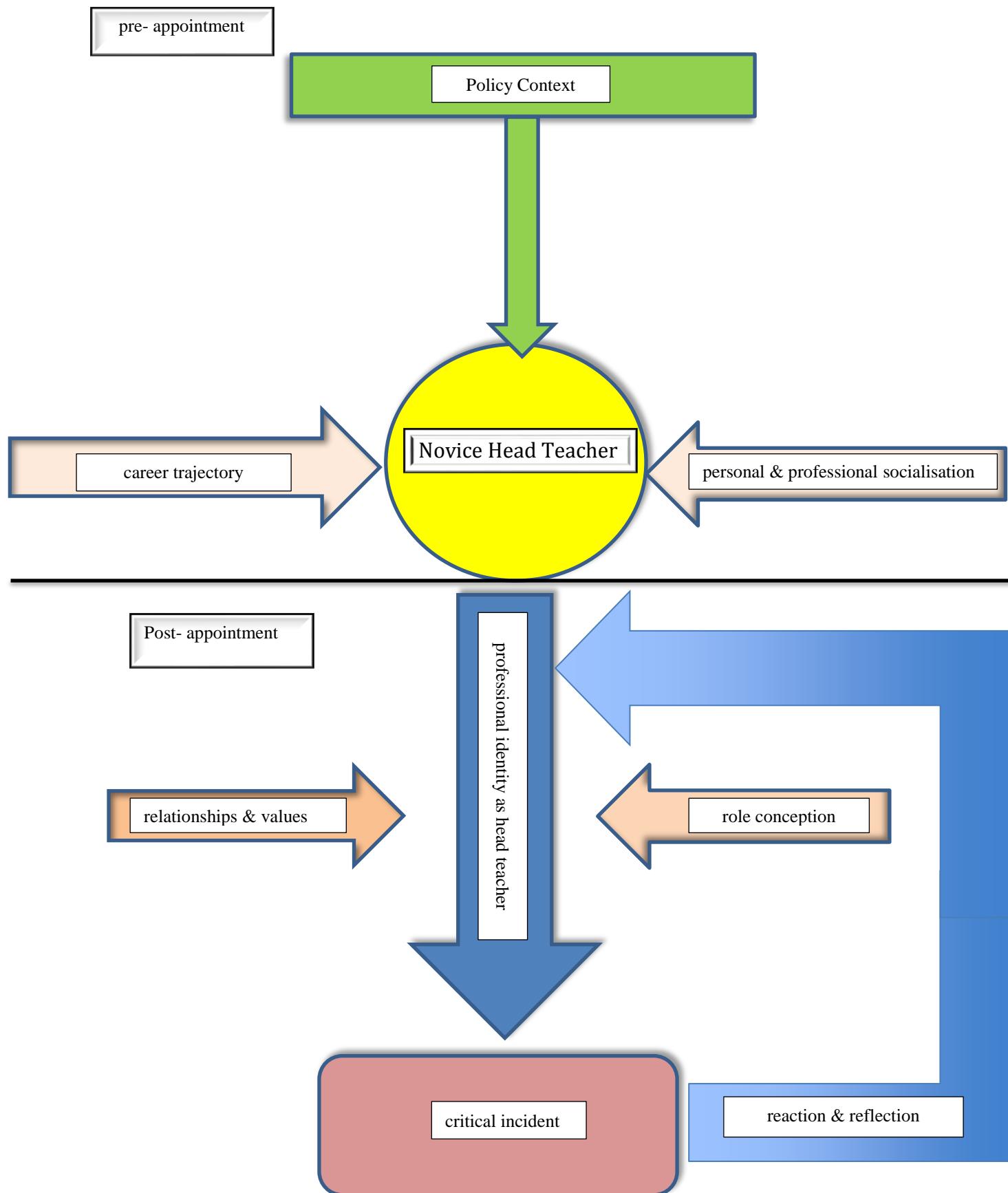
Perhaps this is the ultimate metaphor of headship.

Thus, despite the emotional intensity of their jobs, the participants viewed being a head teacher as a huge privilege. This was similar to the findings of MacBeath et al. (2009: 21). From the data, headship can be viewed as a developmental journey. The participants in this research had no direct plans to become head teachers. Yet, when they did take up post they faced many challenges in building their identity and becoming established as head teachers. They were all crucially aware of the fact that relationships were key to the success of their headship and were aware of the need to carefully manage emotions in themselves and others. The fact that the head teachers were so aware of this aspect of their role caused me to consider if their gender may have had an impact on this awareness. Thus, although gender was not a major construct in the conception of this research, having analysed the data I felt it was important to give some consideration to issues of gender in headship.

4.7 Summary

Head teacher development can therefore be viewed in two phases: pre and post appointment. The head teacher is shaped by her individual career trajectory and personal and professional socialisation prior to taking up post, all within a specific policy context. Having been appointed, her professional identity is shaped by these aspects as well as her conception of the role and her values and relationships. Her reaction and reflection on a crisis situation will subsequently impact on her professional identity. This process is illustrated in the following conceptual map:

Figure 3: Conceptual Map of Factors Influencing Early Experiences of Headship



Chapter 5 Gender: an emerging issue

The starting point for this research was not gender but early headship experience. Given that I was a female head teacher, researching early headship experience through an autoethnographic methodology, it was important for me to compare my experience to that of a similar group of people. Thus it was the experience of other female head teachers that I considered. Gender was not therefore a major construct in the initial conception of this research which was designed to explore early experiences of headship. However, gender was an implicit understanding since I was a female using my own early headship experience as a major data source. A further implicit understanding was that until relatively recently secondary head teachers were predominantly male and therefore I could be regarded as aypical, since I was a female undertaking a role generally undertaken by males. This is important because females continue to be under represented at head teacher level in Scotland and any exploration of their early experiences may assist in future recruitment and help redress this imbalance.

As I completed my analysis of the head teacher interviews, I became aware that there were common responses from the head teachers taking part in this research which were possibly linked to gender. One important example of this was the finding that none of the head teachers had a direct career plan to become a head. There was the possibility that this lack of career plan was more characteristic of women head teachers and perhaps gender related. Therefore, a further element was added to the study. I subsequently considered gender in early headship experience and whether or not there were any particular areas or issues, which were particularly relevant to female head teachers. I was interested in exploring the use of a gender lens to consider headship ‘from the standpoint of being female’ (Gosetti and Rusch 1995, cited by Coleman 2002: 10). This would allow me to interrogate the data and explore ways in which gender may have impacted on my experience and the experience of the head teachers in this study but this was subsequent to the analysis in the previous chapter.

5.1 Consideration of issues of gender

Although my research is focused on the experience of female head teachers, its focus was not the question of gender but on early headship experience. It was only in the

identification of the participants who had, on the surface, similar sets of experience as head teachers that the factor of gender was included. Thus, in considering early headship experience, the choice of a female sample group was to allow me to look at a group of head teachers who would possibly have had broadly similar experiences. Their varying length of service and difference in age further provided a time frame spanning the last three decades. The female sample was to control the gender variable in the research therefore the issue of gender was implicit in the sample. Having analysed my own narrative and that of the sample of head teachers, gender emerged as an issue for exploration. Two key areas prompting this further exploration were the apparent lack of explicit career planning by the heads in this sample and the broad similarities in the nature of the responses to the prompts for discussion. This caused me to consider if there was a gender connection contributing to this broad similarity. In keeping with my methodological approach of autoethnography, I began with a reflection on the issue of gender in relation to my own experience as a senior school leader. Subsequently I examined the key issues relating to gender and leadership emerging from the literature and considered my experience in the light of these. I then considered the responses of the other head teachers in a similar way.

5.2 Personal experience: a retrospective reflection on gender in my role as a school leader

Given the male orthodoxy of headship at the end of the twentieth century, discussed in chapter two, and my own subconscious belief that I could not be like my male head teacher, as well as the lack of female role models at the time, it is interesting for me to reflect on how I came to be a head teacher. Like many female heads, and those in this research, I had no specific career plan to become a head teacher. Although I had no specific career plan to become a head teacher, I did not consciously think that because I was female I could not apply for promotion and from my earliest days in teaching it was my goal to be a head of department. With regards to senior leadership, I applied for the Scottish Qualification for Headship, not because I was certain that I wanted to become a head teacher, but because I did not want to count myself out by not applying, should the qualification become compulsory for head teachers. This reflects some of the gender differences in the approach of men and women to career planning, discussed in chapter two.

Prior to becoming the only female member of a senior management team, when I was appointed AHT, I would not really have considered my role in school in terms of my gender, probably because gender had never been an issue for me in any of my previous posts. This is similar to the experience of the female secondary head teacher in Ozga's research, who stated she never felt disadvantaged as a woman, but on further probing moderated this to the fact that she did not perceive any gender related issues in relation to her promotion (1993: 51). I did not perceive any either. Neither was I aware of ever having been hindered in a professional capacity because I was female. However, on becoming AHT, almost every person I met within my new school commented on the fact that I was a woman and relatively young. I assumed that this was because I had joined an all-male team, and in comparison to my colleagues I was relatively young and therefore did not consider this to be a gender motivated comment. My initial remit included responsibility for pastoral care, primary-secondary liaison and the lower school (S1 and S2) curriculum. I do not think I was deliberately being channelled into what was viewed as a 'feminine' role of pastoral care, catering for younger pupils (Coleman, 2002: 23); this was the remit which had been carried out by my male predecessor. Indeed, the head teacher of this school was very good at ensuring I had a full range of experience as AHT, which would enable me to apply for further promotion, should I make that choice. He was, however, a very tall male with great physical stature and presence. I was conscious that I could never be like him or emulate his style, simply because I was a female. I think too, I had an ingrained image of what a secondary head should look like, and inevitably it was a male figure. This was because in the mid to late 1990s there were few female role models as secondary head teachers and the accepted norm of a secondary head was invariably male. I think it is likely that, at a subconscious level, I possibly believed I would therefore not become a head teacher because I was a woman. Coleman (2003: 6) refers to this as the male orthodoxy of leadership, which I will discuss later.

Apart from these almost subconscious thoughts, which were perpetuated by my own feelings, as well as the lack of female head teacher role models, I had no direct experience of being treated differently because I was female. Partly this is chronological, because my experience in education post-dates the Equal Pay Act (1970) and the Sex Discrimination Act (1975). 'Women into Management' courses were also well established by the time I assumed my first senior leadership post in the nineties. Clearly, the fact that such courses

were being organised, indicated that there were issues related to women breaking through the glass ceiling¹⁹ to headship. From my own perspective, it was not until I was engaged in this research process that I became more aware of the specific range of gender issues associated with women in leadership roles in education.

In the time I have been in post, the number of female head teachers in Scottish secondary schools has risen. Indeed, in one authority in Scotland, around fifty per cent of secondary head teachers are female, a fact not replicated in neighbouring authorities. This is a high proportion, significantly higher than the proportion indicated by Coleman who stated that in 2001 in Scotland only six per cent of heads and deputies were female (2002: 2). Currently, the proportion of female head teachers has increased considerably with thirty per cent of registered secondary head teachers in Scotland being female. However, this is still lower than the sixty four per cent of registered secondary teachers who were females (GTC April 2013). Thus although the figure has increased there are still more male head teachers in Scotland, although there are more female teachers in the secondary sector. This is not unique to Scotland as an OECD report indicates: 'In all countries except Australia, Israel and Sweden, women are under-represented in secondary school leadership' (Pont, et al. 2008: 30).

In my autoethnography, gender did not feature as an explicit factor in my journey to headship. Neither was gender raised explicitly by any of the head teachers in this study either as a barrier to headship or as a significant issue they were aware of in their early headship experience. It should be acknowledged, however, that I did not specifically ask gender related questions. Nevertheless as I explored the data there were some issues emerging which appeared to relate to gender, particularly in relation to the approach of female head teachers to their job and in their apparent lack of career planning (Coleman 2002: 30; Coleman 2007: 387; McLay 2008; Ozga 1993; Young and McLeod 2001).

There are many factors that may have contributed to the increase in the number of female secondary head teachers. Changes in society and equal opportunity legislation may well have had an impact. In one local authority in Scotland the number has almost tripled in nine years. Thus there are more female role models for younger female teachers and being

¹⁹ This term was first coined in the 1980s, and subsequently popularized by Hymowitz, Carol, and Timothy D. Schellhardt. "The glass ceiling: Why women can't seem to break the invisible barrier that blocks them from the top jobs." *The Wall Street Journal* 24 (1986).

a female secondary head is not such an unusual occurrence, in certain areas of the country. Coleman asserts that it is easier for a female to secure headship in London, and that 'Trying to become a head in Scotland...increases the odds against women' (2002: 151). However, this is perhaps not the case more than a decade later, particularly in some of the inner city authorities.

Although the head teachers in this study were not specifically asked about the role of their gender in headship, their general responses reflected that of other research on female experience of headship. Similarities included their child centred approaches, their belief that they could make a difference and their collaborative approaches. They described the importance of supportive networks of colleague head teachers, the ability to depersonalise criticism and negative reactions and the need to maintain a work life balance (Fidler and Atton 2008; Cliffe 2011; MacBeath et al. 2009; Mercer 1996; Young and McLeod 2001; Weindling and Earley 1987). It is perhaps not surprising to note that the older participants were the only ones to make reference to issues such as maternity leave or child care, since they had experience of working conditions less supportive of women:

Left work to have 2 children. There was no such thing as maternity leave. You had to resign.

I got a new school, a brand new school, in XXXX [name of town removed for confidentiality], Principal Teacher, and I was there for about two years, and then I had XXXX [child's name removed for confidentiality]. I wanted to go back there, but I had a disagreement with the head teacher, because there was a crèche but you couldn't use it...

Furthermore, it was both of the retired head teachers who made specific mention of gender or, more accurately, who perhaps had a more challenging time in an era where there were fewer women and the expectation was that a secondary head teacher would be male. For one of them, this centred on observing some males doing the job badly:

I wasn't sure that I wanted to go in to senior management because it was mainly men, doing it badly, and I thought, no, I don't fancy that, and then I came to the realisation that I thought maybe I could do this, and I started applying for AHT jobs.

For the other, there was more of an overt awareness and seeming acceptance of being treated differently:

... it was quite difficult because not only was I female but I was also younger than them all... I mean it would've been so easy just to patronise me all the time, and they did, but there you go... that was the way it was.

Both of these responses perhaps reflect the experience of Coleman's head teachers (1996), possibly because their experience was at a similar time. None of the other participants raised any specific issues referring to their gender, or gender politics, in the course of interview, but the second analysis did point to some suggestion of this as an emerging theme, as discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 6 Reflections and implications

6.1 Reflections on research questions

There has been very limited research on the experiences of early headship which has included an in-depth exploration of this vital stage of a head teacher's development. This study used an analytical autoethnographic methodology to explore early experiences of headship, using head teachers' recollections of these experiences. The research was designed with the aim of identifying whether or not there were dominant themes across these experiences. The research questions posed were:

1. What are the significant factors in the progress to headship?
2. What are the pivotal experiences in early headship?

The specific areas discussed included:

- What prompts teachers to seek to become head teachers and what keeps them in post?
- The 'all-consuming nature' (MacBeath et al. 2009) of the job and how this is dealt with by existing head teachers;
- The possible mismatch between the perception and reality of headship;
- The surfacing of key challenges in early headship.

This study has added to the understanding of early headship experiences, which will have professional application in assisting others in their journey in headship and will specifically address the emotional demands of the post, especially in the early years, which have been highlighted as particularly challenging by this and other research (Briggs et al. 2006; Crow 2007; Earley and Bubb 2013; Murphy 2007 et al.; Quong 2006; Walker and Qian 2006; Weindling and Dimmock 2006). Thus the study moves beyond the experiential, since it will contribute to this understanding. It does so in outlining the inevitability of an early crisis situation which subsequently impacts on the novice head teacher's developing identity and how the novice head teacher is perceived. This will be useful to prospective head teachers and those responsible for their development. In addition, the research will contribute to the development of the understanding of early headship in an area where

there has been relatively little research, that is, female experiences. Very importantly, it also provides an insight into early headship experience for those who prepare and support aspiring and newly appointed head teachers, and who may have no direct personal experience of headship.

6.2 Reflections on analytical autoethnography

Successful analytical autoethnography must demonstrate five key features: complete member researcher status, analytical reflexivity, narrative visibility of the researcher's self, dialogue with informants beyond the self and commitment to theoretical analysis (Anderson 2006: 378). This study has demonstrated these features. It began with a critical reflection on my own early headship experience, which was written as a first person narrative piece of reflective writing. I was therefore very clearly visible in the study. This was then set in the context of the extant literature in the field, allowing for analytical reflexivity, which subsequently shaped the prompts for discussion for the interviews with the head teachers in the study, who were the other informants beyond myself. The data generated from the interviews identified dominant themes in early headship development, which were theoretically analysed.

An analytical autoethnographic methodology has not been without challenges, in particular, the charge that it is based on subjective experience. In this study subjectivity is both a strength and a distinctive feature of the research. It was designed to examine early experiences of headship and was therefore deliberately focused on the experiential, which Delamont (2007) criticises. I have refuted these criticisms in chapter three by demonstrating that the research did not simply focus on introspection but considered my own reflection on my early experience of headship related to the experience of others and to the relevant literature. It was also located within a social context, which was, secondary headship in Scotland during a specific period spanning the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This was also set within a specific policy context and discourse, as discussed in chapter two. Furthermore, this research has added to the knowledge of early headship experience, which will help others in their journey in headship, and will especially address the emotional demands of the post.

Alongside providing insight into these experiences, the outcomes have a clear professional significance which is crucial given that the research was completed for a professional doctorate. Its focus has been relevant to my profession and has illuminated the interface of headship with policy, practice and research. Given the composition of the sample, a further important feature of the research is the focus on the experience of female head teachers given that historically, and to some degree currently, secondary headship is a male dominated field.

6.3 Limitations of this research

A limiting factor of this research may be the small number of participants. This was a deliberate choice, in line with the interview method chosen, which was designed to elicit rich personal data within broad contexts, which were derived from my own experience and the literature. A further limiting factor could be the fact that the study was based on the experiences of female head teachers; conversely this could be regarded as a strength of the research as there is a limited set of studies in this area, thus this thesis extends the field. However, the study was not about gender in and of itself. It was about the experience of female head teachers and gender issues were considered after the data had been analysed. Similarly, insider research could also be regarded as a limiting factor. However, it was a prerequisite to an analytical autoethnography. Arguably, this too could be regarded as a strength as I was able to utilise insider experience in the pursuit of knowledge, which will assist in supporting head teachers in their early headship experience and assisting those who prepare them.

6.4 Reflections on key themes emerging from the research

By considering individual experiences of early headship, this study has revealed:

- The influence of role models and previous SMT experience for head teachers;
- The emotional intensity and all-consuming nature of the job, particularly in the early days in post;
- The inevitability of an early critical incident;
- The impact of legacy issues on head teachers' early experiences;

- The role of emotional intelligence in headship, in particular the need for self-awareness, resilience and finely tuned interpersonal skills;
- The importance of self-reflection in successfully building head teacher identity;
- The need of support from head teacher colleagues.

Of particular importance has been the emergence of the inevitability that there will be a crisis situation during the early years of headship, the handling of which will impact on the head teacher's developing identity, as well as the staff's perception of the new head teacher, both of which are intertwined. The prompts for discussion allowed some of the key challenges in early headship to be surfaced and analysis of the data has allowed me to identify key factors in early headship experience, which relate particularly to the process of head teacher socialisation, both at an individual and an organisational level. The socialisation process also highlighted the emotional intensity of the role at this early stage, as well as throughout headship.

Although some of the sample did complete a headship preparation programme (SQH) others did not. However, with both groups there was some sense of not really learning fully about headship until 'on the job'. Consideration must be given, then, to what this says about preparation for headship and development of and support to head teachers in their early years in post and I will make some recommendations about this in sections 6.5 and 6.6.

6.4.1 What prompts teachers to seek to become head teachers and what keeps them in post?

The data in this research indicated that the participants had no direct plan to become head teachers. The tipping points in changing this were varied but included some similarities, particularly working closely with a head teacher as a member of a senior team. This was an important factor in making the participants aware of some of the tasks undertaken by a head teacher. It was at this point that many of the participants began to consider headship as a possible career choice. The support and encouragement of other colleagues and headship preparation programmes were also important factors, as was the desire to have wider influence and experience a new challenge. What gave the head teachers greatest satisfaction in post was invariably connected to helping young people achieve,

empowering staff and seeing both young people and staff develop. Ultimately, the head teachers in this study felt they were making a difference in the lives of young people. Amongst the rewarding aspects of the job, those mentioned most frequently were the ability to make a difference and influence things for better, thus improving learning and opportunities for young people. This satisfaction was what kept them going.

6.4.2 The ‘all-consuming nature’ of the job and the mismatch between the perception and reality of headship

It was notable in the data that comments relating to the emotional labour associated with being a head teacher were woven through many of the interviews. This emotional labour related to handling emotions in self, in other people and the emotional aspects of leading the school as a whole. Being a head teacher meant being able to deal with unpredictable situations, not simply by having processes in place but also by having the requisite emotional intelligence and resilience to cope with the unexpected and guide the school through whatever challenge arose. A key feature in the data was the inevitability that there will be a crisis situation in the early years of headship, the handling of which will impact on the head teacher’s developing identity, as well as the staff’s perception of the new head teacher, both of which are intertwined. Of particular note was the fact that although there were more than twenty years between the appointment of the most experienced head teacher and those with the least experience nevertheless there was a commonality in their comments relating to the emotional intensity of headship which perhaps suggests that this is a key element of headship which should be addressed in headship preparation programmes. The emotional intensity of the post emerged as possibly the greatest mismatch between the perception and reality of headship; quite simply it was not until it was experienced that the intensity of it struck home. This is a particular challenge for those responsible for headship preparation programmes as it is difficult to simulate the experience of having overall responsibility for the leadership of a school.

6.4.3 Key challenges in early headship and coping strategies

Issues inherited from their predecessors were amongst the key challenges faced by head teachers in their early days in post. One important legacy issue highlighted by head teachers in this research was related to establishing a relationship with their new SMT.

This was particularly true when they had to deal with an SMT that contained a depute head teacher who had been unsuccessful in applying for the post they had gained. Having been appointed over an existing internal candidate brought a further emotional nuance the new head teacher had to negotiate. She had to navigate her way through existing loyalties whilst simultaneously building her own relationships with her new SMT. The legacy of working with a senior team, usually appointed by the previous head teacher, and taking account of their working practices was mentioned by all of the participants. What emerged as a key feature in dealing with this successfully was the importance of establishing relationships and managing the realignment of the existing team under the leadership of the new head teacher. The data indicated that the head teacher's interpersonal skills were important in the handling of this situation, as well as some sensitivity as to where the school was in terms of its development.

By far the greatest legacy issue emerging from the data related to personnel issues, whether these were dealing with difficult matters of staff competence or the formal procedures, which subsequently had to be followed. This was mentioned specifically by half of the participants, and all made reference to the fact that matters had been allowed to develop under their predecessor. Understanding the history of the school and where it was in terms of its own development featured as a legacy issue head teachers had to face, not specifically because of any individual situation but because it created the context in which they were operating. All of the head teachers commented on the need to get to know their new schools, appreciating where it was currently, and importantly getting an understanding and appreciation of its history.

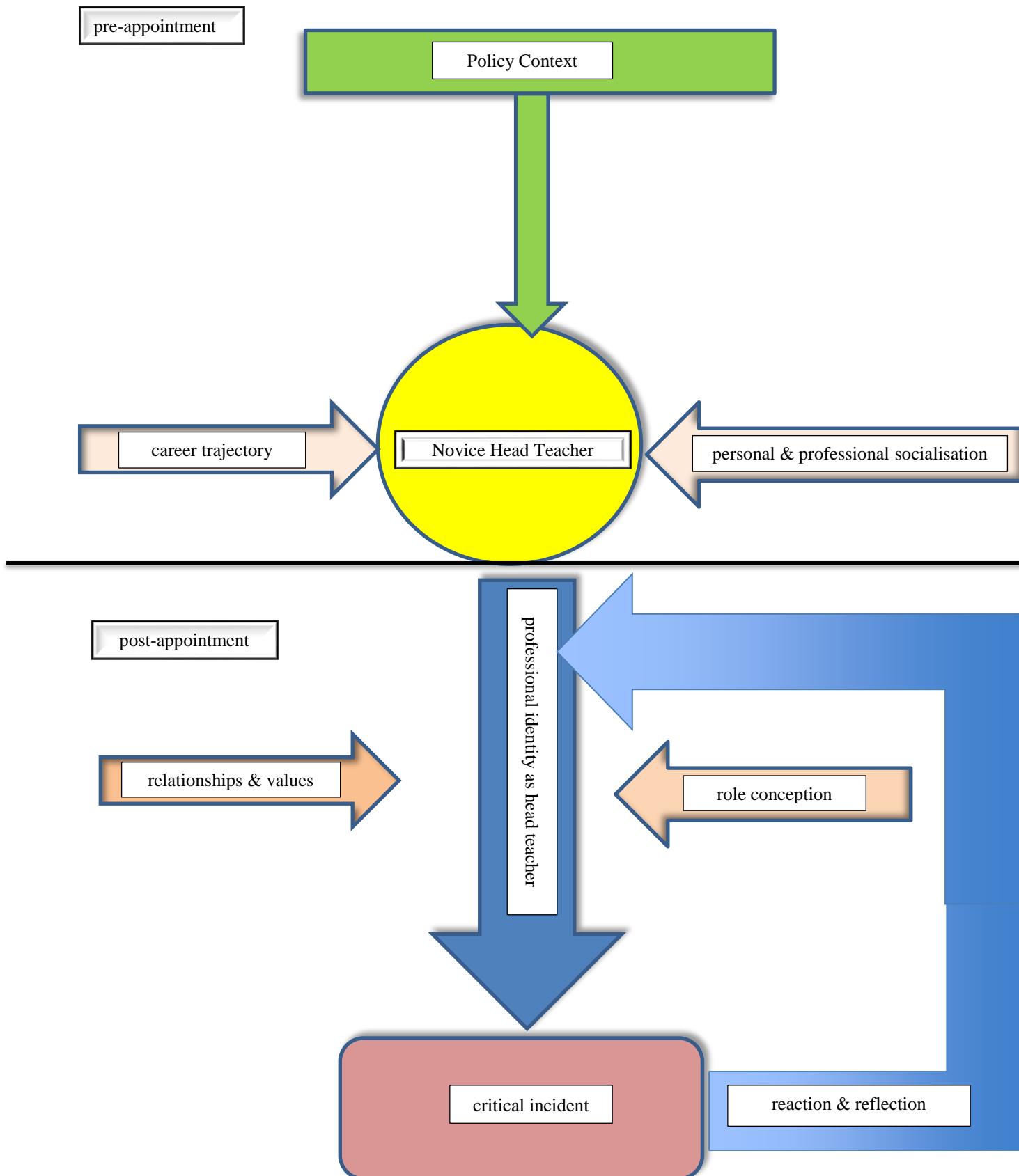
The emotional intensity of the post also raised the question of the head teachers' coping strategies. They mentioned the support of other head teachers, including informal social gatherings, which allowed them to share experiences and challenges. It was evident from the data that receiving the understanding of others who were doing the same job was a very important support mechanism for all of the head teachers. The shared experience of headship seemed to bring some reassurance, particularly in difficult situations. Although the support of peers was the most frequent support mechanism cited by the head teachers, support from family and friends were both mentioned as well. Support from management teams and colleagues with whom they had previously worked were also important to the head teachers. A number of the participants also spoke about the importance of building in

time for themselves and making a conscious decision to stop working. Maintaining a positive outlook was a further coping strategy mentioned by several of the head teachers. For the head teachers the rewarding aspects of the role perhaps provided a counter-balance to the demands of emotional labour.

6.5 Implications for headship preparation

The conceptual map constructed to illustrate factors influencing early experiences of headship can equally be applied to head teacher preparation and the greatest implication for this lies in extending programmes such as the SQH to include the first year in post, as illustrated in figure 4 on the following page.

Figure 4: Conceptual Map of Head Teacher Preparation



Although the focus of this study was on early experiences of headship, a number of implications have emerged for head teacher preparation programmes, none the least the suggestion that headship preparation should extend into the post appointment phase to encompass the early days in post. This study has shown that one of the greatest challenges facing new head teachers is the emotional demands of the job, which seem to be at their most intense during the early period of professional and organisational socialisation. Given that this was the experience both of the heads who had undertaken a preparation programme as well as those who had not, the question therefore arises as to how head teachers can be prepared for this and how they can be supported. This is preparation for a role where there are high degrees of unpredictability, which is challenging. It would be unrealistic to second-guess every conceivable crisis which could emerge. What can be predicted, however, is that a crisis will emerge and thought as to how this is prepared for is required by those aspiring to the post of head teacher and those who prepare them for the post. Frequently, there is no text-book response to such situations and head teachers then act from their value base and their tacit knowledge based on what they have learned from the handling of previous unpredictable situations. They are operating in what Schön (1987: 6) describes as ‘indeterminate zones of practice’ (IZP) which escape technical rationality or solution, but which are pertinent to professional practice: thus the question may be posed as to how aspiring and novice head teachers are prepared for indeterminate zones of practice.

6.5.1 The need to provide scaffolding

In Vygotskyian (1978) terms, consideration should be given to what scaffolding could be put in place to prepare head teachers for, and support them through, these challenging times. In simple terms, openly discussing the perplexing aspects of headship may help demystify them by signalling they are a ‘normal’ part of growth and development in headship and not an indication of failure. In discussing IZP, it is worthwhile considering Bolton & English’s (2010) discussion of the role of emotions in education decision making (p575). They aim to deconstruct the logic/emotion binary which has dominated leadership preparation, and to establish the role of emotions in decision making as normal: ‘We believe that educational leadership curricula should similarly be recast to be more inclusive of the role of emotion as a response to a decision event’. They highlight the fact that in situations of uncertainty, when confronting a decision, emotionality was very evident to the

decision maker as ‘gut instinct’. I would contend that it is not ‘gut instinct’ alone that operates in such circumstances, but an instinct from tacit knowledge gained from reflection on previous experience. In situations of high uncertainty, the decision makers slowed or reviewed the decision-making process and if necessary reversed a previous decision. The decision was made on the basis of weighing up the severity of the impact of the consequences on the decision maker and how vulnerable they would become as a result. In normative decision making theory, emotions would not be considered as a decision making tool because they lack reliability. What the educational leaders in Bolton & English’s (2010) study demonstrated was that emotions did figure in decision making, particularly in times of uncertainty, and that at times they were brave enough to reverse decisions. However, there was no direct reference to the influence of values on such decision making, whereas, the head teachers in this research were clear about decisions built around values of trust, integrity and the quality of relationships as well as their instinct and tacit knowledge. Making aspiring and novice head teachers aware of this, as an element of scaffolding, seems worthy of consideration in future preparation.

In examining artistry of professional practice, Schön contends that we need to consider what master practitioners do in indeterminate zones of practice and in some way make their tacit knowledge explicit. Tacit knowledge is crucial as it is the reserve from which experienced head teachers draw when they are operating in situations they have not previously experienced. As Wright (2009: 265) asserts, tacit knowledge and educational theory provide ‘... conceptual insights that inform thoughts about practice’ rather than providing templates for action which must be rigidly followed. Thus both have to be accessed in head teacher preparation. One way of providing scaffolding, and making use of tacit knowledge, would be in opening the dialogue between established and aspiring head teachers. This would have to be carefully planned to ensure the established heads did not simply recount the incident they handled but rather made explicit their thought processes and decision making strategies. Such dialogues could initially be incorporated within existing preparation programmes for aspiring heads. For those new to post, one-to-one conversations may be more appropriate, reflecting the approach (professional artistry) outlined by Schön, where novices learn from master practitioners.

6.5.2 Creating a Reflective Practicum

Schön posits that developing professional artistry is best addressed by adopting the methods of design studios or musical conservatories, where there is freedom to learn from master practitioners in low risk circumstances (Schön 1987: 17). Unfortunately, low risk circumstances do not at present exist for novice head teachers, apart from those who have had some experience, in acting positions, where they temporarily cover an absence or vacancy. However, it is also recognised that, in some cases, acting in the post of head can also act as a disincentive to future application for headship (Draper & McMichael 2002, 2003) and a crucial issue lies in the support the acting head receives whilst undertaking the responsibilities of headship. Creating a reflective practicum for new head teachers is challenging, but vital, in supporting them (as well as acting and aspiring head teachers) in their early days in post. As well as providing practical and moral support, a crucial aspect of such a practicum would be in ‘demystifying’ some of the practice of headship, particularly where it relates to dealing with situations in indeterminate zones of practice.

If a practicum is ‘a setting designed for the task of learning a practice’ (Schön, 1987: 37) the question arises as to how exactly one learns to become a head teacher, given that, as the data in this research indicated, the greatest surprise of headship was in the emotional intensity of the role and the realisation that the ultimate responsibility in the school lies with the head teacher. Since this emotional intensity seems to be something which actually has to be experienced, it cannot therefore happen until after appointment, which is problematic in creating a practicum. Aspects of the job of head teacher can be learned in other SMT posts or in headship preparation programmes, as discussed in chapter five. The key questions would appear to be how opportunities to operate within indeterminate zones of practice are to be provided for aspiring head teachers and what support can be offered to new head teachers experiencing these indeterminate zones. Perhaps existing head teachers have to heed the recommendation from MacBeath et al. (2009: 59) and take the lead in seeking ‘critical friends and make time for reflection, support and challenge and promote resilient collegial support networks’. They could offer crucial support to novice head teachers in situations where they were able to make their tacit knowledge explicit. The head teachers in this research also highlighted this kind of network as an important source of support. For those head teachers in more isolated circumstances, online support might be a possibility. MacBeath et al. (2009: 55) cited the importance of *Deputes Together* and

Heads Together (Scottish online communities) in sustaining commitment and motivation. Perhaps these could be further developed to create Schön's reflective practicum. Before this stage, however, the turbulence of the early experiences, and the feelings of inadequacy felt during that first crisis, or indeterminate zone of practice, need to be highlighted as critical rites of passage on the road to developing as a head teacher. This can be addressed before appointment, thus signalling that crises will arise but that they can be handled. It would seem, however, that the people most equipped to address this are perhaps the head teachers already in post, both in terms of sharing their experience and in supporting their novice colleagues. Some local authorities provide coaches or mentors, and many heads, including the participants in this research, found the support of fellow head teachers, as well as friends and family, very important.

It would seem that the experience of established head teachers is at present an underutilised resource in the support and development of novice head teachers and that further consideration should be given as to how this might be used. Earley and Jones (2010: 87) highlight the concept of leadership maturity in their discussion of research by the Hay Group:

Research by the Hay Group (2008) notes the differences between established leaders who show strengths in such matters as political awareness, indirect influencing, alliance-building skills and long-term thinking and planning, and emergent leaders and those on fast-track programmes who often do not... these qualities and skills are associated with leadership maturity... so how can leadership maturity be accelerated as well as leadership and management skills developed?

The concept of leadership maturity has been developed in the Victoria Department of Education's Framework for School Leaders (2007) where five levels of performance have been identified across five domains of leadership. This indicates that an appointment to a head teacher or principal's post is not the end point but rather a developmental journey that continues throughout headship. The five stages are based on the Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition (1986) and range from novice to expert performer. Collins (2008) contends that people do not only learn from experience, but also their reflection on experience. Providing opportunities for reflection for new and aspiring head teachers seems to be a key issue in head teacher development and a five stage model, as described, could provide a useful tool in developing this, especially since its emphasis is on levels thus suggesting that

leadership is a developmental process. This provides a useful framework for discussion and reflection and could provide a useful tool for charting leadership growth.

The question arises, however, as to what benefit such reflection brings. Reflection on action creates a space in which the individual may increase their belief in their self-efficacy by considering the actions they took. Rhodes (2012) cites Bandura (1977), who suggests that self-efficacy has an important contribution to make to behaviour, particularly in challenging circumstances (2012: 444). The head teachers in this research indicated that their confidence increased following the successful handling of early crisis situations, and their subsequent reflection on them. This is important, as self-belief could be a key determinant between potential and actual high performance leadership (2012: 440). However, it is the interaction of reflection on such challenging circumstances and not simply the circumstances themselves that contribute to the development of self-efficacy. Thus it is important that reflection on action takes place as it helps to make explicit the thought process, feelings and emotions involved in handling a variety of situations, particularly where these were complex or fraught. As thoughts are being articulated, the individual comes to a greater understanding of herself, and how she handled a particular situation. If the outcome is positive, this may also contribute to an increase in self-belief, which is important in establishing identity as a head teacher, particularly in the early days in post. Put succinctly, reflection helps people learn from experience (Brookfield 1995; Collins 2008; Dewey 1910; Earley & Bubb 2013; Schön 1983).

Given the challenging nature of headship, self-efficacy and self-belief are important for any head teacher, but particularly so for those in the early stages, where the challenge is most intense at a time when they are building their professional identity, as the data in chapter five indicated. Thus it is important that opportunities are created for head teachers to reflect on their work, particularly in relation to challenging circumstances. While reflection itself is important, it could be that having the opportunity to discuss their reflections with an experienced head teacher would provide additional benefits for the novice head teacher: articulating particular courses of action in such a context may further benefit the novice head teacher's self-efficacy. This could be facilitated through head teacher observation, as posited by Earley and Bubb (2013). In their small scale research the six new head teachers who were observed for a day and interviewed before and after

the observation all commented on the benefits the observation brought, in terms of assisting their reflection ‘with a fellow professional with no vested interest’ (2013: 792).

6.5.3 Reflection in and from the swamp

That this need for reflection has great importance is further discussed by Schön (1987) who highlights an important area, which needs further consideration in headship:

In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution. The irony of this situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or society at large, however great their technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern (Schön 1987: 3).

Headship ‘in the swamp’ perhaps needs to be more openly discussed, and I would suggest that the handling of early crisis situations, forms part of that swampy heartland. I concur with Wright (2009: 265) who states ‘In the swamp, everyday experiences are rich sources of learning that may be provoked by tension, chaos, struggle, uncertainty, conflict and dilemma’. However, I agree from the standpoint of an experienced head teacher and with the benefit of hindsight. I am unsure if I would have said this as a novice head teacher experiencing my first ‘swamp’. Open discussion of such difficult issues would serve the purpose of making new heads (who may be experiencing ‘swampy’ situations) aware of the fact that they are not alone. This is important particularly when they are dealing with the insecurities which arise during early socialisation experiences, both at a personal and an organisational level, when it is all too easy to make the assumption that they may have misjudged a situation. It is important that novice head teachers understand that such experiences are an essential and inevitable part of headship and not necessarily attributable to any failure on their part. This is about more than raising awareness, however. It is about helping new head teachers understand their developmental journey, and a model such as the Victoria Framework (2007) could contribute to this. Sergiovanni (2001: 2) elucidates Barth’s (1980: xv) contention that, although problems and challenges of education may be similar, the solutions are particularly idiosyncratic and that, effective leaders ‘have resigned themselves to the difficult task of having to create their practice in

use as they make decisions' (Sergiovanni, 2001: 2). If head teachers know about this in advance and understand that it is part of their developmental journey as a head teacher this may relieve some of the emotional intensity of the early days by reducing anxiety caused by 'swampy' situations. It would also, perhaps, make new heads more willing to acknowledge difficulties in their early days in post thus providing an opening for support. Consideration has to be given to the possible contexts for such conversations to support novice head teachers. The use of existing head teachers in reflective conversations could assist this process, not simply in the context of a sympathetic ear, but in encouraging the new head teacher to make their thought processes explicit, thus bringing an element of cognitive understanding to the 'swampy' situation.

6.5.4 Coaching to support reflection

Coaching could provide such a context and is already used extensively as one plank of leadership development in the UK and beyond (Forde et al. 2013a: 106). It could usefully be extended to support reflective conversations with novice head teachers. Simkins et al. (2006) examined 'Leading from the Middle' a NCSL programme which was one of the first leadership programmes to contain a systematic approach to coaching. They cite West and Milan's (2001) description of three types of coaching, the third of which, developmental coaching, might be considered as a possible context for reflective conversations with novice head teachers, since it is concerned with 'more complex, emergent and longer-term objectives' (2001: 323) and is less directive in approach than skills or performance coaching. Davidson et al. (2008) evaluated the availability of coaching in the Flexible Route to Headship Pilot in 2008 and concluded 'we believe that coaching has a significant contribution to make to the development of school leaders' (Davidson et al. 2008: 4). Forde et al. (2013b: 449) indicate the importance of coaching and reflection 'in the building of a sense of self-efficacy and the strengthening of interpersonal skills' both of which have also been highlighted in this study as being important in early headship. More importantly, however, they note the personal and professional impact on the candidates who undertook coaching within the FRH and highlight the importance for the participants of 'reflecting on and renewing their values'. However, it is also noted that coaching further assisted participants in dealing positively with some leadership challenges, which included dealing with conflict, reframing conflict as something which could have a positive impact and being less judgemental or learning to

suspend judgement (Forde et al. 2013a: 108). It is important to note that these areas are broadly similar to some of the early challenges of headship experienced by the head teachers in this research and would perhaps suggest that coaching conversations for head teachers newly in post would be a beneficial strand in head teacher development.

Within the evaluation of the FRH (Davidson et al. 2008) there was some discussion of the credibility of the coach and whether or not this had to be a head teacher; in the eyes of the participants the fact that their coaches had been head teachers gave them credibility. Forde et al. (2013a: 117) point to an inherent contradiction in having someone with professional experience and expertise in what was a non-directive coaching relationship, as opposed to a more direct mentoring approach. However, what is important for head teacher development is the contribution a coaching methodology could make to on-going leadership development. The coaches involved in the FRH pilot indicated that ‘anyone in the role should be an experienced and successful head teacher, partly so that he or she would appreciate the demands of the role’ (Davidson et al. 2008: 29). What was also crucial however, was that the coach was someone who was ‘affirming, probing and challenging’ (Davidson et al. 2008: 39) and for the individuals on the FRH it was ‘the coaching experience that is credited with building confidence’. If this is true for individuals undertaking a programme prior to appointment as head teacher, it is perhaps equally important for new head teachers who have just embraced the challenges of the post.

The provision of a coach could make a significant contribution to head teacher development in terms of providing a context for reflective conversations and ‘practice based learning’ (Forde et al. 2013b) where practice-based learning is distinguished from practice in that it provides a context for ‘critical thinking, knowledge and understanding [which] underpin the development of practice’ (p446). Albeit this is discussing the development of aspiring heads, it could equally be applied to the on-going development of new head teachers, where they are supported to develop knowledge and understanding to underpin their practice as head teachers. In Schön’s description, the coach would be a member of the professional community of practitioners, who would ‘emphasise indeterminate zones of practice and reflective conversations’ (Schön 1987: 40) which can also be considered practice based learning. In such conversations tacit knowledge may be elicited and made explicit. However, the question arises as to how the provision of a

coach, master practitioner, or critical friend for newly appointed head teachers could be funded in the current financial climate, as well as taking account of some of the other issues raised. It could be, as Brydson (2010: 188) suggests, that it becomes an accepted part of a head teacher's role, and is initiated by head teachers themselves rather than being something organised by a local authority. There are a number of other considerations, which would have to be taken into account in rolling this approach out, as the evaluators highlight. These include: training and supervision of coaches, how they are allocated, how positive and trusting relationships are established, and how the coaching relationships are exited (Davidson et al. 2008). There were also questions around the support of coaches, as well as how coaches were allocated, as was the case with Simkins et al. (2006).

6.5.5 Working alongside master practitioners: apprenticeships, internships and work shadowing

Schön (1987) makes the case for those embarking on a profession to learn alongside a master practitioner. Earley (2009: 307) indicates that school leaders cite working alongside head teachers as the 'single most powerful learning opportunity in their development'. The head teachers in this research also spoke about the influence (positive and negative) of head teachers with whom they had worked and Davidson et al. (2008: 20) indicate, for those on the FRH 'Speakers at the residential who were head teachers were seen as particularly helpful and inspiring, and as credible witnesses to the day-to-day demands and dilemmas of headship'. Simkins et al. (2009) discuss a pilot of work shadowing in Sheffield, in which senior school leaders were linked to head teacher mentors in another part of the city. Of particular note were the benefits derived from 'shadowing plus in-depth discussion' of managing areas such as the transition to headship or work life balance (2009: 246). What is also important, however, was the importance of framing the learning from shadowing, whether that was the discussion of specific instances with an emphasis on helping the observer understand and make sense of them, or wider issues of what headship is about set in a particular context. In all of these examples, the success and importance relates to the discussion with the experienced practitioner underlining once more the key role of reflection. It could be that this influence relates to the impact of modeling. Bandura (1997) highlights the importance of models, who demonstrate efficacy, as well as voicing their conviction in difficult circumstances that the situation can be handled. He indicates that observation in itself is less effective than 'having models

verbalize their thought processes and strategies aloud as they engage in problem-solving activities' (p93). As yet, however, working alongside head teachers seems to be under-utilised as a training mechanism for aspiring or newly appointed head teachers, albeit that as depute heads individuals are already working with head teachers. In these positions, however, as deputies the individuals are carrying busy remits and there is therefore little time available for training purposes to run in tandem.

Given that work based learning and learning alongside a master practitioner are important in developing personal expertise, the question arises as to how this might be deployed in head teacher development. Internships are not commonly used in the United Kingdom. Earley (2009) describes two which operated in England, suggesting that internships are important because they allow the application of new skills in 'authentic settings' where they 'are guided by critical self-reflection' (p309). However, it should be noted that there is a wide range of internship experience as the time spent in the internship varies greatly. Nevertheless, the potential for internships in supporting head teacher development is important. The emphasis on critical self-reflection is key as it indicates it is not the placement in and of itself, which holds the key to effective leadership development but the critical self-reflection, the importance of which has already been considered. It is worth noting that the individuals involved in the project made reference to increasing their awareness of the emotional aspects of the post and the need for resilience in headship (Earley 2009: 316). Given this is one of the areas new head teachers find surprising, as the data in this research indicated in chapter four, internships located in schools within or across local authorities could provide a way of acquiring more knowledge and experience of this important area of headship. Internships are, however, costly. A key point in the evaluation of the programme is pertinent:

Our future leaders learn from the experiences accrued during their internships but they learn more from having opportunities to reflect on those experiences and time needs to be made for this which is enabled through regular meetings with coaches and mentor heads (Earley 2009: 318).

This once more appears to support Schön's contention that reflection with a master practitioner will assist professional development and that reflection is a key factor in practice-based learning.

Whilst internships are not commonly used in head teacher development programmes in Scotland, consideration could be given to head teacher apprenticeship schemes, whereby local authorities appointed a head teacher designate who would work alongside an experienced head teacher before taking up appointment. Given the current legislation on the appointment of head teachers in Scotland,²⁰ however, the apprentice head teacher would subsequently have to be appointed to an appropriate school. Such a scheme would require greater attention to be paid to succession planning. A further possibility for apprenticeships would be the appointment of a head teacher designate to a school, where a successful head teacher is planning retirement. This would allow the head teacher in waiting to contend with some of the legacy issues in real time, with their predecessor present, thus these would perhaps be surfaced before they become one of the many legacy issues with which head teachers in this research had to contend. An alternative model would be to incorporate work shadowing with discussion, as in the Sheffield model, as part of existing head teacher preparation programmes, but extending the range of the experience to continue into the head teacher's early days in post. Thus, the new head teacher already has a working relationship with a head teacher with whom they have previously engaged in reflective dialogue. This would necessitate a reframing of head teacher preparation programmes as experiential learning, which extends beyond appointment.

6.6 Implications for leadership development

In 'Teaching Scotland's Future' (2011), known as the Donaldson Report, the former Chief HMIe conducted a review of teacher education, at the request of the Scottish Government. Whilst focusing primarily on initial teacher education, the report also includes recommendations pertinent to school leadership. It continues the contention of 'Leadership for Learning' that

Human capital in the form of a highly educated population is now accepted as a key determinant of economic success.... the foundations of successful education lie in the quality of teachers and their leadership (Donaldson 2011: 4).

²⁰ Parental involvement in head teacher and deputy head teacher appointments is required by the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006, and was established in the School Boards (Scotland) Act 1988

Importantly, the report recognises that ‘Leadership is based on fundamental values and habits of mind which must be acquired and fostered from entry into the teaching profession’ (Donaldson 2011: 4). Within the report, there are recommendations, which can be considered in the context of head teacher development. Crucially, the importance of self-reflection is recognised from the earliest stages of teacher education. Mentoring, as a key plank of current teacher training, is recognised as a successful strategy in professional development with the usual caveats of the quality and training of mentors (Donaldson 2011: 53). The Santa Cruz Model, where mentors were released from their posts on a full time basis to fulfil the role of mentor, is highlighted as being particularly effective. Perhaps consideration has to be given by local authorities to the release of current head teachers to function as mentors to head teachers in the early days of their headship. The Santa Cruz model releases teachers for two to three years to focus entirely on mentoring, and mentors are recruited after a rigorous selection process and provided with systematic training. Whether two to three years is feasible or desirable for head teacher mentors, it is clear that time has to be available for this to operate effectively, and not simply to become something head teachers do in addition to their current duties.

The Donaldson report indicates a lack of continuous professional development opportunities for experienced head teachers, and suggests that ‘a pool of national leaders of education’ (Scottish Government 2011: 80) be developed to allow experienced, high-performing head teachers to contribute to system leadership within Scotland: ‘National leaders of education would continue in their current posts but contribute significantly to beyond their own school’ (Scottish Government 2011: 81). A range of possible contributions is listed including working closely with policy makers and civil servants. What is lacking, however, is any suggestion that national leaders could be used to support aspiring and novice head teachers. Consideration should be given to the development of this role, within the context of on-going professional development. Not only would support be provided for new head teachers in the early stages of their headship, but experienced head teachers would benefit from the development that mentoring/coaching would bring.

6.7 Wider implications

The findings from this research have particular implications for headship preparation, both at a formal level through head teacher preparation programmes and on the ground, working in schools with existing head teachers.

6.7.1 For the Scottish Government

Given the emotional intensity of the post, and the inevitability of early crisis situations, consideration should be given to using existing head teachers as coaches for new head teachers to facilitate reflective dialogue. This could operate within the proposed framework of National Leaders of Education, engaging head teachers as mentors rather than only in areas of policy development.

6.7.2 For local authorities

This study highlights the importance of critical reflection in building identity as a head teacher. Systematic opportunities and time need to be created for existing DHTs and new head teachers to engage in reflective dialogue with an experienced head teacher.

For DHTs, given the influence of role models and the experiential learning as a DHT, consideration should be given to opportunities for existing DHTs to reflect on the work of headship with an experienced mentor who may or may not be their existing head teacher. This could be developed through the establishment of head teacher internships.

Given that all head teachers in this research spoke of the impact of legacy issues in their early days in post, local authorities should consider developing exit plans when outgoing head teachers intimate they are leaving. Such plans could contain a summary of the school's journey under the outgoing head teacher and an indication of possible next steps in its on-going development. Similarly, if at all possible, a phased handover could also be considered, where the head teacher designate has an opportunity to be in and around the school with the outgoing head teacher. This would allow the opportunity to observe aspects of the culture of the school and thus surface some legacy issues.

6.7.3 For providers of head teacher preparation programmes

Head teacher preparation programmes should provide a platform where head teacher socialisation (both professional and organisational) is more openly explored by aspiring head teachers, thus increasing their awareness of the intensity of the early period in post. Existing head teachers should be used in discussing their early experiences. As this research has highlighted the emotional intensity of early headship experience, consideration should therefore be given to a re-conceptualisation of head teacher preparation programmes to encompass the first year in post, including opportunities for observation of the new head teacher in post as a means of supporting reflective dialogue. This is illustrated in figure 4 (p148).

6.7.4 For existing head teachers

Existing head teachers should speak more openly about the rewarding aspects of their role, to counterbalance some of the disincentives to headship. They should have increased involvement in the preparation and development of new and aspiring head teachers.

6.7.5 For future research

This study focused on the experience of a group of female head teachers who were either currently in post or had retired and who were all relatively positive about their headship experience. They identified early crisis situations, which they had handled and from which they had grown. It is possible, however, that there are individual head teachers who did not have a positive experience in such circumstances. Future research could therefore investigate the reasons why some head teachers elect to step down from their post and whether these resignations were linked in any way to early crisis situations and the development of their professional identity.

This research focused on the experience of female head teachers and was conducted by a female researcher using an analytical autoethnographic methodology. It may be useful to consider the experience of male head teachers in a similar way to ascertain any similarities in their experiences. The use of an all-male group would provide a mirror opposite for comparison, allowing further extrapolation of headship experience according to gender.

Given the fact that head teacher socialisation is a key aspect of early headship experience, both at a professional and organisational level, it would be beneficial to carry out further research with head teachers who were promoted from within their own school, where one aspect of organisational socialisation is arguably reduced. This would allow further consideration of socialisation process. Furthermore, given the importance of legacy issues in particular, the study of internally appointed head teachers would provide another perspective on this, by considering the extent to which they feature in the experience of such head teachers.

This study was largely based on the stories of existing head teachers and highlighted the significance of their early days in post suggesting that headship preparation is crucial. To further explore this area, it would be useful to have future studies of new head teachers as they take up post, tracking their progress and experience over a period of time to provide additional data to support head teacher development.

Finally, this research focused on a small group of head teachers. It would therefore be beneficial to extend the study across a wider pool of head teachers to ascertain the extent to which the experiences outlined are common in early headship

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Appendix A



Plain Language Statement

1. Study title and Researcher Details

Perception, Reality and Other Key Influences On Early Experiences of Headship in the Scottish Secondary Sector

Jacqueline Purdie email: j.purdie.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Research Supervisor: Professor Christine Forde email: Christine.Forde@educ.gla.ac.uk

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

There is increasing concern at an international level about the recruitment and retention of Headteachers. The Scottish Government's commissioned research was published in November 2009: The Recruitment and Retention of Headteachers in Scotland. There are a number of areas from the report I would want to explore further. These relate to:

- reasons why individuals apply for the post of Headteacher and remain in it;
- preparation for the post;
- perception of the post and the reality of the experience in post.

The study will look at headteacher's early experiences of headship and use this to explore the three areas listed above. It is hoped that it will inform future support for aspiring and newly appointed headteachers.

The findings of the study will be submitted as the final part of my studies for the degree of Doctor of Education.

4. Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to participate because of your experience as a headteacher. There will be six participants, covering a range of headteacher experience: two fairly recently appointed, two with more experience and two retired.

5. Do I have to take part?

You are free to decline the offer of participation in this research. If you do decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

I will interview you, asking a range of questions relating to your experience of headship. The questions will be sent to you in advance and the interview will take approximately ninety minutes. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. You will be asked to verify the transcription.

You can, if you wish, use the questions as a writing frame and provide written responses instead of an interview.

The interviews of all of the participants will be analysed to look for common themes.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will have your name, or your school's name removed so that you cannot be recognised.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results will be written up in my dissertation for a Doctorate in Education at Glasgow University. You will free to read the final dissertation. I will also provide oral feedback to all participants.

The results may also be written up as journal articles or conference papers in the future.

The findings may also be shared with Glasgow City Council Education Service to inform future support for new and aspiring headteachers.

9. Who is organising and funding the research? (If relevant)

This research is self-funded.

10. Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been reviewed by Glasgow University College of Social Sciences (School of Education) Ethics Committee .

11. Contact for Further Information

Further information can be obtained from j.purdie.1@research.gla.ac.uk or from my supervisor Professor Christine Forde at c.forde@educ.gla.ac.uk

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer by contacting Dr Georgina Wardle at georgina.wardle@glasgow.ac.uk

Thank you for reading this.

Jackie Purdie

Appendix B**Consent Form****Title of Project:**

Perception, Reality and Other Key Influences On Early Experiences of Headship in the Scottish Secondary Sector

Name of Researcher:

Jacqueline Purdie

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I consent to my interview being audio-taped and that a copy of the transcript will be returned to me for verification. I will not be identified by name in any publications arising from the research. I will have the opportunity to check any direct quotes used in the research.

4. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person giving consent
(if different from participant, eg Parent)

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

1 for subject; 1 for researcher

Appendix C Prompts for discussion

Prompts for Discussion

Introduction

Research commissioned by the Scottish Government on the recruitment and retention of head teachers was published in 2009 and highlighted a number of areas I would like to explore further. These relate to:

- reasons why individuals apply for the post of head teacher and remain in it
- preparation for the post
- perception of the post before becoming a head teacher and the reality of the experience in post.

I want to examine head teacher's recollections of their early experiences of headship and use these to explore these areas. The areas for consideration are preparation for headship, your early days in post, your understanding of the nature of headship and your experience of being a head teacher.

The questions below are prompts for discussion, and for retired head teachers will be in the past tense.

You may, if you wish, provide written responses to these prompts, as an alternative to a discussion.

Preparation for Headship

How long have you been head teacher?

Was this something you always wanted to do?

Please give me a brief outline of your professional journey to head teacher.

Did you undertake the SQH, or equivalent, prior to appointment? If so what impact do you think this has had on your practice?

What similarities or differences are there in how you saw the role before taking up post and your experience of it now.

Considering the role models of any head teachers with whom you have worked, what impact do you think they may have had on your practice.

If there are any other role models you consider significant, please tell me about them, indicating why you consider them an important influence on your practice.

Early days as head teacher in your school

Please describe your first meeting with staff, including your recollection of how you wanted to project yourself, how you prepared for the meeting and whether or not you were given any feedback ?

What were your immediate priorities on taking up post?

Reflecting on your first year in post, what particular challenges did you face?

Could you describe any significant early experiences which may have had an influence on how your headship developed?

Did any of these experiences require you to make a specific response to a situation which may have been unique to your school?

Being a head teacher

What do you think is the essence of headship?

If you were to use a metaphor, image or artefact to represent your experience of headship what would it be?

Why did you choose this image?

To what extent are you able to rationalise/depersonalise any negative reactions to decisions or actions you have taken?

Can you describe any situation where you have had to maintain an outer appearance which did not reflect how you were actually feeling?

How do you maintain your sense of perspective?

How important is the support of other head teachers to you?

What gives you greatest satisfaction in your role?

What advice would you offer a new head?

Appendix D

My Story

"Put it off. Turn it off. I can't sleep with the light on." This is one of my earliest teaching memories, drilling English language learners in the elision of consonants and vowels in English pronunciation, something that had escaped my notice in my 20 plus years as a native speaker! I was attending the Bell School of Languages in preparation for a two-year teaching placement in Zaire. My final report from Bell commented on the good rapport I had with the adult learners. At this stage I did not know how important this would be to my success in the classroom and ultimately in school leadership.

At one time, during my early contemplation on being a head teacher, I considered 'headship as journey' as an appropriate metaphor to explore my experience of headship. Now, I think it is perhaps too straightforward as it implies a point of departure and an arrival at an ultimate destination. Headship, in my experience, is not quite so neatly defined. It is a process; one of refinement and evolution where the person you are and the head teacher you become, grow and develop together. Appointment to the post of head teacher is but a stage in this process, which begins long before. Exactly how long before is hard to pinpoint, in my experience, but I am conscious that my personal and professional development throughout my life have brought me to where I am now.

If the metaphor of a journey is potentially too linear to encapsulate my experience of headship, one of a three-legged stool certainly helps to describe what I view as the three essential components of headship: emotional intelligence, vision and values and distributed leadership. If one leg is missing the stool will not stand; if one of these components were missing then I believe my headship would be weakened. But where did my emphasis on these three components originate? (HT Question)

In attempting to answer this question, my focus will be on my professional development and experience. My early experiences of leadership in secondary schools were in situations where I was promoted over individuals with considerably longer service than me and in some cases considerable acting experience²¹. Thus I had displaced people in securing new positions. These were challenging situations and I made a conscious decision not to get drawn in to the emotion; I had no control over how others reacted and the only reaction I could control was my own. Emotional intelligence would be one way of describing that early rapport identified at the Bell School of Languages, and my early experience in school leadership, even though I would not have known it in those terms at that time; feeling comfortable in a learning or working environment is fundamental to successful outcomes. The ability to handle emotions in oneself and others is, I believe, crucial to headship.

Individual teachers are probably aware of their personal values and would likely be able to articulate these. Certainly, I would have been able to state what my values were. Completing the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) was very important in stimulating my reflection on my vision as well as my values. In my final presentation I talked about building an E-School, where ethos, environment, effective learning and teaching and effective leadership would be essential components. In a later conversation with one of my depute head teachers, who was completing her SQH, I showed her this presentation and she commented that it actually reflected what I had done as head teacher. I was struck by this too, but on reflection, not surprised as I had spent a great deal of time thinking about how I would run a school and what I would like that school to be like. It is heartening that my vision of what that school could be like and the reality of my current experience are similar. (HT Question)

Had I always wanted to become a head teacher? (HT Question) The answer would be no. I remember always wanting to be a Principal Teacher of English. I loved teaching and I had a passion for curriculum development and this post offered the opportunity to follow my interests but also to have a wider influence on the educational experience of young people; I felt I could change things for the better. Thereafter, my career journey was about extending that influence. There was no grand plan to become a head teacher. At each

²¹ Acting experience refers to the situation where an individual assumes the responsibilities of a promoted post during an extended period, where the substantive post holder is absent.

stage as I carried out my own responsibilities and worked with those at the next level I generally thought, "I could do that," and so would apply for a further promoted post. The only exception to this was head teacher. I looked on at head teachers I knew and thought, "I couldn't do that." The SQH had been introduced when I was an assistant head teacher and I had applied to do it, not because I knew I wanted to be a head teacher, but because I did not want to rule myself out of headship by not completing it, should it become compulsory. It was not until I had a period covering for an absent head teacher that I actually decided that I wanted to be a head teacher. This experience gave me the opportunity to carry out the responsibilities of the post in a "safe" environment and I found that I actually enjoyed it and realised that I could do it in my own way, rather than trying to live up to images of what I thought a head teacher should be like! (HT Question)

As I reflect on my first few months in post I am conscious now that they have shaped the direction and tone of the school and our ethos has grown and developed over the years. (HT Question)

When I took up post as head teacher in October 2004, my main aim was to create a positive climate. I believe that the staff in a school is its greatest resource and my early days were spent getting to know staff and their views of the school. I remember the excitement, exhilaration and a slight degree of apprehension as I addressed my first staff meeting on that first morning. I introduced myself, giving the staff some information about the schools I'd worked in and making connections with staff I had worked with in the past, who had previously worked in my new school. I suppose I was establishing rapport. I made no mention of my vision but, re-reading the notes for my speech on my first day, I simply said, 'I believe in open, honest and direct communication. Please speak to me. Obviously my early days will be spent getting to know staff, pupils and parents. Please don't sit unsure about a course of action that has been taken. Come and speak to me. I don't promise that I will always agree with you but I will certainly offer an explanation.'

I then went on to tell them the good things I had heard about the school and how much I looked forward to working with them to ensure the best for the young people in our school.

I thought a great deal about that first staff meeting; there is only one opportunity to make a first impression. I knew the staff would be getting the measure of me, which was why I

made a direct statement about communication. I did not speak about my vision or values explicitly because I wanted a shared vision for the school, which would hopefully grow as we worked together. (HT Question)

In those early days in post I had no ‘to do’ list so spent a great deal of time walking around the school meeting people. I had much positive feedback about my ‘manner’ in these early days and I believe that this created a sense of resonance in the school; staff were on-board and ready for change. My journal after day three says, “I cannot believe the last three days. They have exceeded my expectations in every way.” What was particularly striking was the positive response from staff, particularly to my talks to pupil assemblies (ten over five days). Again my message to the young people was fairly short, focussing on what makes a good school and what I wanted for them as well as what I expected of them. Staff responded well to this too and even suggested taking some of what I said and making posters out of them for displaying in classrooms.

During my second week a serious incident occurred where an S1 pupil was killed as a result of a tragic accident involving another pupil. I had time to think about how to handle the situation, as the pupil did not die immediately. I knew communication was crucial and had a staff meeting as well as pupil assemblies. Members of staff later thanked me for briefing them in this way and this has now become an established pattern; if serious events take place, the staff expect to be called together. We also established a memorial board in the main school foyer. Sadly, dealing with the death of pupils and members of staff has become all too frequent an experience for me, and our board is filling up, but this early experience of a sudden bereavement shaped how I dealt with such incidents in the future. (HT Question)

At this time I was also dealing with health and safety issues, exclusions and the plethora of activities, which are part and parcel of life in a busy secondary school, as well as meeting with a member of the directorate to discuss the examination results. Such juggling is the daily reality of the post and does not really change. In all circumstances, the smooth running of the school must come first. Throughout this time, however, I was very conscious that I was “on show” and I knew that it was imperative to act according to my values, living out the role of head teacher in a way which was concordant with my vision; I had to “walk the talk.”

An emphasis on the leadership of Principal Teachers (PTs) was something I stressed from my early days in post, as this extract from the minute of our first meeting shows:

"J Purdie thanked PTs for their contributions and for the positive tone of the meeting. She outlined the key role for PTs in securing the school improvement agenda and indicated that PT meetings should be a means of driving this agenda."

During that first year I felt I needed some hands on experience of working with PTs, rather than working through deputies; I needed to work closely with them. I therefore organised a conference, out of school, where I worked with the PTs, without any senior managers there. This was the foundation on which our professional learning community has been built and staff now regularly take on leadership roles within the school, chairing working groups (design teams as we call them) with a DHT present simply as a consultant.

Holligan et al. (2006), talk of years one and two being filled with relentless problems. This was true in my experience in that numerous challenging situations arose, as well as tragic ones. However, I was able to turn them to my advantage by choosing how I reacted to them. Sometimes, all you can control is your own reaction, as I had learnt as a young PT. In a list I began compiling as a young assistant head teacher in 1999 of things to do and not do as a head teacher I wrote "Choose to react positively". What prompted me to write that I no longer recall, but I do know that it is an important part of my approach as head teacher. Thus, I used incidents of aggression to staff, which were potentially negative, to help me to put in place a regular programme of school assemblies. Having taken up post in October, I had originally thought I would wait until the new school session to begin a proper assembly programme. However, events relating to staff disquiet with aspects of discipline provided an opportunity to begin this programme early in the New Year, a few months into my post. Even in the darkest moments of headship (and they do occur) I will always endeavour to find something positive.

The focus in our school is on success, and success for an individual is achieving his or her potential. Young people are encouraged to aim for personal bests. This focus has certainly been shaped by my own interest in motivation, self-confidence and how they impact on achievement but it has also grown from our shared view of what we want our

school to look like. Whilst we have school improvement plans which focus on tasks and targets, I wanted some idea of what the staff wanted the school to be like in the future, so in February 2005 I took them through an exercise about how we wanted our school to be in 2010. Encouragingly much of this has been achieved and we have since completed the exercise for 2015. This future visioning has been important in measuring our progress and sustaining our drive and direction.

Holligan et al. (2006: 117) point to a number of factors, which influence the needs of new head teachers: the context of the school, the background of the head teacher, vision and values and the relentless problems of years one and two, being amongst these. I would contest that these factors, rather than being development needs, have a far more crucial role in determining how the headship actually plays out.

So in reflecting on my initial weeks in post, all three legs of the stool were evident: I had to use my emotional intelligence, demonstrate my values and vision, by “walking the talk” and I wanted to support the leadership of others. At the time I probably could not have articulated that this was what I was doing. I knew I was creating a climate, but it is only reflecting on journal entries for that time that I am able to see myself operating on all of these fronts. If a journey is too safe a metaphor for headship, adventure may be more appropriate. For, according to my dictionary, it encapsulates a dangerous or exciting incident, a hazardous enterprise and a delightful experience. Such is the paradox of headship.

Postscript²²

In writing this short account of my early days in headship I am conscious that I have not paid sufficient attention to my own professional development. The experience I gained on the job as Principal Teacher, Assistant Head teacher (AHT) and Depute Head teacher (DHT) was invaluable. However, in each of my senior management roles I pursued further study: a certificate in effective learning and teaching and an M Ed as AHT and the SQH, which I completed as DHT. Professional reading and reflection have always been very

²² I added this postscript after I had written the main reflection and was incorporating it into the dissertation. It was in response to questions as to how I managed time to undertake the EdD.

important to me throughout my career so it is perhaps unsurprising that I have chosen to continue my professional development in the EdD.

Appendix E

Plans to become a head teacher

Debbie	No. Not at all... It wasn't until I became a depute head teacher.
Linda	No. I did not. I never really thought about being a head teacher...
Karen	Never. I actually never envisaged myself taking up a leadership position in anything.
Martha	No. I always wanted to be a teacher, but I had no plans for promotion.
Rosemary	It was something I wanted to do from about the age of forty up. Up until then I didn't even want to be on a senior management team.
Maria	No, it wasn't... I knew I always wanted to be a teacher.

Appendix F

First meeting with staff

Debbie	I gave them a bit about me. Some people had advised me not to do that, but I am a very open person and I probably took a wee bit of a risk but I felt I had the confidence enough myself to do that. So I shared a bit about myself, about my career path... I did want a bit of my personality to come over.
Linda	I reckoned they wanted to know a wee bit about me, so I very bravely gave them a bit about my background and a bit about my personal life... nothing too personal... I was also keen to come in and show that I was the new head teacher.
Karen	I think what I wanted to say was exactly the same: here I am, this is what I'm about.
Martha	During the summer I happened to meet a lot of staff that were in the school and I was friendly and interested in them... I wanted to project myself as someone who had credibility... I also wanted the staff to get a sense that I knew the school and also that I was a listener... I told them briefly about my job history and academic history.
Rosemary	I remember just talking to them about myself and what I valued.
Maria	I'm just going to go in and present myself as someone who is looking forward to meeting them all... I've now got to go in there and allay their fears and also give them some kind of notion of what kind of person has come.

Appendix G

Knowing the school

Debbie	I knew where the school was roughly but I wasn't sure what was going on.
Linda	I did not understand the history of the school, so I had to ask
Karen	First thing was just to find out where they [the school] thought they were... I made clear I wasn't a new broom and everything was going out.
Martha	... every school is unique, and there might be good reasons why 'we've always done it this way'. Develop a good understanding of the history, so that when you are managing the changes, you can understand better why people may resist, and work with them to find a solution.
Rosemary	I think I took the first six months listening, looking, learning and formulating.
Maria	... this is a tremendous school; it's got a fabulous history and I want to build on that.

Appendix H

Leadership approach

Debbie	I have quite a consultative approach to leading and managing the school.
Linda	.. the other bit of that for me was making sure the other senior managers delivered their bits and it was not a one-woman show.
Karen	I think my predecessor here was quite insular, quite quiet... I think I'm much more engaging, just personally, and so I think they were thinking 'Oh this is nice.'

Appendix I

Metaphors and figures of speech

Debbie	having to rein myself in when I look at attainment there's a mountain to climb so I really wanted to throw the rattle out the pram I could never let my guard down
Linda	there was all of that boiling away in the background [unsuccessful internal candidate] LNCT circulars came and whacked me in the face the buck stops with you
Karen	you're in the driving seat you're like a funnel and everything comes at you you're the funnel for all the woes you are a servant
Martha	I work my socks off The buck really does stop with you more than ever before
Rosemary	It's like a bag of snakes He was my rottweiler you're between a rock and a hard place
Maria	It's constantly shifting sands [After one year in post] Well... there's no more spectres waiting ... There's no other skeletons in this cupboard

Appendix J

Emotional intensity

Debbie	<p>So I really wanted to throw the rattle out the pram, right, I really did... inside I was very annoyed and frustrated but I tried hard not to show it</p> <p>... taking your time and not showing your emotions and I'm feisty and I'm passionate... I have found that quite difficult</p>
Linda	I had to tell staff they were surplus and they were compulsory transferred. Oh I just felt sick and I felt very emotional and I did not know how I was going to hold it together... that was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do and I had to maintain a composed outer appearance when I just felt terrible.
Karen	If I'm speaking to a member of staff I'm very aware of how this might be affecting them as a person, never mind a professional, as a person. So not that long ago I had to go through the process and eventually one of my members of staff was dismissed... I had to let go of that emotion and say, no the damage has been done to successive cohorts of young people... And that was hellish, absolutely hellish.
Martha	When the EIS/SSTA rep is talking to me about any issue which I feel is trivial... In these cases I appear very interested and discuss with them how we can solve the problem. Also some staff need to have their ego massaged now and again and although tiresome, it needs to be done.
Rosemary	I think especially with parents, about an exclusion, or difficult youngsters, or something. Parents are sitting crying or even pleading with you for help... You're putting on a persona.

Maria	You can't actually let your personal feelings come in... because you just want to run away and say 'Oh God, what do we do now?' Whereas you've got to ... maintain this air of 'Right, I know what we're doing here. We'll be fine'
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